**Pedagogy as Dialogue between Cultures:**

Exploring Halaqah: an Islamic dialogic pedagogy that acts as a vehicle for developing Muslim children's shakhsiyah (personhood, autonomy, identity) in a pluralist society

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Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

For Mustafa Ali

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Abstract

This thesis presents an argument for the use of dialogic halaqah to develop the personal autonomy of young Muslims in twenty-first century Britain. It begins by developing a theoretical grounding for Islamic conceptualisations of personal autonomy and dialogic pedagogy. In doing so, it aims to generate dialogue between Islamic and 'western' educational traditions, and to clarify the theoretical foundation of halaqah, a traditional Islamic oral pedagogy, that has been adapted to meet the educational needs of Muslim children in contemporary Britain. Dialogic halaqah is daily practice in two independent British Muslim faith-schools, providing a safe space for young Muslims to cumulatively explore challenging issues, in order to facilitate the development of selfhood, hybrid identity and personal autonomy, theorised as shakhsiyah Islamiyah. This thesis examines the relationship between thought, language, and the development of personal autonomy in neo-Ghazalian, Vygotskian and Bakhtinian traditions, and suggests the possibility of understanding shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self.

This theoretical work underpins an empirical study of data generated through dialogic halaqah held with groups of schoolchildren and young people. Using established analytic schemes, data from these sessions are subjected to both thematic and dialogue analyses. Emergent themes relating to autonomy and choice, independent and critical thinking, navigating authority, peer pressure, and choosing to be Muslim are explored. Themes related to halaqah as dialogic pedagogy, whether and how it supports the development of agency, resilience and independent thinking, and teacher and learner roles in halaqah, are examined. Moreover, findings from dialogue analysis, which evaluates the quality of educational dialogue generated within halaqah, that is, participants' capacity to engage in dialogue with each other, as well as with an imagined secular other, are presented. The quality of the dialogic interactions is evaluated, as is evidence of individual participant's autonomy in their communicative actions.

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Glossary and Abbreviations

Allah	Literally The God; "The name of the Creator of the universe and all that it contains. Derives from the word *'Ilāh'* which means the One deserving all worship, the One to whom all hearts submit in love, fear, reverence, desire, trust and sincerity." (Abughosh & Shaqra, 1992) Allah is not male or female and has no comparison in creation.
Adāb	An awareness of propriety; good manners, underpinned by strong moral values. Also refers to Literature, as it is associated with being cultured. See *Ta'dīb*
Adhkār	The plural form of *dhikr*, which literally translates to remembrance or mentioning; used to refer to praising God outside of prayer.
Akhlāq	Morality and virtues, which are necessary for an authentic Islamic character.
Al-ḥaywān an- nāṭiq	See *'Aql*.
Al-Khāliq	Literally the Creator; one of the 99 names/attributes of Allah.
Ar-Razzāq	Literally the Sustainer; one of the 99 names/attributes of Allah.
Amānah	Trust, to be held in keeping for the real owner.
'Aql, (Nuṭq)	Literally intellect/thinking/faculty/reason/mind.
	Allah (God) has given *insān* (mankind) the unique asset of *'aql*, usually translated as intellect, but having much more meaning in Islamic terminology: in that it also relates to spiritual understanding. Al-Attas (1980) has discussed in depth the Islamic definition of man as *al ḥaywān al nāṭiq* (the rational animal) where the root word *nuṭq* encapsulates the uniqueness of man:
	"Man is possessed of an inner faculty that formulates meaning (i.e. *dhū nuṭq*) and this formulation of meaning, which involves judgment and discrimination and clarification, is what constitutes his 'rationality'. The terms *nāṭiq* and *nuṭq* are derived from a root that conveys the basic meaning of 'speech', in the sense of human speech, so that they both signify a certain power and capacity in man to articulate words in meaningful pattern. He is, as it were, a 'language animal', and the articulation of linguistic symbols into meaningful patterns is no other than the outward, visible and audible expression of the inner, unseen reality which we call *'aql*."
	Thus, the *'aql* aspect of man has the capacity not only to reason independently, as we are used to understanding in the west, but also to know in the spiritual sense through the *qalb* (heart) as opposed to the *dimāgh* (brain). The uniqueness of human 'thought' is intrinsically tied up with man's spiritual nature in Islamic epistemology.
'Aqliyah	Intellectuality: from the Arabic root word *'aql*.
As-Ṣamad	Literally the Absolute; one of the 99 names/attributes of Allah.

Āyah; pl. *Āyāt*	Literally sign; also used to refer to a verse of Quran; To return to the concept of '*aql* and speech as qualities of man, knowledge is said to be recognising the 'name' or 'sign' (*āyah*) which signifies the essence of the thing or person. Further, The Quran refers to both its own verses and the many forms of creation as 'signs' (*āyāt*); demonstrating the unity between the knowledge revealed by Allah and that discovered through the senses and '*aql*. This concept of the unity of knowledge arises from the most fundamental Islamic concept of *tawḥīd*. Thus, not only does knowledge have a unified source, it has a holistic or integrated nature. The traditional distinction therefore between '*aqlī* (philosophical and/or intellectual) and *naqlī* (transmitted or revealed) knowledge does not signify what would traditionally be understood in the west as the distinction between secular and religious knowledge.
Dār-al-Arqām	House of *Arqām*; *Arqām* is the name of one of the Prophet Muhammad's companions; his house was the setting for the first few halaqah conducted by the Prophet with early believers.
Dhawq	Literally tasting: used in the Sufi tradition to refer to the idea of tasting or experiencing divine presence or knowledge.
Dīn	Literally way of life. *Dīn-al-fiṭrah*: The way of life suited to human nature. Islam is a *dīn* and therefore much more than a 'religion'. It is the way of life decreed by Allah that meets the *fiṭrah* (human nature). All questions can therefore be referred to the Islamic sources and Islam should guide all human endeavours, individual and social.
Du'aā	Literally supplication, prayer; in the Islamic faith this can be an individual or collective act, and is understood to be the believer communicating directly with God, i.e without an intercessor.
Ghayb	Literally unseen: refers to the supernatural world.
Fiṭrah	Literally human nature: this is understood to be essentially good, in that human beings have a natural disposition to recognise, know and love Allah; and live by Islam, which is known as *dīn-al-fiṭrah* and is the natural way of living. Furthermore, this *fiṭrah* is not passive, but rather, an active inclination to know Allah and do good actions. Every child is therefore born innocent, inherently seeking Allah, with the potential to ascend to man's rightful position as *Khalīfah* (steward) of God. Islamic education will enable this innocent child to re-learn what is already inherent in him and help him grow in his relationships with Allah, himself and creation.
Ḥadīth pl. *Aḥadīth*	Prophetic saying: the *aḥadīth* have been preserved and compiled in books, they serve as the secondary source of Islamic law, after the Quran.

Ḥalaqah	Literally circle; usually a circle of learning.
	Originally an Islamic oral pedagogy instituted by the Prophet Muhammad, in his *tarbīyah* (education) of early Muslims; since then *ḥalaqah* are to be found in every Muslim community, in homes, Mosques, under trees, in literary and intellectual salons, and within educational institutions. *Ḥalaqah* are conducted purely orally with students and teacher sitting in a circle on the floor. An integral part of traditional Islamic education, *ḥalaqah* continues to be core practice in Muslim cultures, considered both to be a fundamental pedagogical method in 'academic' institutions such as *Al-Azhar* university, and to be a form of social discourse and transformative education in communities. In both cases, it can be credited with development of learning, of theological sciences, arts and natural sciences; with character transformation, the empowerment of individuals, and of communities, through a social-justice agenda (Zaimeche, 2002). In many traditional Muslim cultures, there was no clear demarcation between informal and formal learning. The pedagogical format varies immensely and can be transmission-based/teacher-led or dialogic/student-led. It can also be a collaborative group effort involving loose exploratory discussions about Quranic teachings, or about social problems in community settings. The 'curriculum' or content is open and determined by teacher or students, it varies from Quran, law, grammar, literature, philosophy, logic and astronomy, in academic institutions; to family life and raising children, women's empowerment, history, politics and spirituality in community settings. In all cases, the paradigm is an Islamic worldview. Mosques will have at least one *ḥalaqah* operating at any time and larger Mosques may have multiple, for example the Mosque of *'Amr ibn al-'Aās* in Cairo is reported to have had forty *ḥalaqah* at one time. These circles of learning were often sites of academic dispute and discourse. *Ḥalaqah* has thus been widely used in Muslim societies across time and place, and is a living reality across the Muslim world and in Muslim minority contexts today.
Ḥifẓ	Literally protection, preservation, memorisation; usually used in reference to memorisation of the Quran.
Ḥāfiẓ pl. *Ḥuffāẓ*	One who has memorised the entire Quran; and thereby preserves and protects it from corruption or being lost.
Ijtiḥād	A specific scholarly/legal term; usually associated with jurisprudence and translated as independent legal reasoning; it describes the process of making a legal decision by independent interpretation of the legal sources, the Quran and the *Sunnah*. There is also a dimension of due diligence encapsulated in the term.
Ikhlāṣ	Authenticity, Absoluteness, Sincerity.
Ikhtilāf	Literally divergence, variance, diversity and otherness; refers to a juristic agreement of mutual respect for intra-religious difference.

'Ilm	Literally knowledge: The value of seeking knowledge in Islam cannot be underestimated. A number of Arabic words are related to knowledge, *'ilm* and *ma'rifah* being the two main ones. Words related to the root *'ilm* are the third most frequent in the Quran, after two words that refer to God. The books of Islamic rulings often begin with the rulings related to seeking knowledge e.g. the famous manual of the *Shāf'ī* school, *Al Miṣri*'s 'Reliance of the Traveller'. Seeking knowledge is intertwined with concepts of morality, the virtuous life, spirituality, worldly progress, fulfilment of human potential and wisdom (*ḥikmah*).
	The above is a very brief summary of the foundations of Islamic epistemology. A number of other points are also important for the purposes of this thesis. Firstly, knowledge is not separate to action (Halstead, 2004). D'Oyen (2008) cites Imam *Shāf'ī* (b.767 CE) as having said: "Knowledge is not what one has memorised, knowledge is what benefits." Wan Daud (Wan Daud, 1998) explains that the word *'Aālim* is not 'one who knows' but 'one who does according to his knowledge. Knowledge is sought as an Islamic obligation (sacred) or as a praiseworthy action (non-sacred i.e. worldly knowledge) if it brings benefit to the *dīn*, self, society or environment through action.
Insān	Literally mankind/ humanity: the human being is the best of creation as s/he has unique attributes of *irādah* (freewill) and *'aql* (intellect), which is the capacity to acquire and use *'ilm* (knowledge).
Iqra''	Literally read/recite (in the imperative); The first word said by Gabriel to Muhammad and therefore the first word of Quranic revelation. Just as knowledge plays an intrinsic role in the beginning of the human narrative i.e. the creation of Adam. It has a central role in the beginning of the final revelation of God i.e. the Quran. The first revelation to Muhammad was: "Read! in the name of thy Sustainer, who has-created man out of a germ-cell. Read! for thy Sustainer is the Most Bountiful One; who has taught [man] the use of the pen; taught man what he did not know!" (Quran, 96: 1-5)
	Thus, Allah orders the Prophet to 'read' or 'recite', as the final teaching for humanity begins. He reminds humanity that He is their Creator and that He taught them, indeed, that he taught them the use of the pen and that without Allah they would know not. Knowledge in Islam is sacred by its very nature, as its source is Allah. Muslims are also all too aware that the knowledge they have been given or can attain is infinitely miniscule in comparison to the knowledge of Allah. As knowledge is ultimately from Allah it is also synonymous with truth. Islam is referred to as *'Dīn-al-Ḥaq'*, the religion of truth. Thus, there is definite objectivity of knowledge; however man is bound by his subjectivity and will struggle to attain this, although he does have the potential to realise the truths, which are already inherent within him.
Irādah	Freewill: Man has been given freewill and this elevates him above the rest of creation. See also *Khalīfat-ul-arḍ*.
Jamā'ah	Literally congregation, collective, community; some religious obligations are collective and a congregation is required for them. Collaboration thus becomes important as there is no priesthood in Islam. Islam insists on the individual's direct relationship with Allah without intercession. Congregational obligations are therefore a collaborative, participative efforts.

Khalīfat-ul-arḍ	Literally the steward of God on earth: our natural role in the universe is to take responsibility for the rest of creation by fulfilling the will of Allah. Stewardship is a unique responsibility given to Adam and all *insān* (mankind). Man's relationship with education and knowledge is part of his unique nature as the 'supreme' creation of God. Al-Attas, (1979) and Murad, (2001) have discussed in depth the incident of Adam being educated by Allah prior to the 'fall' from paradise. Murad (2001) explains that in the Islamic paradigm this event has a significance entirely at odds with the traditional Christian understanding. For Muslims, this is considered an ascent, as it enables Adam to take on the role of '*Khalīfat-ul-arḍ*' (the steward of God on earth). Adam achieves this status, which is superior to his innocent state in paradise, through repentance. What has given Adam as the prototype man the capacity to reach this status is that he has been 'educated' or given knowledge by Allah. "And he imparted unto Adam the names of all things" (Quran 2:31). Indeed in Islam, man has the capacity to be superior to the angels due to his freewill. Whilst angels worship Allah without freewill; man when he worships and submits to God has chosen to do so through his own freewill. Only through complete submission to Allah can man fulfil the purpose of his creation. Education is re-learning what has already been taught by Allah, in order to fulfil this purpose. (*The Essence of Islamic Education*, 2001)
Khusr	A state of loss.
Ma'ná	Meaning (of a word).
Mafhūm	Literally understood: can also be used to mean concept.
Muḥassib	Literally one who can be taken to account: used in the context of the accountable adult who is responsible for his/her own actions.
Murabbī	Learned teacher, guardian, one engaged in upbringing; the Arabic equivalent of the Jewish term Rabbi, from the same root as *Rab*.
Muslim	Literally one who has testified and submitted; one who believes in and adheres to Islam.
Nafs	Literally self, ego, disposition/thoughts, desires and feelings; The *nafs* can be positive or negative for the human being, but needs to be developed and cultivated through education and acts of piety. Freedom from one's *nafs* and others (*an-nās*) is attained through submission to Allah who is *Aḥad* (the ultimate Unity).
Nafs-Al-Muṭma'innah	A satisfied and content self; at peace with itself, and with its condition. This is a Quranic term (89:27).
Nuṭq	See '*Aql*.
Qalb	Literally heart; The Quran refers to the heart as the seat of consciousness and learning. "Gabriel-who, verily, by God's leave, has brought down upon thy heart this [divine writ] which confirms the truth of whatever there still remains [of earlier revelations], and is a guidance and a glad tiding for the believers." (Quran 2:97). The *qalb* is an important focus in Islamic education; which is concerned with the development of a "sound heart".

Quran	Literally that which is recited: refers to the divinely revealed scripture of Islam. Consists of 114 *suwar* (chapters) revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad over a period of twenty-three years. The Quran continues to be recited by Muslims throughout the world in the language of its revelation, Arabic; exactly as it was recited by Prophet Muhammad nearly fourteen hundred years ago. The Quran is viewed as the authoritative guide for human beings.
Rabb	Literally Lord; one of the names of Allah. Also used to mean guardian carer/educator who enables development and flourishing. The verb that is derived from the same Arabic root (*Rababa*) is used to mean bringing-up/educating, *Tarbīyah* is also derived from this same root. *Rabb* itself is sometimes used in the Quran to denote the care and upbringing of children (Quran 17:24; 22:5; 26:18) This term is also related to natural growth in relation to plants and animals.
Rabb-Al-'Aālamīn	Literally Lord/guardian/carer/educator of all the worlds; one of the titles of Allah.
Sakīnah	Literally tranquility: inner peace reached through submission, total reliance on Allah, and an awareness of the purpose of *insān* (humanity).
Salām	Literally peace: Islam came to bring peace through submission to the one true God, Allah. Thus outer peace is manifested through living by Islam; inner peace through submission to Allah's will.
Shakhṣ	Individual, person, body, spirit.
Shakhṣīyah Islāmīyah	Muslim identity/personality/character
	Scholars have written volumes on the true Islamic character based on the example of the Prophet, including discussions of many of the terms given in this glossary. The development of character is a primary aim of Islamic education; In twenty-first century Britain, notions of Islamic identity become important to this term.
Sunnah	Literally way, method, manner; used to refer to the Prophetic Tradition of Muhammad. As the Quran urges the believers to obey Muhammad and states that he is a source of guidance, his example: his sayings, actions and silences are a source of law in Islam.
Sunnī	Literally following the Prophetic tradition; in reference to the larger of the two main Islamic sects, the other being *Shīy'ah/ Shia*.
Surah pl. Suwar	A chapter of the Quran
Surah Al-Fātiḥah	Literally 'The Opening'; The first chapter of the Quran
Su'wāl Jawāb	Question and Answer.
Tadabbur	Spiritual reflection.
Ta'dīb	Literally discipline: considered by some to be the highest form of education, *ta'dīb* is concerned with application of Islamic culture in one's conduct and deportment. Its focus is morals, manners and good judgement; involving knowledge of how to behave in society, for example towards parents, in a learning environment, or as a traveller.
Tafsīr	Literally explanation, commentary; refers to Quranic exegesis.

Ta'līm	Literally teaching and acquiring knowledge: often used to refer to knowledge of Quran and other Islamic texts, what many refer to as 'traditional scholarship'. At the heart of this is the teacher-learner relationship, which is also a pivotal concept in Islamic eduction. *Ta'līm* has always been viewed as a path to right action and self-development as well as developing scholars/Imams of good character to lead the community.
Tarbīyah	Education and upbringing; development of a child by a parent or a student by a teacher. Often linked to the Islamic concept of *fiṭrah* (human nature), *Tarbīyah* is facilitating the flourishing of the *fiṭrah*.
Tawḥīd	The holism, oneness or unity of Allah (God); "Unity in its most profound sense. Allah is one in His Essence and His Attributes and His Acts. The whole universe and what it contains is one unified event which in itself has no lasting reality." (Abughosh & Shaqra, 1992)
Ummah	Literally nation/community: refers to the universal body of muslims as one distinct, integrated community (Abughosh & Shaqra, 1992), an all-embracing identity, encompassing diversity.

NB: the terms halaqah and shakhsiyah Islamiyah are core terms in this thesis; therefore, they are used without italics or diacritics throughout the text.

Abbreviations

AMS-UK	Association of Muslim Schools - United Kingdom
CHANNEL	UK government programme to identify and support those at risk of being drawn into terrorism
DfE	Department for Education
EEF	Education Endowment foundation
ERQ	Empirical Research Questions
FBV	Fundamental British Values
HIE	Holistic Islamic Education
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
KQ	Key Question
ISF	Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation
NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PREVENT	One section of the UK Government counter-terrorism strategy
PSE	Principles of Shakhsiyah Education
SEDA	Scheme for Educational Dialogue Analysis
TRQ	Theoretical Research Questions

Preface

Part I A Dialogic Journey

"It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others... One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." W.E.B. Du Bois

Double-consciousness has been a constant feature of my inner-life, yet for many years it was a phenomenon that despite its persistence, I could not quite define. Ever since I can remember, I have always occupied two worlds and struggled to make them whole. Thus, when I read this quote, written over one hundred years ago, it certainly rings true. With great insight, DuBois touches here on a fundamental fracture, which although elusive in its essence and challenging to express, is nonetheless central to the encounter of the racially-identified self with its own life-world, a life-world that is produced within a society where the racially-identified self is always at the margins. On the surface, this is stating the obvious. How else would one describe the experience of a racial or cultural minority except as twofold? In my Masters research (Ahmed, 2010), participants described their childhood experiences growing up as young Muslims in 1980s' Britain.[1]

Hafsah: *We're saying that we lived one lifestyle… we had double identities basically.*
Aisha: *We did have parallel* (identities)*, yeah we did.*
Hafsah: *One lifestyle at home, another at school…*

Hafsah and Aisha are members of a group of Muslim mothers, who began to home-school their children in the late 1990s, and in 2002 founded two primary schools, to provide an 'alternative' and Islamic education for their British Muslim[2] children. As an original member of this group, my Masters research had an auto-ethnographic

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[1] I have used the term Britain throughout this thesis as it aligns with the use of British Muslim (see footnote 2). The only exception is in reporting from the UK census as the census also includes data from Northern Island.

[2] The term British Muslim is contentious for many reasons, which are explored by participants in both the Masters and doctoral studies. Further, no participants are from Scotland or Wales. Therefore, they could perhaps be better described as English Muslims. Nevertheless, I have decided to use this term because it is consistently used in media and academic discourses dealing with issues around integration and more recently securitisation.

element; aiming to explore whether the Islamic oral pedagogy of halaqah, a practice that embodied our 'alternative' ethos, could be described as dialogic pedagogy. I was seeking to identify parallels in 'western' and Islamic educational traditions, with a view to enhancing practice in our schools. With hindsight, I now realise that there had also been a concern to make whole the 'two-ness' in our practice as educators, and in our children's experiences as learners. This was compounded by a desire to create understanding within the wider non-Muslim society of the motivations behind, and practices in, Islamic schools. My research was actually a continuation of my personal journey of addressing double-consciousness. I am grateful to my Masters supervisor, whose attempts to understand both my motivations to contribute to the academic and public discourse on British Muslims and education, enabled me to explore the workings of my own double-consciousness. My supervisor eventually suggested that research on halaqah as dialogic pedagogy needed to be preceded by an exploration of the Islamic concept of *tarbīyah* (education as upbringing), which underpins the practice of halaqah. He recommended that I initially study teachers' and school leaders' conceptualisations of how this 'alternative' education enables children to explore their identities and negotiate their various heritages.

At the time I remember thinking that this suggestion was sensible, but feeling frustrated that instead of researching Islamic pedagogy, I was being directed to the persistent issue of identity that seems to be a dominant focus of research on minorities. My frustration was a manifestation of double-consciousness. As a racially-embodied self, one is always explaining oneself to the dominant culture. To do so, one must view oneself through the eyes of the dominant culture. Thus, identity becomes the defining feature of most discourse on race, and in some sense the racially-embodied self becomes further entrapped in a perpetual internal self-other dichotomy. Nonetheless, it is to my supervisor's credit that he directed me to literature on 'Southern' (Connell, 2007) and 'indigenous' theory (L. T. Smith, 1999), which enabled me, through the methodological section of my Masters thesis, to explore this experience of double-consciousness as a non-western researcher (Ahmed, 2014a). This literature led to acknowledgement that, as much as I was seeking to research the Islamic educational practice of halaqah as pedagogy, my research was nevertheless bound up with identity and conceptualisations of self. Thus for the PhD study, I decided to evaluate the capacity of dialogic halaqah to develop selfhood and

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personal autonomy for young British Muslims, by facilitating active dialogic engagement that centres their personal experiences.

My own experience of double-consciousness has been constant throughout my education in British schools and universities. I was able to come to terms with competing personal identities relatively easily, in comparison to the challenge of how to deal with paradigmatic, that is ontological and epistemological, tensions that underpinned my double-consciousness. For me, the experience has not been entirely negative, but a journey of self-discovery, making me much more aware of who I am, and how I understand others. Perhaps this 'two-ness', 'this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others', may itself be a way of developing an understanding of self; perhaps it can be harnessed to enhance the ability of the self to dialogue with the other. In our globalised post-modern world, encounter with the other is inevitable and all encompassing.

Part II Shakhsiyah Schools - Contemporaneous Events
The following recount presents some events that unfolded during the course of this PhD study. They provide a contextual backdrop to the research, particularly its aims and implications.

Muslims, schooling and securitisation: Shakhsiyah Schools
In the May 2010 UK general election, the Coalition government, led by the Conservative party, came into power. This was six months after the schools that I work in, which are the subject of this research, had undergone a media storm due to unsubstantiated allegations of extremism made by the Conservative party, then in opposition (Ahmed, 2012). Although the Labour government resoundingly rejected the allegations, there was significant damage to the schools' reputation. As a small organisation with minimal resources, little could be done in response. Michael Gove, the shadow Secretary of State for Education, had been closely involved in raising the allegations in Parliament. When the most significant allegation, of anti-extremism funding being given to the schools, was proven to be false, an apology had to be made to the House of Commons, for providing false information to the House. This was very embarrassing to Michael Gove; therefore his ascent to power, as Secretary of State for Education in 2010, was a worrying development for our schools. Moreover,

Gove's distrust of British Muslim communities, and his criticism of what he saw as appeasement of Muslim demands, was open knowledge. His solution to Muslim integration was straightforward and simplistic, according to Gove, by differentiating the Islam as a religion from the newly coined term of 'Islamism' as a 'political ideology', Muslims could be brought into the secular-liberal fold (Gove, 2006). This simplistic argument, which did not take into account the myriad complex factors affecting young Muslims growing up in Britain, was to colour his actions in office, to the detriment of Muslim pupils in what should be a safe space, their school.

OFSTED as an arm of the State's security apparatus

In our schools, there were two direct interventions by Gove as Secretary of State. First, in October 2010, a scheduled inspection was directly commissioned from the Department of Education. Unbeknown to staff, children aged 9 to 11 years were interrogated by OFSTED inspectors and left in tears by questions, such as what they thought of 'bombs on trains' and what they would do if their 'father was to force them into marriage'. OFSTED inspectors seemed oblivious to the racist and Islamophobic undertones of this questioning. Inspectors seemed to think that reassuring school leaders that the children had answered the questions appropriately and intelligently, was a sufficient defence to what was described by parents as 'abusive' behaviour. They could not see that staff and parents were concerned about the impact on the children of this type of questioning, rather than what the children might say in response. This was also an early indication that despite Gove's separation of the religion of Islam with so-called Islamism, the two would be continuously conflated when dealing with Muslims in schools.

The second incident of direct intervention was even more troubling, in that the Secretary of State chose to overrule OFSTED's findings. The second school run by ISF was due to be inspected in 2012. In May 2013, a very late specially commissioned inspection commenced. It consisted of unprecedented and intense interrogation of staff and school leaders. Although in this instance, the children were spared, a deeply disturbing approach was taken by OFSTED, during what was supposed to be an evaluation of educational provision. As minority communities have done for centuries, our school community did everything possible to explain to suspicious inspectors, that we were actively addressing the complex issues of growing

up as Muslims in Britain, with great success, through our first hand and profound knowledge of the needs of Muslim children. The outcome was a report that praised our efforts and stated that in the category of Spiritual, Moral Social and Cultural education, our provision was 'Good' (Ofsted, 2013). In October 2013, Michael Gove chose to overturn the inspectors' report, and claimed that various sections of our Halaqah Curriculum could be construed as extremist, because there was not enough clarity in what children were being taught. The fact that halaqah is an open-ended child-led discussion, meant that the government could not accurately identify what might be said in class. This open pedagogical approach, although deemed beneficial by the inspectors, was worrying to a government concerned about what Muslims were doing in faith-schools. This was troubling, as in the MEd pilot study, teachers had identified halaqah as the pedagogy best suited to dealing with these complex issues. Therefore, it became even more imperative that this claim was tested through rigorous research.

The 'Trojan Horse' Affair

Perhaps naïvely, the staff at our school assumed that Gove's behaviour in directly controlling OFSTED was limited to our schools. However, the 2014 Birmingham 'Trojan Horse' affair, and subsequent government policy proved us wrong. In March 2014 an anonymous letter, widely considered a forgery (Richardson, 2014b), alleged that there was a plot by Muslim extremists to take over Birmingham schools. This led to a flurry of OFSTED inspections, which have come under intense criticism, with claims of government interference (Arthur, 2015), as they inexplicably downgraded previously 'Outstanding' schools to 'Inadequate'. Lee Donaghy, Assistant Principal of Park View School's description of the first and second OFSTED inspections was remarkably familiar to Shakhsiyah Schools' experiences.

> '[The] Ofsted inspectors ... left us with a list of mild recommendations for improvement. We had an action plan ready to be implemented the very next day. However, when the same inspectors returned ten days later, they told us within hours that the school would be rated inadequate. Our strongly held belief is that the inspectors were ordered back into the school by somebody who felt that Park View had to be placed in special measures to enable the removal of Park View Educational Trust. … The inspectors' conduct during

that second visit left pupils and staff feeling like suspects in a criminal investigation. From female pupils asked whether they were forced to wear the hijab (despite girls in the same class clearly not doing so) to one staff member being asked "Are you homophobic?", we were subjected to inappropriate and bizarre lines of questioning, designed to elicit the evidence required to damn us.' (Donaghy, 2014)

Two separate investigations were also conducted at the local (Birmingham City Council) and national (Department for Education) level, with contradictory outcomes. Nevertheless, the affair culminated in a change in government policy, with new regulations requiring all schools to promote Fundamental British Values (FBV), and requiring OFSTED to inspect schools' compliance.

> '[T]he Trojan Horse affair, and the high profile media campaign which preceded it, placed Ofsted in an invidious position. The process that declared schools that were previously rated outstanding, to be failing, raised questions not only in terms of the methodology by which judgements were reached but, perhaps more influentially, they have created a discourse of anti-Muslimism around the agency which will be very difficult to shift. The recent declarations by Gove on the future policing of British Values implies that Ofsted will be central in judging not only what these values actually are, but equally whether they are present or not within schools. … This will leave Ofsted with a very tricky course to steer in terms of its politically impartial stance. … But, if anything, the affair should also be remembered as a perfect example of the way in which the careful crafting of a crisis and skilful manipulation of the media is capable of inflicting untold damage on communities, the inspectorate and the current system of education.' (Baxter, 2014)

Fundamental British Values and PREVENT: Impact on Shakhsiyah Schools
Baxter's prediction of the challenges created by OFSTED's new role came to pass later that year. Regulations requiring the active promotion of FBV, and inspection frameworks to evaluate this, were hastily drafted over the summer holidays. On 30th September, the day after new regulations were published, unannounced OFSTED inspections of specially selected independent Muslim schools in the London borough

of Tower Hamlets commenced. A state funded Tower Hamlets school with a majority Muslim population was also inspected, as were both Shakhsiyah Schools. Inspectors were working from regulations published the day before and draft unpublished guidance, which was not only to be amended before publication in November, but was unknown to school leaders during the inspections. Specially trained inspectors were given a specific commission to focus on the promotion of FBV. The lead inspector of the Shakhsiyah Schools inspection had been the lead inspector at Park View before the summer. As in Birmingham, all the schools were suddenly considered to be 'Inadequate'. What became clear to us as school leaders, was that the government was purposefully attempting to change the narrative from meeting the needs of learners in accordance with their religious and multiple cultural heritages in designated faith-schools, to one of promotion of narrowly defined Fundamental British Values and British heritage. This approach could only serve to exclude those of hybrid identities.

British Muslims are now required to prioritise their 'Britishness' over other identities. By generating a British or Muslim dichotomy, where Islamic values are seen as separate and even counter to 'British' values, the government's approach simultaneously ignores both any potential overlap between these values, and any points of tension that may arise for Muslim educators and pupils, who necessarily have multiple hybrid identities. For instance most will have at least Islamic, English, and country of origin identities. Indeed, the 'preventing radicalisation' and 'countering extremism' discourse associated with the government's PREVENT strategy, now requires every Muslim in Britain to justify his/her beliefs, identities and practices, and demonstrate that these are not in contradiction with FBV (Heath-Kelly, 2013). This applies to Muslim schoolchildren, even those as young as three, and to Muslim educators; as OFSTED is now explicitly charged with determining how far children support FBV and how far school leaders and teachers 'actively promote' FBV (Department for Education, 2015; Ofsted, 2014). Failure to do so can lead to accusations of extremism, and being banned from working in schools. Schools are also required to monitor children for extremism and vulnerability to radicalisation. Any suspicion of 'undermining FBV' must lead to action under the duty to safeguard children from harm (Miah, 2017; O'Donnell, 2016). Children, parents and teachers must be referred to CHANNEL, an anti-radicalisation scheme. This new duty on

teachers has been widely criticised as requiring teachers to act as the "secret service of the public sector" (Adams, 2016). Teachers have warned that this approach will stifle open debate and is counter productive, alienating and isolating Muslim pupils (Neustatter, 2016).

Narratives about British Muslim Education

The 'Trojan Horse' affair and subsequent government policy on FBV and PREVENT, has exposed two competing, yet overlapping, narratives about British Muslim education (Richardson, 2014a). The dominant narrative is of Muslim educators using unethical and undemocratic means to take over the leadership and governance of state schools in order to run them on Islamic principles. According to this narrative, the practice of conservative Islam encourages young Muslims to become vulnerable to radicalisation. The Government argues therefore that its PREVENT strategy is necessary to safeguard these young Muslims. The counter narrative is that Muslim parents and communities, concerned by underachievement, and by the lack of recognition of their children's religious and cultural heritage in schools, have sought to become more actively involved in school governance and leadership. Ironically the PREVENT strategy has resulted in Muslim educators feeling disempowered to engage in the important work of preparing children for life in modern Britain. This is despite the fact that, due to the involvement of Muslims in the governance and leadership of Park View School great strides were made in raising the achievement of Muslim pupils. Park View is located in a deprived community, 98 percent of the pupils are Muslim and 70 percent are eligible for free school meals. Prior to the involvement of the local Muslim community, the school was failing and underachievement was rife, with the proportion of pupils passing 5 A*-C GCSEs in the single figures (Adams, 2014). By 2013 however, this had risen to 75 percent, far above the national average. Many members of the school community felt that recognising pupils' religious and cultural heritage had assisted in raising achievement.

> 'Part of us getting excellent results has been about reflecting the wishes and needs of the community in the school. We would not have got those results without doing those things that mean that parents trust us and that kids are comfortable here.' (Lee Donaghy, Assistant Principal, Park View School, cited in Adams, 2014)

Park View is a state school and according to its school leaders, it achieved such academic success through simply facilitating Muslim practices, and recognising Muslim identity. In independent Islamic faith-schools, there is further scope for innovation, and independent Muslim educators have been thoughtfully working to generate pedagogy and curricula that celebrate Muslim religious and cultural heritage, develop sound moral values, and develop a critical reflective outlook in Muslim young people. These approaches are now under suspicion. For example, whilst the use of halaqah as dialogic pedagogy, that generates critical and reflective thinking, was praised in OFSTED reports from 2002-2013, post 'Trojan Horse' inspectors have seen its open format as potentially subversive, and have charged school leaders with producing evidence that they are monitoring the open discussions closely. Inspectors also commented that, as the pedagogy is Islamic, its 'Islam-centric' nature may in itself be evidence of the lack of *"active promotion"* of FBV. The capacity of halaqah to generate critical thinking within the Islamic tradition, and the potential benefits of this approach seems to have been lost on these inspectors. Instead, the school's aim to provide the opportunity for children to explore issues of identity and values in a culturally familiar environment has itself come under scrutiny. The fact that these events were contemporaneous with the data collection for this PhD is also significant. Participants in the study express their opinions within this climate, where their schools are under direct scrutiny by OFSTED and ongoing monitoring by the Secretary of State for Education.

Chapter 1 Introduction: Pedagogy as Dialogue between Cultures

The relationship between culture and pedagogy is becoming increasingly important in educational research. The intricacies of this relationship were meticulously illustrated by a comparative study of primary education conducted between 1994 and 1998 in five nations: England, France, the United States of America, Russia and India, (Alexander, 2001). The study surveyed policy as well as practice, with data collected at three levels: the system, the school and the classroom. It drew upon cultural understandings of teaching and learning in order to "unravel further the complex interplay of policies, structures, culture, values and pedagogy" (Alexander, 2001 p. 4). A focus on language as the defining feature of how pedagogy is understood in these different cultures, and on spoken language as a pedagogical tool in the classroom, means that this ambitious study has parallels with this smaller PhD study. Both studies share the aim of illustrating the interplay between pedagogy and culture, thus generating intercultural understanding between contrasting educational traditions.

This present study will contrast and compare the Islamic educational tradition as it is manifested in a specific British context, with the broader field of Educational Dialogue research conducted in British universities. It will investigate the Islamic pedagogy of *halaqah* as classroom practice in two independent primary Islamic faith-schools in England. Halaqah is a traditional oral pedagogy, which these schools have adapted in order to develop an authentic and sustainable Muslim contribution to a multicultural society in twenty-first century Britain. Halaqah is a traditional means of developing *'aqliyah* (intellectuality), *tadabbur* (spiritual reflection) and *akhlāq* (good character). Deeply rooted in Islamic culture throughout centuries, halaqah has been used widely and flexibly by communities across the Muslim world, both at the core and periphery of educational practice. Halaqah is daily practice in these two schools, with the aim of developing each child's individual *shakhsiyah Islamiyah* (Muslim identity/personality/character). School leaders and teachers claim that the dialogue created in the safe space of halaqah develops children's agency and sense of selfhood, as they cumulatively explore challenging issues about their hybrid identities as Muslim Britons (Ahmed, 2010). By exploring this practice of halaqah as a dialogic pedagogy in the British context, this thesis aims to shed light on Islamic concepts of individual autonomy and human agency; leading to a deeper understanding of the

potential of *halaqah* to provide a culturally-coherent pedagogy that enables Muslim learners to address issues of identity, belonging and integration, in a secular-liberal multicultural British context.

It is important to note that the interpretation of halaqah adopted for this study, which is claimed to be consonant with the important features of dialogic teaching, is a particular approach developed by school leaders in Shakhsiyah Schools. As with all educational practice, this particular conceptualisation of halaqah, which is further developed in subsequent chapters of this thesis, is open to challenge by other Muslim educators who may draw on the wide range of understandings of education present within Muslim communities.

My research aims are:
I. To explore and construct pedagogical theory from the Islamic philosophy of education that already underpins *halaqah.*
II. To explore parallels and differences between Islamic and secular-liberal pedagogical theories and practices, to enhance understanding between cultures.
III. To explore empirically the processes and outcomes of *halaqah* as a credible model for contemporary Islamic education, that aims to develop shakhsiyah (an Islamic notion of personal autonomy).

1.1 Outline of the thesis

Figure 1 illustrates how the theoretical section of this thesis proceeds through a nested approach using sociological, philosophical and pedagogical lenses to drill down informatively and authoritatively to the specific concerns of the empirical study. Chapter 1 lays out the context and the case for the research by examining the socio-political issues around educational provision for the 8.1 percent of British schoolchildren who are of Muslim heritage. Chapter 2 scrutinises similarities and differences between Islamic and secular liberal conceptualisations of personal autonomy. Chapter 3 explores the Islamic educational theory underpinning the use of halaqah as dialogic pedagogy, and its parallels with mainstream educational dialogue theory. It draws on the neo-Ghazalian philosophy of Naquib al-Attas, and contemporary educational applications of neo-Vygotskian sociocultural theory and

Bakhtinian dialogic theory, to investigate the relationship between thought, language and the development of the cognitive, affective and spiritual domains of the human personality. These different strands are drawn together to consider the possibility of understanding shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self and what that means for engagement with the secular other. Chapter 4 outlines the methodology for the empirical study. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 report the findings of a small-scale qualitative study examining children (aged 10-11 years) and young peoples' (aged 15-19 years) views on personal autonomy and being Muslim, and whether halaqah has helped them navigate their identity as Muslims living in a secular society. Data was generated through three hour-long dialogic halaqah sessions held with each group, involving a series of key questions. Data from these sessions is subjected to both thematic and dialogue analyses, by using an established thematic analysis method and the scheme for educational dialogue analysis (SEDA). The aim is to evaluate children's and young people's views on autonomy, authority and halaqah, and their capacity to engage in dialogue with each other, as well as with an imagined secular other. The two analyses are brought together to examine two individual participant's contributions in relation to a definition of personal autonomy. Finally, Chapter 9 draws some conclusions, including implications for intercultural, international and social justice applications of halaqah.
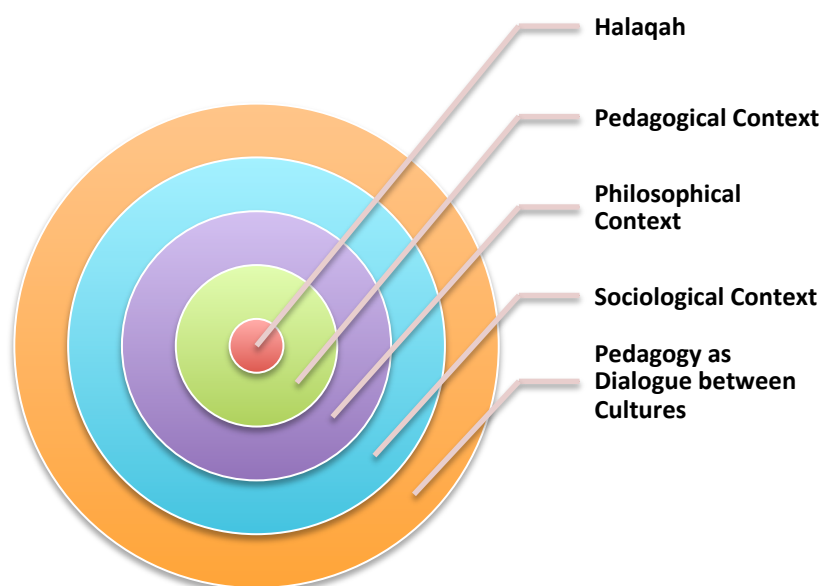
Figure 1.1 A nested approach to exploring relevant theoretical and empirical literature

1.2 The socio-political context

The increasing politicisation of the presence of minority Muslim communities in Europe, has led to a plethora of research publications, across a wide range of academic fields. As second and third-generation European-born Muslims come of age, more complex issues of identity related to race, ethnicity, nationality, belonging and religion, have begun to unfold (Ahmed, 2012; Scott-Baumann & Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2015). Conversely, these identity issues are also mirrored in European societies. European societies characterised by ageing populations, high immigration and an increasingly visible European-born Muslim population, some of whom maintain non-European dress and cultural practices, are beginning to question what it means to be European. These concerns about changing demographics are played out in the media through the demonisation of Muslims and the cultural practices of ethnic minorities (S. Ahmed & Matthes, 2016). In some instances, the presence of Muslims in Europe has been presented as an existential threat to an ethnically white secular-liberal society, with a Christian heritage. By relating this public discourse to Habermas' work on the crisis of secularity and the crisis of pure practical reason, Mavelli (2015) has shown that European populations and political leaders are increasingly conflating secular-liberal underpinnings of contemporary European identity with Europe's Christian heritage. This identifies an aporia at the heart of secular-liberal policies, which became ever more apparent around 2010-2011, when the leaders of the UK, France and Germany critiqued previous policies of multiculturalism, arguing that immigrants whether of first, second or third generations, needed actively to adopt their new national identity along with its secular liberal values and Christian heritage (Hills, 2015; Mavelli, 2015).

This European identity crisis should seem a little premature when population statistics are considered. However, it can be explained by a 2015 YouGov poll which revealed that 55 percent of the UK population believes that the government is lying about immigration statistics (Rogers, 2015). The mismatch between the statistical and operational reality of Islamic educational services and public perception is also evident in government policy and the media coverage of Islamic faith and supplementary schools in the UK.

1.3 Muslims in the UK, Islamic faith and supplementary schools

The 2011 UK census records 4.8 percent of the British population as Muslim, 47.2 percent of who are UK born, and 73.3 percent state that their only national identity is British or other UK identity. In terms of ethnicity, the Muslim population is predominantly Asian (67.6 percent), but otherwise ethnically diverse, with 7.8 percent of Muslims of White ethnicity. However 33 percent of the Muslim population is aged 15 years or under compared with 19 percent of the overall population, and Muslims comprise 8.1 percent of the school age population (Ali, 2015). The vast majority of Muslims attend state schools that are either of no religious character or Christian faith-schools. Less than 0.1 percent of state schools are Muslim faith-schools compared to the approximately 34 percent that are Christian. Whilst the Jewish population of the UK is 0.5 percent of the total, 0.2 percent of state schools are Jewish faith-schools (Long & Bolton, 2015). State funded Muslim faith school provision is therefore available for approximately two percent of Muslim children, compared with approximately 33 percent of Christian children and approximately 39 percent of Jewish children. Approximately five percent of Muslim children attend Muslim schools, mainly low fee independent schools attached to Mosques (AMS-UK, 2013).

Despite these statistics, serious concerns are repeatedly voiced about Muslim education in Britain. Much of the academic literature on Muslim Education in Britain centres on concerns about the awarding of state funding to a small number of Islamic faith-schools from 1998 onwards.[3] As more than a third of state-funded schools are faith-schools, principles of equality make it difficult to deny state funding to Islamic faith-schools, (Flint, 2007; McCreery, Jones, & Holmes, 2007; Meer, 2007; Parker-Jenkins, 2002). Nevertheless, concerns persist and analysis of the literature reveals that they are rooted in deeper issues, namely integration and secular-liberal principles of personal autonomy, and the 'liberal dilemma' regarding Muslims in general and faith-schools in particular. The issue of integration is discussed below, and personal autonomy and the 'liberal dilemma' are discussed in Chapter 2.

1.4 Muslims, education and integration

Concerns voiced about faith-schools, across the academy and the media, are

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[3] It took 15 years of campaigning by the Muslim community to achieve equality with other faith communities in this regard.

essentially about Muslims, perceived as the threatening 'other' in Europe (S. Miah, 2015; Said, 1978), identified not by race or ethnicity but by religion,[4] and a fear that Muslims are not integrating into society (Bald, Harber, Robinson, & Schiff, 2010; MacEoin & Whiteman, 2009; Wright, 1992). Conversely, there is also research on the difficulties faced by Muslim children growing up in schools where their religious beliefs are often misunderstood, and performing their religious duties is challenging and embarrassing (Salili & Hoosain, 2014; Scourfield, Gilliat-Ray, Khan, & Otri, 2013). In Britain, many schools have made substantial efforts towards inclusion of different ethnicities and religions, studies have found that examples of open hostility towards Muslims or interethnic bullying in schools are rare (Scourfield et al., 2013; Sedmak, Medarić, & Walker, 2014). However, several children's charities report that Islamophobic bullying in schools is a growing phenomenon, The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's (NSPCC) Childline, reported a 69 percent increase in calls from children seeking counselling for racist bullying in 2013, with Islamophobia reported as a particular issue. Calls had increased from 802 in 2011 to 1400 in 2013 (Dugan, 2014). The charity 'Show Racism the Red Card' also reported strong anecdotal evidence of growing anti-Muslim prejudice, while the teaching union NASUWT said that anti-Muslim sentiment in wider society was a 'growing problem for schools' (Milmo, 2015). This is compounded by a lack of knowledge and understanding about Islam in schools (Revell, 2012; Shah, 2009), where key beliefs are sometimes misrepresented, and teachers and students are influenced by a distorted media narrative about Islam and Muslims (Revell, 2010, 2012).

The experience of Muslim children in schools is complex; qualitative studies have shown that when they face difficulties in relation to their Muslim identity, these experiences may generate "Muslim resistance identity", whereby identity is about defending the Islamic faith, even in those children who are not particularly devout (Scourfield, Gilliat-Ray, Khan & Otri, 2013, p.132). This religious contradiction is sometimes addressed by a secular and identity based approach to inclusion; however, there are deeper epistemological differences, which are mostly overlooked (Ipgrave, 2010). Ipgrave has argued "for a form of inclusion that moves beyond making Muslim pupils feel affirmed or comfortable and allows them to contribute their

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[4] Source: BBC News. (2010, 7 June) A 2010 government survey showed that 58 percent of Britons link Islam with extremism.

religious perspectives to their own and others' learning" (Ipgrave, 2010, p. 14). Ipgrave's insightful argument begins to explore deeper issues that are fundamental to a sound understanding of the challenges facing integration. However, these issues are complex and multi-layered, raising a whole host of other questions, some of which are theological.

It has been noted that despite differences in ethnicity, minority Muslim communities also maintain and/or construct a distinct religious identity and worldview, which is maintained or even enhanced in second and third generations (Ahmed, 2012; Coles, 2008; Meer, 2009; Shah, 2009; Tinker, 2009; Voas & Fleischmann, 2012). This apparent homogeneity does seem to operate at some level, mainly due to the Islamic concept of *ummah* (nation/community) as an all-embracing identity encompassing diversity (Shah, 2015). Nevertheless, there are great internal variations, including sectarian differences and diverse interpretations of Islam and its application to contemporary life. Furthermore, some researchers have argued that Muslim communities are unlikely to integrate in the way that might be expected by host societies (Halstead, 1989; Voas & Fleischmann, 2012). Halstead suggests this is because Islam is a *dīn* (way of life), both a 'civilisation and a religion'. Instead of embracing secular-liberal freedoms, second generation Muslims have turned to Islam as a means of challenging cultural assimilation into a Eurocentric paradigm. Islamic identity is at the core of the debate on integration, citizenship and education (Haw, 2009; Parker-Jenkins, 2002; Sedgwick, 2014; Shah, 2008, 2009). Yet this identity is far from simple, and as Ipgrave (2010) and Sedgwick (2014), point out, there is more to being Muslim than identity. These varying dimensions lead to deep questions about integration and segregation, which often centre on schooling. Perceived dangers of segregation between communities have led to increasing calls for the promotion of inclusive and common schooling. However, this argument has been recently problematised and challenged (Miah, 2015; Merry, 2016). Miah argues that the simplistic binary construct of integration versus segregation neglects a range of other dimensions, including the suggestion that faith-schools can prepare children and young people to engage with secularism and Britishness with confidence (Miah, 2015). Merry challenges the predominant notion that segregation always results in injustice, arguing that a justice-based approach should consider the costs of integration, and the potential benefits of voluntary self-segregation (Merry, 2016). In

any case, it is clear that there are no easy policy responses that can attend to the perceived lack of integration. Shah (2015) has shown that Muslim expectations of education are generated by a complex range of factors, arguing that all school leaders need to consider how challenges around faith identity can impact educational achievement, as well as children's lived experiences in school.

The religious and cultural dimension of faith identity identified by Shah (2015) and Halstead (1989) needs serious attention. Muslim life in Europe can be viewed as an emerging and evolving habitus that could be defined as a European Islam (Ramadan, 2013). Ramadan, who has both a western and traditional Islamic education, seeks to examine how the Islamic sources could be applied to minority citizenship in a European context. Whilst Ramadan's work is perhaps the most famous example of the drive from within European Muslim communities to forge a way forward compatible with their fundamental beliefs, the idea of a European Islam, and indeed variations of different national Islams, has been explored widely in sociological and political literature. There is little consensus, however, on what such a phenomenon may consist of (Sedgwick, 2014). In Sedgwick (2014), a number of writers explore this idea by also examining the role of European states in formulating acceptable Muslims and Islams. It is in publicly funded schools that state power is most evident in its control on socialisation, whether through exclusionary practices, such as in France, or the state as a provider of Islamic Religious Education, as in Germany. Research has demonstrated that these differing approaches are shaped by differing national historical circumstances and understandings, in relation to a number of factors: the structure of the education system, understandings of secularism, relationship between state and church, and the colonial and political history of specific countries (Berglund, 2015; Sovik, 2014). The identity development and socialisation of Muslim children and young people is becoming increasingly politicised, and complex dynamics are resulting in confused policies and marginalised young people (Hamid, 2016; Khan, 2013). The increasing trend of essentialised stereotypes of Muslim identities, which are then identified as problematic in educational policy (Shain, 2011), can have devastating consequences for individual young Muslims in their everyday experiences in schools. Jaffe-Walter has shown how "everyday practices of coercive assimilation are cloaked in benevolent discourses of care and concern." (Jaffe-Walter, 2016, p. 2); for example, the 'concern' for young Muslim women about oppression from

patriarchy, something I am all too familiar with in my own experiences of state education in 1980s London (Ahmed, 2014b). However, in twenty-first century Britain, this discourse of concern has taken an alarming turn through policies that synthesise the securitisation of Muslim children and young people, with safeguarding from harm. In the preface, I have illustrated how this sociological backdrop has combined with recent political events to directly impact British Muslim educators, Muslim pupils, and this research study. Far from supporting integration, government policies are generating mistrust and undermining community efforts to navigate complex questions around values, identities and educational practices.

1.5 Identity, autonomy and selfhood: *Tarbīyah* for *Shakhsiyah* (educating for identity)

These complex issues around education and integration were explored in my Masters thesis, entitled '*Tarbīyah* for *Shakhsiyah* (Educating for Identity): seeking out culturally-coherent pedagogy for Muslim children in Britain' (Ahmed, 2010). This initial study documented Shakhsiyah Schools as sites where pedagogy and curricula are being developed in order to provide British Muslim children with a Holistic Islamic Education (HIE). Through a reworking of classical Islamic educational thought, the schools are attempting to synthesise classical Islamic pedagogy with contemporary educational methods, i.e. modern full-time schooling. The aim is to accept and meet the challenges of aporia generated by being Muslim in a secular-liberal society (Lawson, 2005). These aporia include: isolation-integration, Islamic identity-British identity, Islam-secular-liberalism. Like (Merry, 2007), Lawson accepts there is no resolution to these tensions, rather they must be accepted and navigated through critical self-examination. However, there are important characteristics of Muslim education in Britain that may challenge the above narrative, and need to be acknowledged. First, not all British Islamic schools adopt a holistic approach or attempt innovation in Islamic educational practices. Many simply teach the English National Curriculum alongside traditional Quranic and Islamic Studies (Walford, 2002).

Second, the majority of British Muslims are part of a postcolonial diaspora to the seat of empire, which the host society is seeking to 'integrate', leading to some resistance amongst Muslim communities. As demonstrated above, there is ample sociological

and ethnographic research investigating Muslim religiosity, socialisation and identity in western contexts, particularly in relation to young Muslims and their education (Sedgwick, 2014). The term, Islamic education, can refer to anything from sermons and public lectures, Quran recitation or memorisation classes, informal circles of learning, after-school and weekend classes for children, to *Dar-al-Ulūm* (Islamic seminaries), accredited Islamic higher education colleges, independent Islamic schools and state-funded Islamic faith-schools. However, much of the research focuses on Muslims and Islam in state-funded schools, because the liberal state is perceived to be funding an illiberal education. For many Muslims, education and schooling are also sites of challenge and resistance when it comes to issues of identity and integration. Britain has a long history of programmes aimed at developing inclusive education for minorities. Despite this, an identity-based approach has educational limitations, particularly in relation to a religious identity (Coles, 2008; Ipgrave; 2010). Coles demonstrated that when considering the diverse needs of Muslim children, the government initiative 'Every Child Matters' needed thoughtful adaptation. Ipgrave presents an argument for replacing the identity-based approach to inclusion with an epistemology-based approach. This radical and controversial departure in a secular school system begins to recognise the challenge of double-consciousness for Muslim children in mainstream schooling. Muslim children are subjected to learning within two radically different epistemological traditions, leading to an internal unease, which for a child is incredibly difficult to understand.

This second claim needs qualification by a third, although Islam is not considered a part of British culture, western science and culture has drawn on Islamic sciences and culture, as well as on the Judeo-Christian tradition, which itself has similarities with Islamic beliefs. This shared heritage is largely ignored when issues about Islamic faith-schools are raised within the contemporary secular-liberal discourse; Islam is usually portrayed as the alien 'other' (Said, 1978; Parker-Jenkins, 2002; Meer, 2007). A number of scholars have demonstrated the influence of medieval Islamic educational practice on the historical development of higher education in Europe (Dossett, 2014; Makdisi, 1981). One example is that the endowment of a professorial chair has its roots in the *kursi* (chair) that was used by a teacher in mosque *halaqah* (circles of learning).

The fact that we still talk of professors holding the 'chair' of their subject, is

based on the traditional Islamic pattern of teaching where the professor sits on a chair and the students sit around him, and the term 'academic circles' derives from the way Islamic students sat in a circle around their professor. (Goddard, 2000, p. 100)

A few studies have begun the theoretical work needed to analyse both the shared heritage and differences between Islamic philosophies of education and mainstream education (Burrell, 2016; Coles, 2008; Merry, 2007).

Thus the context of my work is a complex and contested ideological terrain. Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation (ISF) has navigated this complexity to devise educational principles that underpin an effort to synthesise these educational heritages (Ahmed, 2016a). Teachers in Shakhsiyah Schools are actively engaged in practitioner action-research, working to establish and refine practice that meets the needs of British Muslim children. This derives from the history of the foundation, founded by Muslim mothers who were seeking an appropriate education for their British Muslim children. At this early stage, when the name of the foundation was being considered, it did not take long to settle on the term shakhsiyah as a concept that embodied its core aim. Although this term is not to be found in classical Islamic literature on education, it nevertheless encapsulates the widely agreed aim of education as the development of character (Halstead, 2004). Moreover, it goes further because it centres individual personality, whilst still retaining the core concept of character, and places an emphasis on moral and spiritual growth. As mothers, recognising that every child is an individual, and that every individual child's character is unique, we were drawing on the Islamic concept of *tarbīyah,* (education as parenting) which theorises learning as upbringing. The term, shakhsiyah, can also be theorised as the personal identity of a child, grounded within a holistic sense of self, with the capacity to incorporate a range of multiple hyphenated identities. In the Masters study, teachers and school leaders claimed that the dialogic pedagogy of halaqah was significant in the development of shakhsiyah.

1.6 Islamic education, personal autonomy and dialogic pedagogy

It is in this socio-political context that this research, on the use of halaqah as a dialogic pedagogy to develop personal autonomy, aims to move beyond the media rhetoric and government narrative of securitisation and safeguarding. This thesis aims

to address these complex intercultural issues through a pedagogical lens, by examining culturally-coherent educational provision that prepares Muslim children for life in Britain. The theoretical work in this thesis, on the contested issue of developing personal autonomy in Muslim children, aims to address the dominant government narrative of FBV versus Islamic values. The empirical study aims to evaluate the quality of dialogue and critical thinking in halaqah, and to test the claim that halaqah provides a supportive safe dialogic space for Muslim children and young people, to explore the challenge of double-consciousness, that is, the cultural paradox of being Muslim in a secular, sometimes hostile society. It can be argued that for Muslim young people, personal autonomy is just as important in resisting and negotiating institutional secularism and state-sanctioned Islamophobia (Suhr, 2014), as navigating and negotiating the demands of family expectations and religious authority (Salili and Hoosain, 2014). Educational provision for Muslim children and young people, therefore, needs to attend to the development of personal autonomy, within the interplay of a range of structural and cultural influences.

With the increasing influence of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, educational dialogue has become an important field in educational research at an international level (Alexander, 2001; Cazden, 2001; Howe & Abedin, 2013). Dialogue is well established in educational research as having the capacity to enhance learning and cognitive ability, with various small-scale studies providing some evidence (Littleton et al., 2005; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008). Nevertheless, large-scale research on measuring the impact of dialogue on test scores and learning outcomes is still ongoing, and is, as yet, inconclusive in terms of generalisibility. However, my interest in educational dialogue is not in relation to academic outcomes. I am interested in the capacity of dialogue to generate personal autonomy and develop holistic identity. Conventionally, the capacity to reason is considered a prerequisite of personal autonomy, and this certainly needs to be considered; therefore, research on dialogue as developing reasoning and critical thinking will be important to my study. I am also interested in affective development and reflexivity, as self-awareness is also considered an essential component of personal autonomy. A third layer of exploration is a more philosophical understanding of education as ontologically dialogic (Kazepides, 2012; Matusov, 2009; Wegerif, 2011), which ties in with Ghazalian notions of self and becoming.

Whilst the Masters study explored the capacity of Shakhsiyah Schools to support the development of an holistic personalised identity; this PhD thesis seeks to examine whether shakhsiyah can be theorised as a form of personal autonomy within an Islamic worldview, and whether the classical Islamic pedagogy of halaqah, adapted as a form of dialogic pedagogy, can facilitate the development of shakhsiyah. There are two reasons for theorising shakhsiyah in this way. First, Muslim children and young people, growing up as a minority in a secular society, are constantly faced with situations that require an autonomous disposition. Second, the major concern about Islamic education in the host society is that it is indoctrinatory and does not value personal autonomy. This legitimate concern has recently been intertwined with concerns about 'extremism' and its potential influence on British Muslim children and young people. Recent events following the 'Trojan Horse' affair, which transpired during the PhD process, and are described in the preface, intensified the urgency for a thoughtful re-evaluation of the needs and concerns of British Muslims. In this thesis, I argue that such a re-evaluation must draw on the British Muslim community's own resources, namely Islamic educational thought, to address complex contemporary challenges.

Through the theoretical work in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis, I hope to demonstrate that personal autonomy is not the preserve of liberal theory alone, and to draw out the importance of personal autonomy to the Islamic worldview. I aim to develop neo-Ghazālian educational theory into theoretical constructs that can support Islamic dialogic education. I then proceed to consider how such theoretical constructs might address the needs of British Muslim children. For British Muslims, dialogue with the other and within the double-conscious self, is a constant of their life-world; but can dialogue be harnessed pedagogically to develop young Muslims who are more comfortable with their double-consciousness, and embrace it as a characteristic of their religious selves? In a postmodern secular liberal world, is it possible for Muslims to provide an education for their children, which enables them to maintain a stable identity, an identity that they can hold onto, as a mainstay amid their multiple fragmented underdeveloped selves?

1.7 Theoretical research questions

Prior to embarking on an empirical study, it is essential to interrogate the theoretical underpinnings that frame this research. The overall research question is: **Can the Islamic dialogic pedagogy of halaqah help develop Muslim children's *shakhsiyah* (personhood, autonomy, identity) in twenty-first century Britain?** This question hinges on notoriously intangible and impenetrable concepts, namely personal autonomy and dialogue. Moreover, there is the further challenge of translating the concept of shakhsiyah and the practice of halaqah into language that affords contrast and comparison to autonomy and dialogic pedagogy. It is therefore imperative that these theoretical contentions are examined in some depth. Understanding these concepts through a double-conscious lens entails unravelling a Gordian knot. Chapters 2 and 3 review the literature and interrogate these core concepts; the following theoretical questions guide these chapters. The aim is to examine existing theory and to begin to develop theoretical constructs useful for educating Muslims in minority contexts.

Theoretical Research Questions:

1. How might Islamic theories of knowledge, personhood and education influence an understanding of shakhsiyah Islamiyah, as a form of personal autonomy within an Islamic paradigm?

2. How might Islamic theories of knowledge, personhood and education influence the practice of halaqah as a modern pedagogy operating in a Muslim minority context in relation to the development of shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a form of personal autonomy?

3. What, if any, relationship can be identified between the dialogic pedagogy of halaqah and secular-liberal conceptualisations of dialogic education?

4. How far does halaqah as a dialogic pedagogy bridge the broad aims of Islamic education and secular-liberal education?

5. Could, and if so, how could the practice of dialogic halaqah in full-time Islamic primary schools help to meet the complex needs of Muslim children in contemporary secular-liberal British society?

This theoretical work leads to empirical questions, which are detailed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 Philosophical Contentions: personal autonomy and shakhsiyah, developing an Islamic theory of personhood

This chapter scrutinises the philosophical tensions between secular-liberalism and Islam, and reviews Islamic conceptualisations of personhood and education, in order to develop a deeper understanding of shakhsiyah Islamiyah as an authentic and credible form of personal autonomy within the Islamic worldview. The term autonomy usually has specific secular-liberal connotations and in this configuration, it is not easily absorbed into the Islamic worldview. It would be disingenuous and superficial to simply claim shakhsiyah as a form of autonomy without rigorous theoretical interrogation from both secular-liberal and Islamic perspectives. In the overall research question, can the Islamic dialogic pedagogy of halaqah help develop Muslim children's shakhsiyah, the secular-liberal term 'autonomy' has been replaced by the term 'shakhsiyah'. This is not a move that can be justified without an extensive and profound consideration of the tensions between secular-liberal autonomy and Islam, which is provided in this chapter. It is also essential to address the critique of Islamic education as transmission-based and teacher-centred if a claim about halaqah as a dialogic pedagogy is to be taken seriously. This chapter therefore proceeds through a theoretical analysis of similarities and differences between Islamic educational theory and secular-liberal conceptualisations of dialogic pedagogy.

I begin this chapter by discussing and problematising the liberal critique of Islamic education. I then present a summary of the Islamic worldview, and outline typologies of Muslim education and holistic Islamic education, before exploring notions of authority and autonomy in Islamic education. I propose that these tensions exist to varying degrees in all educational practice. I then develop an Islamic understanding of autonomy as selfhood, and translate it into the concept of shakhsiyah Islamiyah. Finally, I explore the possibility of understanding shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self. It is at this point that the central concern of this thesis comes to the fore. Nevertheless, it is intended that the preliminary theoretical interrogation will be appreciated as a necessary prerequisite both for the design of the empirical study and the discussion of its findings.

2.1 Secular-liberal theory, education and personal autonomy

The government definition of Fundamental British Values (FBV) is based on a rudimentary secular-liberal interpretation of Britishness (White, 2014). FBV are defined as "democracy; the rule of law; individual liberty; mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs" (Department for Education, 2014, p. 5). In this chapter, I examine the FBV of individual liberty, understood here as personal autonomy, in order to consider similarities and differences between the broad aims of Islamic education and secular-liberal education.

A useful definition of personal autonomy that is authentic to the enlightenment rationalist secular-liberal tradition is detailed in Table 2.1. This definition is predicated in agency and describes specific personal characteristics, including questioning, reasoning, critical thinking and taking a position. In doing so, this definition offers opportunities to consider these features of autonomous thought in relation to features of productive educational dialogue. It also allows for an evaluation of whether such educational dialogue encourages the development of these features in those who engage in it on a regular basis.

Table 2.1 Characteristics of an autonomous individual (Dearden, 1975, p. 7)

Characteristics of an autonomous individual (Dearden, 1975, p.7)
(i) wondering and asking, with the right to ask, what the justification is for various things which it would be quite natural to take for granted;
(ii) refusing to agreement or compliance with what others put to him when this seems critically unacceptable;
(iii) defining what he really wants, or what is really in his interests, as distinct from what may be conventionally so regarded;
(iv) conceiving of goals, policies and plans of its own, forming purposes and intentions of his own independently of any pressure to do so from others;
(v) choosing amongst alternatives in ways which could exhibit that choice as the deliberate outcome of his own ideas or purposes;
(vi) forming his own opinion on a variety of topics that interest him;
(vii) governing his actions and attitudes in the light of the previous sorts of activity.

Having offered an established liberal conceptualisation of autonomy, I shall now interrogate the assumptions underpinning it and the liberal dilemma that it has generated.

2.2 The liberal dilemma

There is a growing body of literature on what has been called the 'liberal dilemma' (Burtonwood, 2000, p. 269), where the fact of pluralism, that is the existence of faith-based education in secular-liberal societies (H. Alexander, 2015; Merry, 2007), demonstrates incongruity between the liberal values of equality and autonomy. This dilemma refers to the challenges liberals face from cultural and communitarian groups who do not prioritise liberal values, particularly the value of personal autonomy (Burtonwood, 1998). Classical liberalism, with its rationalist and enlightenment heritage, has become open to the accusation that it is a monism shaped by the Christian and colonial heritage of Europe (Parekh, 2002). Parekh contends that classical liberals like Locke, Montesquieu, Kant and Mill, drew on Greek rationalism and Christian universalism to devise a worldview, which justified the colonial endeavour as a means of bringing a vision of the good life, that is critical rationality, choice and personal autonomy, to backward peoples. According to classical liberalism, this vision can be rationally demonstrated and is thus binding on all human beings (Parekh, 2002). Parekh's argument bears some similarity to the government narrative of FBV as a means of assimilating non-liberal values and cultures. The difficulty for classical liberalism is that the argument that personal autonomy rests on truths considered rationally demonstrable and universal has been widely challenged. Whilst classical liberalism argues that reason must challenge dogma, many communitarians and non-western peoples challenge non-negotiable liberal truths as dogmatic and oppressive. The classical liberal argument is that secular education is essentially neutral, and enables impressionable young children to make autonomous decisions about their beliefs; in contrast to faith education which necessarily proclaims 'self-evident' truths (Moti Gokulsing, 2006) about the superiority of that faith, and is thus indoctrinatory, limiting children's right to autonomy (Parker-Jenkins, Hartas, & Irving, 2005; Tinker, 2009). This perspective has been undermined by the contention that the liberal definition of personal autonomy is actually Eurocentric, and although it presents itself as rationally demonstrable, it rests on 'self-evident' truths about rationality that are far from universal, thus turning the 'liberal dilemma' into an intractable problem, as identified by the communitarian critique. In classical liberalism the concept of the rational autonomous individual is constructed in the abstract (Rawls, 1971). Such an individual is free from any cultural context. The communitarian critique of classical liberalism is that human beings are always

socialised into particular communities, and these communities will therefore influence how autonomous individuals make choices in life and relate to others (MacIntyre, 1988; Sandel, 1998).

The liberal-communitarian debate has spawned a vast literature including feminist, religious and racial critiques that is increasingly focused around intersectionality. Christman and Anderson (2005) and Mahmood (2004) cover these issues in some depth. Burtonwood (2000) identifies that feminist, Afro-centric, Islamic and other critiques are partly concerned about the loss of communitarian values to an unfettered liberal emphasis on individualism. Whereas secular-liberals may feel they have won hard fought rights for the benefit of all, non-European communities have their own values and ideas of cultural development. For some westerners, the rest of the world should accept rights that they assert as rationally demonstrable, so that everyone can reach the same developmental stage as the West. Implicit in this view, however, is a notion of 'intellectual-cultural superiority', which could be described as little different to the notions of racial superiority that drove colonialism. There has been some response to this in the form of the development of the indigenous knowledge movement and a drive for culturally-relevant pedagogy (Ahmed, 2012; R. Bishop, 2008; G. H. Smith, 2003; Stonebanks, 2008). Against this broad backdrop, there has been specific scholarship on the issue of Islamic faith education in secular-liberal societies.

2.3 Secular-liberal societies and faith-education

The liberal-communitarian debate has generated nuanced positions on each side; which lead to new perspectives on individual-community relations and Islamic faith education (Merry, 2007; Panjwani, 2009; Tan, 2014). Panjwani attempts to seek out an 'overlapping consensus' (Rawls, 1993), between Islamic and liberal conceptions of autonomy, rationality and educational aims, in relation to the dominant educational discourse in British Islamic faith-schools. He argues that this approach enables social cohesion without demanding submission of one worldview to another. For Panjwani, it is essential to recognise the role of historicity and human agency in the lived enactment of both traditions; this requires new enactments that can achieve overlapping consensus (Panjwani, 2009). Merry's approach is to recognise that liberal theory is vague about how much weight should be given to autonomy as the central

feature of a liberal education. He highlights the tension between autonomy and tolerance as key liberal virtues. A disproportionate emphasis on autonomy could undermine tolerance by generating coercion towards a liberal lifestyle, and undermining the values central to cultures that perceive individuals as intrinsically part of an organic holistic community. Merry considers the idea of wellbeing as an alternative way of understanding how individuals can attain a flourishing worthwhile life. Nevertheless, wellbeing still requires children to have the capacity for autonomy, to be able to independently choose worthwhile pursuits, and to ensure the possibility of choosing a life outside of their community (Merry, 2007). Tan (2014) accepts that rationality and autonomy are always situated within an ideological framework. She cites Thiessen, a Christian educator who identifies 'normal rationality' and 'normal autonomy' as being situated within a convictional community that has its own context, history, language and practices (Thiessen, 1993). Nevertheless, Thiessen's conceptualisation incorporates some dimension of liberal ideology, in that there must be evidence for beliefs held and critical openness towards one's worldview. This requirement for evidence and critical openness should not be restricted to internal questions within a tradition; but also requires the capacity to evaluate one's existing worldview against other worldviews. This would ensure that the individual's life choices are based on a careful evaluation of her own worldview, as well as alternatives. Merry and Tan go on to describe Islamic theories about rationality and autonomy; yet as outsiders to the Islamic tradition, they are not able to construct theory but rather to describe historical ideas.

The Jewish educator, Hanan Alexander, has begun to construct liberal theory that abandons the claim of neutrality, and replaces the 'view from nowhere' (Nagel, 1989) with 'a view from somewhere' (H. Alexander, 2015, p.39) and generates a 'pedagogy of difference' (2015, p.87). H. Alexander is not satisfied with Panjwani's appeal to Rawlsian overlapping consensus in dealing with the issue of faith-schools in liberal societies. He considers the Rawlsian conception to be still beholden to a claim of neutrality. H. Alexander critiques Rawls' idea that 'public reason' is dependent on a form of moral reasoning based on values and standards shared by everyone who enters public discourse. H. Alexander argues that the idea of public reason precludes moral reasoning based on religious traditions that give precedence to scripture, because these traditions do not comply with liberal values and standards of public

reason. Thus Rawls maintains the superiority of the liberal enlightenment worldview. By claiming that behind a 'veil of ignorance' every individual would choose his conceptualisation of public reason, because it is the most just, Rawls presupposes the concept of rationality that he is using to make his argument. He neglects the critique that individuals do not function from behind a veil of ignorance, they do not exist in the abstract; they are not an unencumbered self, devoid of any type of identity.

H. Alexander asks the question, what would a liberal education without the presumption of an underpinning neutrality constitute? What should an education look like if we have to begin with a view from somewhere? His response is the idea of 'pedagogy of difference'. This is founded on the dialogic idea that we need to be both initiated into *a* robust vision of the good life, that is, a 'thick' robust moral description, which is not necessarily religious, *and* be educated with the capacity to step outside our worldview and critically evaluate it from an outsider's perspective. As there is no neutral rational, scientific or objective stance, we have to step outside to some other worldview. This could be the secular-liberal worldview, and indeed should be so, because this is the dominant worldview in the contemporary world, although it should not be considered neutral. A question for this thesis would be whether dialogic halaqah provides such an education?

For Alexander, a worldview that has the capacity of a 'pedagogy of difference' is one that has the capacity to engage in dialogue. It affirms an intelligent spirituality, that is, a search for an understanding of one's self, within the context of a learning community that has a vision of a transcendent higher good. H. Alexander goes on to define the features of such a community by drawing on a different liberal heritage, on the concept of 'value pluralism', popularised by Isaiah Berlin, but also to be found in the pragmatism of William James and the Deweyian tradition in educational philosophy. This liberal tradition offers education from a holistic point of view towards a way of life, but it is not totalistic. Rather it is pragmatic in the sense that although it begins from a particular culture, it is open to learning from experience. Moreover, it is synthetic, in that it is prepared to engage with opposite points of view, including those within which there is the potential for disagreement. Finally, it is ethical in the classical Greek sense of the term, in that it asks the question, what is the good life? This form of pragmatism relies on three presuppositions. First, the person

who engages in it is a free agent with freewill, even if it is not total freewill. Second, this agent has moral intelligence, that is, the capacity to tell the difference between right and wrong, according to some moral theory. Finally, this agent recognises that fallibility, that is, the possibility that she might be wrong, is a direct consequence of freewill. Additionally in this form of pragmatism, educational experiences are considered valuable, not only when the agent gets it right, but also when the agent gets it wrong. For Alexander, dialogue is the necessary consequence of living in a world in which there is no 'view from nowhere' (2015, pp.81-84).

In the next section, I present a summary of the Islamic worldview. This is followed by an examination of some responses from Muslim thinkers to the apparent aporia of the formation of a Muslim self in secular-liberal societies. I then present literature by Muslim educators in relation to educating Muslims in secular-liberal contexts. Finally, I develop a theoretical framework of Muslim selfhood, in order to address TRQ1: How might Islamic theories of knowledge, personhood and education influence an understanding of shakhsiyah Islamiyah, as a form of personal autonomy within an Islamic paradigm?

2.4 An Islamic worldview

There are many misconceptions about Islam and Islamic education. Therefore, it is useful at this point to summarise a generally agreed upon Islamic worldview, in order to give the reader a deeper understanding of foundational Islamic beliefs. It is hoped that this understanding may lead to some empathy with the double-consciousness experienced by British Muslims, and an appreciation of the need to generate a holism in Muslim identity. This summary of Islamic epistemology and ontology is from my own reading of Islamic texts supplemented by attending ḥalaqah and seminars. It is not intended to fully encompass all perspectives in the vast Islamic intellectual tradition. Rather, it provides an umbrella understanding of normative *Sunnī* Islamic teachings.

Islam begins by asserting *tawḥīd* (the holism, oneness or unity of Allah (God)), and extending this to unity of creation; unity of knowledge; unity, and therefore equality, of humanity; unity of those who have testified and submitted (Muslims); unity of *dīn* (Islamic way of life); and unity of every other concept and human endeavour within

Islamic culture. Human nature, *fiṭrah*, is essentially good, in that human beings have a natural disposition to recognise; know and love Allah; and live by Islam, which is known as *dīn-ul-fiṭrah* and is the natural way of living. Human beings are *khalīfat-ul-arḍ* (stewards of God on earth); our natural role in the universe is to take responsibility for the rest of creation by fulfilling the will of Allah.

The literal meaning of Islam is peace through submission; living by Islamic teachings brings *sakīnah* (inner tranquillity) and *salām* (outward peace and harmony on earth). *Insān* (the human) is the best of creation as s/he has unique attributes of *irādah* (freewill) and *'aql* (intellect), the latter being the capacity to acquire and use *'ilm* (knowledge). It is through knowledge that man comes to know his inner potential and attains pure submission to Allah in inner and outward actions. The Quran repeatedly exhorts humans to use their *'aql* (intellect) and *tafakkur* (reflection) to come to know Allah through his *āyāt* (signs). In the Islamic paradigm, knowledge is located in the *qalb* (heart) as well as the mind.

The Quran makes seeking knowledge an obligation, asking the believers: 'Can they who know and they who do not know be deemed equal?' (Quran, 39:9). Thus, knowledge is sought internally and externally. Human beings have been given senses and *'aql* (intellect) to understand the material world. They have been given the Quran and *'aql* (insight) to understand the internal world. In Islamic ontology, from the *tawḥīd* perspective, there is a material world with a unified objective reality. All objective knowledge lies with Allah. 'For with Him[5] are the keys to things beyond the reach of a created being's perception: none knows them but He. And He knows all that is on land and in the sea; and not a leaf falls but He knows it.' (Quran, 6:59) Human beings bring multiple perspectives and interpretive frameworks to our understandings of this world. The limited human mind/heart cannot attain totality of knowledge. Nevertheless, it is through seeking external and internal knowledge that we fulfil our purpose. The search for truth leads ultimately to Allah. It is through *tarbīyah* (personal development/education) that human beings realise their purpose and attain their true worth as the 'best of creation'. (Ahmed, 2012)[6]

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[5] Gender is not a characteristic of Allah, Who 'nothing is comparable to'. (Quran 114:4). However, accepted practice is to use the male pronoun.

[6] This summary of the Islamic worldview was previously published in (Ahmed, 2012)

This development can be viewed as a dialogic journey.

> 'The monotheistic worldview sees the universal unity in existence, a unity of three separate relationships: (1) our relationship with others, nature and the universe; (2) our relationship with God; (3) our relationship with our 'self'. These relationships are not alien to one another; there are no boundaries between them. They move in the same direction.' (Bakhtiar, 2008, p. xxxiii).

Within this worldview, Islamic intellectual heritage is not monolithic; Islam is an incredibly rich and diverse tradition. Yet it does have a core unity that has traditionally been maintained through *ikhtilāf,* a juristic agreement of mutual respect for intra-religious difference, however, its literal translation can also mean divergence, variance, diversity and otherness (Murad, 1999). Thus, the individual's relationship with others is a core element of a major strand of Islamic thought, which I will draw on in the theoretical section of this thesis. The key figure in this tradition is the twelfth century scholar Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058-1111CE). I will also draw on the work of twentieth century Malay Muslim scholar Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (b. 1931), who has been described as neo-Ghazalian (Daiber, 2011). It is important to note that, although these scholars do not use the terminology that is associated with contemporary sociocultural theory and educational research on dialogic pedagogy, there are comparable ideas at work here. Ideas that although based on two very distinct worldviews, provide an opportunity for cultural dialogue through exploration of pedagogical practice, and of the cultural understandings that underpin it (Alexander, 2001, pp.1-6).

2.5 Islamic educational theory and personal autonomy: the Muslim self in secular-liberal societies

In this section, I explore ideas of autonomy in Islamic education, settling on a dialogical notion of the Muslim self as shakhsiyah Islamiyah. Returning to the idea of double-consciousness, Muslim selfhood faces particular challenges in secular-liberal societies. I deliberately use the term secular-liberal as opposed to liberal because, as Talal Asad has shown, in modern liberal nation-states it is the secular, itself defined through a culturally and historically constituted relationship with religion, manifested as an enacted representation of individual citizenship, that 'redefines and transcends

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particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender and religion' (2003, p5). The liberal conception of autonomy is closely related to this enactment of citizenship. According to Asad (2003), Mahmood (2004), Habermas (2006), and Mavelli (2015), the secular, with its dependency on the conceptual boundaries of religion, far from being inclusive, necessarily seeks to dominate and thus exclude the religious self. As Habermas states, "given that in the liberal state, only secular reasons count, citizens who adhere to a faith are obliged to establish a kind of 'balance' between their religious and their secular convictions." However, "many religious citizens would not be able to undertake such an artificial division within their own minds without jeopardizing their existence as pious persons" (Habermas, 2006, p. 8), thus generating double-consciousness.

In this way, the composition of TRQ1, with its emphasis on the core liberal value of personal autonomy, is itself influenced by the dominant paradigm of secular-liberal thought. In dealing with this quandary, I refer to Mahmood's anthropological work on female Muslim religious activists in Egypt, where she identifies that liberal assumptions about agency, locating it in the political and moral autonomy of the subject, inherently shape the study of Muslims (2004). Although Mahmood self-identifies as a liberal, by drawing on poststructuralist feminist literature and detaching the notions of agency and self-realisation from liberal autonomy, she is seeking to understand her subjects in their own terms, from within their own forms of consciousness. To do so, she recognises that the desire for freedom is not an innate universal desire, rather it is mediated by specific cultural and historical conditions, thus in her study the meaning of agency "cannot be fixed in advance, but must emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibility, and effectivity" (2004, pp. 14-15). Mahmood demonstrates that this religious negotiation is with the authority of orthodoxy, family, the state and the norms of liberal discourse. Nevertheless, to characterise it as autonomous resistance to subordination is to misunderstand the religious discourses and desires of these women's activities. To proceed, a language needs to be found that represents and is "actually constitutive of different forms of personhood, knowledge, and experience", as they arise within a particular discursive tradition (2004, p. 16).

Mahmood's thesis is relevant to this study because I am seeking to draw on Islamic

conceptions of personhood, knowledge and education, to examine specific modes of being, responsibility and effectivity, as a means to begin theorising shakhsiyah Islamiyah as an Islamic form of selfhood and agency, and as an aim of Islamic education. First, however, I briefly discuss some typologies of Islamic education and interrogate the concepts of autonomy and authority in relation to 'teaching Islam'.

2.6 Defining Islamic Education

Contemporary literature on Islamic education has its roots in a postcolonial movement known as Islamization of Knowledge (IOK), which emerged from a series of world conferences on Muslim education held during the late 1970s and early 1980s (Niyozov & Memon, 2011). IOK is mainly concerned with addressing the dualism of education found in the Muslim world, where traditional Madrasahs function in parallel with modern secular universities, creating two classes of intellectuals who are often at odds with each other. IOK seeks a process of decolonisation by generating holism through the re-Islamization of higher education. One response to the IOK movement is literature questioning the concepts of 'Islamization of knowledge' and 'Islamic education'; arguing that these terms ignore both cultural variation in Muslim understanding and human agency in Islamic educational theory and practice. Panjwani (2004) and Waghid (2011) argue that it is more accurate to talk of 'Muslim education' as opposed to 'Islamic education', in order to foreground personal agency. Having acknowledged these arguments as valid, Memon and Zaman, (2016) nevertheless contend that use of the term 'Islamic' recognises the holistic foundation of Islamic educational theory, in that the indefatigable influence of *tawhīd* (divine unity), as it shapes the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of these cultural variations, is what makes them distinctively 'Islamic'. Moreover, literature on Muslim education also includes all educational practice in the Muslim world including secular education systems, whereas Islamic educational theory seeks to replace the idea of religious and secular education with a *tawhīdi* holistic approach (Ahmed, 2012; Merry, 2007; Rasiah, 2016; Shah, 2015). Douglass and Shaikh present a useful typology for education relating to Muslims, "education of Muslims in their Islamic faith; education for Muslims which includes the religious and secular disciplines; education about Islam for those who are not Muslim; and education in an Islamic spirit and tradition" (2004, p. 7). This thesis is concerned with the latter; its theoretical focus is to examine the concept of shakhsiyah Islamiyah as the goal of a

tawhīdi (holistic) understanding of Islamic education. Figure 2.1 provides a conceptual map of Islamic concepts of knowledge, personhood and education. Each concept is defined in detail in the Glossary.
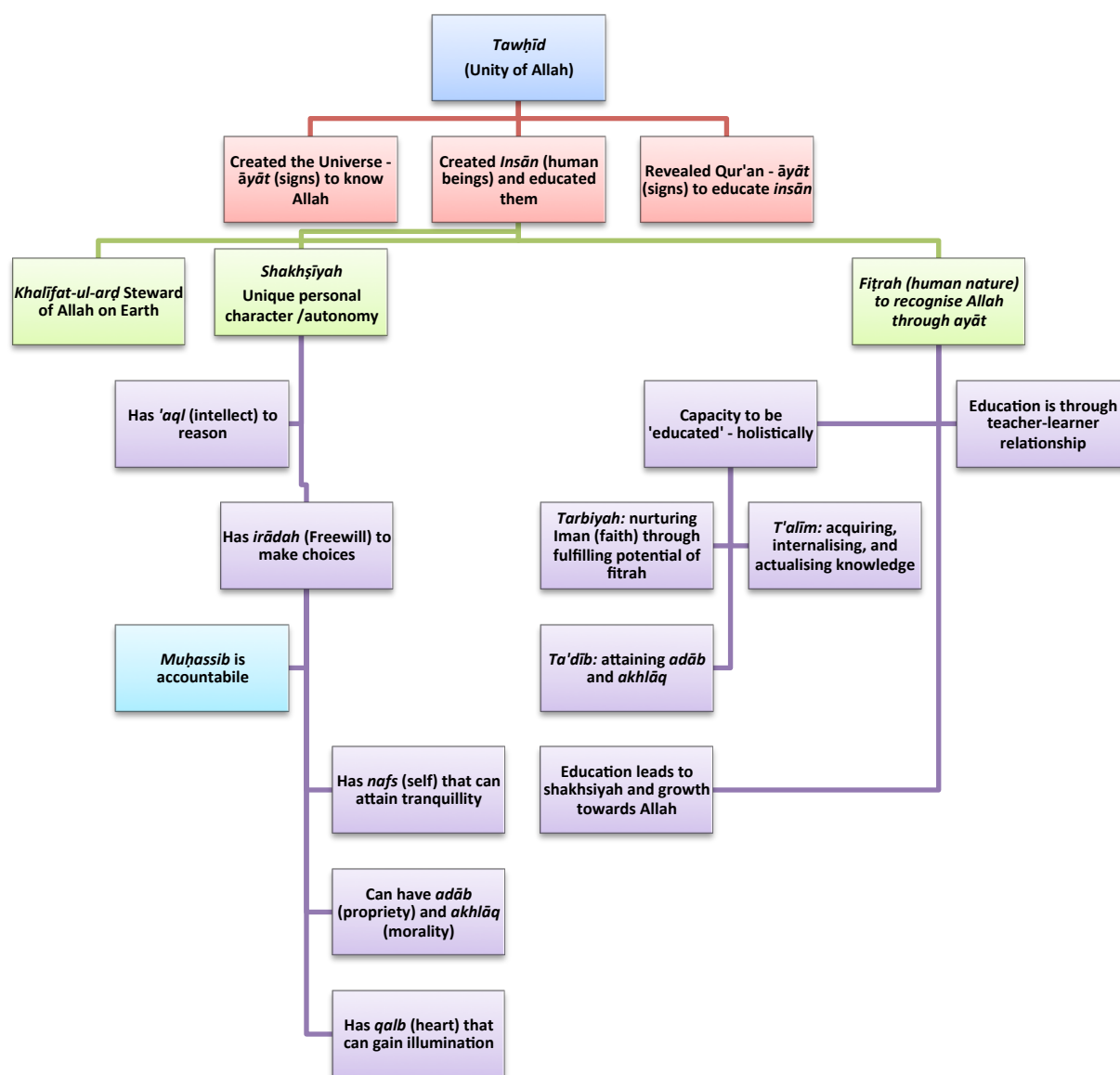
Figure 2.1 Islamic concepts of knowledge, personhood and education

2.7 Facing difficult questions: Islamic education, teacher authority and learner autonomy[7]

To begin exploring personal autonomy in relation to Islamic education, it may be helpful to bypass the discourse on typologies of Muslim education and ask the direct question: what do we mean by 'teaching Islam'? If the word Islam is defined as attaining peace through submission (to the will of Allah), there immediately appears a challenge to the notion of such education developing autonomy. However, further exploration of what Islam requires in relation to submission, that is, that it comes through a free choice made by an autonomous individual, takes us immediately to an inherent aporia in Islam. Through its creedal premise of *tawhīd* (unity), Islam ignores what are usually perceived in the 'Western' mind as dichotomies, and thus, in the Islamic worldview, freedom from self (*nafs*) and others (*an-nās*) is attained through submission to Allah who is *Ahad* (the ultimate Unity). Furthermore, although Allah exhorts *insān*, human beings, to use their *'aql* (intellect), the use of this uniquely human faculty leads to a recognition of the limits of the human intellect in that Allah and the *ghayb* (unseen) cannot be properly known by it alone. Thus, whereas *'aql* has been created in order for the human being to recognise Allah through his *āyāt* (signs), recognising these signs of Allah, leads to a recognition of human feebleness, thereby leading to an acceptance of the need to become Muslim, which in Arabic is to submit to *as-Ṣamad* (the Absolute). Such a view is inherently contradictory to a humanist worldview that underpins much of contemporary secular-liberal thought. In Islamic discourses, free will and *'aql* are the two distinctly human qualities that elevate the human being above the rest of creation, enabling human autonomy in choosing to become Muslim (one who submits). Therefore, when we are talking about teaching 'Islam,' I propose that we are talking about teaching a learner to submit to Allah, because this definition arrives at the heart of the problem of autonomy in Islamic education.

Moreover, the verb 'teach' is also at the heart of the incongruity between the terms autonomy and education, in that to 'teach' immediately implies authority. For how can there be teaching without authority? For many traditional Islamic educators, sacred knowledge comes from Allah and is not constructed by human beings: *ta'līm*

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[7] This text in this section has been adapted from *'Teaching Islam: Are there pedagogical limits to Critical Inquiry?'* (Ahmed and Lawson, 2016). It is however, all my own work.

(teaching) is transmission of sacred knowledge, and the teacher, as transmitter of sacred knowledge, is central to Islamic pedagogy. Combining the definition of Islam with this definition of teaching, it is easy yet fallacious, to conclude that Islamic education is pure indoctrination, because even in this definition of *ta'līm,* there is complexity. The primary duty of the Islamic teacher is to develop the character of the learner; thus the teacher-learner relationship is not just transmitting sacred knowledge but one of close direct interaction between student and teacher. It is through this relationship that sacred knowledge, reflective wisdom, and moral character are traditionally thought to have developed. So the learner is not an empty vessel but very much an active agent, a seeker of knowledge who is looking for something from this particular teacher. Thus 'teaching Islam' has a complexity wherein the dichotomy of teaching-learning is carefully balanced and unified through a *tawhīd* worldview. Furthermore, there are other ways of defining Islamic education, which are detailed later in this thesis, adding nuance to the already complex classical understanding of *ta'līm*.

We can continue this discourse on the teacher-learner relationship by facing the challenge of 'teaching' per se, as a paradoxical practice, in that in any educational situation learner understandings might be restricted or supplanted by teacher-intended understandings. This exists in all conceptualisations of education, even learner-centred ones, and it is what Bonawitz et al. describe as the "double-edged sword of pedagogy" (Bonawitz et al., 2011, p. 322). In their research, looking at how explicit instruction affects learning through exploratory play in pre-school aged children, they found that, although teacher instruction speeds up children's understanding of the function of a toy, it can also hinder children's further exploration of a toy, thereby restricting the learning benefits of exploratory play. They conclude that a combination of the efficiency of pedagogical transmission, with encouragement toward exploratory play, should maximise learning in the short and long term. Scaling this up to the teacher-learner relationship in traditional Islamic education, a clear practical solution emerges that requires skilful teaching: a pedagogical repertoire that is both teacher-led and learner-led. Skilful teaching involves encouraging questioning, criticality, awareness of differing arguments, and personal reflection in students; combined with the effective and precise transmission of sacred knowledge, through direct teaching and instruction. Although at the level of practice, skilful teaching addresses the

question of learner autonomy in any educational situation, it does not address the more fundamental contradiction between teaching sacred knowledge and personal freedom in questioning sacred truths. In Islamic education, surely there are limits to critical inquiry, in that a learner is not permitted to be critical about matters of creed or dogma. However, this critique does not recognise the requirement in Islam to arrive at faith through the use of the *'aql* (intellect). Neither does it recognise that the aporia of choice-submission is inherent to the Islamic creed. It is true that the teacher is a necessary spiritual and intellectual guide, who enables the learner to appreciate the truth of Islam, submit as a Muslim through an intellectual understanding of the text, and to attain spiritual submission to Allah through reflective self-knowledge. However, in this context, a new question arises, i.e. how far can any authority, however strong, teach this type of submission without the learner making an active choice. Without the learner's autonomous choice, the act of submission becomes meaningless. Does this mean that authority and autonomy are actually mutually defining? Rather than being a matter of either/or, is it not that both are necessary to achieve the objective of Islamic education? In the case of an adult who has converted to Islam and sought out a teacher that she wishes to learn from, there is a conscious choice, and the relationship between authority and autonomy is accepted; yet what may be said for a young child being taught in a madrasah. How far does she exercise any kind of autonomy? Does she really choose to submit? What kind of Islamic education would help support this child's education?

It could be argued, as has been famously done by Amartya Sen (1985), that there is a limit to all our choices; a child newly born has no choice but to accept the authority of her parents, and she is limited in many other ways, such as by gender, class, the language and culture of the family home, etc. Furthermore, the concept of choice only applies when a person has the capacity to choose, which itself requires the ability to think, to envisage alternatives, and to be aware of one's own feelings; in other words, to have a mind that is aware of itself, has experiences, and has beliefs about the world. Is it not the role of education to facilitate the development of such an individual? Accordingly, should not Islamic education aspire to create these skills and this capacity? Certainly, it could be argued, that the outcome of early Prophetic halaqah, where he educated the new believers, were individuals who acted autonomously in relation to their new belief and new life.

More recently, has the goal of personal autonomy been neglected in Islamic education? As in all educational communities, a range of contemporary Muslim thinkers have reflected on these issues (al-Attas, 1979; Davids & Waghid, 2016; Panjwani, 2009; Sahin, 2013; Shah, 2015). Theoretically at least, it can be argued that Islamic education is about enabling the flourishing of the human being's autonomy until she, as an active agent, chooses to be Muslim; therefore, as with any educational process, the possibility of an outcome that is not intended is inevitable. That is, she could choose to exercise her agency to reject Islam. This is a given within the Islamic worldview of human accountability in the *ākhira* (hereafter), for choices made in this life. As al-Ghazali says: "O Son! Live your life as you see fit, for you will surely die. Desire what you want, for you will surely depart. Do what you want, for you will surely pay for it. Gather up what you want, for you will surely leave it behind" (2010, p. 94). Nevertheless, to what extent is there room for criticality in relation to the authority of the teacher in Islamic education? There is no doubt that, as the possessor of sacred knowledge, the teacher holds an eminent place in Islam. However, in classical Islamic education, students choose their teachers and thus have the right to select based on judgments of quality, character, intellect, etc.; demonstrating that it is the student's opinion that establishes the authority of any given teacher. Moreover, classical Muslim scholarship has commented in varying ways about the agency of the student in the activity of learning (Gunther, 2006, 2016). This suggests the possibility of a kind of deep, critical, dialogic inquiry that can be conducted at every level of education and with pupils of all ages.

2.8 Autonomy as Selfhood

I move now to another question, one about authenticity. Wherein lies the reality of that autonomy that makes submission to authority authentic, if it is not within our selves? By identifying an Islamic concept of selfhood, where the act of being Muslim is an ongoing choice, this question moves beyond apologetics and begins to address the problem of autonomy more authentically. In Memon and Zaman (2016), various scholars discuss the educational possibilities of a Muslim self. Gunther (2016) explores a range of classical scholar's writings in relation to education and human growth and development. Winter (2016) begins to draw out the importance of the classical spiritual/mystical reading of human learning in regenerating an authentic and holistic approach to the development of *'aql* (intellect). Burrell (2016) asserts that it is

through the practice of learning that the self is transformed in its relationship to the divine; whilst Trevathan (2016), an ex-head teacher, queries whether a striving for authenticity (*ikhlāṣ*) of the self can be perceived as a regaining of spiritual education in Islamic faith-schools.

Davids and Waghid (2016) focus on the ethical dimensions of the Muslim self, relating this to autonomy, to community, and to education, through application of liberal discourse to Islamic ethical discourses. In an important contribution to the field, they draw heavily on the Quran and Islamic scholarship to present a rigorous argument, 'that an ethical Muslim education is underscored by the practice of autonomous, critical and deliberative engagement that can engender reflective judgement, compassionate recognition and a responsible ethical (Muslim) community'[8] (2016). There are however, two important aspects of Davids and Waghid's work that do not align with my attempt at theorising Muslim selfhood. Firstly, they draw on a neo-Kantian view to rationalise Muslim ethical behaviour. As stated previously, H. Alexander has shown that a Kantian basis for approaching faith-education in secular-liberal societies is problematic (2015). Secondly, Davids and Waghid seek to identify the liberal term, autonomy, with the Islamic concept of *ijtihād. Ijtihād* is a specific scholarly/legal term, usually associated with jurisprudence and translated as independent legal reasoning; there is also a dimension of due diligence encapsulated in the term. There is no doubt that this term does point towards a God-given natural freedom in humankind, Kamali for example, discusses *ijtihād* in relation to Islamic concepts of freedom (Kamali, 2002). However, it is a stretch to conceptualise *ijtihād* as personal autonomy, as it is considered a legal process, as opposed to a state of being and agency. Below, I present an Islamic theory of personhood as it is conceived and understood in the schools that are the subject of this research, i.e. as shakhsiyah Islamiyah.

2.9 Shakhsiyah Islamiyah as Muslim Selfhood

The rest of this section draws on research and development work conducted in Shakhsiyah Schools, aimed at exploring what it means to facilitate the development of a young Muslim's personal character in the British context. In 2011, during an action-

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[8] This quotation is from the back cover of the book.

research project, I asked a group of teachers whether as Muslim teachers we were seeking to develop autonomy, and what that might mean? Teachers felt that developing autonomy is inherent to developing shakhsiyah. Shakhsiyah is an Arabic word that can be translated as personality, figure, character, persona/personage, individuality, spirit, and subjectivity. In the context of the schools in this study, teachers understand it to mean a strong, committed, personal/individual, but Islamic character. Such a person will have the qualities of critical thinking; reflexivity; active and autonomous learning, which is purposeful and action-oriented (practising and connecting what has been learnt); and a strong sense of morality and spirituality. He will seek out knowledge and avenues for personal growth through self-aware dialogical encounter. Shakhsiyah Islamiyah also involves a deep commitment to the Islamic way of life and embodies the meaning of the word Muslim, which means to attain peace through submission to the will and law of Allah.

Although the term shakhsiyah is widely used in the Arab and Muslim world, unlike *ijtiḥād*, it is not a traditional theological term. Rather, it came into prominence during the twentieth century when Muslim scholars began to talk about shakhsiyah Islamiyah or Islamic personality/character. It is possible that this new usage reflects the apologetic atmosphere in the postcolonial Muslim world, where society was reacting to the intellectual and cultural discourses of 'westernised' modernity. The emphasis on the individual self that shakhsiyah as a term provides, is not a natural aspect of the classical Islamic intellectual milieu. Islam is heavily communitarian in orientation and, like other non-western philosophies, does not actively distinguish the personal self from its communal existence. A traditional understanding of the submitted Muslim self recognises human frailty in front of the power of Allah. Allah is not only *al-Khāliq* (Creator) but also *al-Razzāq* (Sustainer). The Quran repeatedly exhorts human beings to question their self-sufficiency (Quran 80:5; 96:7); asking humanity to recognise their dependency on their environment, each other, and ultimately Allah. The Quran points to holism; that the individual is simply a small part of the whole. Holism is found across indigenous cultures, expressed in "different ways… but…concerned with the groundedness (or otherwise) of an individual as an entity related to and indivisible from the rest of the world" (Mika, 2015, p. 1136). Nevertheless, this holism does not diminish the Quranic address to the individual person, where the choice to accept Islam is a free and personal one (Quran 2:256);

neither does it detract from the deeply rooted Islamic idea of personal responsibility and accountability that relies on a notion of human agency.

There are two reasons for appropriating the term shakhsiyah Islamiyah into a twenty-first century Islamic educational theory. Firstly, the concept of shakhsiyah as an individual child's personal character enables an emphasis on his unique characteristics. This is essential when translating the traditional Islamic concept of education as *tarbīyah*, a personalised form of education, into the modern mass-schooling context. Secondly, when educating Muslims in a minority context, within a dominantly secular-liberal society, there is an enhanced need for the individual *shakhṣ* to continuously choose to be Muslim. In an increasingly hostile socio-political context, the Muslim's faith will be constantly questioned and may require re-affirmation on a daily basis. Thus, the Islamic concept of no intermediary between self and Allah becomes ever more pronounced and important.

2.10 Shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self

The concept of shakhsiyah Islamiyah draws on both the element of agency inherent in Quranic discourse, and the holistic conceptualisation of the individual human being as part of a greater whole, by adopting an understanding of the Muslim *shakhṣ* as a dialogical self. By 'dialogical' here, I mean a self that is formed, grows and develops in relation to the other. Moreover, through bringing together the self-conscious personal/individual nature of the term *shakhsiyah,* with the worldview/state of being implied in the term *Islamiyah*, 'shakhsiyah Islamiyah' necessarily becomes a self in dialogue with its worldview. The Quran alludes to three dialogical relationships that the Muslim actively engages in, and that shape her being: relationship with self, with Allah and with the rest of creation, that is, other human beings, animals, natural environment and universe (Bakhtiar, 2008, p.xxxiii). These three relationships in turn are interrelated into a holistic experience, through which there is either personal growth, or decline into *khusr* (a state of loss) (Quran 103:1-3). There is a well defined trajectory for this growth in the Quranic conceptualisations of the states of the dialogical self as it becomes more aware of itself through interaction in its three relationships, all of which are enveloped in the infinite Other that is Allah. This is illustrated in Figure 2.2

Nafs al ammārah bi şu: the self inciting to base desires (Qur'an 12:53)

Nafs al lawāmah: the aware self that accounts and regulates itself (Qur'an 75: 1-2)

Nafs al muṭma'innah: the tranquil self at peace with itself (Qur'an 89: 27)
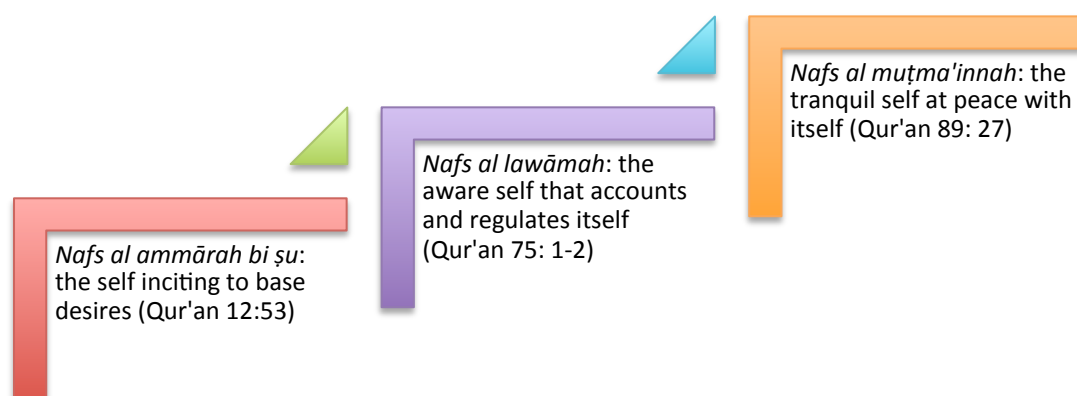
Figure 2.2 Three stages of self-development in Islam

The Quranic emphasis on each person's direct relationship to Allah, without intermediary, can be found in the dialogical enactment of the five daily prayers. According to a Prophetic saying, the core recitation in each prayer, *Surah al- Fātiḥah*, consists of a dialogue with Allah. The Quran also states, "And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided". (Quran 2:186). The relationship with Allah is indelibly linked to the relationship with one's own self according to al-Ghazāli who begins his famous compendium, 'The Alchemy of Happiness' with, "Know that the key to knowledge of God, may He be honoured and glorified, is knowledge of one's own self." (2008, p. 7). He continues by evidencing his argument with *hadīth* (Prophetic saying) and the Quranic verse, 'We shall show them Our (*āyāt*) signs on the horizons and within themselves, so that it will become evident to them that it is the Truth.' (Quran 41:53). Through this *āyah* (verse), al-Ghazali demonstrates the dual meaning of *āyah* (sign). In Islamic thought, the signs towards Allah are to be found both in reality, which includes the human self, and in revelation, which is considered the direct speech of God. The term for Quranic verses, *āyat,* also literally translates as 'signs'. The Quranic worldview places human beings in a world of signs that provide a dialogical route to greater understanding of themselves, their surroundings and their Creator (Lings, 2006). Additionally, through this verse, al-Ghazāli demonstrates that these signs are to be found in the self, and thus points to the

need for a dialogical understanding of the self. Al-Ghazāli's thought has inspired contemporary Muslim intellectuals to consider the implication of the dialogical encounter for addressing the challenges faced by contemporary Muslims (Khan, 2013; Moosa, 2005). For al-Ghazali, knowledge in all its forms is key to personal growth; knowledge is grasped and understood by the *'aql* (intellect) and becomes embodied in the *qalb* (heart). For al-Ghazāli, education is holistic, transformative and lifelong; above all it requires agency and self-actualisation through spiritual and intellectual disciplines that lead to divine inspiration. The pinnacle of human agency and self-realisation is to choose to fully and actively submit to Allah, by overcoming the weaknesses in the *nafs* (self), thus coming to a dialogical realisation of the truth by encountering Allah and reaching a stage of tranquility *nafs-al-muṭma'innah*, a self satisfied and at peace with itself, and with its condition (Quran 89:27).

In this section, I have sought to address TRQ1: How might Islamic theories of knowledge, personhood and education influence an understanding of shakhsiyah Islamiyah, as a form of personal autonomy within an Islamic paradigm? I have attempted to ground the conceptualisation of shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self in classical Islamic thought. The Islamic dimension of this conceptualisation is intensified when the idealised dialogical Muslim-self is juxtaposed with an idealised secular-liberal autonomous and dialogical self (Kazepides, 2012). Nevertheless this conceptualisation has parallels with contemporary dialogical-self theory, as derived form Bakhtin (1981), and advanced by Hermans and Hermans-Konopka. The latter propose that through "the interface of different cultures, a self emerges with a complexity that reflects the contradictions, oppositions, encounters, and integrations that are part of the society at large and, at the same time, answers to these influences from its own agentic point of view." (2010, p. 2)

In this thesis, shakhsiyah Islamiyah is defined as a dialogical Muslim-self imbued with agency. This definition allows us to draw out an understanding of how such a Muslim-self functions autonomously within the dialogic pedagogical space that is halaqah. In the next chapter, I address TRQ2-5, through a brief survey of literature on educational dialogue, and attempt to draw some parallels with the theory and practice of dialogic halaqah.

Chapter 3 Pedagogy: educational dialogue and halaqah, developing a theory of dialogic Islamic education

Having conceptualised shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self imbued with agency, I now turn to the pedagogical concerns of this thesis. The term, 'shakhsiyah', needed to be defined and understood in relation to secular-liberal conceptions of autonomy, for the overall research question to be meaningful. It is equally necessary to interrogate the Islamic theoretical framework that underpins halaqah in relation to conceptualisations of dialogic pedagogy, in order to consider how far halaqah can be considered dialogic. Wegerif has defined the term dialogic as, "the principle of holding different voices or perspectives together in creative tension" (2010, p. 143). Having accepted this definition, it is still necessary to consider what is meant by 'dialogic pedagogy'?

In reviewing the available literature on educational dialogue and classroom talk, it is important to recognise that there are multiple ways of theorising and defining educational dialogue, such as dialogic learning, accountable talk, dialogic inquiry, quality talk, exploratory talk, and dialogic teaching (Hennessy et al., 2016; Howe & Abedin, 2013). In their systematic review of forty years of research on talk in classrooms, Howe and Abedin (2013) opt for a broad inclusive definition, using the setting of the classroom as the common thread, thus referring to 'classroom dialogue'. Hennessy et al. review a range of theoretical and methodological frameworks to provide a very detailed and nuanced definition to use as the basis of an analytic scheme (2016, p. 18). They settle on the term 'Dialogic Teaching-and-Learning' in an attempt to remain faithful to the Vygotskian term '*obuchenie*', which refers to teaching-learning as an integrated activity. Although, for reasons given in Section 4.8, I have opted to use Hennessy et al.'s scheme to evaluate the dialogic quality of halaqah; in relation to terminology, I have decided to use the term 'dialogic pedagogy' to describe halaqah. This is because the Greek term 'pedagogy' alludes to a more holistic conceptualisation of educating than the terms teaching and learning. The term pedagogy is therefore closer to the Arabic terms for education explored later in this chapter. In Section 3.2, I outline the practice of dialogic halaqah in Shakhsiyah Schools and identify some traditional Islamic conceptualisations of education, which

have been developed as theoretical constructs to underpin this practice. In describing these, I draw parallels with various 'secular-liberal' conceptualisations of 'educational dialogue', and use the different terms for educational dialogue that refer to different conceptualisations in the literature, whilst using the broad term 'educational dialogue' to refer to the field as a whole. Through this juxtaposition, I hope to reveal similarities and differences.

3.1 Authority and autonomy in the educational dialogue literature

It is significant that in the educational dialogue discourse we still encounter those tensions and aporia that characterised the philosophical discussion of an Islamic concept of autonomy in Section 2.6. In the last few decades, Vygotskian sociocultural (1986) and Bakhtinian dialogic (1981) theories have generated extensive theoretical and empirical research in psychology and education. Vygotskian sociocultural theory proposes that human thought is generated by the human faculty of speech/language, which develops and functions through social interaction in a given cultural context. Bakhtin's original work on dialogue looked at the generation of meaning in fictional literature, arguing that meaning is generated by the context of the reader as he interacts with the text. He demonstrates that this interaction is always about authority and autonomy. "The importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous. One's own discourse, and one's own voice, although born of another… will sooner or later begin to liberate (itself) from the authority of another's discourse" (1981, p. 348). Bakhtin draws attention to the hybrid nature of language, as different meanings converge through dialogic interaction to generate new meanings.

Both theories have inspired several understandings of how a dialogic approach can improve the quality of classroom discourse between teachers and learners and in peer-to-peer interactions, thereby improving the quality of thinking and learning. Educational researchers are concerned about the persistence of a form of classroom discourse, identified by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), which is characterised by three moves, known as either IRF or IRE, namely initiation (a question by the teacher), response (by a student), and feedback/evaluation (of the response by the teacher). Due to the prevalence of this sequence in British classrooms, combined with the fact that the teacher's utterances tend to be substantially longer than those of students, some

studies have described classroom discourse as overwhelmingly monologic (Alexander, 2004; Lefstein, 2010). As Alexander remarks, "this 'script' is remarkably resistant to efforts to transform it" (Alexander, 2008a, p. 93). Consequently, according to Applebee et al., less than 4 percent of classroom time is spent in dialogic discussions (2003). The predominance of teacher talk, with the teacher as the inevitable educational authority in the classroom, and the naturally unequal relationship of teacher and taught, raises the question: to what extent are British classrooms locations of the development of personal autonomy, as claimed by secular-liberal critiques of Islamic education.

Reviewing the literature, it is clear that researchers are ever conscious of the tension between teacher authority and learner autonomy in theorising and studying dialogic pedagogy. In January 2017, the Cambridge Educational Dialogue Research Group (CEDiR)[9], which brings together educational dialogue researchers working in different fields, organised an online forum with the aim of producing a working paper, written through a dialogic process, to address an initial question: 'what is educational dialogue?' As a member of the forum, I was surprised by how themes of authority and autonomy continually resurfaced in a myriad of ways. These included dialogic authenticity and classroom ethos; constraints on teachers and schools; productive features of educational dialogue; children's knowledge and child-led learning; and assessment for learning. The forum opened with these themes and they remained prevalent throughout the discussion. The opening contributor asked, "constrained within prevailing curriculum and assessment frameworks… how can the teacher be engaging authentically in dialogue?" A later contributor focused on the naturally asymmetric relationship between teacher and learner, arguing that teachers *can* develop dialogue, if "they uphold the ethic of respecting others' perspectives and… treat others as though they matter, even if one participant 'knows' more stuff than another". Amongst a lengthy nuanced discussion addressing this generic question, these two quotations serve to illustrate that the tensions/aporia of teaching as a means of developing autonomy, highlighted in Section 2.6, also apply in some ways to secular-liberal theories of dialogic education. Although Islamic education differs to education based on secular-liberal values, the outcome could potentially be

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[9] See https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/networks/cedir/ accessed on 22.03.17

considered similar. The Islamic concept of the dignity of the human being should ensure that teachers treat learners with respect and 'as though they matter'. Researchers of dialogic pedagogy tend to subscribe to secular-liberal and democratic values. The CEDiR forum and the wider literature demonstrates that they are often aware of tensions between authority and autonomy present in their theorisations of dialogic pedagogy. In this chapter, some of this literature is briefly outlined, whilst some literature is discussed in more depth, in relation to halaqah as dialogic pedagogy, in subsequent sections.

One of the most influential models in Britain is 'Dialogic Teaching' (Alexander, 2004), which proposes five values based principles that define dialogic teaching as 'collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful'; ultimately it is conceived as a moral pedagogical practice, designed to facilitate democratic education (Alexander, 2006). Alexander recognises the power of the teacher in the classroom and is careful to frame his model as "extending the teaching repertoire", to include "rote, recitation, instruction/exposition, discussion and dialogue" (2004, p.28-30). For Alexander, these principles and repertoires are embedded in an educational ethos that is highly focused on liberal values that determine clear educational aims, including developing learner autonomy (Alexander, 2010).

Michaels, O'Connor and Resnick (2008) also draw heavily on rationalist and democratic values in promoting the 'deliberative discourse' of 'Accountable Talk'. Their model draws on a Vygotskian theoretical framework, and perceives accountable talk as dependent on three interdependent types of accountability: to the learning community (listening to others and building on each other's contributions); to knowledge (explicitly basing arguments in facts or known and evaluable sources); and to accepted standards of reasoning (establishing logical connections and reasonable conclusions). They explicitly ask the question: 'Is discussion antithetical to authoritative knowledge?' They argue for a productive middle ground between reasoning and knowledge, valuing both monologic (authoritative) and dialogic discourse. Following Cazden (2001), they acknowledge that transmission of accepted knowledge is important for societal advancement. This is balanced with the recognition that such practices can support students without socioeconomic privilege to access learning, and may address inequity in successful learning.

Paulo Freire (1970) demonstrated the relevance of 'Dialogic Learning' to inclusive and transformative education for marginalised communities. His ideas have been actualised by many educators, and have had huge international impact. For example, through his work with Roma communities, Ramon Flecha has developed 'Dialogic Learning' into 'Successful Educational Actions for All' (2014; 2000; Flecha & Soler, 2013). This particular research discourse is heavily framed by the inevitable educational tensions between authority and autonomy; it consciously argues for the capacity of a dialogic education to generate autonomy in the face of the authority of structural inequalities.

Structural inequalities may also work at the level of the classroom. Neil Mercer's 'Guided Construction of Knowledge' (1995) builds on Vygotskian sociocultural theory to demonstrate that the ways in which language is used in classrooms, are specifically shaped and constrained by culturally-situated, social and institutional 'ground rules' for discourse. These 'rules' may be implicit and invisible, but are nevertheless socially constructed and upheld by students and teachers. It is possible that by explicitly redefining new 'dialogic' ground rules, and by improving the quality of peer-to-peer group-work, we can create more democratic classrooms, by recognising that it is through 'interthinking', that is, the sharing of knowledge and perspectives to generate 'common knowledge', that the 'intermental' becomes 'intramental', that is, new ideas and knowledge are generated and internalised. Mercer and colleagues' 'Thinking Together' programme attempts to achieve just this (Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008; Mercer & Littleton, 2007). They have identified three types of talk: 'disputational', where there is disagreement without collaboration; 'cumulative', which is agreement and consensus without critique; and finally 'exploratory', which is "a form of co-reasoning in language, with speakers sharing knowledge, challenging ideas, evaluating evidence and considering options in a reasoned and equitable way" (Mercer & Littleton, 2007, p.54). Mercer and colleagues have extensively explored the impact of this programme through interventionist research studies in classrooms with students of all ages, and with different curriculum subjects. These studies explicitly teach children how to use language to reason. Their findings demonstrate measurable impact on children's dialogue and reasoning skills (Littleton et al., 2005; Mercer, Dawes, Wegerif, & Sams, 2004; Mercer, Wegerif, & Dawes, 1999). Mercer and Howe (2012) have provided a clear theoretical base for this work. They argue that

Vygotskian sociocultural theory and dialogic teaching and learning has intrinsic value because of its potential for improving learning. Nevertheless, in their meta-review of four decades of research into dialogic pedagogy, Howe and Abedin (2013) argue that, "much more is known about how classroom dialogue is organized than about whether certain modes of organization are more beneficial than others" (2013, p.235). In particular, they note that there is much less evidence about whole-class dialogue as opposed to peer-to-peer dialogue in group-work. It is in whole-class situations that IRF and issues of teacher authority are likely to be more prevalent. This is not to say that there is no evidence in this regard, Wells and Arauz (2006) present findings showing evidence of an improvement in teachers' adoption of a 'dialogic stance'. Wells uses the term 'Dialogic Inquiry' to describe a collective search for agreement, again emphasising a more egalitarian approach through reciprocity within collective dialogic inquiry, where teachers seek to elicit and understand student's perspectives, to enable learners to build on existing knowledge.

Adam Lefstein has challenged this idea of educational dialogue as easily implementable through idealised pedagogical models, which generate democratic harmony in communities of inquiry (2010). It could be argued Lefstein's critique is unfair, that far from being enthusiastic about an ideal dialogic pedagogy, researchers are well aware of the challenges, complexities and tensions arising in translating this research into classroom practice. Indeed this has been recognised by Howe and Abedin (2013). Nevertheless, Lefstein offers a perspective on dialogic pedagogy that needs to be considered. He makes three claims, all of which allude to the natural tension between authority and autonomy in any dialogue, particularly in educational dialogue. First, he draws attention to the multiple dimensions of any communicative activity; metacommunicative, relational, interpersonal and aesthetic, all of which have a bearing on personal autonomy. Second, he draws attention to the need to recognise the inherent tensions between participants, ideas and concerns, which exist in all dialogue. His point is that it is precisely these tensions that lead to productive dialogue. Mercer and Howe have made a similar argument for recognising the Piagetian concept of 'socio-cognitive conflict' as a bridge with Vygotskian socioculturalism, saying that this concept has "great potential value" for educational dialogue (2012, p.13). Finally, Lefstein also draws attention to the constraints on teacher and learner autonomy that are generated by curriculum and by

institutionalised schooling. Lefstein's thesis, that dialogue needs to be understood through metacommunicative, ideational, interpersonal and aesthetic lenses, has an echo of Bakhtinian notions of polyphony and heteroglossia.

Eugene Matusov (2009) and Rupert Wegerif (2011) have proposed Bakhtinian understandings of dialogic education. Matusov's argument is that rather than there being forms of pedagogy that can be classed as dialogic, education itself is essentially dialogic, as teachers and learners, like all human beings who interact, are always "locked in dialogic relations" (2009, p.1), and are continuously making meaning through dialogue. However, the dialogicity of many educational practices can be distorted by the structures of conventional schooling, which seeks to "make all consciousnesses transparent and homogenous" (2009, p.4) through transmission of the teacher's knowledge. Matusov argues "for a pro-dialogic project of education" (2009, p.5), which goes beyond dialogue as instrumental to dialogue as ontological. Kazepides (2012) and Hermans & Hermans-Konopka (2010) also present education as dialogue, recognising the dialogical nature of the human self. Kazepides links this idea to the moral project of realising human dignity and autonomy, arguing that through such an approach the oppressive authority of education, as transmission of authoritative knowledge, can be challenged.

Rupert Wegerif, drawing on Bakhtin, presents a theory of dialogic pedagogy as a manifestation of the ontological reality of human development, as occurring through our interactions with others and with the world (2011). He thus devises an explicit theory of thinking that is not rationalist, mathematical, or logical; but rather is dialogic and relational, where meaning always assumes at least two perspectives and emerges from the interplay between more than one perspective. Wegerif introduces the ideas of 'addressee', the listener; and 'super-addressee', an idealised universal listener, who is ever-present in our thought processes and interactions; able to understand our meaning even if we ourselves and the 'addressee' do not. This idea serves to highlight the ongoing liminality of our existence. Our existence is a continuous need to explain ourselves to ourselves, through explaining ourselves to an other, or an 'infinite other'. The super-addressee can be understood as a collective projected cultural voice, for example in religious discourse, the super-addressee may be God, or in scientific discourse, a future community of scientists.

To develop Wegerif's argument in relation to the concerns of this thesis, if reality is dialogic, we are only responsible to ourselves and to the super-addressee, which in this case is Allah. From this perspective, even if we always exist in relation to the other, we nevertheless also always have a choice, even when we choose to submit to Allah. Ultimately, all educational endeavours, including dialogic pedagogies and Islamic educational practices, necessarily encompass both authoritative and critical elements, although the degree of each element will vary according to the educational context. In this thesis, I argue that dialogic criticality is increasingly important for Muslim children and young people, especially those growing up in secular-liberal societies. This is because the Islamic worldview is under constant challenge, and without engaging with their personal beliefs critically, young Muslims will struggle to make sense of their place in a fast changing world. Strong critical inquiry skills can enable young Muslims to constructively engage in personal reflection as dialogical selves, to contribute with confidence to their own communities and in civic life, and interact dialogically with wider society. Moreover, in Quranic terms, profound critical reflection or questioning, leads reflexively to the core reality of the human self, as demonstrated by Kamali, who provides an analysis of the critical discourse through which Allah engages humanity in the Quran (2006). Shakhsiyah Schools aim to revive this Quranic pedagogy of critical reflection and inquiry, by conducting the Prophetic pedagogy of halaqah as dialogic education.

3.2 Halaqah: dialogic pedagogy and practice in Shakhsiyah Schools

"I think our halaqah has a real cutting-edge approach, because it nurtures children's different aspects, their social needs, their emotional needs, their intellectual needs, even being able to self-reflect… and question their own thinking, which is quite a high order thinking skill, to actually question (yourself) or even question another person." Shakhsiyah School leader, cited in (Ahmed, 2014b p.335).

In the Masters pilot study, this school leader identified halaqah as an opportunity to develop shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self. This PhD study is designed to test these claims, by first critically interrogating whether halaqah can be conceived of as a dialogic pedagogy, when it is reliant on an Islamic theoretical framework; and second, through an empirical investigation. This is due to the pressing need to assess the usefulness of halaqah in addressing liberal and Muslim

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concerns about contemporary Islamic pedagogy and its assumed authoritarian nature (Anderson, Tan, & Suleiman, 2011; Sahin, 2013). To do so, and to lay a theoretical foundation for the empirical study, it is essential to interrogate the theory and practice of halaqah as dialogic pedagogy.

3.2.1 What is halaqah and how is it practised?

Halaqah is an Islamic oral pedagogy instituted by the Prophet Muhammad, in his *tarbīyah* (education) of early Muslims, first in *Dār-al-Arqām* and later in his Mosque in Medina. Since then, halaqah are to be found in every Muslim community, in homes, Mosques, under trees, in literary and intellectual salons, and within educational institutions. Halaqah are conducted largely orally with students and teacher sitting in a circle on the floor. An integral part of traditional Islamic education, halaqah continues to be core practice in Muslim cultures, considered both to be a fundamental pedagogical method in 'academic' institutions such as Al-Azhar university, and to be a form of social discourse and transformative education in communities. In both cases, it can be credited with development of learning, of theological sciences, arts and natural sciences; with character transformation, the empowerment of individuals, and of communities, through a social-justice agenda (Zaimeche, 2002). In many traditional Muslim cultures, there was no clear demarcation between informal and formal learning. The pedagogical format varies immensely and can be transmission-based/teacher-led or dialogic/student-led. It can also be a collaborative group effort involving loose exploratory discussions about Quranic teachings, or about social problems in community settings. The 'curriculum' or content is open and determined by teacher or students, it varies from Quran, law, grammar, literature, philosophy, logic, and astronomy in academic institutions, to family life and raising children, women's empowerment, history, politics and spirituality in community settings. In all cases, the paradigm is an Islamic worldview. Mosques will have at least one halaqah operating at any time and larger Mosques may have multiple, for example the Mosque of Amr ibn al-ʿĀs in Cairo is reported to have had forty halaqah at one time. These circles of learning were often sites of academic dispute and discourse.

> Although the teachers were in charge of the halaqahs, the students were allowed, in fact encouraged - to challenge and correct the teacher, often in heated exchanges. Disputations, unrestricted, in all fields of knowledge took

place on Friday in the study circles held around the mosques, and no holds were barred. (Zaimeche, 2002, p. 3)

Halaqah has thus been widely used in Muslim societies across time and place; and is a living reality across the Muslim world and in Muslim minority contexts today. In our context, i.e. Shakhsiyah Schools, halaqah has grown from the informal learning of collective homeschooling into a daily lesson, within, what is treated by many, as a formal western style primary school. It is argued in Ahmed (2012) that this innovative use of halaqah, should be seen as a positive revival of traditional Islamic pedagogy. Interestingly, Mercer has also recognised the importance of considering such non-western approaches, in his discussion of guidance strategies that can be used by teachers in the social construction of knowledge (Mercer, 1995, pp. 22–23). Halaqah also bears some similarity to comparative 'western' secular practices such as 'Philosophy for Children', which argues that what should be taught in schools is not subject matter, but ways of thinking (Lipman, Sharp, & Oscanyan, 2010; Trickey & Topping, 2004). Another similar practice is 'Socratic Circles', which use questioning based on the Socratic method to generate classroom dialogue (Brown, 2016; Copeland, 2005). It is interesting that both these approaches draw on classical Greek philosophy, which underpins the western secular-liberal tradition. There are also similarities with 'Dialogic Literary Gatherings', which use a literary text to generate classroom dialogue (Flecha, 2000). Flecha insists that classic texts, usually drawn from classical literature are used; because they posit fundamental human dilemmas, and thus have the capacity to generate higher quality dialogue (Flecha, 2000; Hargreaves & Garcia-Carrion, 2016). Similarly, dialogic halaqah in Shakhsiyah Schools draw on the Quran and other classical Islamic texts to pose challenging questions in order to generate dialogue.

3.2.2 Halaqah in Shakhsiyah Schools
Although the practice of halaqah explored in this thesis draws on the traditional pedagogy outlined above, Shakhsiyah Schools have explicitly developed halaqah, both in terms of pedagogy and curriculum, for the twenty-first century British context. The aim is to replace 'Islamic Studies' lessons with a dialogic space for children to think through and explore complex intercultural issues, and develop a strong shakhsiyah Islamiyah. Halaqah is held daily, usually during the first lesson, in classes

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with a maximum of fifteen children; teachers sit with the children in a circle on the floor. In this format, children explore a range of topics through a series of critical questions, which generate dialogic discussion. Teachers will often begin by asking children to contribute their prior knowledge on the topic, but will fill in the gaps in knowledge when required for a discussion to take place. They usually prepare some explanation of the topic to lay a foundation for the discussion. They may use a resource, such as an object, a piece of text, or a poem. Shakhsiyah Schools' ethos is to encourage teachers to adopt their own personal styles in their classrooms; therefore, teachers are currently free to establish their own classroom atmosphere during halaqah. However, teachers are issued with guidance including ground rules as given in Appendix 1. Some teachers are explicit about these ground rules, whilst others prefer to establish these through modelling and expectations.

It is important to note that the culture in Shakhsiyah Schools is not monolithic; rather it is a dynamic, reflexive and responsive culture. It is noteworthy that Shakhsiyah Schools grew organically from a range of home-schooling initiatives run by British Muslim mothers in the late 1990s. In 2002, partly as a response to the increased scrutiny of the activities of British Muslims, it was decided to register two independent schools with an alternative and Islamic ethos. At the time, there were very broad regulations for independent schools and thus it was felt that this alternative ethos could be easily maintained. Although increased regulatory pressures have impacted practice in the schools, innovations like halaqah have been maintained. In this regard teachers are acutely aware that their work is pioneering and experimental. School leaders in particular recognise that their work is the product of their own experiences as Muslim children educated in mainstream British schools in the 1980s and 1990s (Ahmed, 2014b). They recognise that these experiences led them to be conscious that the needs of Muslim children were not being met in mainstream British schools or in after school Madrasah provision. The two parallel systems were leading to dual identities. What was required is some new thinking, which naturally needs to take into account modern 'western' pedagogy as children are growing up in a western society. They further recognise that as educators they have been shaped by their own education, which was 'western' in its culture.

School leaders recognise that the dialogic quality of halaqah is predicated on teachers' understanding of the pedagogical theory underpinning halaqah. Teachers sometimes

struggle to understand that their role is to open up a space for critical self-reflexive learning, a space where children ask questions and begin to explore what it means to be Muslim in their lived experiences. This is no easy task; it is challenging to facilitate a dialogue that both encourages openness and also provides clear answers. According to Ramadan, "younger Muslim generations have forced their elders to provide clearer Islamic answers" (1999, p. 235). As teachers are all too aware, British Muslim children and young people are continuously facing new questions; questions that Muslim teachers and elders are finding increasingly challenging to answer. Whatever it may mean to be a British Muslim, or indeed a Muslim per se, has become an inescapable issue for both young and older British Muslims. Thus, this dialogic space provides opportunity both to draw on the Islamic worldview, and to critically engage in how its teachings and values are to be applied in ever-changing personalised contexts. Teachers are supported through extensive training on Shakhsiyah Schools' theory and practice of halaqah, including how halaqah differs from a teacher-led lesson, and how dialogic halaqah is underpinned by pedagogical theory, that draws on classical and contemporary Muslim educational scholarship to develop educational practice for the twenty-first century British context. Previous action research on halaqah in Shakhsiyah Schools has identified four pedagogical strands that can be attributed to the Prophet: *ḥifẓ, tarbīyah, ta'līm,* and *ta'dīb,* see Figure 3.2 and Table 3.1. Furthermore, in 2005, the schools produced a halaqah curriculum, which includes the study of Islam, other religions, history, citizenship and personal, social, health and economic education. The halaqah curriculum sits at the core of a holistic thematic curriculum.
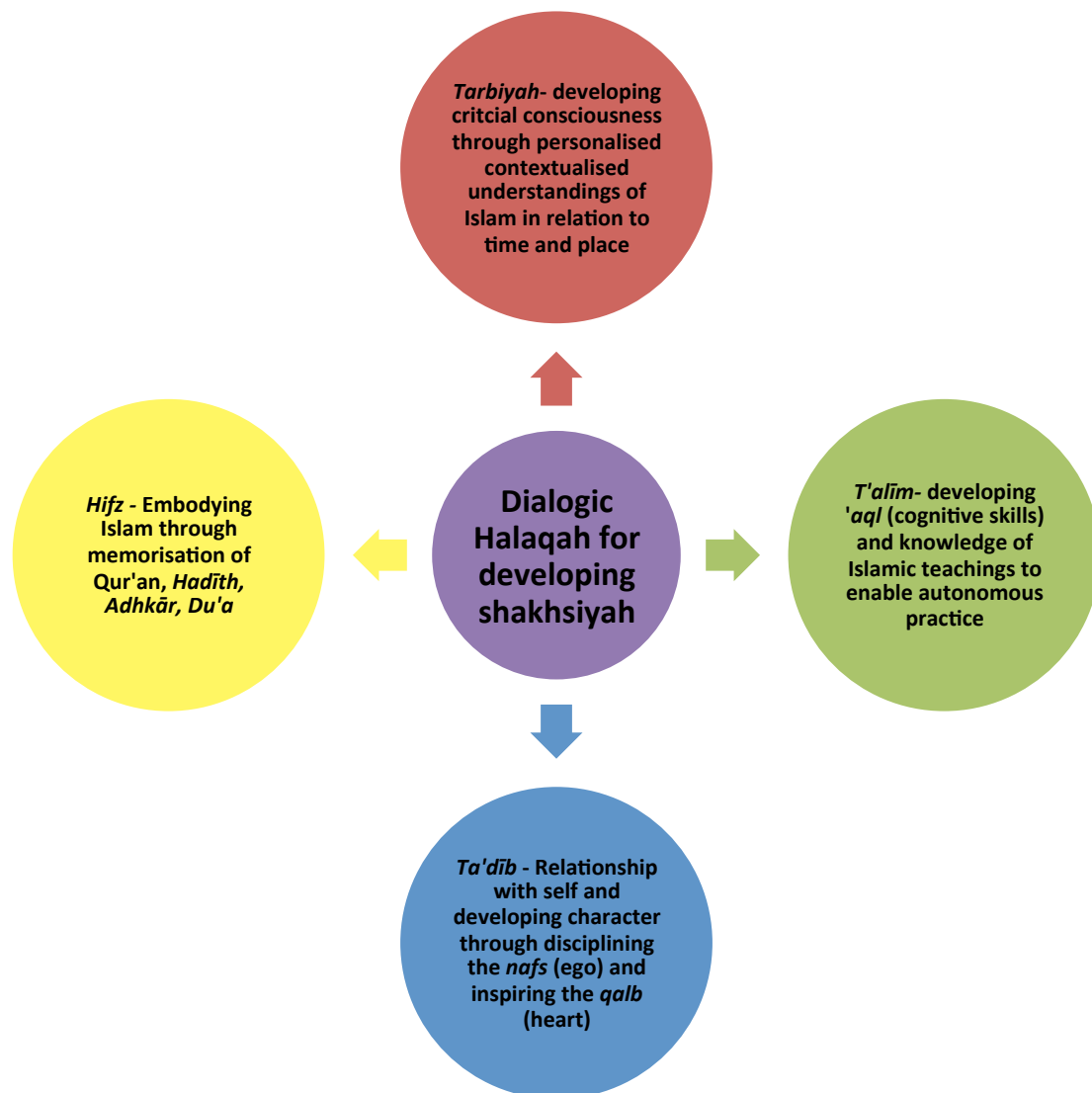
Figure 3.1 Islamic pedagogical strategies embedded in halaqah

Table 3.1 Halaqah: pedagogical strategies and curriculum content

Islamic Pedagogical Strategy	Halaqah Curriculum Content
Ḥifẓ _Ḥifẓ_ is usually translated as memorisation, although the literal translation is to keep, conserve or protect. It is believed that through memorisation of the Quran learners come to literally embody the word of Allah.	• Quran (_Juz Amma_ and other _Surat_) • _Hadīth_ (sayings of the Prophet) • _Du'aa_ (prayers and supplications)
Tarbīyah _Tarbīyah_ can be translated as child rearing and includes physical development. One classical denition is 'to facilitate someone or something to grow and flourish until it reaches its full potential.' In the context of halaqah, _tarbīyah_ is interpreted as nurturing the unique child within her unique context i.e. developing faith, identity and shakhsiyah through having an understanding of one's self within the material and social contexts of place and time.	• Muslims in Britain • Other Religions Beliefs and Cultures • Personal, Local and Global History
Ta'līm _Ta'līm_ can be translated as transmitting knowledge or enabling the acquisition of knowledge. In the context of _halaqah_, it is understood as developing both cognitive skills and understanding of a conceptual framework of the Islamic worldview. _T'alīm_ happens through dialogic engagement in halaqah, which generates contextualized understandings of Islamic teachings, for practice in daily life.	• _'Aqīdah_ (creedal beliefs) • Quran and _Sunnah_ (textual sources) • _Sīrah_ (life of Prophet Muhammad) • _'Ibadah_ (acts of worship) • Seeking Knowledge, Thinking, Reflection and Learning • _Fiqh_ and _Shariah_ (Islamic rulings)
Ta'dīb wa Tazkiyah _Ta'dīb_ can be translated as discipline, but also morals and etiquette. It relates to the dialogical Muslim-self, in that it is about self-reflection and self-evaluation of actions, values, motives and personal characteristics. _Tazkiyah_ refers to self-purification through controlling base instincts and desires.	• Character, Responsibility, Accountability and Autonomy • _Adāb wa Akhlāq_ (values, morals and etiquette) • _Ta'dīb an Nafs_ (disciplining the self/ego) • _Tazkiyat ul Qalb_ (purification of the heart)

3.3 Synthesising Islamic and educational dialogic traditions: challenges and possibilities

One aim of this thesis is to draw out the dialogic elements of the Islamic educational theory that underpins halaqah, and to clarify how this relates to secular-liberal concepts of education, whilst recognising the epistemological and ontological differences between these two worldviews. In this way, this thesis addresses TRQs 2-5, in order to lay a basis for an empirical study. Shakhsiyah Schools are British Islamic faith-schools; they function within secular Britain. Most school-leaders and teachers are brought up and educated in state schools and universities. They naturally draw on mainstream 'secular-liberal' educational theories in their professional self-understanding and in professional dialogues. Educational dialogue theories are well represented in the literature and are thus not covered in detail here. Instead the focus is on dialogic elements in Islamic educational theory, which are not well known, even amongst British Muslim teachers. In developing a hybrid theoretical underpinning to halaqah, it is important to synthesize the two traditions. Therefore, the rest of this chapter is not so much a literature review of educational dialogue theory, rather, it is an initial attempt to draw together varying strands of thought, whilst retaining a skepticism about their epistemological compatibility. In relation to ontology, such a hybrid state is already in existence in that British Muslim communities are functioning through a kind of double-consciousness, which draws on both traditions. This chapter is not a normative literature review, because dialogic halaqah is a unique practice. It is not meaningful to simply review the existing educational dialogue literature and identify halaqah as a 'gap'. Rather, it is important to recognise that the innovative use of dialogic halaqah needs a dialogic examination of its theoretical underpinnings, by comparing, contrasting and attempting to synthesise two educational traditions.

3.4 Traditional Islamic education and the embodied Quranic self

The forms of Islamic education most Muslims are familiar with are aural/oral educational traditions involving the transmission of Quran, as the direct literal word of Allah, to new generations. Any discussion of Islamic education cannot ignore this central tradition. According to Muslim belief, Allah sent Angel Gabriel to teach Prophet Muhammad Quranic verses, which he would memorise, and then transmit to

his companions, who would then also commit these verses to memory and teach their students, who would do likewise, and so on down the generations. Although all Muslims will memorise some *surat* (chapters) of the Quran, some will make it their life's mission to memorise the entire Quran and act as *ḥāfiz* (protector) of Allah's word. Thus, there are currently millions of *ḥuffāẓ* (pl.) across the world, whose mission is to ensure that no change to the revelation occurs. *Ḥuffāẓ* are issued diplomas that provide authentication, not through an institution, but through a list of the chain of teachers of Quran back to the Prophet Muhammad. The discovery of ancient parchments that contain the same text as contemporary Qurans (University of Birmingham, 2015) provides some evidence for the success of this educational system, in meeting its aims. As well as serving to preserve the message of the Quran, memorisation is considered to have a direct physical impact on the Muslim-self. Memorisation provides an aural/oral embodied spiritual knowledge of the Quran, and thus serves as a development of the individual Muslim's dialogical relationship with Allah, through embodiment of the words of Allah (Boyle, 2007; Gent, 2011; Hardaker & Sabki, 2015; Ware, 2014). This form of education has been described as a spiritual rather than social construction (Hardaker & Sabki, 2015), and as offering a window into an Islamic "way of knowing" (Ware, 2014, p.3).

Halaqah in Shakhsiyah Schools maintains this tradition. The curriculum includes a *ḥifz* component, with children memorising certain *surat*, contemplating on their meaning, and drawing on relevant meanings in their halaqah dialogue. However, despite the orality of this pedagogy, this aspect of halaqah is not the subject of the empirical study as it cannot be easily compared to educational dialogue.

3.5 Education as Tarbīyah: halaqah as critical dialogic pedagogy

Many Quranic verses use the epithet, *Rabb,* for Allah. Although this term is usually translated as Lord, its meaning is also that of a guardian carer/educator, who enables development and flourishing. In other instances in the Quran, it is used to denote the care and upbringing of children (Quran 17:24; 22:5; 26:18). Moreover, the Jewish term for learned teacher Rabbi, and its Arabic parallel *Murabbī,* both have the same linguistic root as *Rabb* (Sahin, 2013, p.199). This term is also related to natural growth in relation to plants and animals. These connotations of natural growth are

similar to the Froebelian idea of Kindergarten (Froebel-Parker, 2013) and a 'western' tradition that stretches back to Rousseau (2010). Educational concepts of "increase, elevation, growth, development, nurture and upbringing are all aspects of the word *tarbīyah*" (Tauhidi, 2001, p. 7). This is because *tarbīyah* derives from the same linguistic root as *Rabb,* and thus education is understood as something provided by a nurturing teacher, who 'parents' a child's physical, spiritual and emotional growth; and character development. Sahin has also theorised *tarbīyah* as critical dialogic pedagogy, arguing that human existence is fundamentally a "responsive, relational, dialogical process of becoming" (2013, p.172). Sahin argues that as Allah is *Rabb-al-- 'aālamīn* (Educator of all worlds), the Quran itself becomes a divine pedagogy designed to facilitate human flourishing (2013, p.183).

Education as *tarbīyah* is a lifelong ontological state; it applies as much to adult learners as to children. It assumes learner agency because it defines the human being as a reflexive learning creature, whose purpose is transformative, that is to grow and develop in understanding, in character, and in action (al-Attas, 1979). Thus *tarbīyah* is closely connected to educating for shakhsiyah, which is the core aim of dialogic halaqah. Teachers are asked to understand each individual learner's personal character and personal life-world, and in partnership with their parents, support the child in her personal development. Halaqah involves supporting children to become self-reflective learners focused on the ongoing development of their own character and 'self.' Thus *tarbīyah* aims to promote a developing personal autonomy in the childhood and youth phases of human development, through adult support and guidance. Furthermore, shakhsiyah Islamiyah is defined in this context as autonomous personhood, where an individual, through her own critical thought, has chosen to adopt an Islamic worldview and is able to exercise an Islamic identity in a western secular-liberal society. In this sense, a capability approach to freedom informs practice during daily halaqah. This is through a critical dialogic approach, empowering religious and cultural autonomy; and a sociocultural dialogic approach, empowering personal autonomy by developing the skills of critical and reflective thought.

3.5.1 Critical dialogic pedagogy

The critical pedagogy dimension to *tarbīyah* is less noted in the literature. The Prophet's educational context was necessarily one of critical dialogue, in that he was

seeking to challenge the dominant thinking in society and its oppressive practices. Like other Prophets of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, he campaigned for the rights of the oppressed, weak and marginalised. This is evident within the Quran, which repeatedly directly calls humankind to consider the oppression they are witnessing (Quranic Chapters 93, 102, 104, 106, 107). The Quranic revelation spoke directly to the people of that time, asking them to consider a range of issues, referring directly to events and problems in society. Critical pedagogy is also evident in the nature of the Prophet's halaqah and educational practices.

> The Prophets'… teaching… (included) heated debates and discussions… aiming largely at the adult, the oppositional, the disappointed and the marginalized. It spoke about the social injustices, and daily issues, using the language of religion and poetry. It was informal and integrative of words and actions… To that end, Islamic education of the period of revelation was radical. (Niyozov & Memon, 2011 p.8)

In Shakhsiyah Schools, *tarbīyah* is theorised as understanding the active dimension of Islam within a real-life context. Children learn Islam within their own unique context as individuals with hybrid identities, and within the more complex multilayered realities of Muslim and British society. During halaqah, they actively ask questions about their role as Muslims in the current world and the social issues that they see around them, such as racism, poverty, and environmental issues. This social awareness has a spiritual dimension and is interwoven with a broader teaching of the Islamic way of life, and how it can be realised in a contemporary British context. Through developing a reflective and complex but nevertheless strongly Islamic identity, there is a natural emphasis on the role of Islam in social reform and the call for social justice. For example, in discussing the Islamic concept of *amānah* (trust), children will contemplate what it means that the earth has been 'entrusted' to human beings. They may consider how much pollution local factories release, and how that relates to the concept of the earth as an *amānah*. Children then consider what they can do to change the situation, and whether they have a responsibility to act. However, as a religious pedagogy, halaqah differs from secular ideas of 'critical pedagogy', in that it subscribes to an Islamic worldview rather than secular human rights, which is contentious. Despite these contentions, Muslim educators draw on critical pedagogy to argue for a more transformative education for all Muslim children (Ahmed, 2012;

Zeera, 2001; Zine, 2008). Considering that Muslim communities in the 'West' are often socio-economically deprived and are increasingly marginalized, there are clear parallels with the work of transformative critical dialogic educators, such as Ladson Billings (1995) and Flecha (Flecha & Soler, 2013; Flecha, 2014), who operate in the Freirean tradition (Freire, 1970). The Freirean tradition values the cultural capital of these marginalised learners by valuing their existing knowledge, especially when it is knowledge that is alien to the dominant knowledge of established educational institutions.

3.5.2 Culture and dialogic pedagogy

Identifying *tarbīyah* in halaqah as a radical critical pedagogy could be perceived as subversive, as it shares features with other critical pedagogies that educate for social justice. However, the Halaqah Curriculum is also clear that *tarbīyah* is contextual; that teachers are essentially engaged in the upbringing of children whose life-worlds are those of twenty-first century secular-liberal Britain. The purpose of halaqah is to provide a dialogic space that enables a culturally-coherent pedagogy in that children's hybrid-identities are recognised and celebrated (Ahmed, 2012). It is about translating Islamic beliefs, values and teachings for the British context. Thus the Halaqah Curriculum section on 'Muslims in Britain' opens up a dialogic space to discuss how to be Muslim in this specific context, and to understand the role of Muslims in contributing to British society in the past, present and future. The intention is that daily halaqah provides children and young people with a safe space to explore difficult and controversial issues necessary for the development of their holistic identity, whilst promoting autonomous and critical thinking. According to Shakhsiyah Schools' teachers, this reflective space gives children the opportunity to air their views and frustrations, in dealing with complex local and global events (Ahmed, 2012). Teachers encourage children to feel that they should be active participants in the world around them, that learning and education can empower them to be positive agents of change.

This conceptualisation of *tarbīyah* through halaqah can sit within Alexander's work on the relationship between culture and pedagogy (2001). Furthermore, like 'Dialogic Teaching', halaqah can be described as 'pedagogy for a runaway world' (Alexander, 2006), in that through dialogic pedagogy halaqah claims to prepare children for a

globalised world. Alexander's analysis of the different cultural constructs of education, reflected in variances in meanings of the terms used for education in Russian, French and English such as *obrazovanie* and *l'education*, is important (Alexander, 2001, p. 94). Similarly, in analysing *tarbīyah,* it can be seen that its holistic approach impacts the practice of halaqah as pedagogy. Alexander's insistence of the imperative to go "beyond dichotomous pedagogies" (Alexander, 2008a p. 72) chimes with the holistic nature of halaqah and the holistic thematic curriculum that is built around it (Ahmed, 2016a). This holism allows teaching and learning to be understood as serving a range of functions, operating in many different ways and on a multiplicity of levels; creating an appreciation of the complexity of interactions in halaqah.

Alexander recognises the complexities in generating a dialogic classroom ethos and developing multilayered high-quality classroom talk. He has devised dialogic principles, namely, *collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative* and *purposeful* to support the development of a dialogic classroom ethos (2004, p.28). These principles need the full commitment of teachers and schools. Alexander acknowledges that it is particularly challenging to implement the principle of *cumulative* dialogue, due to timetabling and curricular constraints. Halaqah, however, is a daily activity at the centre of a holistic curriculum; it is, therefore, well placed to offer a *cumulative* dialogic space. Furthermore, class groups in Shakhsiyah Schools are limited to fifteen children, and teachers stay with their classes for two years in order to foster a stronger teacher-learner-parent relationship and a community of learning. There are strong parallels between dialogic teaching as an ideal conceptualised by Alexander, and halaqah as an idealised form of *tarbīyah*. There are also marked cultural and philosophical differences. Alexander demonstrates that classroom talk "mediates, not just teaching and learning but also the wider culture" (2004, p.12). In the context of dialogic halaqah, the claim is that teachers and children draw on at least two and often more cultures, with the aim of children thinking for themselves and developing a range of skills that enhance their cognitive capabilities. Teachers are trained to use Alexander's repertoire of classroom talk, of *rote, recitation, instruction, discussion* and *dialogue*, (2004, p.30) with the emphasis on the latter.

3.6 Ta'līm: halaqah as cognitive dialogic pedagogy

Islam offers a multiplicity of terms for education. Having considered *tarbīyah,* we turn to the second most common term, which is *ta'līm.* This conceptualisation of education is fundamentally related to cognitive development, and is closely connected to the concepts of *'ilm* (knowledge) and *'aql* (intellect), as given in the initial revelation to Prophet Muhammad:

> *"Proclaim! [or read!] in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created; Created man, out of a [mere] clot of congealed blood; Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful; He Who taught [the use of] the pen; Taught man that which he knew not."* (Quran 96: 1-5)

These Quranic verses are most commonly cited in relation to education, and it is always duly noted that these verses were the first to be revealed, and that they directly commanded the Prophet Muhammad to consider his existence as a speaking, learning, knowing, created being. The opening word *iqra'* is usually translated as a command to 'read', but also means recite or proclaim. It has the same linguistic root as the word Quran, which literally translates as recitation, and which has traditionally been an oral text. The Prophet is said to have famously responded 'I cannot read', as he was not literate, yet the revelation continued to instruct him to read/recite/proclaim these direct words of Allah; as a direct education from Allah to humankind. The second verse that is usually translated as 'created man' actually uses the word *insān,* which means human beings and is not gender specific. This conceptualisation of human beings as learning beings is directly dependent on the concepts of *'ilm* and *'aql.* The word 'taught', used in verses 4-5, has the same linguistic root as *'ilm,* and teaching is thus directly linked to knowledge. Furthermore, *'ilm* and related words with the same linguistic root occur no less than 750 times in the Quran, comprising one percent of the Quranic text. Translating *'ilm* as 'knowledge' fails to do justice to its broader meaning, which includes diverse ways of knowing for example, intuition and gnosis (Rosenthal, 2006, p. 24). Thus, *t'alīm* is much more than the simple transmission of knowledge as information. To understand how knowledge and learning are conceived to be very specific to human beings, it is important to examine the concept of *'aql* (intellect/thinking faculty), which is considered to be unique to human beings, because only human beings are considered to have speech and language.

3.6.1 Knowledge, thought, speech and language

A major strand of Islamic epistemology, dating to the eleventh century Islamic scholar al-Ghazali and culminating with the work of the twentieth century scholar Naquib al-Attas (Daiber, 2011), identifies speech as intimately related to *'aql* (intellect/reason/mind) (Quran 2:31, 55:1-4, 96:1-5; al-Attas, 1980). Al-Attas' thesis rests on defining the unique characteristic of the human being as speech, drawing on the classical Islamic definition, given by al-Jurjani amongst others, of man as:

> *Al ḥaywān al nāṭiq* where the term *natiq* signifies 'rational'. Man is possessed of an inner faculty that formulates meaning (i.e. *dhu nuṭq*) and this formulation of meaning, which involves judgement and discrimination and clarification, is what constitutes his 'rationality'. The terms *naṭiq* and *nuṭq* are derived from a root that conveys the basic meaning of 'speech', in the sense of human speech, so they both signify a certain power and capacity in man to articulate words in a meaningful pattern. (al-Attas, 1980, p. 2)

Al-Attas continues his argument by pointing out that speech is the outward manifestation of *'aql* which is the "innate property that binds and withholds objects of knowledge and creates meaning by the use of words" (al-Attas 1980, p. 2). *'Aql* according to al-Attas, is much more than reason from the Latin *ratio*; it combines *ratio* with *intellectus* into an organic whole and is related to the spiritual substance which is referred to as the *nafs* (self). This point is significant for the understanding of the idea of a dialogical Muslim-self, and will be dealt with in more detail below. Here, I would like to focus on possible similarities and differences with Vygotsky; to do so, I draw on Chapter 7 of *Thought and Language* (Vygotsky 1986). In this chapter, Vygotsky moves from speech to thought via a number of 'planes' that connect the two. From the onset Vygotsky states that he is interested in both phylogenetic and ontogenetic development; indicating his insight that speech and thought are intimately connected with man as a social being. Here too there is an overlap with Islamic thought where the term *insān* (human beings), is said to come from a linguistic root, which denotes social interaction. Like al-Attas, Vygotsky focuses on the most elemental component of speech i.e. a word; stating, "the meaning of a word represents such a close amalgam of thought and language that it is hard to tell whether it is a phenomenon of speech or a phenomenon of thought." (Vygotsky, 1986, p.212) Vygotsky goes on to demonstrate how words embody meaning, arguing

that in the historical evolution of language the structure of meaning and its evolutionary nature also change. Al-Attas' concern is to realise the essential *ma'ná* (meaning) of a word, which he defines as "the recognition of the place of anything in a system… Meaning… is a mental image (denoted by a word)… When that word or expression becomes an idea, or a notion in the mind (*'aql* with reference to *Nuṭq*) it is called understood (*mafhūm*)" (al-Attas, 1980, p. 3)

Al-Attas is ultimately concerned with rejuvenating Islamic thought, by reviving the essence of meanings as embodied in Quranic terminology and the Quranic worldview. He sees language as one medium of communication between the divine and human, which leads ultimately to a more experiential relationship with the divine through the Ghazālian concept of *dhawq* (tasting). This demonstrates a divergence with Vygotsky, who is far more interested in how word meanings develop, mainly in children's cognitive development but also more widely. "If word meanings change in their inner nature, then the relation of thought to word also changes… Let us consider the process of verbal thinking from the first dim stirring of a thought to its formulation… how meanings… function in the live process of verbal thought." (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 217)

The question of how meanings function in the live process of verbal thought, is essential to an empirical study of halaqah. This is because cognitive development of *'aql* through *nutq* is also a stated aim of halaqah, as part of personal development embodied in shakhsiyah Islamiyah. It is important to note here that al-Attas is not stating that meanings are static; he recognises the development of individual human thought and understanding in relating to the other within one's lifeworld. Meanings are generated through thought, which in sociocultural theory is dependent on language. Like Vygotsky, he sees language as essentially about communication and thus essentially about relationships with the other. In the Muslim context, this refers to the personal human journey towards Allah, through the threefold relationships with, self, others and Allah. As an educator, al-Attas would be in agreement with Vygotsky's thesis of the social impact on thought through language, the impact on the intramental of the intermental (Mercer, 2000). There is no contention with Mercer's thesis that language as a peculiarly human characteristic enables shared knowledge for problem solving. However, there is a tension with Mercer's argument of the open

nature of language, whereby "words and structures have no fixed associations of meaning and can be recombined infinitely –so new meanings can be negotiated" (Mercer, 2000, p.168). As a Muslim educator, al-Attas' concern is the intellectual revival of Islamic thought from the Quranic paradigm. In such an endeavour, the subject of interthinking has to be drawn from the Quran; and intrathinking includes the personal reflexive dialogue of the *nafs* with Allah, mediated by traditional Islamic scholarship. His aim is the revival and reapplication of traditional meanings as opposed to the generation of new ones. Nevertheless, Al-Attas' neo-Ghazālian theory provides a strong foundation for halaqah as cognitive dialogic pedagogy, enabling a comparison between al-Attas' theory and Vygotskian sociocultural theory. Moreover, if 'thinking communities' (Mercer, 2000, p.169) of Muslims are attempting to make sense of their being through dialogic halaqah in twenty-first century Britain, then such halaqah can be understood as a self-consciously sociocultural activity. The act of seeking out established meanings of Quranic terms, necessarily involves the deconstruction of their conceptual meaning and its reapplication in new dynamic fluid contexts, whilst retaining an understanding of original meanings.

Research on halaqah as practiced in Shakhsiyah Schools, can therefore be located within existing theoretical and empirical sociocultural research. As dialogue between children is the aim of halaqah, research on classroom talk and group-work, for example Mercer's research into developing children's awareness of the power of talk for learning, through establishing rules for exploratory talk (Barnes, 2008; Mercer, & Dawes, 2008), has strong parallels with halaqah. The terms interthinking and intrathinking used above, are devised by Mercer (2000). During halaqah, children may break off into smaller groups or 'talk partners' hopefully using 'exploratory talk' (Dawes, Mercer, & Wegerif, 2004) to discuss a concept or answer a question, before feeding back to the class through 'presentational talk'. On some occasions older children lead halaqah and mediate the class discussion. Through both types of talk, children take responsibility for their own learning and indeed for their viewpoints, relationships, actions and conclusions. In this way talk involves learner agency. However, research has shown that whilst schools and teachers may aim to develop high quality group work, it is common that whilst children may sit in groups they rarely work together as a group (Galton & Hargreaves, 2009; Galton, Simon, & Croll, 1980). It is possible that the nature of halaqah as mediated by a teacher, may serve to

support children in developing the skills of collaborative and exploratory talk, so that they can be reproduced during group-work. Halaqah is often used to discuss issues or disputes that have arisen in the class, allowing children to understand multiple viewpoints. Through discussion about an episode in which they have been participants, the class shares, reinterprets and develops meanings, creating common knowledge (Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Mercer, 1995), which is built up cumulatively over time (Alexander, 2004). This common knowledge is consciously framed by Quranic conceptualisations of the world, which function as common knowledge for all Muslims. Thus children and teacher are 'thinking together' (Mercer & Dawes, 2008), to generate knowledge and understanding within an explicitly Islamic cultural context. This development of a class learning community, complements the personal development generated by halaqah that is the subject of this thesis.

In theorising *ta'līm* within dialogic halaqah, I draw on the Islamic tradition of *su'wāl jawāb* (question and answer), where students engage in extensive questioning of a teacher, and a dialogue ensues. Furthermore, in theorising *ta'līm* in this way, a parallel is seen in the Vygotskian concept of the 'zone of proximal development'; that learning takes place through dialogical interaction between teacher and learner, within an interdependent relationship that provides opportunities for 'scaffolding' learning. Sociocultural teachers work at the interface of the 'pedagogical limits' to any act of learning, examining where those limits are and how they can be broadened. Sociocultural research suggests that dialogue and criticality are the keys to enhanced learning in modern classrooms (Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Alexander, 2004; Barnes, 2008). Shakhsiyah Schools' teachers are trained to understand that underpinning the idea of halaqah as dialogic pedagogy is the Quranic pedagogy of questioning and reflection. This is a form of critical inquiry that was enacted during Prophetic halaqah, whereby Quranic recitation would act as an impetus for reflective critique of long-held beliefs, and raise questions about the possibility of personal and societal transformation. It is worth re-iterating that the basis of this emphasis on critical reflection, is the importance given to questioning and reflection in the Quranic narrative. For example, Allah instructs Prophet Muhammad, *"Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding."* (Quran 39:9). This exhortation to acquiring knowledge has traditionally been considered ontological as well as epistemological (Rosenthal,

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2006). Moreover, as shown in Section 3.7 below, it has a dialogic dimension.

Critical reflection is therefore an essential part of Islamic education, which encourages use of the exclusive human faculty of *'aql* (intellect), and the development of the human capacity to reason. Thus, existing research on the development of reasoning skills through dialogue has relevance to the development of halaqah as pedagogy (Mercer, Wegerif & Dawes, 1999; Mercer & Littleton, 2007). Although the development of reasoning is not the specific focus of this study, children's ability to think critically and reflexively is. Howe and Mercer (2012) have discussed the usefulness of the expression of contrasting opinions, as an important predictor of learning gain, and this factor is considered in evaluating the dialogic quality of halaqah. Moreover, Alexander's criteria of high quality educational dialogue as 'collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful', is also important in evaluating the dialogic nature of halaqah. These principles imply a certain ontological quality to educational dialogue. Chapter 4 will describe in detail how these and other factors will be used to empirically evaluate halaqah as dialogic pedagogy.

Prior to the empirical study, it is important to examine another layer of Islamic educational theory that considers human beings as dialogic beings. Although al-Attas' theory has been used above to understand the relationship between thought and language, and the dialogic nature of *ta'līm*, al-Attas' main argument is that education should be understood as *ta'dīb* (1980). This conceptualisation begins to draw in the idea of education as ontologically dialogic; and is an important dimension of the theory underpinning halaqah.

3.7 T'ādib wa Tazkiyah: halaqah as ontological dialogic pedagogy

Having theoretically explored halaqah as critical dialogic pedagogy, and cognitive dialogic pedagogy, I now consider it as ontological dialogic pedagogy. Traditional Islamic epistemology locates the *'aql* (intellect/mind) in the *qalb* (spiritual heart or seat of consciousness). According to al-Attas, these two terms are better understood as synonymous because the *qalb* is essentially a "spiritual organ of cognition" (1980, p.2). There is, therefore, a personal, spiritual and affective dimension of *'aql,* which goes beyond thinking skills to higher human faculties of mind (Henzell-Thomas,

2005). These include insight, intuition, embodied wisdom, and human flourishing through moral character. Al-Attas links this type of 'cognition' to the capacity of using speech in the 'formulation of meaning', which is essentially relational or dialogical, as the meaning of any thing is determined by its relationship with other things. Furthermore, for al-Attas, this dialogic epistemological understanding of the human being's relationship with the 'world of things' extends to the dialogical relationship between the *nafs* (self), others, and Allah; with Allah as superaddressee (Wegerif, 2011). Al-Attas draws on the Ghazālian tradition, whereby these relationships are based on human agency in seeking to know and understand Allah.

T'ādib comes from a linguistic root which is related to the concept of discipline, it is often understood as the inculcation of morals and manners; etiquette; and the high civilisational achievements of literature and poetry. Al-Attas discusses in detail that this is not the original conception of the term. For him *t'ādib* has more to do with full and holistic development, where the *nafs* understands itself in relation to the other, through these three dialogic relationships. Al-Attas defines the real meaning of *tādib* as "recognition and acknowledgement of the proper place of things", in relation to the *nafs* and within the world (Attas 1980, p.8). Furthermore, this recognition serves as *āyāt* (signs) that point towards Allah. It must be remembered that the Quranic concept of *āyāt* refers to words as well as things. Therefore a person's *mafhūm* (understanding) of the 'meaning' of a word or thing ultimately generates recognition and understanding of Allah.

Al-Attas contrasts this more holistic dialogic understanding of *t'ādib* with an understanding of *t'alīm* as the acquisition of knowledge. In this sense, he sees *t'alīm* as mere learning without understanding, that is, without knowing the true purpose of what has been learnt. From a *t'ādib* approach, the true purpose of knowledge of a thing, is to be grasped by understanding its relation to everything else. It is this that renders the knowledge more meaningful, and makes it holistic. This dialogic understanding of al-Attas' theory is significant, because al-Attas' emphasis on *t'ādib* has led to critics misunderstanding the holistic and exploratory nature of his conceptualisation of *t'ādib*; seeing it instead as limiting, confining, inward looking and obsessed with the 'proper place' of things (Sahin, 2013, p. 178). Al-Attas' criticism of *t'alīm* is concerned with the standardisation and narrow instrumentalism

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of both modern 'western' education and the reified educational systems to be found in most madrasahs. This concern about education lacking depth and purpose is important to the Ghazalian tradition. Henzell-Thomas compares al-Ghazali's eleventh century critique of the 'conventional learning of the age' treating only the superficial aspects of man, with modern education and its sole emphasis on the thinking and reasoning aspect of the human mind. Al-Ghazali's point was that true knowledge comes from direct spiritual experience, *dhawq* (tasting); this comes through seeking the divine and disciplining the *nafs* (self/ego) through *t'ādib* (disciplining) and *tazkiyah* (purification). It is through these dialogical educational processes that the *nafs* comes to know and understand itself, its relations with others and with Allah. Here, Islamic educational theory begins to align with Hermans (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 2010) and Wegerif's (2011) work on dialogical-self theory.

For al-Ghazali, freedom and autonomy is not limited to the ability to think and act for oneself; but in essence arises through a realisation by the *nafs* of the full potential of the human being to harness his freewill and intellect, and centre his choices and actions through his own agency, enacted in relation to others in his lifeworld. In this way the *nafs* gains an ontological understanding of itself as a dialogical Muslim-self, and realises its insignificance in relation to Allah, who as the super-addressee, is the infinite other that bears witness to the *nafs'* ongoing ontological dialogue (Wegerif, 2011). Freedom and autonomy can only come through disciplining the *nafs* (self/ego), overcoming the base desires for the material world, and realising that the self exists and acts in *relation* to the other. This way of understanding autonomy requires emotional, moral and spiritual intelligences. Such intelligences are ways of knowing that are conventionally sidelined by modern schooling, whereas an understanding of education as *t'ādib* can help develop these ways of knowing. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this Islamic theory is mostly developed in terms of the relationship with Allah as the super-addressee, as opposed to with human others. The proposal in the present thesis is that the neo-Ghazalian intellectual tradition can be developed with a stronger focus on the dialogic relationship with others. This chapter is an initial attempt to do so, by comparing and contrasting with educational dialogue theories that are fully focused on human interthinking to develop cognitive and affective domains of the human personality.

The holistic development in *t'ādib* has a somewhat tenuous parallel to sociocultural theory, in a reading of Vygotsky that claims a "tripartite relationship among emotion, behavioural mastery, and personality" (Levykh, 2008, p. iii). Although Vygotsky's work is rooted in western empirical science, Vygotsky saw his work as much broader, as interdisciplinary and holistic (Daniels, 2001; Vygotsky, 1986). Indeed Vygotsky refers to philosophy and literature liberally throughout the text of *Thought and Language,* particularly in Chapter 7. Daniels (2001, p7) sees this holism as important in relation to Vygotsky's thought on agency within social formation. In this way, Vygotsky's thought can be compared with the neo-Ghazalian thought of al-Attas. Vygotsky's thought, as framed within a secular-liberal paradigm, and al-Attas' thought, as framed within an Islamic paradigm, are two distinct yet parallel ways of understanding education as dialogue. It can inform Kazipedes' ontological claim of 'education as dialogue', where dialogue is understood as a unique human achievement (2013). Al-Attas would agree that dialogue is uniquely human, but would understand it as due to divine grace, as opposed to human achievement. Moreover, this conceptualisation aligns with Matusov's (2009) ontological understanding of education as essentially dialogic, and is informed by Wegerif's idea of a super-addressee (Wegerif, 2011).

Unlike al-Attas, whose concern is the revival of Islamic intellectualism through a paradigm shift that returns to classical Islamic ways of knowing, Wegerif, is much more interested in cross-cultural dialogue for the twenty-first century. Wegerif's work involves generating dialogical open-mindedness towards the other's perspective (Doney & Wegerif, 2017), creativity through collaboration (Wegerif, 2010), and self-awareness through awareness of another's perspective as different to one's own (Wegerif, 2011). From a Bakhtininan perspective, it could be argued that al-Attas fails to recognize the tension between an 'internally-persuasive discourse' and an 'authoritative discourse', which in this case is that of Islamic textual authority (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 424). The Bakhtinian conceptualisation is of an internally-persuasive discourse retelling the text in one's own words, which inevitably leads to modifications. Human coming-to-consciousness consists of an on-going tension between these two discourses. Here al-Attas and the practice of halaqah potentially diverge from dialogic pedagogy built upon Bakhtinian understandings. However, I would argue that this is a nuanced divergence, in that giving primacy to scriptural

texts, still relies in a sense of agency that seeks to give this primacy, *and* recognises that in doing so, this agency acts on an internally-persuasive discourse.

3.8 From theoretical inquiry to an empirical study

Thus far, theoretical research questions related to personal autonomy, Islamic education, and educational dialogue, have been used to guide a theoretical exploration of secular-liberal and Islamic conceptualisations of these terms, through sociological, philosophical and pedagogical lenses. Chapter 1 sets the case for the research by exploring the complex sociopolitical context that the research is being conducted in. Chapter 2 consists of discussion about Islamic theories of knowledge, personhood and education, which lead to a conceptualisation of shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self, imbued with personal agency. Chapter 3 explores how foundational Islamic conceptualisations of education such as *tarbīyah, t'alīm, t'ādib* and *tazkiyah,* can be understood as dialogic pedagogies that recognise and develop personal agency. It further explores these conceptualisations in relation to the practice of dialogic halaqah in Shakhsiyah Schools. Parallels and contrasts between halaqah and mainstream dialogic educational practices are drawn, in order to demonstrate that there is a substantial theoretical overlap between conceptualisations of dialogic education arising from Islamic and secular-liberal paradigms.

Chapter 3 demonstrates that there appear to be substantive differences among Muslim educators in conceptualising education and its aims, and substantive differences among secular-liberal educators in conceptualising educational dialogue and its aims. Nevertheless, the broad aims of Islamic education could be defined as the development of the holistic personality of a rational human being who has the capacity to freely choose to be Muslim; and the broad aims of secular-liberal education could be defined as the development of a rational human being, who has the capacity to choose her own values. If these are the broad aims, then educational dialogue, whether it is through halaqah, or through secular-liberal pedagogies, has the potential to achieve these broad aims.

In conclusion, the proposal made in this chapter is that halaqah as practised in Shakhsiyah Schools, is a dialogic pedagogy generating autonomy within an Islamic

context. It is proposed that dialogic halaqah helps Muslim children and young people work out their place in contemporary Britain and a globalised world. Dialogic halaqah develops *'aql*, the cognitive ability to reason and the capacity to think and reflect; it also develops the affective and spiritual dimensions of personal character that support an Islamic conceptualisation of human autonomy. These claims need to be explored empirically. As these claims are so specific, and as halaqah is a substantially different context to most classroom practice, this thesis empirically investigates the quality of discourse in halaqah by collecting data with relevant content from several halaqah and considering whether dialogic processes can be identified in this data.

In empirically investigating the processes displayed within halaqah as a dialogic pedagogy, my aim is to examine whether participants understand themselves as autonomous individuals; whether they demonstrate the self-reflexive agency of a dialogical Muslim-self; and whether halaqah itself has the features of a dialogic pedagogy. Lefstein has described the tangible characteristics of dialogic pedagogy as "learning processes in which teacher and pupils critically interrogate the topic of study, express and listen to multiple voices and points of view, and create respectful and equitable classroom relations" (2017). I explore whether halaqah has these characteristics, and others theorised by Alexander, Mercer and Wegerif. Moreover, I investigate whether halaqah provides a culturally-coherent dialogic space (Wegerif, 2010) for British-Muslim children and young people to address issues of identity, belonging and integration. Shakhsiyah Schools' teachers see halaqah as pedagogy for the development of articulate, identity-confident children, who can discuss such issues with assurance thereby extending their own, and others' knowledge and thinking. They claim that halaqah contrasts with other forms of Islamic education in that it enables considered and nuanced examination of differing perspectives. According to school leaders, although the discourse in halaqah is mediated by the basic tenets of Islam and its sacred texts, it is an open dialogue, which encourages participants to consider multiple viewpoints, and with an open mind apply their agency. Therefore, this thesis aims to examine school-leaders claims that learners' personal agency is essential for the interthinking (Mercer, 2000) that happens in halaqah. Through interthinking learners explore and evaluate differing interpretations of Islam and of what it means to be a British Muslim. This intermental dialogue leads to the development of the intramental (Mercer, 2000), that is, critically and

reflectively active dialogical Muslim-selves.

The following empirical research questions have been devised to test these claims. They will be the basis of a qualitative case study that is described and justified in the next chapter.

3.8.1 Empirical research questions

1. How do young Muslims educated in Shakhsiyah schools conceptualise personal autonomy, authority (religious or otherwise), and shakhsiyah Islamiyah?
2. What are the reflections of young Muslims educated in Shakhsiyah Schools about their educational experiences of halaqah, in comparison to other forms of education?
3. Do, and if so to what extent, do these young Muslims identify a relationship between halaqah as a dialogic pedagogy and the development of their personal autonomy within an Islamic paradigm, i.e. their shakhsiyah Islamiyah?
4. To what extent, and in what ways, can the discussion generated within halaqah be identified as dialogic?
5. What evidence, if any, is there in the dialogue created in halaqah of participants' personal autonomy in the form of questioning, reasoning, critical thinking, self-reflexivity and confidence in one's own position while respectfully seeking to understand the other?

Chapter 4 Methodology and Research Design

This chapter sets out the methodological theory and research design for the empirical study. It builds on my Masters research, where I used halaqah as a research method. The ideas underpinning this use of halaqah as a research method were developed through theoretical work. The theoretical work was required in order to translate my epistemological beliefs rooted in the Islamic paradigm, into a research design that delivers authentic and trustworthy qualitative data. Some of the content in this chapter is summarised from a methodological journal article published from the Masters study (Ahmed, 2014a).

4.1 Establishing a research paradigm: locating Islamic research in the indigenous research discourse

The use of halaqah as research method emerges out of my personal experience as a Muslim practitioner-researcher, working in British Islamic faith-schools that are seeking to provide culturally-coherent contemporary education. I work at the interface between theory, practice and community activism. My research methodology therefore has to reflect these values of cultural authenticity. My experience as a research student is similar to the experiences of other Muslim researchers (Zeera, 2001) who face tensions between two paradigms and attempt to reconcile them. Nevertheless, it may seem peculiar to use the subject of the study, i.e. halaqah, as the data collection method. It is therefore important to explain how my epistemological and ontological beliefs have shaped my methodology and research design. I begin with an attempt to demonstrate parallels between my quest for cultural authenticity and wider qualitative research discourses, namely critical pedagogy (CP) and indigenous knowledge (IK). I then tentatively propose some 'Islamic research principles' as a guiding framework for devising an authentic methodology that emerges from the Islamic paradigm. In Ahmed (2014a), I have discussed at some length some of the theoretical discourses amongst Muslim scholars that surround the methodological issues that I face. I will not repeat this discussion here.

Many of these discourses are not related specifically to Muslim experience, but are also to be found in other 'non-western' experiences such as the place of indigenous or 'non-western' knowledge in the academy. Researchers from the global South have

identified research as an arm of the colonial endeavour (Connell, 2007; L. T. Smith, 1999) and are seeking to reclaim intellectual space that centres their indigenous worldviews. Indigenous researchers tend to have a commitment to critical pedagogy (Norman K. Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008), and believe in the transformative nature of education as a means of challenging power. These post-colonial movements go beyond race and gender equality to equality of thought/worldview; challenging a colonial concept of 'progress' that privileges 'knowledge' as constructed in the global North. Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (2008), Reagan (2005), and Connell (2007) all place Islamic educational theory within the IK and CP discourse, on the basis that the Islamic worldview shares many of the concerns of IK and CP. It could be argued that the rich Islamic tradition of structured documented scholarship problematises its classification as IK, which often focuses on oral traditions. Countering this claim is the viewpoint that dismissing a documentary knowledge tradition reveals a continued disrespect to IK, in that it appears to consider IK to be less rigorous or illiterate, and therefore in need of separation from 'scholarly' types of knowledge. The argument also demonstrates the continued muddled perception of Islamic knowledge in relation to positivist modernist epistemology. Islam does not fit into a secular rationalist or secular empiricist model, and is therefore decried as invalid, despite sharing an intertwined history with the development of European modernist thought. Islamic scholarship of the eleventh and twelfth centuries laid down a fairly rational and rigorous approach to knowledge generation, including principles of empiricist research, which were later developed into the 'scientific method', and adopted in the European renaissance (Hassan, Ahmed, & Iskandar, 2001). However, this scholarship was nonetheless framed within a deeply religious context, and is therefore classed as pre-modern and medieval (Gunther, 2006). This is further compounded by the fact that Islamic learning will not compromise on the supremacy of Quranic revelation and Prophetic tradition as sources of unassailable knowledge. How then is Islamic scholarship to be seen as IK and Islamic education to be seen as CP? Although these tensions may appear unique to Islamic knowledge, there are parallels with challenges and paradoxes that are to be found in other IK movements. I have explored these parallels elsewhere in relation to al-Attas' philosophy of education (Ahmed, 2016b).

4.2 An Islamic research methodology, and halaqah as data collection method
Despite the qualifications discussed above, I aim to use an interpretive paradigm as

the overarching strategy of enquiry whilst retaining the holism of Islamic epistemology through the principles given below. In interpretivism, interpretations are limited to a particular individual or group. They are valuable in a pluralistic society to gain understanding of the individual or group. It could be argued I am bypassing the more fundamental divide between holistic Islamic epistemology and its principle of an eternal core truth, and the inherent relativism/subjectivism of interpretivism. Alternatively, my approach could be understood as a reflection of Islamic wisdom; that the human being should accept her limitations and whilst seeking truth, acknowledge that there is always more to learn, whether she is functioning as a scientist, interpretivist, or religious scholar. The non-Muslim reader will read my work as purely interpretivist. For the Muslim reader, whose worldview is shaped by Islamic epistemology, my work will be judged on how far it is true to the Quranic paradigm as embodied in the principles given below. If this study were to use a purely interpretivist paradigm, it could produce findings considered useful from a social research perspective; however, such findings may not be meaningful or useful to the community that is initiating the research.

Furthermore, such an approach would bypass the intrinsic value of authentic indigenous research. Arguments for culturally relevant/coherent research and education for indigenous and colonised peoples have been made for many years, for example, in Native-American (Klug & Whitfield, 2003), Australian-Aboriginal (Osborne, 1991) and African-American communities (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Another IK approach is known as Kaupapa Maori, which is a comprehensively developed approach to education and research from a Maori perspective (Bishop, 1998; G. H. Smith, 2003; L. T. Smith, 2005). Like my personal journey, Kaupapa Maori began with the Maori community seeking out culturally-coherent education for Maori children. They were responding to fears that Maori culture and language was disappearing. Development of Kaupapa Maori research intertwined with development of Kaupapa Maori pedagogy and schools. Kaupapa Maori researchers did not develop a unique new methodology, but rather developed a framework with which to approach research, including principles to guide the researcher, given in Table 4.1. Research informed by these principles embraces political activism, empowering Maori communities.

Table 4.1- Principles of Kaupapa Maori research

Principles of Kaupapa Maori Research
Tino Rangatiratanga – The Principle of Self-determination
Taonga Tuku Iho – The Principle of Cultural Aspiration
Ako Māori – The Principle of Culturally Preferred Pedagogy
Kia piki ake i ngā raruraru o te kainga – The Principle of Socio-Economic Mediation
Whānau – The Principle of Extended Family Structure
Kaupapa - The Principle of Collective Philosophy
Te Tiriti o Waitangi – The Principle of the Treaty of Waitangi
Ata - The Principle of Growing Respectful Relationships

These Maori research principles are a holistic and practical model that can be emulated to devise similar Islamic research principles given in Table 4.2, as a means of conceptualising my research design and my use of halaqah as a research method.

Table 4.2 A tentative proposal for principles of Islamic research (Ahmed, 2014a)

A tentative proposal for 'Principles of Islamic Research'
1. *The principle of primacy of Quran and Prophetic Sayings*   As revealed texts, these are the ultimate guiding forces for Muslim researchers who are adopting the Islamic paradigm.
2. *The principle of combining classical Islamic scholarship and sciences with a range of other research methods*   Traditional methodologies for understanding the revealed texts have an important role to play in helping Muslims understand new knowledge and address new scientific, social and human issues. Relying on classical thought with all its diversity will generate authenticity and continuation of the Islamic tradition. The classical methodologies naturally generate holistic Islamic meanings and moral guidance on application of knowledge for human sustainability and environmental conservation. Most research methodologies are compatible with Islamic epistemology once the Islamic paradigm is made the conceptual framework within which the methodology operates. Methodologies and methods should be selected in order to meet the objectives of the research and in line with the other principles.
3. *The principle of using all human faculties of understanding, intellectual, rational, intuitive and spiritual*   Human understanding of the natural, social and human worlds cannot be reduced to the empirical/rational dimension only. A more holistic approach needs to be accepted to recognise multiple forms of human meaning and knowledge. Research must be rigorous and peer reviewed to ensure validity and authenticity.
4. *The principle of centring the human situation in research*   Research should meet the holistic needs of human beings as individuals and a collective. Therefore the human situation should be at the core of all research. This is applicable in all endeavours of knowledge seeking, particularly when studying human society. Research

should have a broad holistic, qualitative, interdisciplinary approach, which incorporates reductive elements for detailed understanding. Research should ultimately be purposeful for human beings in their capacity as trustees over the created world.

5. *The principle of Islamic ethics and etiquette*
The researcher must demonstrate a deep commitment to Islamic ethics as a human being, and as a researcher, including appropriate etiquette in light of Islamic teachings about interacting with one's own and other communities.

6. *The principle of collaborative, participative, transformative and useful research*
Research should serve the people researched; it should empower and offer practical and real solutions and improvements. It should include the researched in all stages of the research process including dissemination and application.

These principles are generically derived from the Islamic ontological and epistemological paradigm, described in Section 2.4, and have been checked as authentic with a qualified Islamic scholar.[10] Figure 4.1 details how halaqah nests into the proposed methodology and research principles.

Halaqah – Thematic and sociocultural analysis of data generated by a participative, collaborative, spiritual and reflexive dialogue in a halaqah format

A intrinsic qualitative case study of the use of halaqah as dialogic pedagogy in Shakhsiyah Schools as a means to develop autonomy/shakhsiyah

A Critical Theory approach with an awareness of a post-colonial indigenous knowledge perspective

An Interpretivist paradigm that draws on sociocultural theory

Islamic research principles derived from Islamic Epistemology, ontology and values

Figure 4.1 Research Paradigm, Epistemology, Methodology, Methods (adapted from Ahmed 2012)

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[10] Personal communication with Sheikh Ramzy Ajem 17.10.12

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Figure 4.2 outlines various existing strands in qualitative research interwoven into halaqah as research method. Detailed descriptors of these strands can be found in (Ahmed 2014a).
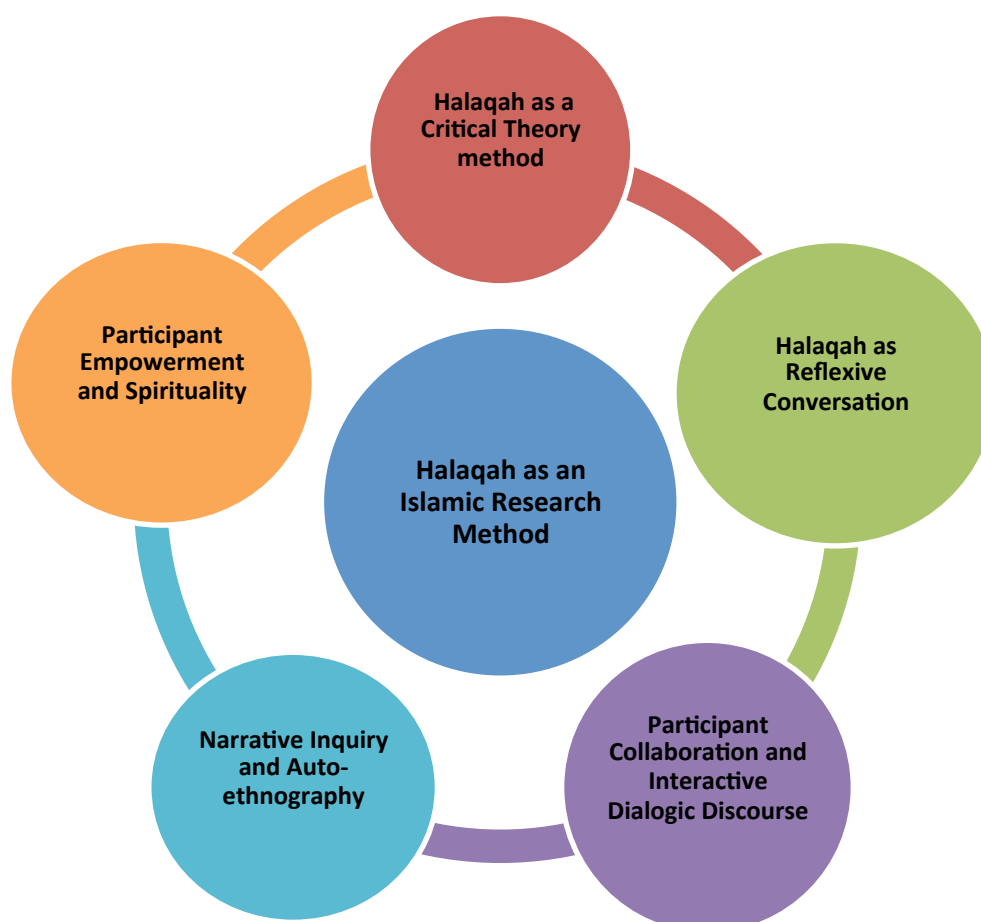
Figure 4.2 Qualitative research strands incorporated into Halaqah as research method (Ahmed, 2014a)

These Islamic research principles are realised through the collective qualitative processes of halaqah adapted as data collection method. As such, it operates as a forum in which children and young people can express and develop accounts of their personal perspectives on autonomy, authority and halaqah, thereby generating data for analysis. Halaqah celebrates the sacred, spiritual and transformative nature of *'ilm* (knowledge), and values the beliefs, cultural aspirations, personal and collective autonomy of participants. Through halaqah participants are able to express viewpoints as Muslims with a particular worldview, and as co-constructors of knowledge who are

developing collective insight through interthinking (Mercer, 2000). This *'ilm* (knowledge) is meaningful for participants, as individuals growing closer to Allah through self-reflection, and as a group through collaborative learning. Halaqah as a method does not treat participants as complex 'material subjects', but values the human potential for realisation of deep meaning and personal growth. Halaqah is more than a group interview or focus group. Its format is a traditional reflexive practice in Islamic cultures where the reference point is the Quran. The interpretivist aspect is, therefore, limited and qualified through emphasis on cultural-coherence, that is, the Islamic worldview. Nevertheless, halaqah has the potential to generate rich qualitative data that can be subjected to rigorous qualitative analysis.

The piloting of halaqah as a data collection method during the Masters study is reported on in detail in Ahmed (2014a). For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to note the differences with the Masters study, which is the only other occasion whereby, as far as I am aware, halaqah has been used to collect research data. The main difference is that in the case of the Masters, the participants were colleagues, that is, teachers and school-leaders, as opposed to current or former pupils. This means that power differences were much less marked. The teachers' halaqah were conducted in my absence. I had joined in the school-leaders halaqah as an 'equal' participant, which is why figure 4.2 lists auto-ethnography as a potential dimension of halaqah as research method. In this doctoral study, the intention is that the young people's halaqah sessions are led by the young people, however as I am present to raise the questions and direct proceedings, power is necessarily at play, and this is discussed in more detail in Sections 4.4 and 4.7. Moreover, the children's halaqah are conducted as a series of scheduled lessons, where I take the role of the teacher, thereby, I am clearly in a position of power. The challenge of researcher power in relation to participants was taken into consideration through processes of researcher reflexivity during the stages of analysis. Section 4.8 describes the processes of the analyses undertaken, illustrating how using established data analysis schemes greater rigour is generated in the doctoral study, in comparison to the Masters.

In the next section, I describe how scrutinising another existing research methodology, led me to conclude that using halaqah as a data collection method was on balance a useful approach in meeting the aims of this PhD.

4.3 Scrutinising an existing research methodology: Religious identity in Muslim adolescents

Whilst researching autonomy and Islamic education, I considered Sahin's approach to research and his research instruments for the study of psychosocial development of Muslim adolescents (2013). Sahin researched modes of religiosity amongst Muslim youth, aged 16-19 in Birmingham, shortly before the 9/11 attacks, and later in Kuwait. His research instruments have been adopted by a number of graduate students. Sahin's methodology is formulated from a Husserlian phenomenological approach. He draws upon the work of Erikson (1980) to understand the adolescent struggle with identity formation, and the work of Marcia (1993), who developed Erikson's thinking to define four modes of adolescent identity states, shown in Table 4.3.

	Commitment	No Commitment
Exploration	**Identity Achievement** – the state of having developed well-defined personal values and self-concepts. Their identities may be expanded and further defined in adulthood, but the basics are there. They are committed to an ideology and have a strong sense of ego identity.	**Identity Moratorium (Exploratory)** – adolescent has acquired vague or ill-formed ideological and occupational commitments; he/she is still undergoing the identity search (crisis). They are beginning to commit to an identity but are still developing it.
No Exploration	**Identity Foreclosure** – means that the adolescent blindly accepts the identity and values that were given in childhood by families and significant others. The adolescent's identity is foreclosed until they determine for themselves their true identity. The adolescent in this state is committed to an identity but not as a result of their own searching or crisis.	**Diffusion** – the state of having no clear idea of one's identity and making no attempt to find that identity. These adolescents may have struggled to find their identity, but they never resolved it, and they seem to have stopped trying. There is no commitment and no searching.

Table 4.3 Marcia's identity states as applied by Sahin (2013)

Sahin also draws on Francis' 'Scale of Attitude towards Christianity' (Gibson & Francis, 1989) to devise an 'Attitudes towards Islam Scale'; resulting in the 'You and Your Faith' questionnaire and a semi-structured interview schedule called the 'Muslim Subjectivity Interview Schedule' (MSIS). In his original study, Sahin collected quantitative data from 383 Muslim students in Birmingham aged between 16-19 years. He then conducted semi-structured interviews with fifteen of these students. Sahin's findings (2013) show that none of these Muslim young people have an *achieved* identity as regards their faith and that the majority (nine out of fifteen) have an *exploratory* identity. *Foreclosed* identities were in a minority, that is three, and these all happened to be male. The remaining three have a *diffused* identity, in that, whilst detached from their faith, they still remain believers. In his qualitative analysis of the views of the young Muslims who completed the semi-structured interviews, Sahin finds that the Islamic education they received is inadequate in supporting them to have an *exploratory* approach, which would have enabled them to have an *achieved* identity. He goes on to propose the development of a critical/dialogic pedagogy for Islamic education and engages in some theoretical work, demonstrating how such a pedagogy can be derived from the Quran and Islamic sources.

The relevance of Sahin's work to mine led to consideration of the viability of using his research instruments as a means of validating my work. My data and findings could potentially be compared with his data and findings; which would provide a measure of whether halaqah, as critical dialogic pedagogy, enables young people to have an autonomous, nuanced and reflective attitude towards their faith, whilst remaining committed believers. However, I decided not to use his research instruments for a number of reasons. Firstly, I was not convinced by the fourfold categorisation of identity; it appears to be a little crude for my purposes. I fully expect most religiously observant young Muslims aged 16-19 years, such as those who are participating in my study, to have a mixture of an *exploratory/achieved* identity, as exploration of identity is, in my opinion, a lifelong reality for Muslims in twenty-first century Britain. I am more interested in *how* young Muslims explore their identity, and whether they are able to engage in critical dialogic discourse to address questions that arise relating to their identity. Secondly, my methodological work during the Masters is quite well developed and I feel it sits more comfortably in the sociocultural

dialogue literature. I anticipate that halaqah as a data collection method will generate richer dialogic data for analysis. If it fails to do so, then the claims about halaqah will have been falsified. Thirdly, Sahin collected his data in a pre-9/11 context, amongst young people whose parents were first generation immigrants and one of his findings was a generation gap. The young people who are participants in my study have grown up in a post 9/11 context, in a climate where expressing religiosity increasingly requires personal commitment. Furthermore, their parents are young Muslim parents of the same second-generation of the late 1990s when Sahin was conducting his research. At that time, these parents were committed enough to their faith to develop an alternative educational approach for their own children. Thus, the two data sets will have substantial differences and are not so easily comparable.

4.4 Insider research

In this empirical study, I aim to analyse the complex phenomena of autonomy, authority and dialogic pedagogy in a culturally-coherent manner from within the Islamic scholarly and pedagogical tradition. Halaqah as a research method, is much more than a data collection vehicle, rather I am drawing on Islamic epistemology to use the processes of halaqah as an authentic, transformative, intellectual, spiritual experience for all participants, including the researcher. These research halaqah aim to generate insights and awareness in participants of their *nafs* (self) and its relationship with itself, with others and with Allah. The argument of authenticity is supplemented by the alignment of halaqah as research method, with established research conventions that inform this study. The epistemology, underpinning sociocultural dialogue theory, aligns with an interpretivist paradigm. Furthermore, it understands the researcher and researched as situated in a dialogic space. A space where the researcher is valued as 'research instrument': her role is to engage in conscious dialogic interpretation that involves defining and redefining meanings (Stake, 2010).

> At the heart of interpretive inquiry is a researcher's capacity for encountering, listening, understanding, and thus "experiencing" the phenomenon under investigation. Rather than assuming the traditional stance of a detached and neutral observer, an interpretive inquirer, much like a tuning fork, resonates with exquisite sensitivity to the subtle vibrations of encountered experiences. (Piantanida & Garman, 2009, p. 59)

Therefore, like many qualitative researchers, I find myself in an iterative reflexive process of defining and redefining meanings related to the phenomena of dialogue, halaqah, Islam, shakhsiyah and personal autonomy, as I seek to theoretically and empirically make sense of, and interpret the relationships between these phenomena. Equally, designing and conducting the empirical study is also a process of dialogic encounter, of drawing on Islamic epistemology and ontology to negotiate a qualitative research paradigm. My status as an insider-outsider researcher, participating in the data collection halaqah, involves a continuous dialogic reflexive engagement, which includes developing and refining research questions, making research decisions and creating meaning in writing up the findings. This qualitative approach can be understood as performing and writing culture, that is, generating a specific Islamic educational culture for a British context. Thus halaqah is not simply a vehicle to gather information, but an event that produces "performance texts and performance ethnographies about self and society" (Denzin, 2001, p. 24).

Considering this alignment with established qualitative methodologies, it could be argued that halaqah is simply a focus group or group interview, and therefore needs to be identified as such. This argument is strengthened by the observation that group interviews with predetermined question-answer structures have been replaced with focus groups that are perceived as "dialogic events within which power relations between researchers and research participants are diminished and people collectively interrogate the conditions of their lives to promote transformation" (Kamberelis, Dimitriadis, & Welker, 2017 p. 694). As Ladson-Billings pointed out, to the unaware eye, culturally-relevant teaching is "just good teaching" (1995, p. 159). Ladson-Billings powerfully dismantles this reductionist argument by demonstrating that cultural incongruity between white teachers and African-American students, impacts black-students' achievement, thus making a case for culturally-relevant teaching. Her argument can be used analogically in relation to halaqah as research method. It may be the case that a committed interpretivist and transformative approach to a focus group could have a similar outcome to halaqah, in generating rich data through a dialogic space. However, it could be countered that the culturally-coherent nature of halaqah as an Islamic activity, in generating a dialogue about Islam, autonomy and authority, has the capacity to not only be more relevant, but more meaningful for

participants and researcher. Another question that needs consideration is whether halaqah as a group activity could lead to groupthink, that, as a traditional Islamic practice, halaqah may encourage participants to don their Islamic personae. In such a scenario, individual semi-structured interviews would generate more credible data. In-depth interviews may be a credible alternative approach to the one I have taken. However, dialogic halaqah has the capacity to provide culturally specific 'exquisite sensitivity', with the researcher intuitively sensing new and unexpected phenomena and meanings in the dialogic space. Furthermore, its dialogicity is not so much between researcher and participant but between participants; it aims to stimulate counter-argument and co-construction. The data will also be subjected to dialogue analysis, which would identify if the method had encouraged bias towards a particular narrative, as opposed to the intended dialogic interaction. Furthermore, the benefits of the familiarity of the halaqah format should outweigh the potential strangeness of an individual interview, particularly with the primary-aged child participants. However, this approach to the research design raises further questions about researcher situatedness and my role as an insider.

4.4.1 Researcher Situatedness: Political context

In the politicised context of Islamic education in Britain, the research design needs to include careful consideration of the positioning and situatedness (*Situatedness*, 2008) of the researcher; because it may impact the ethical integrity, validity or trustworthiness, and potential impact of the research findings. This is particularly so due to my close involvement with the subject of my research. I am directly involved in innovating the use of dialogic halaqah with primary-aged British Muslim children, and developing theory to underpin this innovation. Thus, any research project I devise to empirically test the claims about halaqah, needs to recognise my position as an insider, particularly in relation to my role in data collection and analysis processes. 'Social-situatedness', according to Costley, Elliot and Gibbs (2010), was originally outlined by Vygotsky in 'Thought and Language', as an awareness that all forms of learning and knowledge production are ultimately social and cultural. Costley et al. discuss in some detail how work, self and learning all grow through work-based research projects, and their description is particularly apt for the complexity of my role and my closeness to the research.

As this is insider-research, claims of neutral objectivity are necessarily replaced by an emphasis on the value of presenting an insider perspective (J. Mercer, 2007) i.e. that of a practitioner-researcher working in a British Islamic faith-school, which is consciously using traditional Islamic practices. Whilst this transparency is important, it is also crucial that as a researcher, I recognise that "multiple ways of being situated in a context always exist" (*Situatedness*, 2008). In order to maintain the necessary reflexivity during the study, I need to be aware that there are always a multiplicity of possibilities as to how an insider-researcher can approach qualitative research; and that these possibilities impact interpretations and outcomes. Without continuous transparency and reflexivity, the trustworthiness of my findings may be called into question.

Furthermore, there are specific issues related to 'Muslim' insider-researchers, due to the political context of our work. With this in mind, in order to ensure that I was fully aware of all the complexities of my situation, in September 2014, I attended a conference entitled 'Inside Out: Reflexivity and Methodology in Research with British Muslims', organised by the 'Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK', Cardiff University. In this conference, postgraduate Muslim students studying Muslim communities, highlighted a range of tensions. Ebbiary (2014), pointed out that an insider researcher does not 'go to the field', but is already there. In my case, this is my workplace, where I have worked for over a decade. Ebbiary showed how in some ways, for the insider-researcher, the typical trajectory of a researcher is reversed; so that the researcher is proceeding from being an insider to an outsider through a continuous conscious effort to consider how an outsider might perceive these phenomena. She described how her relationship with the 'Muslim community' swings from loyalty to cynicism, creating complexities that require careful navigation. Pettinato (2014) identified the 'research fatigue' amongst British Muslims, exhausted by outsiders attempting to examine their 'extremism' and 'Britishness'; reminding me of the Maori researcher Tuhiwai Smith's declaration that "research, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (1999, p. 1). Pettinato's focus on the dual role of some Muslim researchers as activists, reminded me of my own motivations for the research as an extension of my ongoing activism as an educator, particularly in light of the 'Trojan Horse Affair', that dominated the British Muslim educational landscape in 2014. Pettinato showed how most social research

sought to understand Muslim activism in secular terms and did not seriously consider the 'Islamic variable'. He argued that the engaged Muslim researcher-activist has 'more of a stake in producing accurate findings than an insider', as only accurate findings will lead to useful impact in addressing the social issues of the Muslim community. Mustafa (2014) highlighted the benefits of trust that Muslim researchers enjoy, but argued that the wider context of global events, stereotyping and politicised tensions, also impact Muslim researchers, if not more so. Like other participants at this event, she emphasised the importance of researchers employing ongoing reflexivity, perseverance, sensitivity, and quality time, in carefully considering these issues. My aim is that the rest of this thesis will demonstrate this ongoing reflexivity.

4.5 An intrinsic qualitative case study

This research is designed as an 'intrinsic qualitative case study'. Stake's work on case study research is used as an appropriate qualitative approach that chimes with 'Islamic Research Principles'. This is "a view of case studies that draws from naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological and biographic research methods" (Stake, 1995, p. xi). In emphasising context, as necessary to understanding a case, Stake allows for research to use an alternative frame of reference to the scientific/positivist model. According to Stake (2005), the end product of a case study should portray its context in depth. This allows formulation of a research design rooted in an alternative epistemology, where knowledge is contextualised in reference to Quran and *Sunnah* (Prophetic tradition). Through emphasising context, this research generates understanding of the particularity, complexity and multiplicity of participants' perspectives and narratives as they emerge through reflexive conversation in halaqah. The role of case study in the research design is detailed in Figure 4.1.

The aim is not to understand this case as a representation of other cases, or to provide generalisability. Rather, this case illuminates the theoretical work conducted in this thesis, and provides data to answer specific empirical research questions, which focus on reviving and reframing a traditional Islamic pedagogy as critical-dialogic pedagogy. It is the peculiar nature of the research site that makes this case worthy of study, in that it offers a systematic alternative to conventional approaches to Islamic

education in a minority context. Shakhsiyah Schools have many features that do not easily translate to other sites. Additionally, the cumulative nature of halaqah means that it can't be generalised to short-term interventions, as some learners within these schools have engaged in daily halaqah for up to eight years.

Furthermore, within the schools there is a need to devise the case boundary; this also requires consideration of the unique nature of Shakhsiyah Schools in relation to their history as home-schooling initiatives; their ethos, identified in the 'Principles of Shakhsiyah Education' (Ahmed, 2016a); and their operation as sites of 'holistic alternative Islamic education'. One feature related to all of these factors is the small intertwined community that is under study. The pilot study had devised the case as two groups of staff, teachers and school-leaders/founders of the school. Time limitations had led to the decision not to include parents or children's perspectives rather to focus on staff alone; working in detail with one dataset in order to focus on deeper understanding of staff perspectives. Meanwhile, data analysis was informed by previous intimate knowledge of Shakhsiyah Schools' parents, staff, children, policies, curriculum and ethos. The PhD study builds on the pilot study's findings that staff consider dialogic halaqah as the core mechanism for developing shakhsiyah Islamiyah. It is therefore useful to determine whether learners agree with these findings; and to what extent these halaqah can be described as dialogic. Thus, the boundary for the PhD case study is two groups of learners; the first group is children aged 10-11 years, and the second consists of former pupils, who are now aged between 15-19 years.

A conscious decision has been taken to devise groups that have had a high quality cumulative experience of dialogic halaqah, that is, they have attended daily halaqah for as long as possible, with teachers who are skilled with dialogic pedagogy. This is because Shakhsiyah Schools face the inevitable constraints on dialogue highlighted in Chapter 3. Although the schools are independent and have an alternative ethos, they are still struggling against pressure from Ofsted to comply with a more mainstream form of education. Teachers joining the schools often hold a conventional understanding of education and conceptualise teaching as transmission of knowledge. Teachers regularly receive training using materials from successful dialogic programmes such as Alexander's, 'Talk for Learning: teaching and learning through

dialogue' (North Yorkshire County Council, 2006), and the 'Thinking Together' project (Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008 p. 67). However, the high turnover rate of teachers means that the schools sometimes struggle to embed this innovative use of halaqah effectively. This means that the practice of halaqah is often not as dialogic as intended, and many classes have a mixed experience. If the purpose of this research is to explore the unique practice of Shakhsiyah Schools, it becomes important to devise the case in a manner where this practice is fully represented. Thus the two groups of participants are purposefully devised to consist mostly of young people and children who have experienced high quality halaqah over a period of time. The former pupils are the children of the founders and thus have a seamless experience of ethos between home and school. The children's group consists of older primary children, most of whom have seven years' experience of daily halaqah with teachers who have been identified as having dialogic practice. Although these children have had extensive cumulative halaqah, its effects may not be immediately apparent. It is therefore necessary to examine whether the young people's reflections contrast with children's perspectives. Thus, these two groups are a prime case for the purposes of evaluating the success of cumulative dialogic halaqah in developing shakhsiyah.

4.6 Data collection, timescales and participants

The central strand of my empirical research is the collection and analysis of audio data of halaqah held with each of the two groups of participants. I had intended to use video data, because that is now common in dialogic classroom research, but found that as children and young people were seated in a circle, elements that could be visually observed were minimal and easily superseded by the quality of the discussion. I therefore decided to focus on listening and re-listening to the audio recordings whilst transcribing and coding transcripts, and found this the most fruitful way of attaining familiarity and intimacy with the data. I personally led each halaqah acting as teacher/facilitator. I had intended that the data would be collected through a series of three daily halaqah, with each group in late August to September 2013, in order to maintain continuity and allow for accumulation and development of the discussion over a sustained time period. The young people's data collection was conducted in August 2013; participants for this group were selected on the basis of being original members of the home-schooling collectives that had come together to

form the schools. As one aim of the study was to demonstrate the potential of dialogic halaqah, I considered it important that participants had experienced of cumulative dialogic halaqah over a number of years, and came from families committed to the schools' alternative ethos. I contacted current and ex-staff members whose children were aged around 16-18 years to ask for contact details. These young people were sent the participation information sheet and eight were interested in participating. However, one of these was aged 15 and another aged 19. They were all invited to attend an introductory halaqah followed by three data collection halaqah intended to last 45-60 minutes over three days in one of the schools. One prospective participant was unable to attend on the given dates, and so the group consisted of seven participants aged 15-19 years, four female and three male.

Due to personal circumstances, I had to take intermission from September 2013 to September 2014. The children's data collection was therefore conducted in October 2014, during normally scheduled halaqah lessons in one of the schools. For this group, it was important that the data collection mimicked normal halaqah lessons, albeit with the presence of both audio and video recording equipment. Again in order to demonstrate the potential of dialogic halaqah, I selected a year six class who had been taught by teachers with strong dialogic practice over a number of years. The parents of all children in the class of 12 (the schools have a human-scale ethos and a maximum of 15 children per class) were sent a letter outlining the study and a consent form. The final group consisted of eight children. Further details are given in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Data collection outline

Halaqah group	Participant Information	Dates and timings of data collection	Circumstantial influences
Youth Planned Age Range: 16-18 years Actual	The make up of this group was partly determined by availability and willingness to participate, which extended the age range.	Data collected over two days in August 2013. Halaqah 1 30.08.13 (1 hour 40 minutes) Halaqah 2 31.08.13	As the Halaqah were participant led, Halaqah 1 was allowed to continue until it came to a natural end. During Halaqah 2 many of the questions

Age Range: 5-19 years Gender: 3 boys 4 girls	The intention was that participants should be originally home-schooled children whose parents then founded Shakhsiyah Schools. All participants met this requirement.	(1 hour 17 minutes) Halaqah 3 31.08.13 (42 minutes)	allocated to Halaqah 3 were addressed. It was therefore decided to continue after a break and complete Halaqah 3 later the same day.
Children Age Range: 10-11 years Gender 3 boys 5 girls	For this group, I purposely selected a year 6 class most of whom had only attended Shakhsiyah School so were well versed in participating in a Halaqah. Additionally, experienced dialogic teachers had taught this particular class. My intention was that the group should include children who have had the best quality halaqah learning experiences in order to test the theory. If these children do not meet the claims, they would be falsified.	Data Collected over 3 days in October 2014, during scheduled Halaqah lessons in the normal school timetable. Some of the sessions continued into the scheduled 15 minute break. Halaqah 1 21.10.14 (1 hour) Halaqah 2 22.10.14 (43 minutes) Halaqah 3 23.10.14 (58 minutes)	Due to personal circumstances I had to take intermission from September 2013 to August 2014 and this delayed the data collection with the younger children.

In total, 6 hours and 20 minutes of data are video and audio recorded. The format of the halaqah is organised in the manner of Shakhsiyah Schools' halaqah, that is, a series of key questions (KQs) devised to meet the educational level of the learners/participants, are used to guide the dialogue. The questions are designed to initiate detailed discussion on a question, concept or topic. The teacher/facilitator reiterates each key question, rewording and re-posing it, and encouraging participants to challenge each others' perspectives, until the question has been exhausted. The teacher/facilitator tends to move in a sequence with each key question building on the previous, but can allow movement from one question to another in accordance with the flow of the discussion. If a natural dialogic interaction does not occur between

learners/participants, the teacher/facilitator encourages this through presenting counter arguments or further questioning. KQs were differentiated between children and young-people to allow for their level of understanding. The research halaqah KQs, devised for the purposes of data collection, and details of participants' educational background are given in Appendices 3 and 4. Each of these young people had extremely varied educational journeys. Many of them started off being home-schooled at home by their parents, moving to collective homeschooling initiatives, which eventually turned into Shakhsiyah Schools. Some spent time abroad, others attended seminary type religious education and one's educational focus has been *ḥifẓ* of the Quran. Additionally, they have attended a range of other independent Muslim schools, in Britain and abroad, and mainstream secondary schools. These diverse experiences enable varied reflection on the perceived merits of halaqah at Shakhsiyah Schools. Details of the types of schooling and what halaqah provision, if any, was offered, are also included in Appendix 4.

4.7 Ethical considerations

The participants in this study are young British Muslims, who have been asked to participate in research being conducted in a politicised context. Therefore, a fundamental concern is to ensure the well-being and dignity of all participants as autonomous human beings. This ethical goal has implications for the methods of data collection and participation; for transparency, reciprocity and mutual trust; for confidentiality and data management; for trustworthiness in the production of findings; and for authenticity to the values of the researched community.

In line with the research values of this study, ethical issues have been carefully considered to ensure they meet Islamic research principle 5. Qualitative researchers have questioned traditional western research ethics models. Christians (2005) describes the dominant traditional model as a 'biomedical model of ethics'; he perceives it to be a value-neutral approach arising from enlightenment rationalism. The kind of collaborative research conducted in this study requires a different approach to ethics; where participants' views on the research design are sought, and participants' values become part of the study. This research has been initiated by, and is being conducted by a Muslim researcher, and the subject of the research is educational practice within a Muslim community. Therefore, the researchers' and

community's ethical values should contextualise the ethical values normally expected in contemporary educational research. Thus, this study upholds the values of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011), whilst simultaneously ensuring ethical conduct from an Islamic basis and within a Muslim context. Many ethical research boards have responded to suggestions from qualitative researchers, by modifying their guidelines to incorporate differing ethical models. BERA has done this by incorporating a section on 'Aspirations of Educational Researchers' (BERA, 2011, p. 4); which allows me to use an Islamic ethical approach whilst maintaining my commitment to BERA's guidelines.

In this particular study, a range of measures is adopted to meet these guidelines. Respect for each individual participant as required by BERA, is also required by Islam, thus written informed consent is a requirement. Participants aged 16 years and above are considered autonomous agents, able to give their own consent, while for children aged less than 16 years, parental consent is also considered necessary. The right to withdraw is also built in and participants are reminded of this at the beginning of each halaqah session. One parent exercised this right after an initial introductory halaqah to explain the project. The parent also requested that any recording of this introductory halaqah be destroyed and this request was fulfilled. Therefore, the usual requirements of informed consent from participants, parents and children are fully met. Information provided to participants about the study and consent forms can be found in Appendix 2. Additionally, procedures that ensure anonymity and confidentiality are implemented, not only to protect privacy, but also to encourage openness during the data collection. Although the unique nature of the practice of halaqah in these two schools means that they cannot be kept anonymous, all possible measures are taken to avoid the possibility of any participant being identifiable. Thus, pseudonyms are used, and statements presented in findings have been carefully edited to preserve anonymity. Data are held securely and confidentially, and will be archived appropriately.

Traditionally, halaqah is based upon trust in the halaqah leader's capability and sincerity. In this instance as the researcher, my role is to introduce and facilitate the data collection halaqah, and to uphold the traditional trust placed me as halaqah leader. It is important for validity that my presence is limited to a mediatory role,

allowing as much openness as possible. It is also important that the processes of the research design have a built-in reflexivity, whereby I as a researcher, am fully aware of the inevitable influence my presence and actions will have on the participants. All the participants know me as a head teacher in the schools and the power of this role means that I need to do what I can to mitigate this, for example, by making participants aware that this study has nothing to do with my relationship with them as a head teacher, thereby encouraging openness. Nonetheless, my duty of care is ever prevalent in my relationship with them. Some participants, especially the young people, also know me in a social capacity as a friend of their parents, which could mean that they are reluctant to be open and honest, or it could make them feel more comfortable. Furthermore, the research design aims to encourage 'participatory' ethics and ownership of the research amongst all participants. Although these values are from an Islamic tradition, they also align with BERA's commitment to 'democratic values' (BERA, 2011). However, they also differ in some respects; in some ways, they are more akin to the feminist-communitarian model of ethics advocated by Christians (2005). Communitarians stand in direct contrast to the established individual autonomy mode of ethics, and this is consistent with the Islamic emphasis on community as a counterweight to individual autonomy. In some ways Islamic *akhlāq* (morality) is rooted in the concept of *jamā'ah* (community of believers) upholding Islamic teachings for the common good and in obedience to Allah.

> If one has to present a communication model based on the Sunnah of Muhammad, it would be an interactive, open, universal, mutually beneficial and symmetrical model of communication. Also it would emphasise a universal code of ethics to be followed by all communication actors. (Siddiqui, 2009 p. 143)

There are parallels between this and Kaupapa Maori. Christians (2005) cites Denzin (2003) as enriching feminist-communitarian ethics with the indigenous research ethic of Kaupapa Maori, to make "the researcher responsible not to a removed discipline (or institution), but to those he or she studies" (Denzin, 2003, p. 258). Hence, steps are taken to organise feedback sessions to participants to present the findings, ensuring that the value of reciprocity towards participants is met.

The other responsibilities defined by BERA, that is, to sponsors, to the community of educational researchers, educational professionals, policy makers and the general public are also observed. Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation trustees will receive a presentation of the methods and findings of the study. The theoretical work meets the aims of developing the pedagogy of halaqah in Shakhsiyah Schools, and is fed into teacher professional development, in order to meet the aims of the foundation. Furthermore, this research is conceived as a bridge-building exercise between the Muslim education community and the wider education community in Britain and beyond; and will therefore be disseminated as widely as possible. Thus, the responsibilities of integrity, purposefulness and communication are tightly woven into the research design.

4.8 Data Analysis

The qualitative data generated through the KQs in the research halaqah, requires two layers of analysis in order to answer the ERQs. To ensure rigour, both layers of analysis are conducted using established qualitative analytical methods. Silverman notes that a values laden approach emphasising authenticity can be 'potentially dangerous', in that politicised moral values are substituted for methodological rigour (2015, pp. 78–9). To ensure trustworthiness, analytic rigour is essential, and authenticity must be balanced with credibility. Rigorous qualitative analysis conducted with due care, and consistently challenging the researcher's own assumptions, can provide powerfully credible valid knowledge, which informs our understanding of the social processes in our midst. Dey (2003) describes qualitative analysis (QA) as a process of breaking down transcribed text into constituent parts, through the process of coding. Coding is carried out through an interpretive process that generates newer and deeper meanings, which are eventually re-assembled as findings. This type of QA relies on an iterative process, as successive analytic phases enable querying of decisions in earlier phases, and encourage continuous researcher reflexivity, ensuring rigour. This conceptualisation of rigour can be found in Braun and Clarke's phases of thematic analysis (TA) (2006), which I use as the first layer of analysis to answer ERQs1-3. I then harness another established analytic scheme for the second layer of analysis. The Scheme for Educational Dialogue Analysis (SEDA) (Hennessy et al., 2016) is used to answer ERQs 4-5. Finally, to answer ERQ5 with more rigour, I carry out a brief exploration of the analysed data in relation to

Dearden's (1975) definition of personal autonomy. To do so, I examine the contribution of one participant from each group, drawing on the two layers of analyses, to consider the quality of dialogic contributions and the capacity for critical thinking and reflexivity. Moreover, I look for a commitment to an understanding of shakhsiyah Islamiyah that involves autonomous dialogic thought and behaviour.

The procedural detail given below, complements the naturalistic holistic approach to the research design described earlier in this chapter. I show how established analytic processes ensure rigour in accordance with qualitative research conventions. I illustrate how the study was conducted as transparently, ethically, reflexively, reciprocally and rigorously, as far as possible, thus seeking to ensure its validity, trustworthiness and authenticity.

4.8.1 Thematic Analysis

For the thematic analysis (TA), I use Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages of TA as a guiding principle, shown in Table 4.5. I have already clearly situated myself as a research instrument and have established a dialogic-reflexive approach to the research design. I am therefore conscious that the development of theory undertaken earlier in this thesis, inevitably impacts my response to the data, and therefore these processes cannot be considered a 'grounded' or inductive approach to data analysis. Nevertheless, my research design stresses the importance of participants' voice. Thus whilst I recognise that meanings emerge from the dialogue of which I am a part, and that this dialogue continues beyond the data collection process into the analytic processes, it is also necessary for my role to be mitigated, as much as possible, by participants' voice. I thus begin the initial phase with the intention of bracketing out my theoretical understanding; seeking to listen to participants' contributions, to allow themes to emerge from participants' dialogue, which is recorded in audio, and reified in written transcripts. In this phase, I am seeking to draw on participants' individual perspectives, although my ultimate focus is on the meanings generated through their dialogue with each other. This 'open phase' of analysis then leads to more interpretive phases, where specific codes emerge through a process of conceptualisation of the emergent meanings. As the KQs have been formulated to address the ERQs, these meanings cannot be purely inductive, but are generated by a clearly structured research design. Nevertheless, the overall approach I take as a researcher is of open

dialogue in halaqah and initial open coding. This allows for opportunities for participants to be confronted with unexpected thoughts through contributions from other participants. I cannot predict what their views are; rather, I have to work through their contributions to the dialogue carefully, in order to determine that I have understood their ideas and thoughts, and am not superimposing my preconceptions on the emergent meanings. Thus, during the data collection, I pose questions about the same issue from different angles, and invite participants to take a position, to allow differing perspectives to emerge. The initial generation of random codes is then qualified and honed through successive phases of interpretation.

Table 4.5 Phases of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

During phase two, I carry out an open coding exercise on a short amount of transcribed text with a group of teachers in Shakhsiyah Schools. This is an open and exploratory review of the codes as opposed to a reliability test; and their coding informs phase three. Most of the codes I use are also used by teachers. However, they also identify codes, for example 'knowledge', which although applicable to the text, are not directly useful to my ERQs and are therefore discarded or merged into a more relevant code. One code identified by these teachers, 'self-evaluation', is very useful to my study and is thus adopted into my coding scheme. Many of the codes overlap,

and sections of text are often coded multiple times. These overlaps are refined through subsequent phases as codes develop. In the final phases, codes are finally mapped onto the theoretical terminology developed in Chapter 3. This approach ensures that analysis is not seeking out confirmation of theory. Rather these processes function as an iterative process of development within a dialogic space. My analytic interaction with participants dialogue, develops both my understanding of the empirical impact of halaqah, and assists in the development of theoretical ideas. Chapter 3 reflects this development in my thinking and Chapters 5-8 illustrate how the processes of analysis, and discussion of the findings, draw on the theoretical ideas initially developed in Chapter 3. Upon completion of phase five, an inter-coder reliability test is conducted. The final set of codes is used to review the accuracy of coding in randomly selected sections of coded text. This exercise produces 97 percent agreement. It is detailed in Appendix 5, which also provides a codebook, outlining how codes developed, and demonstrating that the coding scheme is influenced both by theoretical constructs and participants' ways of expressing their ideas.

Although I had engaged in a broadly thematic analysis process in the pilot study, for the PhD, the structure and guidance provided by Braun and Clarke enables me to clarify both my thinking and my analytic processes during each distinct phase. Table 4.5 illustrates the movement from descriptive phases, through to interpretive phases, to phases that 'drill down' and develop clear thematic coding processes, thus generating trustworthy findings. Each phase involves a review of the previous phases and consideration of preceding interpretations, encouraging researcher reflexivity. The computer software Nvivo is used as an invaluable tool in the analysis process, enabling the systematic application of the classic procedures of coding, memos and annotations associated with TA.

Furthermore, the TA conducted on children and young peoples' perspectives on autonomy and halaqah, enables the triangulation of these findings against the claims made by teachers and school leaders in the pilot study. TA findings are given in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.8.2 Dialogue Analysis

The second layer of analysis is designed to evaluate the quality of dialogue in halaqah. Chapter 3 illustrates the many conceptualisations of educational dialogue used by different researchers. These differences have led to varied analytic approaches. Fortunately, this PhD study coincided with the development of the Cam-UNAM scheme for educational dialogue analysis (SEDA)[11], which is intended to be a foundational scheme with wide applications, aiming to strengthen reliability and comparison across different research projects. SEDA draws on a range of theoretical approaches to characterising and analysing dialogue, in order "to distil out the essence of dialogic interactions and operationalise them in the form of a new scheme of systematic indicators" (Hennessy et al., 2016, pp. 16-17). Details of the SEDA coding guide can be found in Appendix 6. Although the project was conducted between 2013-2015, due to intermission from my studies, I was only able to become involved in the later stages. I participated in an evaluation of SEDA, and in the subsequent development of an adapted scheme designed for teachers to use in their classrooms (T-SEDA). This involvement enabled me to observe, and participate in, detailed discussions amongst experienced researchers. These included identifying quality in educational dialogue; strengths and weaknesses of codes and categories; how to isolate a section of a transcript for coding; how to develop criteria for coding; and how to conduct an inter-coder reliability test. SEDA uses the concept of communicative acts (CA) from Hymes' ethnography of communication (1972), given in Figure 4.3, as a means to determine the appropriate level of coding.

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[11] For more information see https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/analysingdialogue/
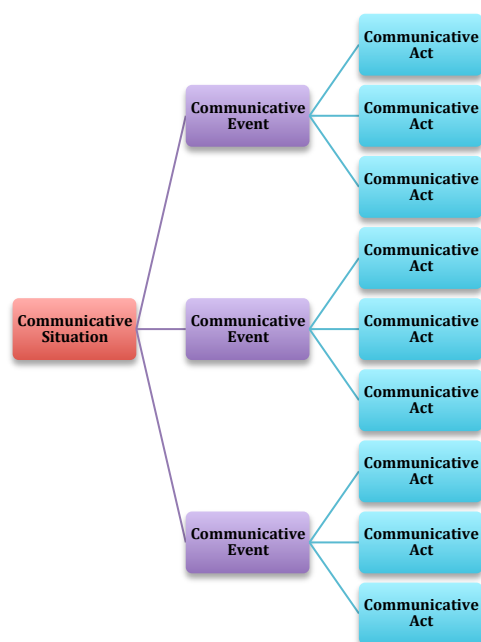
Figure 4.3 Hierarchical and nested levels of analysis from the 'Ethnography of Communication' (Hymes, 1972, as cited in Hennessey et. al. 2016)

A CA is an utterance by a single person, identified by its interactional function within a communicative event (CE). A CE is a series of turns in a conversation where the subject remains constant. These are in turn, part of a communicative situation (CS), that is, a general context for the communication. For my purposes, the data collection halaqah were a specific contrived CS, designed to generate CE around specific questions, in order for me to evaluate the dialogic quality of individual contributions (CA); the quality of a dialogic interaction (CE); and the impact of cumulative dialogue over three hours of data collection halaqah *and* many years of halaqah in Shakhsiyah Schools (CS). SEDA analysis was conducted at the CA level; it involves an iterative process, detailed in Table 4.6

Table 4.6 SEDA Analytic Processes

SEDA Conceptualisation of 'Dialogic Teaching and Learning' (Hennessy et al., 2016, 19)
a) harnesses the power of language to stimulate and extend students' understanding, thinking and learning;
b) is collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful;
c) engages in 'social modes of thinking' where possibilities can be explored collectively through creative problem solving framed by open-ended or authentic questions/tasks and reasoning can be made visible to others;
d) encourages inquiry and equitable participation, where all, including teachers, are seen as co-learners who construct knowledge jointly;

e) is open to new ideas and critically constructive, where negotiation of perspectives allows joint problem solving;
f) promotes the creation of environments where diverse voices can be expressed, explored, contrasted, challenged, cumulatively built upon each other and synthesised, allowing analysis, transformation and reconciliation of underlying points of view;
g) brings into question the widely observed predominance of traditional and 'monologic' educational practices where only one voice (primarily the teacher's) tends to be heard, legitimised and sometimes imposed
SEDA Analytic Processes (Hennessy et al., 2016, 19)
a) we carry out initial in-depth analyses of videos and transcripts of a selected lesson (or lesson sequence), in order to understand the general dynamics of the lesson(s) as a whole, including the goals pursued by the participants; the teaching and learning strategies employed; the sequencing of communicative interactions that occur throughout the lesson(s); as well as the cultural artefacts and tools (including digital technologies) that mediate these interactions;
b) for each lesson, we describe the CS (which normally corresponds to the general context of the lesson as a whole, or to a lesson sequence);
c) we further segment the string of interactions and turns which comprise the lesson into a series of CE;
d) we generate initial hypotheses geared at identifying certain CE which might concentrate dialogic interactions, and analyse these in more detail by using the scheme to code CA. Identifying key dialogic exchanges helps us to understand how knowledge is being constructed amongst participants.

Like Mercer (2004) and Hennessy et al. (2016), I define dialogue as the Vygotskian notion of inter-thinking leading to intra-thinking, where individuals use common knowledge and 'exploratory talk' to inter-think and solve a problem, or to move their collective understanding of existing information forward. I also use Wegerif's notion of 'dialogic space' as a conduit where meaning emerges, as well as Bakhtinian ideas of 'positioning' within the dialogue to understand the processes of these dialogic halaqah. I draw on Alexander's work on cultural variations in classroom talk (2001), to explore how 'classroom culture', including social and cultural beliefs and experiences, influence the dialogic processes of halaqah in Shakhsiyah Schools. I further draw on Alexander's principles of 'dialogic teaching' as purposeful, collective, supportive and reciprocal, culminating in skilled cumulative questioning which guides and prompts and expedites the 'handover' of concepts (Alexander, 2008b, p. 105). I use the SEDA analysis, which arises out of these principles, as

illustrated in Figure 4.4, to evaluate whether halaqah meets these principles.
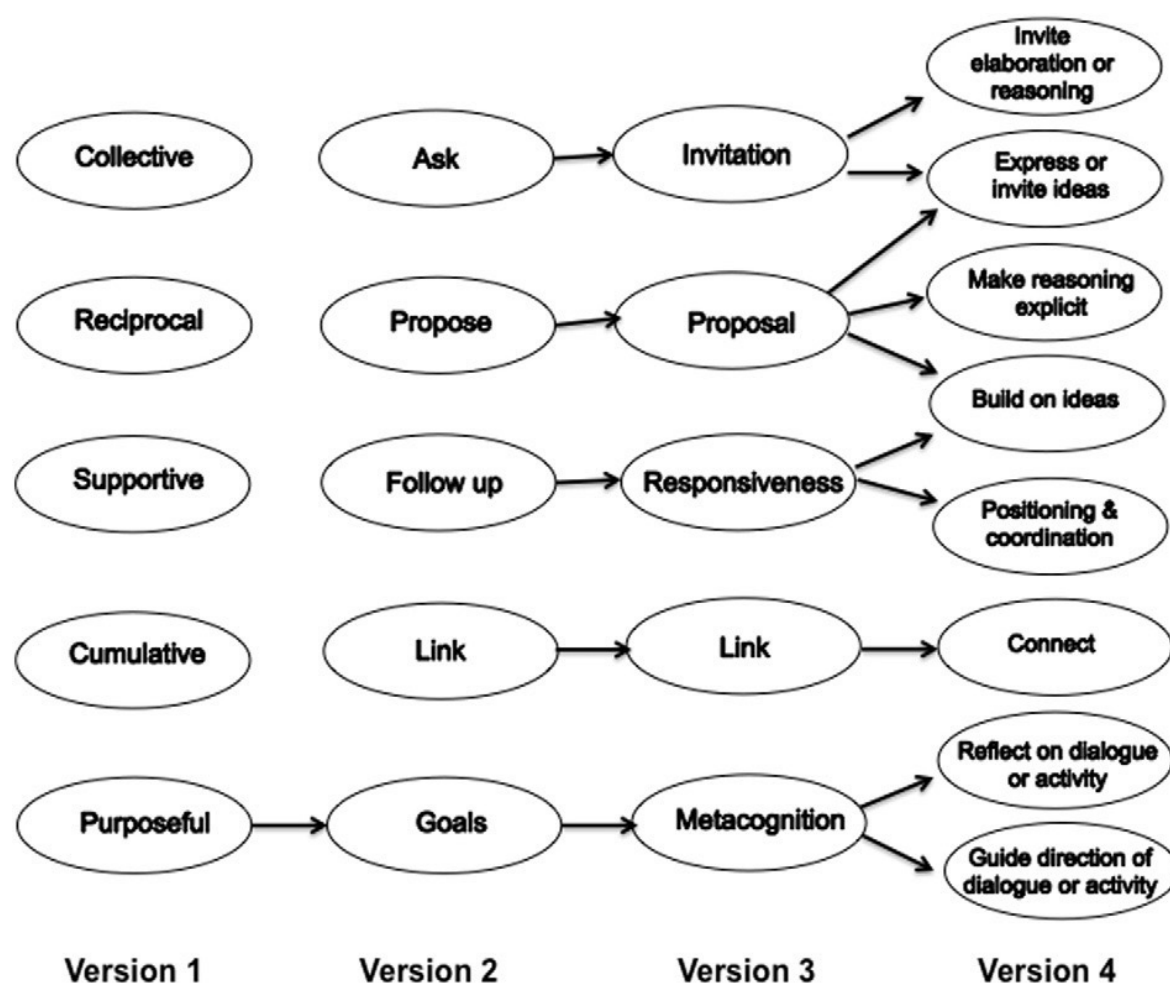
Figure 4.4 Reformulation and continuity in cluster names through four iterations of the analytic scheme (Hennessy et al., 2016)

Thus, halaqah is analysed and evaluated for its dialogic quality at all three levels of CS, CE and CA. The SEDA theoretical and methodological approach is used in order to ensure rigour, and to enable comparison with other instances of SEDA analysis. Although the papers' authors advise that each research project needs to modify the use of SEDA to meet specific research aims and questions (p. 41), my aim is to use the scheme with minimum modification. However, the specific context of this research impacts the use of the scheme in two ways. First, due to my understanding of the context, that is, my knowledge of my intentions in speaking; and participants' responses in the context of a dialogue I was present in; I do not always apply the strict criteria for coding which is based on not being able to guess the speaker's intentions. As I was the speaker and know my intentions, in some instances I code utterances as

invitations where they may otherwise be considered nominations. This anomaly is picked up in the inter-coder reliability test conducted with a fellow PhD student who also contributed to the development of SEDA. The other modification is in relation to positioning where the scheme has very restrictive coding descriptors that require an explicit statement that the speaker is taking a position. As the extract being coded is one where participants have been asked to take a position, I apply the codes even where positioning is implicit rather than explicit. In addition to this, I also apply guidance note eight of SEDA which enables researchers to consider "less explicit and less sophisticated use of evidence in an argument, hypothesis/speculation" (p. 26) when coding the dialogue of young children. Despite these minor modifications, the inter-coder reliability test was very positive. Details are provided in Appendix 7.

To apply SEDA to my data, I begin by establishing the communicative situation (CS) as the dialogic research halaqah, which retain the format of halaqah as it is conducted in Shakhsiyah Schools. I then select a sample of the data for SEDA analysis. Time limitations do not allow for the entire data set of three hours 38 minutes (Total 218min) of young people's dialogue and two hours 43 minutes (Total 163min) of Children's dialogue, to be coded. I therefore decide to code ten percent of the dialogue in each group, that is, 22 minutes of young people's dialogue and 16 minutes of the Children's dialogue. I decide to try to determine the CE by finding an episode in each group's data, which appeared to be strongly dialogic and check whether it coincides with roughly ten percent of the data. This is in a sense purposeful sampling in order to show the potential of dialogic halaqah. On initial scanning the vast majority of the data appears strongly dialogic; however, in both groups a section where I asked participants if they think that there is a conflict in being autonomous/an independent thinker and being Muslim stands out. This question appears to lead to high quality dialogue; I therefore segment the core part of this episode into a CE according to ten percent of the talk time and code this using SEDA. Whilst the bulk of the data appears to be highly dialogic, there will always be episodes in every educational situation where the dialogue is limited or weak. I therefore look for a weak episode in each group in order to illustrate that as in mainstream classroom situations, halaqah depends on how well the teacher is using the pedagogical strategy that is being employed. The weak episodes are then selected for coding. It is difficult to find appropriate examples of weak dialogue in the transcript. The selected episodes

are three to four minutes per group and they are few and far between a lot of strong dialogue. They occur when the teacher is setting up the dialogue, or asking for a description, a recount of experiences or context. The rest of the transcripts are much more like the strong episodes than these weak examples. This is not to say that halaqah is always strongly dialogic, the quality of dialogue generated in halaqah depends heavily on the skill of the teacher in orchestrating the dialogue, and/or the skills and experience of learners in engaging in dialogue. In Shakhsiyah Schools, there is typically a mixed picture in actual practice, as high teacher turnover means that there are often new unskilled and inexperienced teachers in the classroom. It typically takes two years of training and mentoring to enable teachers to lead fully dialogic halaqah. Therefore, it is not being claimed in this thesis that the samples of strong dialogue presented in Chapter 7 are fully representative of practice in Shakhsiyah Schools. Rather, the claim is that cumulative dialogic halaqah have the potential to generate ongoing high-quality dialogue.

The computer software, Nvivo, is used as an invaluable tool in the analysis process. Coding is carried out using Nvivo; the coded data is then transferred into tables to enable presentation in this thesis. This task enables me to recheck my coding which results in some codes being changed, in particular I change some Reasoning (R) codes into Building (B) codes and some Express (E) codes into Uncoded. A number of codes are also moved within the cluster, and some utterances are further segmented. Some utterances are additionally coded as (Connect) C and (Guide) G. The inter-coder reliability test is conducted post this coding check. Further details are given in in Appendix 7.

4.8.3 Evaluating individual participants as autonomous dialogical Muslim-selves

I had initially planned a third level of analysis, in order to directly address the overall RQ: can the Islamic dialogic pedagogy of halaqah help develop Muslim children's *shakhsiyah* (personhood, autonomy, identity) in twenty-first century Britain? A full response to this question requires evidence of the quality of dialogue in halaqah and evidence of autonomy in participants' thought and behaviour. It also requires a way of demonstrating a relationship between the two, through devising an analytic scheme that identifies variations in the quality of dialogic contributions and variations in the level of autonomy demonstrated in these contributions. Theoretically, it should be

possible to test whether higher-level dialogic skills correlate with higher-order thinking and with advanced autonomous characteristics. However, due to the scale of the work required, a third layer of analysis is outside the scope of this PhD study.

Nevertheless, a deeper response to ERQ5 requires a more penetrating examination of the analysed data. To meet this need, I identify the most apparently 'autonomous' participant in each group, and explore the quality of these participants' dialogic contributions. To aid my discussion, it is important to identify evidence of autonomy in action. Whilst I have begun to conceptualise shakhsiyah Islamiyah as an Islamic notion of personal autonomy, it is important for credibility in the wider research community to use a more established set of descriptors to underpin my evaluation. Dearden's account of autonomy, given in Chapter 2, is useful for this purpose. The characteristics of an autonomous person identified by Dearden, bear some similarity to the SEDA codes, which become useful in this regard. In addition, Dearden's descriptors also refer to critical thinking and self-evaluation, which are important themes that emerge from the thematic analysis. This procedural definition of autonomy, requires observation of evidence that these participants critically deliberate on questions to decide upon a viewpoint or course of action to be taken. Dearden defines an autonomous person as one whose thoughts and acts, "cannot be explained without reference to his own activity of mind, …the explanation of why he thinks and acts as he does, must include a reference to his own choices, deliberations, decisions, reflections, judgments, plannings or reasonings" (1975 p. 16). This definition is useful in evaluating participants' contributions. It serves to identify whether that aspect of shakhsiyah that embodies the use of the *'aql* (intellect) to make choices and bear moral responsibility, is evident in the schoolchildren and young people, who have been educated using dialogic halaqah. Evidence of critical thinking of this nature can only be found within high quality talk, that is exploratory talk, collaborative reasoning or dialogic talk. Thus, my questions related to the quality of dialogue in halaqah are also relevant to the quality of participants' shakhsiyah, that is, their personal autonomy, both as learners and in terms of their Islamic identity. I compare the children and young people's self-perceptions of their personal autonomy, with the quality of their dialogic contributions and the quality of sustained critical thinking, reflection, choice and decision making in these dialogic episodes.

My original 'hypothesis' is that halaqah as dialogic pedagogy enhances *'aql* (cognitive capability), that is, the capacity to consider alternatives, and make reasonable and justified choices within an Islamic paradigm; and that this enhanced capacity is a feature of shakhsiyah Islamiyah, which is a form of personal autonomy. This study cannot provide direct evidence to confirm the causation implied in this 'hypothesis'. Nevertheless, the final layer of discussion given in Chapter 7, aims to address the broader pedagogical concerns about the lack of critical thinking in Islamic education (Hefner & Zaman, 2007; Panjwani, 2009; Parker-Jenkins, 2002; Sahin, 2013).

4.9 Internal and External Validity

The value of this research is that it illuminates an intrinsic case study, which provides a deeper understanding of the complex issues facing British Muslims as they attempt to educate their children for the twenty-first century British context. Moreover, it illustrates how Muslims can potentially draw upon Islamic educational philosophy, combined with contemporary research, in order to develop culturally-coherent solutions to these issues. Finally, this study aims to generate greater understanding of the needs of Muslim children and the value of Islamic educational practices, through an exploration of pedagogy as a subject of dialogue between cultures. Thus, the focus of this study is to ensure internal validity through trustworthiness and cultural authenticity. It also offers external validity by providing vital vicarious understanding of a misunderstood community. However, it does not make claims of scientific reliability or generalisability, although it presents findings rooted in sophisticated qualitative rigour, whereby the empirical and interpretive data collection and analysis processes are made as transparent as possible (Denzin cited in Flick, 2008, p. 47).

4.9.1 Internal Validity: Authenticity and Trustworthiness

In qualitative research in general, and indigenous research in particular, internal rigour is concerned with authenticity and trustworthiness, rather than positivist concerns of reliability and validity. Indigenous cultural values and epistemological principles serve as a measure of authenticity and trustworthiness (Bishop, 1998; L. T. Smith, 2005). The indigenous researcher as insider is perceived to be valuable in centring the perspectives of the researched community, and in rooting research in indigenous ways of knowing. Authenticity to Islamic sources of Quran and Sunnah

will therefore be a consideration for Muslim readers of this research. These texts shape the aspirations, agendas and cultural practices of religiously-observant Muslim communities. Furthermore, in line with my role as insider-researcher, I want to capture participants' perspectives through the thematic analysis and present these perspectives with as little 'interpretation' as possible, making their collective dialogic interpretations, that is their voices, the focus of the study. I do not, however, pretend to be a neutral observer, but see my voice as one of many. The Kaupapa Maori idea of a connection of the 'knower' to the 'known' through a 'participatory mode of consciousness' (Bishop, 1998), is a useful parallel in explaining this point. As a researcher, I cannot be separated from the research claiming neutrality, although I can endeavour to step back from it through reflection, and yet participate through reflexivity.

The qualitative principles described above ensure internal rigour through careful consideration of processes. For example, emergent findings are triangulated by participant means and methodological/analytical means. Rigour is ensured through systematic inter-participant triangulation of perspectives involving thorough thematic analysis of four groups of participants, school-leaders and teachers (in the pilot), current schoolchildren and young people who are former pupils (Flick, 2008, p.51). Additionally, the trustworthiness of findings is checked through feedback sessions with the two groups. In these sessions, participants confirmed that their perspectives were accurately reflected and the children's parents were surprised at the depth of the discussion. Although some time had passed, some participants could still identify who had said what. In these sessions, they describe the research halaqah as a useful, enjoyable opportunity for collaborative reflection; for their voices to be heard. The young people re-engage with the issues under discussion, raising the question as to how far their personal autonomy was developed through halaqah, and how far through other experiences, for example parenting styles. They do not negate their initial claims, rather they continue the initial discussion, concluding that halaqah is a core and fundamental element to the development of their personal autonomy, thus verifying the initial findings.

Moreover, the use of two distinct layers of analysis, using established methods and conducted with rigour and reflexivity provides detailed and thorough interrogation of

the data. These different approaches to the data provide contrasting vantage points with which to question assumptions and engage in reflexivity. Beginning with thematic analysis, I determine participant's views on the key questions related to freedom and autonomy; submission and authority; and the capacity of halaqah to develop personal autonomy. I am conscious that participants' self-reporting can be affected by a variety of intentions. However, halaqah dialogue as a group means that they are being asked to consider more than one position, allowing natural probing of their views. Additionally, the nature of their contributions and interactions also indicates the authenticity of their response. Thematic analysis is followed by SEDA analysis, in order to consider the quality of 'classroom dialogue' generated through the unique format of halaqah in relation to other studies of classroom dialogue, by using the same analytic scheme. A final layer of discussion takes two individual participants as cases, and looks in detail at their contributions to the dialogue in three ways. First, their views on autonomy, Islam and halaqah; second, the quality of their dialogic contributions and finally, evidence of personal autonomy in their interaction with others. This final exploration of the data enables the triangulation of findings through the data itself, that is, through a comparison between the two layers of findings. Reliability tests were conducted in both the thematic and dialogic analyses, to ensure that I was not being partisan or biased in my interpretations. The thematic analysis test achieved 97 percent agreement and the SEDA test achieved 88 percent agreement. These procedures help to ensure both authentic data and trustworthy findings. Although the methodology and subject of this study is unique, use of established analytic approaches offers opportunities for comparison with existing literature in the field.

Despite the above evidence of rigour, if this study is considered from a value-neutral pure positivist perspective, it has serious limitations. I am an insider heavily involved in Shakhsiyah Schools, and my level of personal commitment raises questions of bias. However, I have been fully transparent about my involvement and my objectives, as well as the cultural basis of my unorthodox research paradigm. Although, the value of this research is its cultural authenticity, I am nevertheless conscious that my own closeness as an insider researcher is problematic on two levels; first, as a believer, I am a practicing Muslim, and secondly as a professional, I am in a position of authority (head teacher). This situation raises many questions in any kind of research,

as it can pose a serious threat to the criticality and internal validity of both the data collection and its analysis and interpretation. I am conscious of maintaining the credibility of the research as widely as possible. To meet this aim, I actively and carefully explore the notion of the researcher as insider/outsider, in light of similar studies that have opened up complex issues of interpretation (Albouezi, 2006; J. Mercer, 2007). Additionally, as detailed in Section 4.5.1, I interrogate my own reflexivity through attending a workshop on insider research in British Muslim contexts. Although, in some respects I maintain the insider perspective and include auto-ethnographic elements in my writing, I also conduct analysis from an outsider perspective using my skills as a 'western' researcher to maintain objectivity and by placing myself in the position of an outsider looking in.

4.9.2 External Validity: Reliability and Generalisation

Qualitative researchers debate the relevance of terms like validity, reliability and generalisation to their work, and query whether these terms should be redefined or discarded (Golafshani, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This debate is particularly important when considering the external relevance or generalisibility of case study. However, this is a unique case with a unique research method. It is presented as an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995) that can serve to illuminate (Pring, 2000) related discourses, rather than a sample, to be generalised in a scientific manner as in traditional case study (Yin, 2008). In intrinsic case study, generalisation is based on notions of tacit 'naturalistic' knowledge, shared through reflexivity and vicarious experience, see Figure 4.5 (Stake & Trumbull, 1982). To achieve this, the case must be presented with rich contextualised detail through vivid 'thick' description and exemplified accounts, in this instance, of participant's dialogue and perspectives. Thick description potentially allows the reader to empathise with the case and relate it to previous experience. Halaqah is devised as a method that elicits this kind of detailed contextualised data, through lengthy opportunity for self-expression and dialogic accounts that generate meaning.
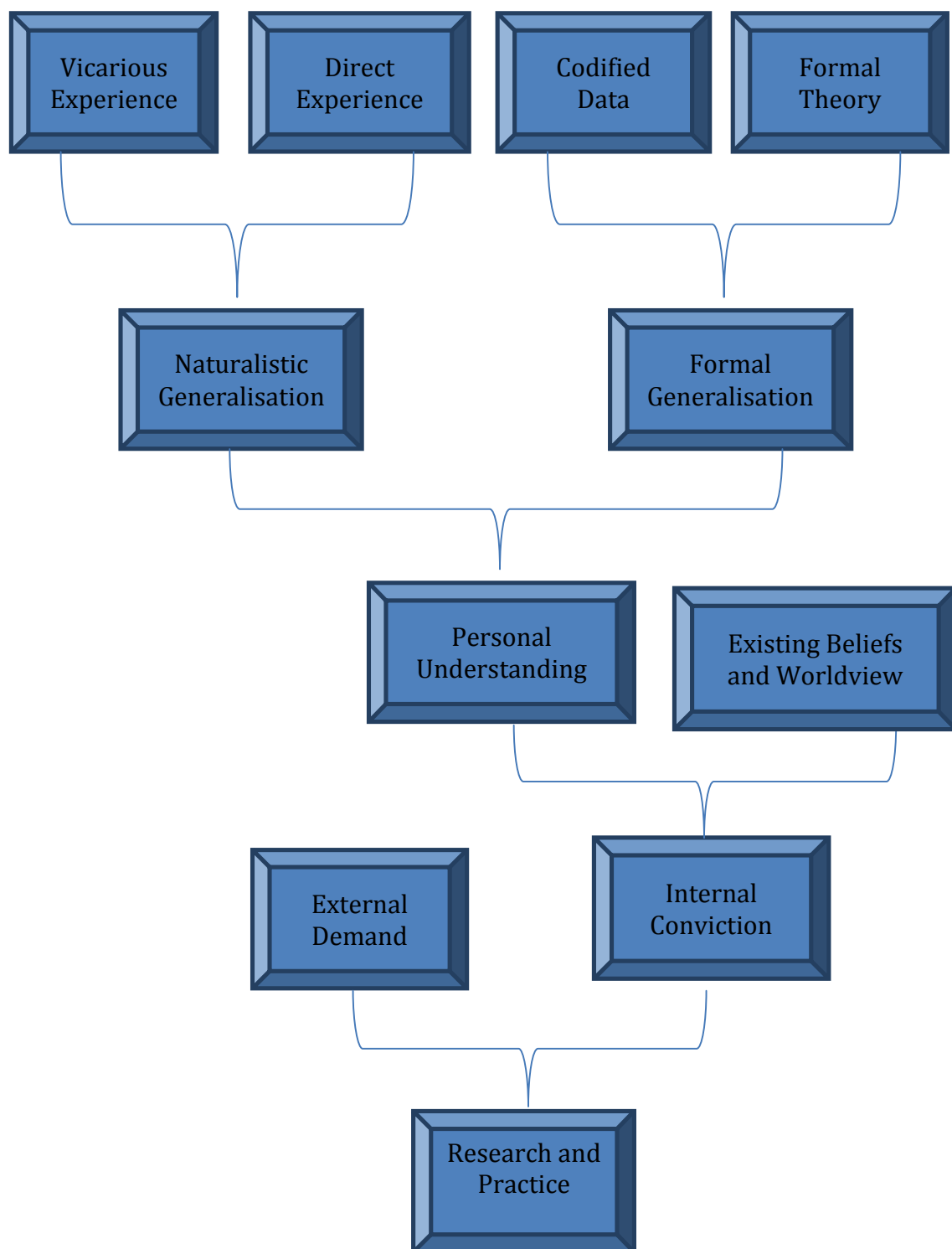
Figure 4.5 Concept of Naturalistic Generalisation adapted from Stake and Trumbull (1982)

Stake's (2005) concept of 'naturalistic generalisations' is useful to this study. Children and young people from a marginalised community, perceived as the incomprehensible 'other' to many, may become comprehendible through a naturalistic narrative presentation of their dialogue and perspectives. If greater understanding is generated, than religiously-observant Muslims can move from outsiders to a better understood group through the 'vicarious experience' of the reader as s/he reads through the findings presented in the following chapters.

4.10 A unique case study offering insight into the potential for pedagogy to act as a dialogue between cultures

In summary, the methodological approach of this thesis is an iterative reflective process of interaction between a developing theoretical framework and empirical data from a unique case. Its aim is to provide insights into the similarities and differences between the practice of Islamic and secular-liberal dialogic pedagogies. It is possible that through the thematic and dialogic analyses of the dialogue generated by halaqah in British Islamic faith-schools, a way forward can be found in how Islamic educational practice can meet the needs of British Muslim children in relation to developing an Islamic form of personal autonomy. A secondary aim is to create greater understanding between educational traditions that are often viewed in opposition. The findings from the empirical data, given in the following chapters, illuminate whether the claims made by school-leaders and teachers in the pilot study are upheld by children and young people; and whether halaqah can be described as a dialogic pedagogy?

Chapter 5 Autonomy, Islam and Shakhsiyah Islamiyah: Findings and Discussion from the Thematic Analysis

The following chapters present and discuss a series of findings drawn from thematic and SEDA analyses. This chapter presents and discusses thematically relevant verbatim extracts of dialogue, detailing participants' perspectives and experiences, related to the broad themes of autonomy and authority. It sets out how they understand these concepts in relation to the theoretical ideas presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 6 presents participants' perspectives on halaqah as dialogic pedagogy, and their experiences of halaqah in relation to other forms of Islamic and mainstream education. Their views on the relationship between halaqah and the development of their personal autonomy are presented and discussed in relation to the theoretical underpinnings of halaqah outlined in Chapter 3. In doing so, these chapters consider how far the children and young people verify the claims about halaqah as dialogic pedagogy made by teachers and school leaders in the pilot study. Chapter 7 presents the findings of the SEDA analysis, in order to consider if any of these claims can be verified by a thorough analysis of the quality of dialogue generated in these research halaqah. Finally, in Chapter 8, Dearden's (1975) characteristics of an autonomous individual are used to evaluate how far these characteristics can be observed in one individual participant from each group. This sequence of presentation was decided on after careful deliberation on how each of the two foci of this study, that is, 'dialogue' as a vehicle to generate 'personal autonomy', should be prioritized. Ultimately, I decided that dialogue, as the 'process' through which personal autonomy is developed, needed to be sandwiched between participants' claims about autonomy and a cursory evaluation of their personal autonomy. Nevertheless, considerable attention is given to findings about the quality of dialogue that is generated in these research halaqah. Moreover, the empirical research questions helped to sequence the presentation of findings. This chapter presents and discusses findings related to ERQ1.

ERQ1: How do young Muslims educated in Shakhsiyah Schools conceptualise personal autonomy, authority (religious or otherwise), and shakhsiyah Islamiyah?

In this chapter, findings and discussion are presented together, interwoven in an attempt to demonstrate the symbiotic and dialogic nature of the meanings that emerged from the research halaqah. To assist the reader and to clarify how quotations are selected and presented, some details are necessary. Participants' perspectives are presented through quotations selected from the coded data for each theme. These are given in italics, and as far as possible, verbatim. However, these quotations are shortened, first, for clarity in meaning, and second, for brevity; thus filler words such as 'like', and unnecessary repetition as participants think aloud, have been removed. Gaps in quotations are shown by ellipses…, where these are in the same utterance they are in between words. Where they are from more than one utterance they are shown in a new line. In some instances, estimated pauses in seconds are included within brackets, for example (1), to illustrate the reflexive nature of the dialogue. A pause less than a second is illustrated as (.); simultaneous utterances are shown in square brackets []. As the themes are interwoven, thematic discussion moves back and forth between the series of three halaqah; therefore, I do not cite which session I am quoting from, unless there is a significant reason to do so. As the computer software Nvivo was used to aid data analysis, it is fairly easy to relocate the specific utterance cited, through accessing the relevant node. Participants' utterances in Nvivo are recorded in full and have not been shortened, thus quoted utterances can be accessed in full and in context, in order to evaluate any interpretation. Although 'freedom and autonomy' had initially been coded separately to 'authority and Islam (submission)', in the final layer of thematic coding, these themes are brought together to reflect participants understanding of their symbiotic relationship. I decided it would be repetitive to discuss these themes separately, given that participants consistently discussed them in relation to each other. Appendix 5 provides a codebook detailing the development of the codes across the different stages of analysis; and Appendix 7 provides extended sections of script from each group. Table 5.1 presents a frequency chart detailing emergent themes.

Table 5.1 Thematic analysis frequency chart: freedom, autonomy, authority, Islam, submission

Emergent Theme	Children	Young People	Young People & Children
Freedom, Autonomy, Authority, Islam and Submission	**325**	**425**	**750**
5.1 Childhood and Adulthood	**68**	**86**	**154**
5.1.1 Learning to be autonomous	27	47	74
5.1.2 Age of maturity	55	5	60
5.2 Thinking Independently	**262**	**297**	**559**
5.2.1 Questioning and critical thinking	33	54	87
5.2.2 Being an individual	68	61	129
5.2.3 Parents and family	60	49	109
5.2.4 Teachers and school	2	4	6
5.2.5 Friends and school peers	56	190	246
5.2.6 Societal norms	11	151	162
5.3 Exercising Autonomy - making choice and decisions, choosing to be Muslim	**258**	**206**	**464**
5.3.1 Making the right choice	107	24	131
5.3.2 Choosing to be Muslim	122	64	186
5.3.3 Choosing within Islam	6	24	30
5.3.4 Point of reference for decision making	8	44	52
5.3.5 Being an autonomous Muslim	212	184	396
5.4 Shakhsiyah Islamiyah and Personhood	**256**	**286**	**542**
5.4.1 Character	171	141	312
5.4.2 Self evaluation and reflexivity	87	242	329

Although this table details the frequency of codes applied, multiple codes were often applied to broad sections of text, as the dialogue related to more than one theme. This broad-brush approach, illustrated through screenshot examples of coded text in Appendix 5, is not best suited to quantitative analysis. It is therefore important to present and discuss findings in a qualitative manner that reflects how interwoven these themes are in the dialogue. Nevertheless, Table 5.1 provides some indication of variations, for example, how much time is spent by each group on different themes, so it can be seen that the children spend much more time discussing 1.1.2, the age a person reaches maturity, in comparison to the young-people. Also, both groups spend much more time talking about 1.2.5 friends and school peers, than 1.2.4 teachers and school, although the difference is more marked with the young-people. Conversely to the young people, the children spend more time talking about 1.2.3 parents and family, but less time on 1.2.6 societal norms.

Themes and sub-themes reflect participants' emerging conceptualisations of freedom-submission and authority-autonomy, as symbiotic. Therefore, the themes are ordered and arranged not by frequency, but are presented in a collective narrative that amplifies participants' voice, and provides coherence. This is not to say that this coherence was prevalent at the onset of the dialogic halaqah, although for some of the young adults it was. However, for the majority of participants, coherence emerged through back and forth dialogue that explored these issues from a number of angles. Although the discussion meandered, each theme is discussed broadly within a sequence that presents the overall argument as it emerged within the dialogic research halaqah. The aim is that this narrative presentation will facilitate a 'vicarious experience' in the reader, allowing for 'naturalistic generalisation' (Stake, 2005). Thus, Muslim children and young people may become better understood through immersion in their collective dialogue, wherein they wrestle with these challenging concepts, in relation to their experience as Muslims growing up in twenty-first century Britain.

5.1. Childhood and adulthood

Participants speak of childhood as a precursor to autonomy. They appear to understand that full autonomy is attained in adulthood and requires maturity. During childhood, a person needs to learn to be autonomous, so that as an adult, she has the capacity to make choices and to take full responsibility for her actions.

5.1.1 Learning to be autonomous

The children discuss this at length. According to them, the idea of making choices and decisions is very much about learning and practicing in order to make the right choices in adulthood.

Zakaria: *Because if you don't make your own decisions, so for example if I had someone, like my older brother, if I don't make my decision for myself and I just copy him all the time, I won't learn later in life, so when he's not there with me, I won't learn how to do stuff for myself, and I won't be able to make my own decisions, so you should try and make your own decisions at a early age, so you can use that later, when you're older in life.*

Asiya also points out that decision-making should be part of learning in school. *I think it's important to make your own decisions sometimes; you actually need to, even ...at*

school; like when you write your story, that's your decision of what to write, and how to write it, you're learning how to make a decision, ...when you're older you can use that knowledge...

The young people concur.

Abdullah: *I think with that said, you can still look at it in the sense that, if you didn't have the freedom, then people make mistakes to learn from them, so let's say if a person was constantly told what to do in making choices and so on, they, they may not like it and they may not learn from it, so when it comes to later stage in life, they haven't experienced things to say I shouldn't go there, I know not to do this kind of thing because* [*they've only been shown a certain way*]

[murmurs of agreement]

5.1.2 Age of maturity, autonomy, responsibility and accountability

According to participants, adulthood and maturity is not only about age, it is determined by a person's capacity to act autonomously, to be responsible and accountable for his actions. The children discuss at length the correct age for being mature enough to make your own decisions. Initially, some children insist that twelve is a good age. They are keen to be autonomous decision-makers as soon as possible. However, through the dialogue, Sara, who initially claims that you know when you are mature enough, and that this could be at the age of twelve, realises that a six year old may feel competent to be autonomous, but may not be ready.

Sara: *Because, you can think you're mature, maybe at the age of 6 and you're not*

Farah: *And you're not?*

Sara: *Well, some people are not*

Farah: *But if the six-year-old thinks they're mature, how do you know they're not?*

Sara: *Well* (1) *it can, it can depend on the way they act and it can depend on the way they make their own choices*

Further to learning about the relationship between the ability to make informed choices and maturity, children also come to realise that adults too seek advice in decision-making. Through the dialogue, they conclude that seeking advice and consulting others is important, whatever your age. The young-people also discuss the age of maturity in relation to autonomy; they link it to independence from your parents.

Abdullah: *I think ...at the end of the day, our parents have brought us up in a certain*

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way, but we're all individuals once we get to a certain age, whether it's puberty or after that, …you need to believe for yourself because, that's your choice, …at the end of the day we're all going to be accountable for ourselves… so I think, it is crucial that (.) the belief isn't forced into us, because even though we're doing what our parents are telling us to do, …obviously once we get to our own age, we're choosing…

Whilst Abdullah feels that he and the rest of the group have reached an age when they are autonomous, they are now choosing to listen to their parents, Qasim expresses some frustration with the responsibilities of adulthood. *'You start thinking, I wish I was younger, that's the age when responsibility starts setting in, because you realise I don't like this set of responsibilities, how it's hanging on you all the time… you have stuff to do, and you have to go and do it.'*

5.2 Thinking independently - in relation to authority, to others, and to outside influences

Participants claim that a Muslim should be an independent critical thinker, able to question and draw his own conclusions. They argue that rules, laws and relationships with others are important; however, ultimately everyone has to make personal decisions. Much of the initial discussion around freedom and autonomy is about choices and decision-making, reported in more detail in Section 5.3. Participants agree that having choices and making decisions are intimately related to the capacity to think and act independently of others. Early in the discussion, they begin to explore the idea of 'thinking independently' in relation to their personal beliefs and contexts in a number of ways. They discuss the capacity to choose and the maturity required to do so; what it means to think and act independently; and they explore the concept of shakhsiyah Islamiyah.

The young people discuss what is arguably a very sophisticated conceptualisation of autonomy; it is about being an individual, a critical thinker who is able to question, and come to her own conclusion. Yet they insist that it is also about recognising that whoever you are, you always draw upon a worldview and set of values. Nevertheless, it is important that you have an appreciation of other worldviews and are able to think independently from others within your own worldview. The children appear less developed in their conceptualisation of being an independent thinker, but

nevertheless, they suggest that questioning is very important. Both groups discuss authority and limitations on freedom, but most of the discussion is in relation to autonomy and being an individual. They talk about how they autonomously navigate authority and outside influences, discussing the difference between being an individual independent thinker and being a follower. Both groups are quite conscious that it is easy to be influenced by others in your thinking and your decisions.

5.2.1 Questioning and critical thinking

Participants claim that questioning and critical thinking are part of Islamic tradition; however, unlike them, a lot of Muslims don't ask questions. When I say to the children, *sometimes we all have questions,* Zakaria immediately responds, *Definitely!* The discussion that follows on from this centres on the importance of questioning your own faith, and to prevent overlap, is reported in section 5.3.2 Choosing to be Muslim. The rest of the children's discussion on questioning and critical thinking is in relation to halaqah and is covered in section 5.3.1 Developing Thinking.

The young-people are quite clear that questioning and critical thinking are part of the Islamic tradition, although they acknowledge that not all Muslims are aware of this or agree with it.

Farah: *Did you ever question your beliefs? How did you deal with it? How did other people around you deal with it? I mean, some of you are saying that it wasn't a problem to question, people were very accepting of that, but it's generally assumed that Muslims will frown on somebody questioning their beliefs, so has anybody experienced that?*

Fatimah: *Um when I was about eight or maybe even seven, I questioned how we knew that God existed, my parents said to me 'well what other alternative is there?' And I said maybe humans have just existed since time, they've always existed and then my father explained to me the theory of Imam Ghazali, of infinite regress… and I think that's an example, it was a very long time ago, Muslims have always been questioning, and he wrote a book about how, how we know God exists, so* (you can't) *say that, that Islam frowns upon questions because one of the most celebrated scholars, he spent a long time questioning and he wrote books about it.*

Qasim: *But it also depends on if your parents are more traditional, like people who come from abroad, they all follow because their parents were Muslims, they never*

used to question, (so) *they follow them… You try to ask them,* (but) *because they have never looked into it, they're just like how can we answer that question, 'it's a stupid question, don't ask that'*

The young people recognise that living in a non-Muslim society requires ongoing reflection about your beliefs, particularly when you are called on to justify them.
Amina: *When I've been questioned by non-Muslims, because their way of thinking is totally different to ours, they're constantly questioning, in a different* (way) *to us and so I often wonder, how I would explain it to them from Islam… and really make them understand.* Qasim alludes to thinking from a different worldview. *When someone questions something you've always thought it to be right, then you have to readjust your mind-set and think, how would I answer the question? Why are they asking the question?*

5.2.2 Being an individual and confident in yourself
In the children's group, Sofia points out that each individual is autonomous. *But, they're not really in control of you so, it's your decision, you're yourself, you can't just tell people, people can't just boss you around and tell you what to do, you are your own self.* Despite Sofia saying this early on, I continue to probe the children's understanding as to the characteristics of someone who is not influenced by others; the children offer a range of descriptions: *They won't give up easily and change* (to) *a different decision; Strong; It's about your strength in your belief; In their behaviour, In the way that they act in public, where they're around other people.* Eventually, they agree that such a person has to be independent, however they are quick to qualify that that independence needs to be tempered with having a good character and doing the right thing. The children also display self-confidence, with Sara very early on claiming, *I think you, you know you when you're mature,* and Asiya confidently stating, *I think it's important to make your own decisions*.

The young people are very clear that they want to be individuals, and display self-confidence. In relation to Marcia's identity states, used by Sahin in his (2013) study of young Muslim's identity states, these young people demonstrate an *Achieved* identity. They have developed and well defined personal values; moreover, they are committed to self-directed on-going development of their own identity and worldview. This is in stark contrast with the young Muslims in Sahin's study, none of

who had an *Achieved* identity. The following comments demonstrate a level of confidence in relating to others.

Amina: *I think you build yourself as a person as well, because you're thinking for yourself, your being freethinking, you're not just being, like controlled and told what to do by something or another person. So, you're able to explore* (for yourself) *what kind of characteristics you have and things.* Qasim seems to be perplexed by why you would compromise your individuality. *I don't get the concept of peer pressure, because even if someone tells you to do something, and just randomly, you don't wanna do it, why do it, even if the consequences may be slightly painful, ...why?* Zaynab talks about having the capacity to be an individual, when faced with a situation where other people have expectations of you. *I would say that it depends, because there are some people in my* (mainstream state) *sixth form, they participate in whatever everyone else is participating in, they want to be like everybody else. When I first came to school, a lot of the conversations made me really uncomfortable, because they were quite shallow and they weren't very moral, so I used to sit somewhere else and a friend came up to me and said you know, people say things about you. And I said; well, so what, I don't care! I don't want to sit with them if they are going to talk about things that make me uncomfortable.*

For Abdullah, being an individual requires self-confidence, which isn't easy in every situation. *I think its also to do with, with self-belief... you as a person, your confidence*
...
I think it's also about a person, as an individual, because that can affect a lot of things ...two people they can be both, they can both be brought up as a Muslim, ...do(ing) *the same things, whereas when they face peer pressure,* (one) *person could crumble, whereas the other one could hold their ground.*

Zaynab talks about being confident enough to change the group atmosphere. *And another thing is that you can influence other people as well, if you make an argument towards them. You say, well I don't understand why you do this, then they can be influenced by it. When I was in* (independent Islamic Girls school)*, a lot of girls used to swear quite a lot, and I said to them, don't swear! Every time* (they would) *swear, I*

used to just look at them or say something to them, and eventually when they sat around me, they wouldn't swear because they felt like, oh I made her uncomfortable, and that made them feel uncomfortable.

Fatimah describes how difficult it is to have that confidence. She is talking about being a young member of a group of female adult seminary students, *...they're Muslims and they're doing something which is wrong and you want to say, 'stop this is wrong', but you feel there's a bunch of Muslims and they are all quite educated in Islam, and yet they're doing this, which seems very wrong. Like there was an incident where there were all these girls and they were all making racist jokes and I, I gave one of them, one of the instigators a very reproachful look and* (later) *I said to her ...what you're doing, it's not right! ...But at the time, I didn't have the confidence to say to all of them, what on earth do you think you're doing making fun of people because of the colour of their skin?*

Participants also display individuality and confidence in how they position themselves in dialogue with their peers. This will be illustrated in Chapter 7.

5.2.3 Parents and family

Both groups are quite aware that the primary influence is parents and family. In the children's group, the question: *So what kinds of things might influence how you think?* elicits the immediate response, *Your parents.* However, some of the children are quite clear that their parents give them the opportunity to think for themselves.

Zakaria: *...some people are Muslims, they're born in a Muslim family, ...they're Muslims but ...they just follow other people and they think uh I have to, I'm forced to, that's what some children think, but*

...

but the families that we have are different, ...they tell us why are we Muslims and why we why we should be Muslims and...

Asiya, links the discussion about parents as influencers, to being an independent thinker; although she is quick to qualify that it shouldn't lead you away from Islam.

Asiya: *Sometimes I do think that I shouldn't be thinking this, maybe I'm* (unclear) *a bit away from Islam, but then* (2) *you should think about it ...are you actually*

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believing in Allah, or are you just doing it for your parents?

The young people are much more self-assured in relation to being autonomous within a family unit. Qasim is particularly reflective about his relationship with his father, where although he feels free to choose his own life, he is nevertheless grateful for his father's guidance, explaining that he sees his father as role model who he will most likely emulate.

Qasim: *...he's very forward. He says I'm Muslim, I chose to be Muslim, ...he always says the door's open, do what you want. But he says, what is better for you is to be a Muslim. He said if you wanna do what you want then go and do that, but it's up to you to choose.*

Farah: *So what do you think about that, what do you think about him saying that?*

Qasim: *It's good, but it's to me it's at the age that the child would understand obviously, ...the child always looks at their parent thinking I want to be like my dad. But then after that, you start to think I don't really want to be like my dad* [laughter] *because there's stuff that he does which you don't really like. I know, when I grow up, I'll probably follow my father in everything he does, practically the way he brought us up and everything; but there are also things I will not do. ...so you slowly start to think, I don't really want to be like my dad, in the worst aspects of his character…*

Kulthum points out that children need parenting and guidance, and shouldn't have complete freedom. *I think that's better than complete freedom, because if you have complete freedom then you could just be making the wrong decisions again and again and again, whereas in this situation you have guidelines that you've been told at home …in some sense you are* (.) *you have the choice to make certain decisions but you are told at home what's right and what's wrong*

5.2.4 Teachers and School

Participants' discussion of teachers and schools as authority in their lives is surprisingly limited. It seems that this is not a feature of their lives that they see as restricting their autonomy. Although, it is possible that this is due to my presence as head teacher. Alternatively, it is possible that attending a faith-based school that aligns with their home culture means that they are functioning within one set of cultural norms, which enables them to feel comfortable. Certainly they do not raise the idea of schools or teachers as challenging to their autonomy, whether discussing

Shakhsiyah Schools or any other educational experience.

There is one example from the children's group where Yusuf is quite focused on the importance of rules and obeying them, within the context of making the right decisions. Here, he is thinking out loud and beginning to see the tension between autonomy and authority. *Well you should make decisions for yourself, I think, because then like, because teachers um always try to like help you build up a good character and um if, if you like follow those rules and then um because sometimes, like when you're doing work, like there's no choice about, about like not doing it, or doing it, you have to do it.* However, Asiya is quick to correct him, pointing to the agency you have as a learner. *I think it's important to make your own decisions, sometimes you actually need to, even when you're at school, like when you write your story, that's your decision of what to write and how to write it and, you're learning how to make a decision then, so even when you're older you can use that knowledge of how you chose what to write about.*

Asiya does not appear to perceive having to write the story as impinging on her autonomy. It is also possible that she is simply passively accepting school as authority. If this is the case, then participants are not aware of a contradiction between how they perceive themselves and their acceptance of schooling. Conversely, perhaps they simply understand schooling as supporting their development of personal autonomy, the limited discussion of schooling in relation to autonomy, means that no conclusions can be drawn.

5.2.5 Friends and peer pressure

After parents and family, participants understand that friends and peers are also influential in their lives. Initially, the children talk about friends being helpful and a positive influence.

Asiya: *Your friends, maybe when you have a problem they're gonna be there with you sometimes, and you can ask them for help…*

Yusra: *Say if your friend's doing something good, you become influenced and you do something good as well.*

The children need some probing as to possibilities where friends may not be a positive influence. They recognise this possibility, but the discussion moves on quickly to having a strong character, so that you are not easily influenced.

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Whereas for the young adults, this is an important topic, generating lengthy discussion. I ask them: if having shakhsiyah is about being a good Muslim, then can someone with a strong shakhsiyah still be an autonomous person?

Ibrahim: *...because peer pressure is quite a big issue you see these days and if some, and if some, like say some people tell you to do something, if you have, uh it's probably shakhsiyah, you'd make the decision not to follow them.*

Qasim is very forthright that he doesn't understand why people bow to peer pressure.

Qasim: *...I don't get the concept of peer pressure, because even if someone tells you to do something, and just randomly you don't wanna do it, why do it, even if the consequences may be slightly painful, ...why?*

Farah: *What about the rest of you, do you feel peer pressure? Qasim's saying he doesn't [feel]*

Qasim: [*But*] *even if I, peer pressure alhamdulillah (praise be to Allah), I haven't experienced it in a major way, but other than that even, the bit that I have, it's just like people, you think they're not going to be nice, you're not going to be popular and whatever, I don't* (care)*, peer pressure, so what!*

Like Qasim, the majority of young people claim that they do not feel the need to succumb to peer pressure, they give examples of times they have withstood peer pressure. These range from not participating in morally inappropriate conversations, swearing, missing prayers in order to play football, smoking e-cigarettes and breaking into cars. A few of them recognise that it can be difficult, particularly in school situations.

Kulthum: *Yeah that's the annoying thing, in a school, in a state school especially, the main thing is to try and fit in and unfortunately that is to not be overly religious. ...It's to try and fit into society and not stick out like a weirdo*

…

No, so I'm saying it's difficult, that's why a lot of people pretend not to (.) *you know, just pretend not to be into their religion a lot, just so that they don't stick out.*

Most of the young-people claim that they have the shakhsiyah not to be influenced by peer-pressure. It is possible that in this group situation, participants feel the need to show that they are strong, and to present themselves as autonomous individuals. However, in general the discussion is very open, and participants are keen to share examples of withstanding peer-pressure, they seem to be very honest in their self-reflections. Moreover, they also identify peer pressure from religious Muslims to

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behave in particular ways, and give examples of how they withstood this also.

Fatimah: *It goes two ways as well because when I went for one year at Madrasah, I felt they were all following a particular madhab* (school of thought), *and I was following a different one and there was a lot of emphasis like, what's your problem? Where are you from? There are people who follow a different madhab? What is this? And you know, it works both ways.*

Ultimately the young people recognise that these are decisions they take as autonomous Muslims who choose to be Muslim.

Amina: *It depends on like peer pressure, how much peer pressure affects you depends on how much you… like friends and company and things like that, and so… if you decide to make the decision that you know, your Islam comes first, rather than popularity, friends and just being with the in crowd, then that's your choice…*

5.2.6 Societal Norms and Islamic norms

The children's discussion on societal norms is very limited. Zakaria points out that you are influenced by your surroundings, and there is some discussion about the rule of law, related to what the children have been learning about FBV. Yusuf for example, is aware that there is the possibility of tension between different sets of laws, but he is very keen to do what is right. *I think being a Muslim means that you abide by the laws of Allah, and since you live in this country, you should also abide by these laws.* However, later on, Yusuf is clear that individual conscience matters, *you should be able to make your own choice to say, is this right, is this wrong? And I need to do what's right.* He gives examples of potential conflicts between these laws, and a simple response about being true to your religion.

The young people however, speak at length. For them the focus is on the difference between societal norms and the Islamic worldview and Muslim practices. They argue that this tension makes them more autonomous, because they have to navigate the norms of Islam and British society, in meeting their own aims in life.

Amina: *I think Islam has made me more autonomous than if I was to be um a non-Muslim, because I don't think they, um, um encourage that as much*

Zaynab: *If I was, if I wasn't a Muslim, I don't think I would think so much.*

Qasim: [*yeah because they don't*]

Zaynab: [*I think,*] *I might just well be a follower, I would think what's the point of*

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thinking about it [*why don't I just go with it*]

Qasim: [*That's what I was thinking, if I wasn't*]

Fatimah: [*I think the fact*] *that we're Muslims and we live in this society, it forces us to be autonomous because we have to,* [*yeah*] *we're constantly being told something different to what we believe, so we had to make conscious efforts to make sure we remain on that straight path, like um (.) recently, up until about a few months ago I was so intent upon pursuing a career in fashion, and then you know, loads of people told me you can't do that with Islam, it would be so difficult for you to become successful, there are things you would have to compromise on. And I was very intent upon it and I said, no I'll do it somehow, I'll skirt around it and then (.) recently when all the stuff about Syria happened and all these things that were going on, and you just think to yourself it's not worth it you, you reassess what means most to you and you realise that, hang on a second I, I want to do something for the sake of Allah and you realise that you've got to do something to help the Ummah, you can't just follow whatever it is you want to do, because at the end of the day that's what you're there for, so it gives you direction in your life and you have to make that autonomous decision to, to follow that.*

In this extract, the critical-dialogic nature of halaqah emerges. Fatimah is clearly wrestling with choosing a life-path that could be seen as superficial or choosing one that involves championing social-justice issues. In the dialogue in this research halaqah, there are echoes of the dialogue on social issues that was characteristic of Prophetic halaqah (Niyozov and Memon, 2011). Moreover, this is not dialogue for dialogue's sake; rather it is in relation to acting autonomously to challenge perceived societal injustice. It is also a deeply personal inner dialogue that reflects an awareness of the need for personal growth. Moreover, the young-people raise the political context, and the courage involved in their decision to adopt an outwardly Islamic identity, i.e. practicing those aspects of Islam that are considered strange in wider society. For the girls, wearing a *jilbab*,[12] which could be considered as marking yourself out as part of the Muslim 'other', is something that they have found challenging. They talk about their internal struggles with deciding whether to wear it or not. This demonstrates that although they claim that they are not influenced by

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[12] Outer garment worn over clothes in public

peer-pressure and society, it is more a case of resisting as opposed to not finding it a challenge.

In this sense, the concept of shakhsiyah as an autonomous independent person becomes important, and they begin to talk of autonomy as a gift that should be exercised. For example, Abdullah is quite forthright about the importance of not following other people in making your decisions.

Abdullah: *I think it's also to do with, with self belief, in yourself …for example, when I was looking to go to college, I didn't just apply to one place, you know that would be, I know certain people from my previous schools, from just round the area, they're very shallow, they're kind of like, you know, oh all the people in my area are going to this school, this college or this school, you know, they just follow each other, they're just sheep, they're, they're not thinking.*

5.3 Exercising Autonomy - making choices and decisions, choosing to be Muslim

Participants repeatedly discuss the responsibility that comes with the freedom to make choices. They are focused on making the right choice in line with their beliefs as Muslims. They see freedom and autonomy as categorically linked to responsibility and accountability to act in the best way. For participants, this moral striving seems to be directly linked to their faith. The young people appreciate that there are other value systems and worldviews, and use this to argue that autonomy always functions in a context.

5.3.1 Making the Right choice

The children seem very concerned about making the right decisions, and keep returning to the idea that as children they need to learn how to make those decisions. Early on, Adam identifies the importance of making the right decision, *'Well, making your own decisions can sometimes be good and sometimes be bad, because sometimes, you can make the wrong decisions and when people tell you it's wrong you think, 'No I think I'm responsible enough, I think I'm making the right decision', but maybe, it could actually be wrong.'* Towards the end of the final session, in response to a question from me about how they feel about having freedom to choose, Adam talks again about responsibility, *We all have a big responsibility.* Children talk about seeking advice from others, but are clear that once they are adults, they are free

to make choices. Nevertheless, they are keen that their choices should be the 'right choices'. Yusuf: *Well, you should be able to make your own decisions; you should be able to make your own choice to say, is this right, is this wrong? And I need to do what's right.*

The young-people voice similar ideas. The first response to the question about freedom comes from Amina, who immediately uses the word responsibility and begins to talk about consequences to actions. '*I think it places a set of responsibilities on people, because you have to actually decide for yourself what you want to do and actually weigh up the decisions. If you have two decisions you have to think about different aspects of them and the consequences'.* Consequences become a recurring theme, the young-people talk about how, as they grow older, they have more responsibilities and their choices have lasting consequences. Qasim: *when you get to the age lets say, exams start ...you realise life is not as easy as I thought it was.*

5.3.2 Choosing to Be Muslim

This theme is explored at length and more fully than others, because it deals with the question at the core of the secular-liberal critique of Islamic education. The young people quickly raise this issue themselves. Whilst qualifying an earlier point that as a Muslim you are choosing to submit to Allah, Zaynab acknowledges that, *you are free to make your own choices to rebel against Allah.* Amina agrees, *but you're submitting on your own freewill.* Qasim says that once you are a young adult, you are free to choose whether to be Muslim or not, because you start to have independence from your parents, *sixteen, fifteen, maybe even ten years old, after that they're free to choose.* They argue that it is a requirement in Islam to autonomously choose to be Muslim, to submit to Allah. In line with the halaqah guidelines, I keep probing the same question, so that they can reconsider their initial thoughts and develop their ideas.

Farah: *So do you think that every Muslim has to come to these kinds of conclusions for themselves or, let's go back to this notion of freedom and autonomy, do you think there's a conflict between a western concept of autonomy, being able to decide the rights and wrongs in life, to be able to either choose their religion or choose, if they don't have a religion, then to choose on their own basis what they think is right and wrong. Do you think there is a contradiction between the concept of autonomy and*

being a Muslim, because to be a Muslim means to submit? So do you think that the concept of autonomy conflicts with being a Muslim?

Fatimah: *To be a Muslim, you have to make the autonomous decision to take the Shahadah* (testament of faith)*, and to say that you believe, and that's the biggest decision you have to make in your life, it's said that people who just say it, it doesn't count. You have to have conviction in your heart, so, the only way that you can come to that, it can't be forced down your throat, you have to have your own internal debate I suppose, eventually you come to the conclusion either you want to submit or you don't.*

Qasim gives the Quranic evidence. *But that goes back to ...the Quran, where Allah says 'La iqra'haa fi deen', that there's no compulsion in the religion ...so if you choose to do it, you choose to do it, if you don't choose to do it, it's your own opinion.* Nevertheless, I continue to probe and asked them if they have ever questioned their faith. Participants interpret the question widely and talk simultaneously about questioning aspects of Islamic teachings and questioning their belief in Islam, which means that it was quite difficult to tease out exactly how they perceived choosing to be a Muslim, from challenges they had in practicing their faith. However, participants were quite candid and open about their personal thoughts. The next section has been redacted to capture the essence of a lengthy discussion on questioning your belief. Qasim is talking about behaviour and lifestyles, but also about the beliefs that underlie these.

Qasim: *when you grow up, you look at other people, you think this is so wrong, it doesn't make sense; you say Islam is the more logical thing; it makes more sense*

Abdullah: [*Umm*]

Zaynab*: [You don't] question your belief unless you don't have an intellectual understanding of it. If you're only emotionally tied to Islam, then eventually you will question it, you'll think [hmm* (murmurs of agreement) *yeah it's true] my parents are following this; do I really need to follow this? No one else is doing it, if from childhood you have an intellectual understanding of why Islam is the right decision, you wouldn't question your belief, because you'd have come to the conclusion that it's a rational thing.*

Fatimah*: I think it takes time to come to that conclusion though, because as a child*

Qasim*: You just follow your parents*

Fatimah: *No, I find that personally, as a child I questioned it all the time, it took me a*

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very long time to come to the conclusion through, not just intellectual means, but other means as well, even emotionally to come to the conclusion that that was the truth, something I believed in, ...you make a conscious decision, do I believe in this? Do I not believe in it? [murmurs of agreement] *And I think throughout the experience you have throughout your childhood, you learn from everything that you go through, and you look at other people's lives and you learn more about Islam, you learn more about other religions, you learn more about different ways of life, about the way society functions, about the way the household functions in your own home, and then you compare the two and you think about different things, and I think ultimately that decision is made after childhood. I think, personally, I don't think that you can say that as a child you're completely steadfast to it and there's* [murmurings] *no questioning after it. I think throughout your life you're always going to be questioning it, but you make a* [*conscious decision.*]

Here, Fatimah is highly reflective and remarkably honest about an on-going inner struggle as a child. This extract is part of a wider discussion that includes reflections about questioning within Islam, within other religions, and trying to understand the nature of God. Both Qasim and Zaynab talk about questioning their faith in the past tense and in a manner as if this was not a major issue for them, any questioning only strengthened their belief. They both claim that they used reason or logic to clarify in their minds the truth of Islam and the appropriateness of Islamic practices. During the discussion, I sensed that these young-people were aware that their non-Muslim peers may consider them irrational and blind followers, but they feel that it is quite the reverse, that their non-Muslim peers are less likely to question their own belief systems. Amina: *I think I feel very, yeah very privileged to be Muslim, because Islam gives you your purpose in life and it makes everything seem clearer. And you have a goal, you see everybody else around you and you see them just* (.) *just living because, because they're there, they're just existing.*

Due to the dialogic nature of the Halaqah, participants don't just say that they are choosing to be Muslim; they reflexively explore the idea. Amina: *I think for me, Islam has always been really open, they've always answered questions, answered all my questions that needed answering; with other religions you tend to see that they, ...are tied to people emotionally and ...they often tell people you don't question things and you just have to believe.* Amina is speaking from experience, like Qasim and

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Abdullah, Amina has one parent who is a convert, and some of her extended family is Christian. She contrasts her experience of parents who have taught her that it's okay to question Islam, with her experiences of Christian people in her life. Fatimah picks up on this, *I think, ...the Christians who said don't delve too deeply or you'll lose your faith, you can compare that to when people say don't look at the nature of Allah; because as a child when you're questioning your faith, I find that's the first thing that comes to mind, how can Allah be, some people say he's everywhere, some people say he's outside space, you get confused and then some people say don't question it, but the difference is then they say, (.) Allah says to you, if you want to know me, look at my creation; so there is an alternative given, which then allows you the freedom to make choices because then you can look at His creation and ...you do have that choice.* This issue of wanting to understand the nature of Allah comes up more than once and is also an issue for the children's group. Qasim and Abdullah highlight that questioning has been part of their life, both as children of converts and of parents who have given real thought to their upbringing and education.

Qasim: *You believe in it even if you do question, because, when I used to think… How is Allah? How* (does) *He live for so long? And how is He on His own? But then you also think that Allah's, He's something limitless, you cannot understand it, the human mind can't fathom it. At the same time I never asked, because I thought they would probably just tell me things I already know, like I said, my dad's really forward, he already tells you all this, you already know, but you still think about it*

Abdullah: *I think it's also about understanding it, obviously if Christianity isn't clear to you, and also there's not a constant reminder, you're not constantly thinking I know what I'm about, what I believe in, that's not clear in your mind. Whereas obviously for us specifically, it's different, because we've been in that setting of Islam, I mean living by it, our families are practising, so we can face most questions that are thrown at us, whereas I think when people aren't sure about their own religion, then that's when they start to question things. With us, questions have been asked, we're not gonna just accept everything, we're gonna have questions, but obviously they've been answered and (.) we've gone through the stages of understanding.*

The young people are very comfortable with exploring their beliefs and questioning the fundamentals of their belief. The children are also comfortable talking about their experiences of questioning their belief in Islam, although they take some time to realise that this is what I am asking them. The children's discussion is quite

convoluted, drawing on a range of issues. Below is a redacted section of lengthy discussion. I have retained those elements that are directly concerned with choosing to be Muslim, there are a number of points made here but the essence of the discussion is that children feel that they have the opportunity to question their beliefs, and are supported if they choose to do so. At one point, however, Zakaria seems a little confused, and is seeking to clarify that although he has questioned his belief, he has *'not gone against it'*. It is still unclear to me whether Zakaria is nervous about discussing that he might 'go against Islam', or whether he is simply being meticulous in clarifying what he wants to say.

Farah: W*hy are you a Muslim?*

Zakaria: *We are Muslim because, not just because our mums and dads brought us up as a Muslim, because we know that there's Allah, Allah is the Lord, and we, we have signs that he's the Lord, so we are Muslims.*

...

Adam: *...when you're older you can find out, it's not that if you're born a Christian you will always be a Christian, because ...it's your decision when you grow up, you choose what path you're gonna take, if you stay with your family, and do what everybody else in your family does, or you research and find out about different religions and find out about Islam*

Zakaria: *Well, Adam is right, and I also have an example, like my father he wasn't Muslim when he was younger and he grew up and then, when he was, ...when you can choose for yourself ...some people could be 12, some people could be 13, when he became that age, he found some books and started reading and then started thinking ...actually why am I alive?*

…

Zakaria: *...some people are Muslims, they're born in a Muslim family, they're Muslims but they just follow other people and they think, uh I have to, I'm forced to, that's what some children think, but the families that we have are different, they tell us why are we Muslims and why we should be Muslims…*

Farah: *So you feel that in your family you have the opportunity to discuss why you should be a Muslim, and you have the opportunity to say the reasons why you might not want to be a Muslim, do you have that opportunity?*

Zakaria: *Well, yeah*

...

Farah: *Sometimes we all have questions,*

Zakaria: *Definitely*

Farah: *I know all of you always have questions …I've got a very very serious question to ask you and I know we've been in here a long time, but try and think about this, have you ever questioned believing in Allah or believing in Islam? Have you ever questioned that?*

(1)

Zakaria: *Um, well I have thought about it, but not really questioned, …I thought about Allah, I was thinking believing in Allah, why actually, why do we actually do that and actually thinking why Allah has asked us to do this*

Farah: *So you've questioned the things Allah has asked you to do, but have you ever questioned why you believe in Allah?*

Zakaria: (2) *Um… well, I've thought, I believed in Allah, well I haven't really questioned it,* (1) *because, because I've thought about it, but* (.) *not really gone against it.*

Farah: *Maybe I haven't explained myself. I don't mean that have you questioned and said 'No I don't believe in Allah'. Have you ever thought to yourself 'do I really believe in Allah? Or, 'why do I believe in Allah?'*

Zakaria: (enthusiastically) *Yeah*

Farah: *…has the thought ever come into your mind 'Is Allah really there?'*

Zakaria: *Yes, that has*

Yusuf: *Yeah, yeah that thought has come into my mind*

Some Children: *Yeah, yeah*

Farah: (looks at girls) *…has that come to your mind?*

All Children: *Yes*

Farah: *Ok, so what do you do then when that thought comes into your mind? How do you, how do you deal with that?*

… (There is a lengthy discussion at this point about evidence for the existence of God, the truth of the Quran etc., which has been removed)

Farah: *…Not everybody believes in Allah, not everybody believes in Islam, …is Allah there? Is Islam true? What do you do? …I mean, you've all said you've had that thought, how do you deal with it? What do you do?*

(3)

Do you get scared? Do you think 'oh no I shouldn't be thinking this'

…

Asiya: *Sometimes, I do think that I shouldn't be thinking this; maybe I'm* (unclear) *a bit away from Islam, but then*

(2)

you should think about it sometimes that are you actually believing in Allah, or are you just doing it for your parents?

Farah: *You should think about it, you're saying?*

(1)

Asiya: *But not like the way that it's gonna lead you away like just 'do I actually believe in Allah? Do I actually believe that there is Islam?'*

Farah: *Mhmm, ok, right*

Asiya: *Or are you just doing it for your parents, because your parents are telling you to pray, (you) should think about 'why do I pray?'*

…

Farah: *Ok, anybody else want to say anything about that?*

(3)

Is there any other ways that you, when that thought came into your mind, think about it, when did that happen to you? What did you do? What did you think?

…

Farah: *…Um, Yusra what do you think? Yusra*

(.) *um* (someone else moves to speak)

Farah: *Let Yusra speak*

(5)

You don't want to talk about it, you don't have to, you don't have to talk about it, it's ok, …alright, shall I, shall I leave you alone? Yeah, ok then, Nazia what about you?

(4)

Nazia: *Well, I thought is there… is there…is…*

(7)

Farah: *You don't have to tell us either Nazia, …Ok, I'll leave you, I'll leave you two alone, ok, don't, don't worry.*

The above section demonstrates that whilst some probing does initiate a candid and comfortable discussion amongst most of the children, there are two who don't wish to be drawn out. However, these two rarely contribute to the discussion at all, so it may not be this specific question, but perhaps the situation as a whole, that is, conducting

halaqah under the gaze of a video camera, that has led to their reticence. It is also important to note that like Zakaria, Asiya seeks to make it clear that her questioning has not led her away from Islam. At this young age of 10-11 years, these children demonstrate less confidence in expressing their internal doubts about their beliefs than the young-adults who are aged between 15-19 years. Nevertheless, no participant reports being discouraged from questioning his or her faith. When prompted they are able to give examples of parental understanding and open discussions.

Farah: *Those of you who are happy to discuss it, did you tell anybody this? ...if so what did that person do?*

Yusuf: *I talked to my mum about it, and I was thinking, how do we know that Allah, and the stories about the prophets, are real?*

Farah: *Ok, so you had a discussion with your mum about it, did she say to you 'why are you thinking about this?'*

Yusuf: *No, she said it's good that I'm curious about it, because it's my religion and I should be wanting to know about it.*

Farah: *Right, so she was pleased that you were thinking about it, and* (that) *you had that curiosity, ok that's good,*

...

Zakaria: *I asked my, my older brother because he's more closer to my age and I feel more comfortable with him, or I ask my mum and she also explains all of this, she does a halaqah with us and she explains this all to me.*

Farah: *So most of you are happy to discuss it with their families, does anybody feel that it's something you shouldn't talk about?*

 (4)

Sara

Sara: *I think that you should talk about it because they might think that it's a really good question, they might want to learn about it as well. And I think it's, really important to learn about it.*

...

Yusuf: *Um, well you should wonder about your religion when you research about it then you'll find out more about it, because you've researched enough and you've found out the truth*

Farah: *Ok, so Yusuf's saying it's important to think about it and it's important to question things because you'll only get to the truth if you keep questioning, does*

everybody agree with Yusuf?

All Children: *Yes*

The length of this edited section demonstrates that sufficient time was given for participants to explore this difficult question in depth, and it was probed in many different ways. At no point does any participant express the view that it is wrong to question your belief or state that they would not be allowed to do so. As stated earlier, interwoven into this discussion was the question of making choices as a Muslim, both between acting on Islamic teachings and in choosing between variations of Islamic teachings.

In Chapter 1, it was noted that much of the literature on Muslim schools and or Islamic education in the UK, is concerned with perceived indoctrination and a lack of respect for the development of personal autonomy (Burtonwood, 2000; Merry, 2007). The findings reported her demonstrate that these children and young people do not report a lack of personal autonomy, even in the most fundamental choice of whether or not to believe in the Islamic creed.

5.3.3 Choosing to practise Islamic teachings and choosing between variations within Islam

Participants openly discuss thinking about choices they make in relation to acting on Islamic teachings. They are clear that ultimately it is their choice whether to practise the teachings of Islam or not. In this regard, on more than one occasion, they raise the issue of human freewill in relation to the divine. However, I ensure that the discussion does not digress into this topic, as it does not directly address my research questions. Nevertheless, it is significant that participants feel comfortable to begin to open up a discussion about this apparent tension in the Islamic worldview, as well as candidly discussing whether they are actually choosing to practise Islamic teachings.

Zaynab: *Yeah ...when you decide that you're going to submit to Allah, it's not like all your powers of decision making are suddenly taken away from you, you still have the choice to do it this way or that way or to even just stop, there's still a* [*choice there*]

Other participants disagree saying that there is a difference in choices made within Islam, as you are trying to follow Islam and be faithful to it, so that isn't autonomous in the same way.

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Ibrahim: [*I mean if you*] *are a Muslim and you're practising ...does that mean that you're still autonomous? ...If you don't really make decisions, if you just do it anyway, because you think that's what being a Muslim is about, that you have to do these things, does that mean you're still autonomous?*

Farah: *That's what I'm asking, what do you think?*

Amina: *I think, um* (unclear) *Islam encourages us* [*to be autonomous*]

Qasim: [*Because you've got to make your own decisions*]

Amina: *it actually tells us to, to always, um like question our decisions, question our intentions, why we're going to do a certain action or not, so in a sense you are being autonomous*

Ibrahim isn't satisfied, because he brings this up again later.

Ibrahim: *If once you become Muslim, I don't think ...you're completely autonomous, I think you lose some of that* [*yeah*]

(Lots of people talking)

Kulthum: *I agree with that because all the choices you make, say for example pork's haram you, so you're not eating pork, you make that choice but your making that choice because you want to be a Muslim, so if you want to be a Muslim you have to make* [*these choices,*]

Ibrahim: [*Your decision is going to be based on*] *...if you go against them, say you don't pray five times a day, then you know… that's not being a good Muslim, so all your choices are you know to try and become a better Muslim, so it's not completely* (.) *autonomous* (.) *so if you think about it.*

Ibrahim and Kulthum point out that your once you are a Muslim; your choices are determined by Islamic teachings. However, like Amina and Qasim above, Fatimah sees it as an on-going series of autonomous choices to be Muslim.

Fatimah: *Because each act you do, you're making an autonomous decision. Am I doing this for Allah, or am I doing this for some sort of worldly gain, am I even doing this act at all, every time you, we pray five times a day, every time you get up to pray, you're making the conscious decision, am I, am I submitting to my Lord, or do I decide not to do that, do I believe in this, or do I not, and that's five times a day that you're making, you're reassessing you're um, that you're, I don't know quite how to explain it, I suppose your spiritual position and, are you still as firm in your belief as you were a few* [*hours ago*]

The others take up this idea with careful consideration; for example, Ibrahim begins

to question his original position.

Ibrahim: [*I don't know really.*] *I mean I'm still not sure, I mean if I, ...if I make a decision ...because I believe in, I believe that's the right thing from what I've learned from being a Muslim, does that make me not autonomous? I mean if I choose not to eat pork because I know that's haram* (forbidden)*, does that, does that make me not autonomous, I mean I've made a decision not to eat pork because that's what I believe, so I'm, I'm not sure about whether that makes me autonomous or not.*

This discussion on choosing to practise Islamic teachings is further informed by discussion about the Islamic idea that the onus is on the individual Muslim to assess conflicting views, and choose what he is convinced of.

Yusuf: *I agree, you should make your own choices, so you've got to actually find different opinions of what's right, maybe somebody who you know you can trust and then you should ask them and* (.) *check what their view is on it and ask other people that you can trust so that you actually know what's* [*right and what's wrong*]

…

Asiya: *I think even when you're in Islam you can still choose, because like when you pray there's the way you pray, so you choose which one, some people um say 'Allahu Akbar' and do this* (acts out a gesture) *whenever they go down, some people don't, but that's a choice, but it's like a choice that you have to make.*

The young people are far more sophisticated in their understanding of variations of Islam and how to approach them independently of others.

Qasim: *Otherwise why would there be, if in Islam you're not meant to be autonomous, when the Prophet… said all the actions are about your intentions so …you have to make the intention, not someone makes the intention for you, you make it, it's your intention, so you'll be autonomous in that moment by making you're intention, that I am gonna do this.*

Fatimah: *Also in Islam, there are quite a few things which are grey areas where you have to make a decision, is this actually the right thing to do, is this what Allah would want me to do, because it's unclear…*

Participants are also clear that they are able to question and challenge what other people are telling them about their faith; that they value achieving personal

conviction.

Fatimah: *I think I can relate to that quite a bit because I had very similar questions…
When* (a teacher) *went through the hadīth and the narrations about the jilbab, I
wasn't very satisfied. I still felt that perhaps she had misunderstood it, and it could be
taken a different way, and so I had a lot of questions. Then later on when I did the
first year of the* (Islamic seminary) *course, because they gave me the skills to go and
look back at books myself, then I started to look into it for myself and there was
nobody else telling me, well this narrations says this, so therefore you have to do it. I
came to the conclusion in myself, …I went through it myself; I felt some sort of
satisfaction that I knew.*

5.3.4 Being an autonomous Muslim means being responsible

The theme of choosing within Islam is developed further by the idea that, as a
Muslim, you have to be autonomous. The children don't immediately understand that
this potentially means making 'wrong' choices; I have to posit this idea. Their
response is that autonomy is still important, but it comes with responsibility.

Yusuf: *Being a Muslim you can still make your own decisions, because if you, if you
still follow the laws of Allah and, say it comes to like something bad and um yo…you
can make the choice, you can either do that bad thing, or you can stay away from it
and do a good thing.*

…

Zakaria: *You could but um,* (.) *yes you could, but there could be some bad things
about it, because you should be kind of independent and in between, independent and
not being independent,* (you) *should be in between, because if you're not independent*
(.) *…someone else might say something to you, which is not part of Islam and they
make it up, you might believe them*

Zakaria links the concept of personal accountability to independent thinking, and
describes how it makes him feel, *it actually makes me feel, well, makes me feel
worried* (2) *that I might actually change my mind,* (I) *might start looking at other
people thinking that they're doing right, when they're doing wrong. …Or, …secondly,
I actually think, this is kind of like a challenge for me, so I can try* (to) *do my best.*

The young adults are already very conscious of their autonomy, and the responsibility
it entails.

Abdullah: *I think that …our parents have brought us up in a certain way, but as we're all individuals, once we get to a certain age of, you know, whether it's puberty or after that …at the end of the day we're all going to be accountable for ourselves, same as if I told Qasim to do this, to do that, he's going to be accountable you know, for doing it, for actually executing it, if you see what I'm saying*

…

Zaynab: *…when you decide that you're going to submit to Allah, it's not like all your powers of decision making are suddenly taken away from you, you still have the choice to do it this way or that way or to even just stop, there's still a choice there.*

5.3.5 Having a point of reference for making decisions

The young adults articulate the idea that Islam provides a framework for making decisions and autonomous choices. Zaynab is particularly clear that decision making always happens in a context and that all human beings draw on a set of values and norms. She sees this as important.

Zaynab: *I think it's important if you have a point of reference for your decisions, you don't just make decisions based on* (.) *nothing or based on what you feel like doing, so for us it's obviously Islam…*

…

Zaynab: *I think also it's ridiculous to assume that just because you …have a secular education, it makes you more free to make decisions, because you're always going to be basing your decisions still on your upbringing, on your education. You don't just make decisions out of nowhere, …the way someone who is brought up in this country in a secular school makes their decisions, would be completely different to the way someone who is brought up in India or Africa would make their decisions, because they have a different basis for it. So even if you do go to secular school you are limited somehow in the way you make your decisions* [*because*]

Amina: [*Yeah you're*] *still biased, yeah*

…

Farah: *So, what you're saying is that* (.) *it's the same thing for non-Muslims in that they're following some sort of way …a way that your free…*

Fatimah: *They are following the concept of freedom, they're trying to attain the most freedom they can possibly get but as a Muslim we're trying to attain the highest* (.) *level of iman* (faith) *that you can get.*

Farah: [*So*] *the highest level of submission. So is that not a contradiction then, so somebody could be trying to attain the highest level of freedom and somebody else is trying to* [unclear]

This question leads to a lengthy and highly animated discussion involving all participants that culminates in Amina giving an example.

Amina: *I think with both parties, where they are trying to attain the highest level of freedom or the highest level of submission, they're both not being fully autonomous, because I remember that a teacher showed me a woman in full black, a full niqāb* (face veil) *and everything and there was another woman, she was wearing a miniskirt and high heels and everything and there was a question: which society is male dominated? Which one of these women are oppressed? ...the answer was, they're both male dominated and oppressed or their both not oppressed, so its...*

Farah: *So what's the point, why are you making that conclusion? ...to uncover is not an autonomous decision either, is that what you're saying?*

Amina: [*Yeah*]

Farah: *Why?*

Amina: *Because um if you're going by the society, isn't it the society that they live in, ...they're giving them a way of living and so they're following that, ...because they want to be part of it...*

...

Fatimah: *...where are these morals coming from, then you're a slave to wherever they came from, ...you have to have reasons behind it and when you look back, those reasons always relate to some sort of an experience that* [*you've had*]

[*yeah*]

[*that's true*]

...

Amina: *The way I, the way I see it is that if being within ...the framework of Islam and being within the framework of any society, you're still not fully autonomous*

Participants' arguments echo H. Alexander's critique of the value neutral assumptions of some liberal theorists. Here they seem to re-voice his claim that there cannot be a 'view from nowhere', that such a notion is a fallacy, and must be replaced by 'a view from somewhere' (2015, p.39).

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5.4 Shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a Dialogical Muslim Self

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, shakhsiyah Islamiyah is conceptualised as an Islamic form of personal autonomy, which shares some characteristics with secular-liberal conceptions of personal autonomy. Shakhsiyah Islamiyah draws on classical Islamic thought as a frame of reference for navigating the contemporary world as a Muslim. Chapter 2 draws on classical Islamic ideas of the reflexive-self (al-Ghazzālī, 2008, and on dialogical-self theory (Hermans & Hermans Konopka, 2010; Wegerif, 2011), in order to conceptualise shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self. With this conceptualisation, the Muslim-self self-consciously draws on an Islamic frame of reference, in order to understand its own being as a state of dialogue. Being consists of the three dialogic relationships of classical Muslim thought: relationship with self, with Allah, and with the created world, including non-Muslim society. Although participants are not directly invited to discuss this concept, it is possible to trace this idea in their dialogue on autonomy, mainly in the self-reflective sections, where they ponder their relationships with self, Allah and others, including non-Muslim others. Participants relate personal autonomy to shakhsiyah Islamiyah, and draw the conclusion that in their worldview, shakhsiyah Islamiyah is an autonomous self that chooses to submit to Allah. They allude to shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self.

5.4.1 Character and the Dialogical Muslim-self

The children are clear that shakhsiyah means character, although they are not able to immediately explain what character means. In the first research halaqah, they link character to good behaviour and making good choices. Yusuf says, *you have to make your own choices, when you're older if you come across something bad, then if you, if you have good character then you'll probably make a good choice and stay away from that bad thing, and do something good instead.* Although Yusuf is implying agency and autonomy within his idea of character, this is not immediately evident to him; he struggles with the idea of autonomy for someone with bad character. *...But if you have a bad character, and you just keep making your own decisions, then I think there's even no point of making your own decisions, because all your decisions will probably be bad, because you have a bad character.*

Farah: *So, do you think, Yusuf, that people who have a bad character should not be allowed to make their own decisions?*

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Yusuf: *They should be, but they should actually have good character, because then when they make their own decisions then* (1) *...most of it will be bad*

Farah: *What do you mean, ok, this is a big question, what do you mean by good character? ...I want to know more about the thinking process, how is it the case that you come to a decision by yourself, you're saying that would be influenced by the character that you have,* (.) *so the ideas that you already have and the values that you have...*

Yusuf: *Yeah*

In the third research halaqah, we come back to the discussion of shakhsiyah as character, and whether character enables you to withstand peer-pressure. The children understand shakhsiyah Islamiyah to be having good values and making good choices. It takes them some time to move from the idea that someone with shakhsiyah Islamiyah, by which they mean good values, may not be able to resist peer-pressure, that a *'strong'* autonomous character may also be required. Their initial focus is how knowledge and understanding would help you to resist peer pressure and make the right choices, how you would access the right kind of knowledge, and evaluate different opinions. Nevertheless, through questioning, they do arrive at the idea of the importance of being 'an independent person' as being very much part of shakshiyah Islamiyah. Once they have settled on this idea, I ask them that if autonomy or independence is good, what happens if an autonomous individual makes bad choices, what if they choose to turn away from Islam? They find this final question very challenging, Adam has a very honest response.

Farah: *...say you're an autonomous person and you decide that you want to do things that Muslims shouldn't do, or that you don't even want to be a Muslim, then what?*

Adam: *Oh woah! Oh man!*

Farah: *Yeah*

Adam: *That's blown my mind!*

After the children have begun to comprehend this idea, I ask them about the Islamic teachings on the nature of the human being as an intellectual being with *'aql* (intellect) and freewill to make choices for which she is accountable. Eventually I summarise these teachings.

Farah: *...ok, let me just bring this together now, just listen carefully.* (.) *Actually, the Islamic teaching is that Allah gave human beings free will and the human beings who make the right choices,* (.) *who use their 'aql, their intellect, to think for themselves,*

to recognise Allah and then choose, it's really complicated Islam, ...you've got the free will, you have to use your aql, your intellect, you have to think, you have to accept Allah, then you have to submit to Allah and do what He says. You have to use your 'aql to understand what it is He wants you to do, you have to choose to submit! (2) He doesn't want you to just pray because your parents tell you to pray or your teacher tells you to pray, He wants you to pray because you want to pray, and He doesn't just want you to do it because you think it's a good thing, He wants you to do it because you love Him, and you love to pray. (1) So He wants you to be autonomous, (.) but He wants you to recognise who He is (.) and he wants you to have that humility to submit to him. (2) Does that make sense?

Yusuf: *Yes, can I just say something?*

Farah: *One minute. (2) And at the end of the day, it's up to us whether we do that or we don't do that. (2) No one can actually make you do it. (2) So ultimately, it's up to you. (2) Which means that, (.) it's very important that you have your own thinking skills. (3) Ok, I think I've said everything I want to say, ok who wants to talk now? Yusuf, Go on.*

Yusuf: *So basically, you just repeated everything we've said for the last four days...*

...

Farah: *For the last four days, I just summarised what Islam has to say about it*

Yusuf: *Yeah*

Farah: *Ok. But it's up to you to decide whether you agree with that or not.*

Yusuf: *Ok.*

Having given the Islamic teaching, I make it clear to the children that it is their choice to be Muslim. I then ask them how they feel about this. Their response, detailed in Section 5.3.5, is that they are happy but have an overwhelming feeling of responsibility. Although I do not use the term shakhsiyah Islamiyah in my summary of the Islamic teachings, it is this concept of freely and consciously submitting to Allah that shakhsiyah Islamiyah is designed to encapsulate. What arises from these research halaqah, is that further to the original hypothesis, i.e. that dialogue generates an autonomous thinking Muslim, is the idea that this autonomy is situated within dialogic relationships; relationships with Allah, self and with others. So for example, in the exchange summarised above, Sofia identifies the self's need for Islamic knowledge, in order to be an autonomous Muslim and to learn from others. In response to my question, *is there a conflict between being somebody who's got strong*

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Shakhsiyah, and being an independent thinker, Sofia introduces the idea of dialogic learning.

Sofia: *Um I think er, like er, when you're around, like we all learn from er like obviously we learn from er like other people… it is good to er learn from other people and ask questions,* [*it's good to do that*]

Farah: [*Ok so you feel that*] *it's good to learn from others and not just try and think for yourself*

Sofia: *Yeah*

Farah: [*Okay*]

Sofia: [*You should learn from*]

Farah: [*So having good Shakhsiyah*] *is also about listening to other people and learning form other people*

Sofia: *Yeah*

Whilst the children take some time to understand the relationship between shakhsiyah Islamiyah and autonomy, the young people take it for granted. Within the first ten minutes of the first research halaqah, Fatimah summarises the Islamic teaching. *I think …you build up your character by making these decisions it's shown there in Surah Shams that Allah says the person who has purified themselves, who made the right decisions, they're the ones who are successful, so wouldn't that indicate that that's what our lives are about, the purpose of our life is to make decisions and to make the right ones. And so each person has to go through that journey of, of which decisions are they making and in the end you find out did you make the right ones or the wrong ones.* The young people link shakhsiyah Islamiyah to the concepts of being an autonomous Muslim, being an individual and having confidence in yourself.

Farah: *How would you define Shakhsiyah?*

Amina: *An upright moral character who doesn't give in under pressure, to things which aren't allowed, which are forbidden*

Zaynab: *I think someone who has a strong character should also be able to assess their own character, to like, know themselves, almost to, so like, that's an important thing, to be able to think, what are your weaknesses, what are your strong points, how could you improve?*

Farah: *So to be reflective?*

Zaynab: *Yeah.*

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Thus, participants clearly explain the reflexive nature of shakhsiyah Islamiyah.

5.4.2 The Muslim's dialogical relationship with her self: Self-evaluation and reflexivity

In the children's group, there is very little direct discussion about self-evaluation as a characteristic of shakhsiyah, because this question is not posed and does not arise. Nevertheless, many of the other questions posed encourage self-reflection and thus children display this quality in the discussion. For example, in relation to making autonomous decisions, Adam says, *well, making your own decisions can sometimes be good and sometimes be bad, because sometimes you can make the wrong decisions, and when people tell you it's wrong, you think, 'no, I think I'm responsible enough, I think I'm making the right decision', but maybe, it could actually be wrong.* Here Adam is demonstrating his capacity for reflexivity. In discussing maturity, Zakaria emphasises the importance of knowing yourself, *if some, someone says they're mature and they're not mature, you will know if they're mature, and they should know themselves, they can't make it up…*

I ask the children if they are happy to be Muslim and they take this question seriously and seem to think carefully about it. After an initial three second pause, I repeat the question. However there is another twelve second pause, which allows children adequate thinking time, eventually one of the children whispers, *all gone quiet*. At this point I reword the question to ask, *let me ask you a different way, why are you a Muslim?* This question prompts some extensive and detailed self-reflective discussion, with children able to offer reasons for why they are happy to be Muslim; examples of when they have questioned their beliefs; and how they have dealt with these difficult questions. They demonstrate a remarkable degree of self-disclosure and honesty.

The young people are much more explicit in discussing the capacity for self-evaluation and reflexivity in relation to shakhsiyah Islamiyah. Zaynab says, *I think someone who has a strong character should also be able to assess their own character, to like, know themselves, almost to, so that's an important thing, to be able to think, what are your weaknesses, what are your strong points, how could you improve.* Ibrahim links this to the idea of having a conscience.

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Ibrahim: *Someone who… in terms of life and stuff, someone who makes the right decisions… you have a conscience that tells you, like, between right and wrong, and you're just choosing, more often than not, the right decision.*

Amina talks about the importance of reflecting on your character; *being freethinking… you're able to explore what kind of characteristics you have…*
Qasim demonstrates the reflexivity that is required in being young Muslims who are navigating their own wishes and other people's expectations of them, *so it's always that conflicting thing, it depends on obviously what factors there are in a decision, because you can be autonomous in a way, where if you have this clear cut path where it's haram or halal, it's forbidden or permissible. Then you can obviously choose what's permissible, whereas if you're mum's telling you to do something, and it's your own nafs, it's your nafs, again it always goes down to nafs, if it's your own nafs that's saying to you, I don't really wanna do it, because I don't like doing this, but you know your mum is saying to you the right thing...* Here Qasim demonstrates shakhsiyah Islamiyah, through his autonomous thinking within an Islamic frame of reference and his thoughtful reflection on his own character.

5.5 Discussion

ERQ1: How do young Muslims educated in Shakhsiyah schools conceptualise personal autonomy, authority (religious or otherwise), and shakhsiyah Islamiyah?

ERQ1is attempting to untangle a web of complexity around what is perceived to be a controversial issue for Muslims. As shown in Chapter 1, during the 1990s and 2000s, concern about Islamic education stifling personal autonomy was at the core of a public discourse on state-funding of British Muslim faith schools. In recent years, and particularly after the 2014 'Trojan Horse' affair, and the introduction of Fundamental British Values (FBV), the public discourse is beginning to shift to the FBV of individual liberty and perceived contradictions with Islamic teachings. In Chapter 1, I argue that the FBV agenda is driven by the government purposefully attempting to change the narrative within Islamic faith-schools. They want Muslim educators to stop focusing on meeting the needs of British Muslim learners, in accordance with their religious and multiple cultural heritages; and to replace this with promotion of

FBV and British heritage, celebrating only a government defined British identity. FBV as defined by government have less to do with Britishness, than to do with a muscular secular-liberalism closing down debate in the public square. In Chapters 1 and 2, I teased out some of the nuance in regard to how secular-liberal societies can potentially deal with religion; such nuance is woefully lacking in the government narrative, which ignores the liberal dilemma outlined in Chapter 2. However, the young people in this study are all too aware of the apparent contradiction of universalising the self-evident truths of secular rationality and individual liberty, and imposing these on religious people. Whilst they do not present the communitarian argument, in highlighting that there is always a frame of reference for all decision-making processes, they echo H. Alexander's argument of the inevitability of 'a view from somewhere' (H. Alexander, 2015, p. 809).

In claiming to value independence of thought and agency of the self, the children and young people both demonstrate some form of commitment to individual liberty. Nevertheless, the young people are particularly clear and candid from the onset, that they choose to be Muslim and that this choice is very different to that of secular-liberalism. The children are also committed to both individual choice and agency, and to their Muslim identity. They initially do not see a contradiction between the two, but through the discussion, they begin to understand the complex issues that arise when human agency and Islam are juxtaposed. Despite this initial lack of awareness, the children's dialogue displays that they are comfortable with both having agency and being Muslim, their demeanour in the halaqah is one of confidence and composed unity in their thought process. Through their dialogue, it is evident that they are capable of questioning and thinking for themselves; and that they do so within an Islamic frame of reference, whilst having an awareness that other people have a differing frame of reference, and respecting their right to do so.

The young people quickly express an understanding of the perceived contradiction between autonomy and religious authority, whilst simultaneously rejecting this idea. They conceptualise autonomy and authority as aporia, an irreconcilable contradiction that is an inevitable tension, generated by the symbiotic nature of the concepts. This chimes with the Islamic understanding of *tawhīd* (unity) underlying all things, and that Allah has created all things in pairs. Can autonomy exist without authority and

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vice versa? Are they not inevitably in tension and yet reliant on each other for definition? The young people seem to understand this. They recognise that in Islam, the call to submit to Allah is a call to submit of your own freewill, to recognise Allah's authority over you as your creator. Without free submission, there is no Islam, they reference the Quran, which is clear that there is no compulsion, and the choice to be Muslim must be made freely (Quran 2:256). They meet H. Alexander's criteria of having had an education whereby they have been initiated into an Islamic vision of the 'good life', *and* have been educated to have the capacity to step outside this worldview and critically evaluate it from an outsider's perspective. Like H. Alexander (2015), they claim that there is no neutral rational, scientific or objective stance; all human beings have been educated in accordance with a culturally specific vision of the 'good life'.

From my perspective as a reflective researcher, the most prominent question that arises from the findings related to ERQ1 is: what do the participants actually mean when they use the term autonomy? In Chapter 2, I interrogate the concept of autonomy and argue that in Islam the individual is recognised as having human dignity and freedom; that whilst Islam may not conceptualise personal autonomy in the same way as secular liberal thought, Islam celebrates human agency, whilst simultaneously recognising human dependence on Allah. I argue that this could be incorporated in a Muslim sense of selfhood, which finds embodiment through the concept of shakhsiyah Islamiyah. Considering that the concept of shakhsiyah Islamiyah is at the heart of the education that participants experienced, it is not surprising that they draw on this concept in this way, and demonstrate the capacity for honest self-reflection of their own characters and their own thinking.

In Chapter 2, I quoted Habermas (2006, p. 8), who says that "given that in the liberal state, only secular reasons count, citizens who adhere to a faith are obliged to establish a kind of 'balance' between their religious and their secular convictions." However, "many religious citizens would not be able to undertake such an artificial division within their own minds without jeopardising their existence as pious persons". I argued that the secular-liberal state therefore demands double-consciousness from its religious citizens. Habermas' description is true of the participants in my study, and the young people talk freely about how they navigate

their religion in secular society. Whilst they do have to exist in a state of double-consciousness, they seem confident in using their agency to navigate these tensions. I argue that in doing so, that they demonstrate a confidence in their identity, and a high level of agency. In different ways, with their different individualities and characters, they embody shakhsiyah Islamiyah as defined in Chapter 2.

The vicarious experience generated in the non-Muslim reader of this chapter should develop understanding of how participants draw on an Islamic worldview to conceptualise these challenging concepts. However, the question of how far halaqah can actually be described as open dialogue remains. Indeed, participants' proclivity to talk about right and wrong in accordance with Islam, as well as what Islam allows or does not allow, draws attention to the assumed differences between halaqah as Islamic pedagogy and secular-liberal education, where theoretically values are not pre-determined, and all ideas are potentially right or wrong. The non-Muslim reader does not have to agree with participants that secular-liberal education is also based on pre-determined values, although some researchers of dialogic education do recognise that this assumption needs to be questioned. Flecha, draws on Habermas' theory of communicative action to critique certain forms of classroom talk, that is, teleological talk, where the teacher has an end in mind; norm-regulated, where teacher and learners ascribe to certain agreed upon norms; and dramaturgical, where teacher and learners take part in presentational talk for public performance (Flecha, 2000, pp. 3-4). Chapter 6 explores how participants understand dialogic halaqah; how far do they see halaqah to be genuinely open dialogue that allows learners to be critical and make their own interpretations?

Chapter 6 Halaqah as Islamic Dialogic Pedagogy for Developing Shakhsiyah: Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses thematically relevant verbatim extracts of dialogue, detailing participants' perspectives and experiences of Shakhsiyah Schools' halaqah. In the Masters pilot study, teachers and school-leaders had made claims about halaqah as a dialogic pedagogy that enables the development of shakhsiyah Islamiyah. This chapter reports on how far these claims are confirmed by current and former pupils, and answers the following empirical research questions.

ERQ2. What are the reflections of young Muslims educated in Shakhsiyah Schools about their educational experiences of halaqah, in comparison to other forms of education?

ERQ3. Do, and if so to what extent, do these young Muslims identify a relationship between halaqah as a dialogic pedagogy and the development of their personal autonomy within an Islamic paradigm, i.e. their shakhsiyah Islamiyah?

Table 6.1 presents current and former pupils perspectives in the form of a frequency chart detailing emergent themes. Each theme is discussed in more detail below the table.

Table 6.1 Thematic analysis frequency chart: halaqah as Islamic dialogic pedagogy for developing shakhsiyah

Emergent Theme	Children	Young People	Young people & Children
6 Halaqah as Islamic dialogic pedagogy for developing shakhsiyah	**415**	**549**	**964**
6.1 Halaqah as dialogic pedagogy	**231**	**245**	**476**
6.1.1 A collaborative Islamic oral circle of learning	153	207	360
6.1.2 Children's voice and teacher's role	85	200	285
6.1.3 Positioning, dialogue and differing perspectives	118	196	314
6.1.4 Purposeful, cumulative and thematic learning	21	14	35
6.2 Halaqah in comparison to other forms of education	**70**	**276**	**346**
6.2.1 Secular mainstream education	0	149	149
6.2.2 GCSE and A-level Islamic Studies	0	39	39
6.2.3 Traditional Islamic education	23	164	187
6.2.4 'Modern' Islamic education	0	39	39
6.3 Developing shakhsiyah Islamiyah in each individual child	**366**	**383**	**749**
6.3.1 Developing thinking	132	292	424
6.3.2 Developing autonomy	88	313	401
6.3.3 Developing shakhsiyah Islamiyah	192	245	437

6.1 Halaqah as dialogic pedagogy

The children are clear from the onset that halaqah is a cumulative oral dialogic pedagogy linked to Islam. When asked, …*what happens in Halaqah? What is halaqah? How do you do it? ...tell me your experiences.* Asiya says, *halaqah is like circle time, when we talk about Islam and relate our theme to it, and sometimes it's really fun, because we get to say whatever we want.* Sofia says, *it's good because we discuss things in depth and we link a lot of things to it. It takes one topic, it would take us a long time to understand, because we will go in depth, and the teacher asks us questions.* The young people are equally as clear about the oral dialogic nature of halaqah. Zaynab describes dialogic halaqah as: *it wasn't making notes like we used to do in other lessons, or writing things down. It was thinking (.), and trying to learn, rather than trying to study.*

6.1.1 A collaborative Islamic oral circle of learning

The children describe halaqah as a circle of learning, a form of learning that involves questions that prompt deep dialogue about Islam; it is based on Prophet Muhammad's method of teaching.

Yusuf: *But in Halaqah it's a different way of learning because, you know, most people don't actually sit down in a circle and take time to think about their religion and what they're really working for.*

Nazia: *When the Prophet used to have halaqah, they used to sit on the floor, so I think it's better to sit on the floor.*

Yusuf feels that a circle is important, *you look at other people and you look at their opinions so you don't want to keep turning around to look at the people behind you.* The children describe sitting on the floor as *more respectful* (to learning about their religion), saying that *it just feels better.* Zakaria links it to the Islamic teaching that human beings are created out of earth, *and sitting on the floor is because we were made out of earth, like the clay …so you might sit on the floor to think,* (how) *one day we might go under this ground.*

The young people recognise halaqah's spiritual dimension, and describe the circular format as collaborative and equal.

Abdullah: *I think halaqah, it's more than just speaking, it's also discussing; …it's a spiritual style.*

Zaynab: (Halaqah lessons) *were different in the sense that it wasn't an individual activity, so teacher didn't give us something to do, it was a discussion; it was a collective activity*

Qasim: *It was a different vibe, it had a different vibe, because everyone was doing it together …so you know, they're equal.*

Ibrahim: *I mean, halaqah, as you grow up, you're quite close to your group; it's not like you're all sat at different tables, we're in a close circle so, …Yeah its probably one of the only lessons where the whole class gets involved…*

Neither the children or young people raise the fact that the teacher joins learners on the floor or that this physical positioning develops a more equal teacher-learner relationship, however they emphasise the teacher's role in facilitating learner dialogue. They do, however, seem to describe a collaborative democratic ethos to the

halaqah. They also recognise that learner autonomy is generated through a mutually supportive, collaborative atmosphere. According to their descriptions, halaqah seems to function according to Alexander's (2004) first three dialogic principles, it appears to be 'collective', described by Zaynab as *a collective activity*; 'reciprocal' *everyone was doing it together*; 'supportive' *you're quite close to your group*. The other two principles, 'cumulative and purposeful' are discussed in a later theme. Furthermore, participants recognise halaqah as Prophetic pedagogy and identify oral dialogue as important to learning. In doing so, they echo al-Attas' theory of learning as meaning generated through language; meaning that is defined and fulfilled through the relationship between Creator and created. Zakaria, for example, talks about recognising human weakness through sitting on the ground.

6.1.2 Children's voice and teacher's role

Participants are clear that the collaborative nature of halaqah encourages children's voice, however, they also give importance to the teacher's role in steering the dialogue. The children talk about being given the opportunity to share existing knowledge, *sometimes all of us get a chance to* (contribute) *...our opinions; we gather all opinions*. Children have the opportunity to suggest halaqah topics, *teacher lets us freely talk about what we want to learn in Halaqah sometimes*; and occasionally lead the halaqah, *teacher says you prepare the Halaqah, so that we get a better understanding of each other*. Children recognise that this helps the teacher understand them, *Halaqah's good because we can express our opinions, so that the teacher may understand us a little bit better when we speak*.

However, according to Zakaria, not all the children participate as much as they claim to, *most of the times, it happens that the teachers ends up saying everything... because half the time the teachers ask questions, they keep asking questions and all the children are quiet, unlike me*. This statement is met with laughter, and leads to an important episode of dialogue, where the children clarify that teachers will continue questioning in order to engage interest and prompt discussion, and that it is through generating dialogue, that teachers facilitate learning. I have redacted this exchange, removing my questions and shortening children's utterances to include all the things they say about the impact of the teacher's ongoing questioning.

Sara: *Teacher asks us the questions like a million times and then...*

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Sara: *And someone has to say it in a simpler form.*

Asiya: *So all the children can learn so teacher can listen to everybody's idea…*

Sofia: *When she asks us, one person, they might get it right, but then she says to people to elaborate on that, and people who are not participating, she would ask them, so everyone gets to join in.*

Zakaria: *…the teacher checks if they're actually listening*

Sofia: *…we kinda lead on to each other's answers, to get the right answer.*

Yusuf: *When she says elaborate she means that, what you might be saying, it may not be that clear… So teacher says elaborate, meaning, break it down into easier words, so that other children can understand.*

Adam: *Also sometimes when teacher says elaborate, she wants more like in depth*

Zakaria: *they could also ask questions, because, if someone's talking and they keep talking, they learn more from other children, so you can learn from other children…*

Zakaria: *Secondly, some people could listen, …and think about it and…* (become) *inspired by what the teacher's saying and by this topic and they might go home and think about it, research about it and come back to school and have more knowledge.*

Sara: *It's different because you can ask any questions about the topic and express your feelings about the topic.*

Sofia: *…we have a lot still to say but it's only for an hour.*

In the above extract, the children illustrate the 'cumulative' (Alexander, 2008) nature of the halaqah, both within a lesson and beyond it. The evidence of cumulative talk in their dialogue here supports their claims.

The young people talk equally as enthusiastically about halaqah as 'cumulative' and as 'purposeful'; they consider it to be a skilful pedagogy for enabling the learner's voices to be heard. They say similar things to the children, with more nuance. Fatimah talks about teachers using halaqah purposefully to address classroom issues, *some of the most influential Halaqah weren't really during Halaqah times, sometimes something would happen in the class, an incident or something, and teacher would sit us all down, all the girls or the class for Halaqah and she talked to us about what happened, she made us think about what went wrong and what we did, how we could improve, and often it would change the whole atmosphere in the class for the rest of the year.* Later she talks about how halaqah was related to children's personal lives, *if the discussion led a certain way, then the teacher would just let it flow, and people*

often were bringing examples from their home life, and things they had experienced themselves, ...we had that scope to play around with... often it would lead to a totally different topic [chuckles and agreement]*, you'd end up saying how did we get here ...we'd sort of just move on however the thought process went ...I found that you learnt a lot more.* However Qasim and Kulthum point out that sometimes it can be confusing for children to follow the thread of a meandering discussion, although the teachers do try to steer the discussion back to the topic. For Abdullah a wider discussion can give context to the topic. The young people reflect on different teachers' styles in halaqah. Ibrahim values learning from the teacher *...when the teachers talk, I don't know, I just feel like, I'm learning a lot more from someone who actually knows what they're talking about.* Elsewhere Ibrahim values teachers' efforts at involving everyone, *in another lesson, someone might not talk in the whole lesson, but here you know, the teachers make sure that everyone takes part, everyone learns something, everyone takes something away from that lesson.* For Amina, it's important the teacher is there to *correct any misconceptions that you had in the first place.*

Other participants talk about learning from peers through dialogue. Amina describes the talk in halaqah as 'exploratory' (Mercer and Dawes, 2008), *I think I like ...more discussion, where we get to voice our thoughts more and everyone gets to see different perspectives, because everyone has different ideas and opinions.* Fatimah appears to describe interthinking moving to intrathinking (Mercer, 2000), *I think when everybody voiced their different thoughts, that's when you learn, and when you were asked to re-evaluate your thoughts, and you said something and you thought hang on that's not worked, and then you went through a thought process where you formed your ideas about something. I think that's where you learnt most.* Zaynab says it develops and refines the intramental (Mercer, 2000), *if other people are talking as well; you start comparing it to your thoughts, so you're thinking more.* Like the children, the young people describe how as children they enjoyed halaqah, *often at the end of Halaqah, there'd be a collective groan and, "Can't we do it next lesson as well?" …We didn't want to stop.* This focus on learner voice and peer-to-peer dialogue has echoes of Freirian critical dialogic-pedagogy as discussed in Chapter 3. Participants seem to understand halaqah as valuing learners' existing personal knowledge and as facilitating transformative learning.

6.1.3 Positioning, dialogue, and differing perspectives

The children talk about the dialogic nature of the halaqah, and the ways in which they benefit from the peer-to-peer dialogue. .

Yusuf: *...so instead of the teacher talking and talking and talking, and saying answer this and answer that, and nobody's really putting their hand up; the kids ask the questions and then the other kids answer*

Asiya: *Sometimes we have mini debates so we have people who are saying one thing, and another group of people who are saying the other thing and the children get to talk. ...sometimes it's planned and sometimes it just happens.*

According to Zakaria, dialogue achieves *three things. Firstly it, it achieves your speaking, how you speak and your vocabulary. Secondly, it teaches you how to learn more, you learn more from other children, ...Thirdly, like we said before about choices, while other people are talking, you, you can make your own choice how um, what you're gonna decide to say.* Here Zakaria is referring to the previous day's discussion about autonomy and making choices. He expressly links dialogue to the ability to make choices, demonstrating that the children share the perspectives of teachers and school leaders, that halaqah empowers learners.

Asiya says that in sharing ideas thinking occurs, and Adam says that the longer the dialogue continues, *the more depth you can get into*; and Yusuf, *the more you understand.* For Sofia it offers an opportunity to learn how to disagree politely. Zakaria focuses on halaqah being particularly conducive to thinking by comparing how challenging a topic might be in oral dialogue, in comparison to completing a written task; *so let's compare it to Literacy,* (in) *Literacy you have a topic which is really high and, you have to use more thinking for that than in Halaqah, but if it's just Halaqah any topic and Literacy any topic, it would be Halaqah because the teacher will ask you questions, and so when you ask yourself questions, you have to keep thinking, because it's just talking, not really writing stuff, so you would have to think more, because you're gonna have to talk more.* Here, Zakaria seems to be describing a Bakhtinian notion of understanding developing through ongoing dialogue, of the self needing the other to create meaning (Bakhtin, 1981). Zakaria's comment leads to a discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of talking and writing as learning activities. The children begin by arguing that through talking you can draw on ideas from other people, whereas in writing you can't. Through some probing, and via a

detour where they contemplate the benefits of a talking internet computer, they begin to realise that it is through sharing ideas and cumulative dialogue that learning happens and thinking skills are developed; that dialogue can also happen in writing, but is more prevalent in talk.

The young people are quite clear that oral dialogue generates learning, and this is created through self-other interaction (Wegerif, 2010), which creates the opportunity to weigh up differing points of view. Fatimah states that learning happens *through you talking, and seeing what others think of what you say.* Zaynab seems to refer to a Bakhtinian notion of polyphony (Bakhtin, 1981) as intensifying learning. *Also if the teacher is just talking, then you're just paying attention to the teacher rather than thinking, if other people are talking as well, you start comparing it to your thoughts, so you're thinking more.* Whilst Qasim seems to refer to Wegerif's (2011) notion of the addressee as necessary for thinking, *then you start to reconstruct your own viewpoint* (in relation to) *everyone else's.* Amina brings the focus onto understanding the other, *I think, in Halaqah you get to really fully understand, because you explore different opinions and different areas, and you won't be reading bias that will just show you one opinion, and just say that's the way you have* (to) *understand. I think* (therefore) *you might make an educated decision when you're older, ...I remember we'd have to do debates and play devil's advocate to understand the other side of the argument, and that was really helpful.* Fatimah describes how conflicting viewpoints in dialogue lead to autonomous thinking. *It allows you to be more open-minded because you're exploring different people's views, not just one view which is being forced down your throat.* For Ibrahim, it allows appreciation of the other. *I think, with Halaqah, with other people talking as well, you sort of understand what they're thinking about as well, so not only you have your own way of thinking, you also understand other people.*

These extracts seem to describe open dialogue that is not teleologically restricted, or dramaturgically orchestrated. Although to some extent there must be some accepted norms, because halaqah is an Islamic setting, participants indicate that these norms can be challenged, because Amina for example, describes debates, where students are asked to play devil's advocate. The direct link participants make between talking/dialogue and thinking/learning demonstrates that they carry an understanding

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of Vygotskian sociocultural theory and see it in action in the pedagogical functions of halaqah. The parallels of sociocultural theory with al-Attas' neo-Ghazalian theory have already been discussed in Chapter 3. Whilst al-Attas' contention that *ta'dīb* is knowing the 'proper place of things', (by place he means purposes) could be considered teleological, this practice of dialogic halaqah is based on the idea that an understanding and conviction of the 'proper place' of anything can only come through the evaluation of different perspectives.

6.1.4 Contextual, purposeful, cumulative and thematic learning

Halaqah is conducted daily and is the core of a thematic curriculum. It is also designed to draw on the learner's personal circumstances and existing knowledge, in order to imbue meaning and purpose into learning. Without prompting, both groups of participants point to these features of halaqah. Adam: …*sometimes in Halaqah we draw mind-maps, the reason is that when we are discussing, …we can go back to that mind-map and get our points from there.* According to the children the mind-map is used to collect everyone's ideas and existing knowledge, which is subsequently used for further learning. Yusra: …*then we research about it and then we find out what's right.* Sara says that they are encouraged to get *other ideas from other people on the Internet.* These mind-map halaqah then become central to the thematic learning that frames the Schools' curriculum. Thus halaqah discussions infuse through the rest of their learning. Adam: *Teacher lets us freely talk about what we want to learn in Halaqah and* (in our) *theme …sometimes when its Literacy we have to write about what we want to learn in Halaqah.*

The young-people are clearer about the relationship between previous knowledge and halaqah dialogue. Fatimah: *If the discussion led a certain way, then the teacher would just let it flow, and people often were bringing examples from their home life, and things they had experienced themselves, which isn't necessarily completely relevant, but we had that scope to play around…*

Kulthum: *We would also get told to research at home, and bring it into the lesson and discuss what extra things we'd read and just talk about …different areas surrounding it, you would be allowed to talk about it…*

Fatimah: *Often we were asked to go home and watch the news, and come in and talk about a story that had affected us. It was interesting to see which stories affected*

different people. Someone would come in (with a) *completely different story, and say I thought this was really interesting.*

They also claim that the relationship between halaqah and the thematic curriculum leads to cumulative learning.

Fatimah: *Sometimes* (Halaqah and other lessons) *were very similar, because we'd have the same theme running so if we were doing China, ...then we would do Halaqah about themes that we discussed in History and then we'd write in English something, a passage about China, and in Science we might look at a Chinese instrument, or a Chinese invention or something. So often it overlapped; in Halaqah you would sometimes say 'in English when you did this, I thought this'...*

Qasim: *And also it wasn't only Halaqah, which affects your life. It's everything all together. Because throughout all your topics, you'd be going, because of the vibe, I mean, the theme that you're doing about Islam, it was through everything, so Maths, English, Science, Halaqah, everything, so it just always, it's recurring through everything, which helps you.*

Kulthum: *Even if we were studying the same topics that we were in Halaqah, as with in our other lessons, in Halaqah we would compare it to like for example nowadays, the situation that happened in the past, we would compare it to what's happening now, we'd just think a lot more, whereas in other lessons it was just, you've just been taught it and* (now) *you can answer questions.*

In these extracts, participants demonstrate awareness of connections between learning across subjects and disciplines, connections through cumulative learning over time, and connections across their varying interpretations of texts and experiences. These features indicate a Bakhtinian understanding of an on-going ontological dialogue across space and time, through text and thorough oral discourse. Furthermore, participants clearly identify two of Alexander's (2004) dialogic principles, that is 'cumulative' and 'purposeful', as characteristics of halaqah.

6.2 Halaqah in comparison to other forms of education

Participants were asked to compare halaqah to other educational experiences. The young people have attended a wide variety of other educational settings, including

mainstream schools, further education colleges, religious seminaries to homeschooling and informal young-peoples halaqah. Full details are given in Appendix 4. Consequently, they are able to paint a convincing picture of the benefits of dialogic halaqah over other forms of education, as demonstrated in the examples given in Sections 6.2.1–6.2.4.

6.2.1 Secular mainstream education

Abdullah describes halaqah as *unique, you know what you're doing, ...when you think of Halaqah, you think we're going to sit down and speak together, whereas ...History, English, you go into classrooms, it's normal, ...Halaqah, it kind of stands out, it's special, yeah, it's more special.* Amina recognizes the *tarbīyah* aspect of halaqah; that it is about allowing children to have the space to bring out the potential within them, as opposed to instilling knowledge within them. *I think it gives it a different atmosphere; it's a bit more relaxed and calm, ...so* (learners are) *not under pressure or anything, whereas if they're in a studious atmosphere, they just get on with their work.* For Kulthum the teacher-learner relationship is important. *And the teacher doesn't care. In a state school, the teacher doesn't care whether you understand this. She just wants to make sure that you just memorise this. You memorise these facts by heart because in schools, it's mainly about, you know, passing tests and exams; that's the main aim... But Halaqah, it's all about asking questions, discussing it...*

Amina: *It's very personal, yeah.*

Fatimah: *With Halaqah, you feel that you're getting some sort of personal benefit. You understand that this means something quite important to you; with other subjects, sometimes it's hard to see why on earth am I studying this...*

Amina: *It's related to your life*

In this exchange, Amina builds on the concept of *tarbīyah* as contextual, personalized, purposeful learning that has meaning in learners' lives. Zaynab goes on to contrast it with learning for exams.

Zaynab*: (Learning) takes place in the here and now, rather than after an exam at the end of two years, so you're not constantly thinking about your future, I have to do GCSEs, so I can do A-levels, so I can get this. You're just thinking this is going to benefit me right now, and for the rest of my life, hopefully. And also, in Halaqah the conversation is constantly moving. ...so you're constantly thinking.*

[General agreement]

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Amina: *You're engaged.*

Zaynab: *It's interactive as well, so you're constantly having to give an opinion rather than just taking information in.*

Abdullah links this *tarbīyah* approach to Shakhsiyah Schools' ethos as well as the halaqah format. *What I've found with Shakhsiyah* (Schools) *is that, I think it's more of a personal atmosphere, between the teacher and the student, it's more about the teachers trying to interact on a personal level, whereas* (in state schools)*, you're just there, they just teach you like, 'My job is done once I give it to you', whereas Halaqah is more emotional, ...the teacher is communicating with you a bit more. ...I'm not saying all of them are like this, but some state schools, the teachers are just like, 'I'm going to do my job, teach you, and that's it. Like, I'll give you the work and you do the homework.'*

[General agreement]

Kulthum: *And in state schools, because you spend the whole lesson just listening to the teacher, when you go home you, you often have to just read over it again because you've forgotten it, you know, because...I don't know, after half an hour my brain just switches off, so I stop listening. It gets boring... But in Halaqah, because it's more interactive you remember it,*

However, Zaynab recognises that these benefits are due to dialogic pedagogy, which can also happen in mainstream schools. *It works even if you're not sitting like this, like in my English Literature class, there's only eight of us, and we're all sitting opposite each other, and we're quite close together. And there's no hands or anything; the teacher just puts a question to us and we all discuss it. And I find that's helped me a lot in that class, rather than just sitting in rows and looking at the board...*

6.2.2 GCSE and A-Level Islamic Studies

Participants are asked to evaluate dialogic halaqah in relation to other ways that young Muslims could be taught their religion. According to participants, GCSE and A-Level Islamic Studies are non-confessional and therefore lack meaning for their lives.

Qasim: *The GCSE, that was more, based on societal issues, that kind of thing, it wasn't really Islam*

Abdullah: *It wasn't very spiritual, it was all very um*

Amina: *Factual*

Abdullah: *Yeah kind of, it was about like marriage and going to Hajj and general knowledge, what most non-Muslims would know, I mean, obviously, that's debatable, ...what non-Muslims would know in this society, I mean obviously... in the sense that what they say on the news, but putting that aside, I mean ...if someone has a rough idea of what Muslims are about, that's basically what they had in the course, ...it's ...not very in depth...*

Qasim: *There's no feeling in it, it's just more facts …*

Fatimah: *You wouldn't know how to translate the concepts into your own life, ...what it meant to you*

6.2.3 Traditional Islamic education

'Traditional' Islamic education does not refer to classical Islamic education, but rather a form that emerged in the postcolonial era, specifically *Dar-al-Ulum* (Islamic seminaries) and the 'Islamic Studies' subject, which was developed for supplementary religious schools, but is also used in most British Islamic faith-schools. The children have experience of Islamic Studies, and compare the closed questioning in 'Islamic Studies' to open, personal, cumulative dialogue in halaqah, which they see as more meaningful.

Sofia: *…when I have an Islamic studies lesson, we usually have like a question book... and we don't, when we discuss it, we don't, I don't know why, but we don't even, like the teacher asks us questions and we write down the answers. But in Halaqah, we don't really write that much, it's more of, it's a better way of learning…*

Asiya: (In) *Islamic studies, the questions they ask in the book might not be the questions that go in depth and when you, when you talk, you, you say more things. When you write down the answer, your hand gets tired, so you can't write all that's in your mind; but when you talk, you can say everything that's in your mind. And in Halaqah, when the teacher asks you a question, you think about it and then you do it. But when you have a text in an Islamic Studies book and you just read the text and answer the questions, when you answer that question, then, there's no other question leading, like that question, there's gonna be no more questions about that. But in Halaqah, your teacher's gonna ask you about that question that leads* (on).

Two of the young people have attended a *Dar-al-Ulum*, a type of Islamic seminary

that originated in British India, with the aim of preserving the religion and its practices. With the postcolonial migration to Britain, this model was transferred to a British setting. According to the young-people, *Dar-al-Ulum* in Britain are just transmitting Islamic knowledge, much of which is not useful to the British context. The lack of discussion and questioning means Islam is not taught in a useful or dynamic way. Both the young people had unique experiences, in that Abdullah is from an African/Caribbean background and attended a *Dar-al-Ulum* boarding school set up by British Pakistanis, when he was aged twelve. He found it a culture shock and was surprised by many of the Sufi practices, which he was encountering for the first time. *To be honest, …it was a kind of place where they have a masjid, they have their Shaykh there, and they do have Islam implemented, but it's in a very (.) shallow one-sided way. Like, we believe this, so we're going to teach you this, …they did have lessons, but it was very (.) it wasn't anything (.) um spiritual. It was like that from an outsider's point of view, …Obviously, they did teach you, but it wasn't much teaching to be honest, it was mostly like reading Quran, (.) memorising Quran, a few ḥadīth …they didn't have much, much of experientially, they weren't teaching you, they weren't even doing anything about history or anything…*

Fatimah, having completed her GCSE's early, attended an adult Dar al Uloom while she was still quite young. She describes that halaqah was something additional to the course. *…They had a Halaqah outside of the course and they invited speakers to come and they would give a short talk and there would be a Q&A, which would sometimes turn into a small discussion. I think that might be because often when people go there they're not going to reassess their thoughts …they're going to gain knowledge about a topic that they don't know much about, they're not going there to have a discussion, to see what other people are saying about the same thing, and I don't think they intend to go very deeply into a topic in the way that you would in a halaqah like this…I don't think it's designed to develop an understanding of Islam, I think it's designed to (.) preserve Islam …just information, so that it's not lost. …Halaqah's designed to make you think, …about what this means for you and how you're going to use it, and how we should use it, and what Allah is trying to tell us through this. Whereas my experience of these courses is that it's just memorisation of facts and sometimes they're, they're not even ones which you could use in your life, things which are redundant now, the kind of things you don't really need to know, but*

they're there so that they can preserve the tradition.

6.2.4 Contemporary Islamic education and other halaqah

There are a lot of short courses and halaqah for adult Muslims, which are designed to meet contemporary needs. The young people have attended these; although they recognise positive practice, they report that they tend to be less dialogic than Shakhsiyah Schools halaqah.

Amina: *I think when you're outside of* (Shakhsiyah) *School, there's not a personal relationship between the person who's teaching and the audience. ...a lecturer who will talk and then afterwards you'll have Q&A, but it's not the same because you don't really talk about ideas and personal opinions…*

Fatimah: *It's like you're there to take down notes on some information which is being given, rather than to explore a topic and see how that relates to you and what it means for you as an individual.* (Whereas), *at Shakhsiyah* (Schools) *often the children had a very personal relationship with the teacher and so they felt that they could share their life experiences with a teacher and …during Halaqah, you would talk about what that meant for you, … what it meant when you went home…*

According to the young people, Islamic education in a secular society needs to put Islamic teachings fully into context, and relate the topic to the learner, and to the wider society. They talk about the importance of dialogic halaqah for meeting the needs of British Muslim children.

6.3 Developing shakhsiyah Islamiyah in each individual child

Participants claim that dialogic halaqah has helped build their shakhsiyah, supporting their development as independent thinking, reflective, autonomous Muslims.

6.3.1 Developing thinking

Children talk about halaqah building confidence in expressing their feelings and ideas. They talk about dialogue helping to develop *ideas* and *improve thinking skills* through extended time for thinking and cumulative dialogue.

Adam: *if you are doing discussion and teacher asks you, I'll give you two minutes to go and think deeply about the question ...so then it improves our thinking skills, ...you're sitting down and you're thinking about what you're gonna say. Teacher asks*

you a question, you think deeply and then you answer the question.

…

Asiya: *I meant that when you sit there in the Halaqah, you're thinking and you're always sharing your thoughts and even when other people talk, you're gonna think about what they said. And then you're gonna say something or just keep it in your mind.*

Farah: *…So what other people say makes you think further about what you're saying (1)*

Okay so that's how the dialogue extends your thinking, so extending the dialogue, the longer you talk about the topic…

Adam: *The more depth you can get into*

Yusuf: *And the more you understand it*

Farah: *The more you understand the topic; but now let's not just talk about the topic, let's talk about the way that you think*

Asiya: *Your brain expands*

Farah: *Your brain expands?*

(Sara makes a gesture of an expanding brain)

(Laughter)

Child: *Really?*

Asiya: *Not literally, not literally!*

The young people comment on the capacity of dialogic halaqah to generate thought and develop thinking skills, through making links with wider knowledge.

Kulthum: *Even if we were studying the same topics in Halaqah as in our other lessons, in Halaqah we would compare it to for example nowadays, the situation that happened in the past, we would compare it to what's happening now, you know we'd just think a lot more…*

Fatimah: *Halaqah's designed to make you think, to make you think about how, what this means for you and how you're going to use it, and how we should use it, and what Allah is trying to tell us through this…*

Ibrahim: *Thinking skills? Yeah! I mean, whenever I was in a Halaqah, I always thought that the teacher was gonna put me on the spot, tell me to say something, so I was always getting prepared. I was always thinking what am I going to say? What's the legitimate answer to what we're talking about? …that's how I developed thinking.*

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Amina: *I think that it would be helpful if more children had Halaqah, because it does get you to think that step, that step further, because, the teacher would pose a question but then when you'd give an answer, she'd get you to re-think it and re-evaluate it, and take it further, like how to expand that, I think that was really helpful.*

These statements demonstrate that participants have some understanding of Vygotskian sociocultural theory. They are able to articulate and describe the idea that dialogue is at the heart of thinking, and that cognitive skills are developed through dialogue.

6.3.2 Developing autonomy

The children and young people explicitly state that they feel halaqah helps them to be independent thinkers and autonomous actors.

Sofia: *I think it would be better if you have Halaqah everyday. It would be better because, it's kind of like a build up for making your own decisions…*

Yusuf: *When you do a Halaqah it helps you do independent thinking, because when teacher asks an open question, everybody, most people probably think different things, because people have different opinions, so then (.) that means you become an independent thinker, because you think for yourself, …you gotta think, is this right or is this right, and you gotta try and break it down to, to check which one is right.*

Asiya: *…you have to think about what you're gonna say, so you have to think, and think, and think to get the best answer and you have to do it in the best of your ability, so it does help improve your thinking skills and for you to make decisions for yourself.*

They understand that choices and decisions are emotional as well as cognitive. They confidently express the relationship between the two, and understand that through halaqah decision making skills are developed.

Yusuf: *…when you're in Halaqah you get to express your own feelings and when you're making choices then once you express your own feelings then, then you'll be a little bit more confident in making your own choices, and once you like listen to everybody else's discussion, and then you will be a little bit more confident making your own choices.*

Zakaria: *…It also makes you, um, make your own choices because if the teacher asks you a question, you have to make your own choices, choose what you're gonna say,*

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so if a teacher asks me any question, I have to think, make my own choice and then say what I'm thinking, what my choice is

The young people make similar points. Fatimah: *Halaqah also helps you formulate an opinion as well, whereas, when you have a lesson where you're learning information, it's more a case of: this is fact, this is fact, this is fact! Not, this is something I could challenge; this is something which different people say different things about. And so that teaches you to formulate your own opinion, so that will help you later on as well.*

Amina: *I think in Halaqah you get to really fully understand because you explore the different opinions and the different areas, and you won't be just like, you won't be reading like bias that will just show you one opinion and just say that's the way, ...so you might make an educated decision when you're older...*

Zaynab: *You're discussing information rather than* (being) *given information, you're developing your own opinions, so obviously that would help you to be able to make your decisions later on in life, because you'd be able to think, you'd have the ability to think it through and make a decision...*

The young people also appreciate the affective dimension of autonomy; and say that educational dialogue has an impact on emotional development.

Abdullah: *...it also builds your confidence,*

Kulthum: *It helps you stand up for yourself.*

Qasim: *I think everyone gives their viewpoint. So then, afterward, it makes you feel like an individual*

Amina connects the development of autonomy to the development of understanding Islam in the context of wider society. *I think that Halaqah helps to build your understanding about things; it makes you become more open-minded, so you're more aware of the wider society when you make decisions, and later on in life.*

6.3.3 Developing shakhsiyah Islamiyah

Although the children spend a lot of time talking about shakhsiyah Islamiyah, they do not directly discuss if and how halaqah develops shakhsiyah Islamiyah, as I did not pose the question in this way. However, it is implied in their dialogue on whether halaqah develops thinking and autonomy, and in the way they define shakhsiyah Islamiyah as having a *strong character.*

Sofia: (Shakhsiyah Islamiyah is) *...the person with a stronger character, ...because they won't like give up easily and change* (to) *a different decision...*

Adam: *It's about your strength in your belief*

Yusuf: *Shakhsiyah Islamiyah means the way your personality is; your Islamic personality, ...you always do what's right, and you always pick what's right, ...even if you're encouraged to do something bad, you will still do what's right... But there are more things* (to shakhsiyah Islamiyah).

The young people give a similar description of shakhsiyah Islamiyah, which recognises its autonomous characteristics, and talk directly about the relationship between shakhsiyah Islamiyah and halaqah. They see the dialogue and questioning in halaqah as important for developing critical thinking and autonomy. Their comments on this are interwoven with their discussion on shakhsiyah Islamiyah.

Amina: (Shakhsiyah Islamiyah is) *an upright moral character who doesn't like, who doesn't give in to, under pressure, to things which aren't allowed, which are forbidden, and things, um yeah*

Zaynab: *I think someone who has a strong character should also be able to assess their own character, to know themselves almost, that's an important thing, to be able to think, what are your weaknesses, what are your strong points, how could you improve?*

Farah: *...do you feel that Halaqah developed your Shakhsiyah?*

Kulthum: *Definitely*

Ibrahim: *It does develop it, because it gives you a better understanding of ...the viewpoints of other people, and that could help you..., it can maybe change the way you think... in a better way.*

Amina: *I think that, during Halaqah, you understand how to implement things in your life, how to actually, practically do things in life, how to show patience, for example, or to show mercy and compassion and things like that. Because often the teacher would question you and ask you to think, how you would implement things in your life, so it does build your shakhsiyah...*

...

Kulthum: *Its definitely helped us become more open-minded. Just generally...*

Abdullah: *It makes you look at things differently. ...When you look at situations, you look at it from several different points of view, than just the typical, what maybe some people would see as, ...let's say you watch the news or something, you wouldn't just assume, you wouldn't just think in a certain way, you would, you would step back and*

look at it…

Amina: *Question it,*

Abdullah: *Yeah, question it, more.*

Farah: *So do you find that other young Muslims are having that same kind of thinking processes or questioning, or?*

Amina: *No, not really, like, when you go out, in college, or wherever, you find, you tend to find that you don't really connect with other people, because they're not on the same kind of understanding*

Qasim: *They just go with whatever's going, they don't think for themselves, you know, basically, they're not autonomous, you know, they're more like, they wear the clothes that everyone else will wear to fit in, …they'd listen to the same things they're listening to, they do practically all the same things that anyone else would be doing.*

Amina: *They're not all like that though,*

Qasim: *You get a feeling you do stand out, then that's where you're at.*

Kulthum: *Most of them usually just have like one opinion their whole lives, like from their parents, but whereas in Halaqah, you're hearing loads of different opinions, so*

Fatimah: *I think Halaqah helps you to know where you stand, like a lot of people they seem to …just follow the crowd, and do whatever everyone else wants to do. You often hear people talking about how they want to find themselves, and they don't know who they are, and I think Halaqah, because it gives you that confidence to make decisions for yourself, and because you can think about things, without needing anybody else to sort of put those thoughts into your head, you can think about things yourself, you can formulate your own opinions, your own ideas about something. You're quite sure of where you stand and who you are.*

Amina: *Yeah, it helps with your identity as a Muslim, and that's the most important thing.*

This leads on to a lengthy discussion about how far the young people feel that they fit into wider society, which is not immediately relevant to the ERQs. However, it is interesting to note that a lot of the young people feel that this ability to question and think independently means that they are different to their peers, who are not as reflective or thoughtful about things. They are not always interested in joining conversations that they perceive to be led by consumerism and marketing. To some of them, these types of conversations are shallow and not meaningful, whilst others

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challenge this idea as being somewhat arrogant. Although not directly relevant to the ERQs, these observations are important, because they illuminate not so much how far halaqah prepares young Muslims to participate in wider society, but in what ways they want to participate in wider society. They seem happy to contribute to society, but in their own ways and on their own terms.

6.4 Discussion

6.4.1 ERQ2. What are the reflections of young Muslims educated in Shakhsiyah Schools about their educational experiences of halaqah, in comparison to other forms of education?

In their systematic review of four decades of research into classroom dialogue, Howe and Abedin (2013 p. 17) state: "More generally, students do not necessarily regard dialogue as a vehicle for learning, perhaps even viewing it as a distraction from the main business of classrooms (Fisher & Larkin, 2008; Pratt, 2006; Rop, 2003)". The findings of this study are in contradiction to this statement. These participants are quite consciously aware of the difference between daily dialogic halaqah and other forms of education. They agree with the claims made by school-leaders and teachers in the pilot study, that dialogic halaqah enables the development of identity, agency, confidence, self-expression, self-reflection, critical thinking, reasoning and dialogue skills. Participants compare halaqah favourably to all other forms of education that they have experienced. The young people are particularly astute about the advantages of halaqah over other forms of Islamic education, discussing the educational potential of different pedagogical approaches with evident understanding. The young people are able to talk at length about different forms of provision for educating young Muslims in their religious identity. They are very appreciative of the unique dialogic education that they have had. They are able to recognise the drawbacks of using traditional Islamic educational approaches in the context of twenty-first century Britain. They also recognise that halaqah is actually a traditional educational format that predates contemporary madrasah systems. As such, halaqah can act as an authentic pedagogy designed to meet the needs of Muslim children and young people in western contexts.

Participants are able to identify and talk about the dialogic nature of halaqah in relation to educational dialogue theories given in Chapter 3. They recognise that halaqah is collaborative; that it gives learners ownership over their learning through encouraging the learner's voice; and that learning happens through exploratory talk, that is, through being open to possibilities (Mercer and Dawes, 2008). Moreover, they recognise the importance of taking a position in dialogue (Howe & Abedin, 2013) and understanding different perspectives, particularly in relation to being members of a multi-cultural society (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). They recognise and value the cumulative (Alexander, 2004) nature of the dialogue enabled by daily halaqah sessions and how this dialogue is purposefully related to the rest of their learning through the holistic thematic curriculum. They understand that this develops their capacity to understand the world and prepares them to engage in critical thinking, and contribute to a fast-changing society (Alexander, 2006). They have a basic understanding of the notion of a dialogical Muslim-self, in that they appreciate that their own cognitive and emotional intelligences develop through interaction with an 'addressee' (Wegerif, 2011).

With both groups, I had to prompt the participants with a question to ask if there was anything negative about halaqah. They struggle to identify something, eventually pointing out that on some occasions the dialogue meanders, which can be confusing; although they are quick to say that usually the teacher will bring it back on track. Secondly, they identify that some learners may initially feel intimidated by being expected to engage in the dialogue, but equally they say that teachers are supportive and encouraging.

6.4.2 ERQ3. Do, and if so to what extent, do these young Muslims identify a relationship between halaqah as a dialogic pedagogy and the development of their personal autonomy within an Islamic paradigm, i.e. their shakhsiyah Islamiyah?

In Section 6.3, participants claim that through developing questioning and critical thinking skills; and by encouraging reflection and consideration of differing points of view, halaqah enables the development of their shakhsiyah Islamiyah; that is, it enables them to be thoughtful, autonomous Muslims, with the ability to navigate

living by Islam in a secular-liberal society. Moreover, participants display awareness that there are specific Islamic features of dialogic halaqah, as it is conducted in Shakshiyah Schools, which enable this development. Their contributions allude to Islamic educational ideas that are theorised in Chapter 3. Notably, they refer to Quranic and other evidence from Islamic sources, thus skillfully drawing on the Islamic worldview that frames the practice of halaqah. In a lengthy discussion about how their peers do not question what is happening around them and are less likely to be interested in questioning political and social issues, the young people allude to the critical pedagogy element of *tarbīyah*.

Abdullah: *…the way people think nowadays in society, it's very shallow, it's not very often when you get open-minded people. There are, but, you know, in our age group, most people they're just thinking about, it's very materialistic*

Fatimah: *I found that they, they didn't have the ability to question things in the same way I did, and I found that there were things lacking. Like, they couldn't, they couldn't challenge something, if someone said something on the news, they would automatically believe it* [General agreement]

Additionally, the young people recognise that through discussing Islamic teachings in context, halaqah enables their *tarbīyah,* or personal development. Halaqah allows learners *to explore a topic and see how that relates to you and what it means for you as an individual.* In relation to *t'alīm*, Sections 6.1.1 and 6.2.2 provide ample evidence of participants identifying the oral and dialogic nature of halaqah as significant in developing their cognitive skills. Regarding *ta'dīb*, in section 6.1.4, participants talk at length about the *nafs*, and the importance of self-evaluation to enable personal growth; they demonstrate an appreciation of the importance of self-evaluation for autonomous behavior.

Nevertheless, participants also recognise that the quality and character of the halaqah depends on the skill of the teacher; they lay great emphasis on the role of the teacher. Halaqah is not just peer-peer dialogue; a skilled teacher often carefully nurtures the dialogue. Shakhsiyah Schools' teachers stay with a class of 10-15 children for two years, they lead daily halaqah, which is at the core of a thematic curriculum. This is a unique situation that the schools feel enables teachers to spend time getting to know the children in their care, and to facilitate ongoing dialogue in a cumulative manner. This format is markedly different to much of the existing research on classroom

dialogue. As Howe and Abedin (2013 p.18) note:

> "A further difficulty, identified in Wiltse (2006), is lack of integration between the research tradition underpinning exploratory talk and a tradition that promotes a form of dialogue commonly referred to as 'scaffolding'. The tradition is often associated with Vygotsky, despite the ambiguities, noted already, over Vygotsky's own perspective on dialogue. Scaffolding is usually characterised as calibrated guidance towards target understanding, allowing students to reshape their understanding gradually in response to questions and suggestions from expert partners. Guidance can come from computers or more able peers, but there is also an obvious role for teachers."

According to Shakhsiyah Schools' training materials, the teacher's expert knowledge and pedagogical adeptness is considered crucial to successful dialogic halaqah. The Schools recognise the symbiotic relationships of teaching and learning, and of authority and autonomy, which are highlighted in Chapters 2 and 3. This tension between the teacher's authority and the learners' agency in contributing to classroom dialogue is sometimes seen as problematic. However, according to Shakhsiyah Schools' ethos, it is through this tension that learners learn to use their agency, whilst respecting others and navigating authority. To use Wegerif's (2011) terminology, they use the super-addressee Allah, and the community of classical scholarship to mediate the tension produced through dialogue. Personalised interpretations and meanings are created in the liminal space of interplay between multiple perspectives, whilst a constant is provided by an overarching Islamic worldview. Thus, it is similar to the tension between the new religion of Islam and prevailing societal beliefs and practices that characterised the Prophet's early halaqah with his companions. Participants contributions indicate that the location of dialogic halaqah in secular-liberal Britain enhances the quality of the dialogue through the tension of liminality and double-consciousness, which is a natural condition of the dialogical Muslim-self in a secular context. Conversely, halaqah draws on the same values and repertoire as those formulated by Alexander (2004); that dialogue should be 'collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful'. Alexander identifies the teacher's repertoire as rote, recitation, instruction/exposition, discussion and dialogue. Through recognising the need for a repertoire that ranges from authority to autonomy, my

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reading of his theory suggests that Alexander recognises the symbiotic relationship between the two.

Having considered participants' perspectives distilled through thematic analysis, it is important to note that they align with the claims made by teachers and school-leaders in the Masters study, demonstrating internal consistency within the organization. The next chapter will test participants' claims through an analysis of their dialogue, using the scheme of educational dialogue analysis (SEDA) (Hennessy et al., 2016), which draws on Alexander's principles, amongst other literature on researching educational dialogue.

Chapter 7 Findings and Discussion: Dialogic and Participant Analyses

The previous chapter demonstrates that, in the Shakhsiyah Schools' community, children, young people, teachers and school-leaders all believe that dialogic halaqah develops critical independent thinking. Moreover, they see the development of shakhsiyah Islamiyah as the ultimate aim of dialogic halaqah. Shakhsiyah Islamiyah is understood as an Islamic form of self-reflexive personal agency that acts in the world, whilst engaged in on-going dialogic relationships with self, Allah and others. Moreover, a self that has shakhsiyah Islamiyah is at ease with the double-consciousness generated by living as a Muslim in secular twenty-first century Britain, and is comfortable with its hybrid-identity.

At the core of the above argument is the idea that the dialogic pedagogy that operates through halaqah develops cognitive skills and personal autonomy. This chapter presents the findings of an empirical study designed to test this claim. Howe and Abedin (2013) have shown that clearly demonstrating a link between dialogue and the development of reasoning, particularly in the whole class context, is still challenging, despite the extensive research to date. Whilst a small-scale study such as this cannot aim to fully demonstrate a link, it can aim to make a contribution to the literature on classroom dialogue. The peculiarly cumulative nature of 45 minutes of daily dialogic halaqah, and the fact that some participants remained with the same group over a period of up to eight years offers an opportunity to understand whether daily cumulative dialogic sessions can be shown to provide opportunities for reasoning and self-reflection to take place. Evaluating the quality of the dialogue of these particular participants in a halaqah setting, can offer some insights into the potential impact of dialogic halaqah.

7.1 Quantifying participation and using the Scheme for Educational Dialogue Analysis (SEDA)

In this chapter, I present quantitative data about participatory interactions in halaqah in comparison to the dominant IRF mode of classroom interaction. I then present and

discuss findings about the quality of these interactions, derived by using the Scheme for Educational Dialogue Analysis (SEDA) Hennessy et al. (2016). SEDA identifies 'communicative acts' that are considered to be highly dialogic. These findings address the following empirical research questions, in relation to each group of participants.

ERQ4: To what extent, and in what ways, can the discussion generated within halaqah be identified as dialogic?

ERQ5: What evidence, if any, is there in the dialogue created in halaqah of participants' personal autonomy, in the form of questioning, reasoning, critical thinking, self-reflexivity and confidence in one's own position while respectfully seeking to understand the other?

7.2 Children's Halaqah: Participatory Data

Alexander (2001, p. 393) reiterated the common finding that teacher talk dominates classrooms, citing Flanders' (1970) 'two-thirds rule': that two-thirds of a typical lesson consists of talk, two-thirds of that talk is by the teacher, and two-thirds of teacher talk is direct instruction, questions or exposition. Alexander also cites the 'asymmetry of interaction' or '75 per cent rule', from the ORACLE follow up study. This found that in the late 1990s a greater emphasis on 'whole-class teaching'. to deliver the new national curriculum, meant that 75 percent of teacher interactions were with an individual child. For the individual child, however, 75 percent of interactions with the teacher were as a member of a class (Galton, Hargreaves, Comber, Wall, & Pell, 1999, pp. 83–4). Furthermore, the findings from Alexander's extensive international study, in relation to talk in English primary classrooms, have been summarised as:

- interactions tend to be brief rather than sustained;
- teachers ask questions about content, but children may ask questions only about
- points of procedure;
- closed questions predominate;
- children concentrate on identifying 'correct' answers;

- there is little speculative talk or 'thinking aloud'; and
- the child's answer marks the end of an exchange and the teacher's feedback formally closes it. (Alexander, 2008b p. 99)

Whilst these findings may now be a little dated, and certainly do not apply to every English primary classroom, they provide a good starting point for analysis of the primary children's halaqah lessons, which were carried out as part of their daily classroom routine. Table 7.1 demonstrates that in these three 45-minute halaqah lessons teacher talk is reduced to 54 percent, and the number of teacher utterances was 572 as compared to a combined 642 utterances from the children. Likewise, the number of words spoken by the teacher exceeds the combined number of words spoken by the children. Nevertheless teacher talk in relation to children's talk is substantially less than either the two-thirds or 75 percent descriptions cited above. Figures 7.1-7.4 provide some visual presentations of the same data.

Table 7.1 Children's halaqah: Quantitative Participatory Data

Children's Halaqah	Relative % of words spoken	Number of words Spoken	Number of utterances	Average length of utterance in words
Adam	6.49%	1859	89	21
Asiya	4.42%	1265	68	19
Unidentified Child	1.06%	303	58	5
Nazia	1.31%	374	20	19
Sara	3.03%	866	59	15
Sofia	5.75%	1646	71	23
Yusra	0.88%	252	17	15
Yusuf	10.70%	3062	102	30
Zakaria	12.41%	3554	158	22
Children Total		**13181**	**642**	
Farah (Teacher)	53.84%	15412	572	27
Totals		**28593**	**1214**	
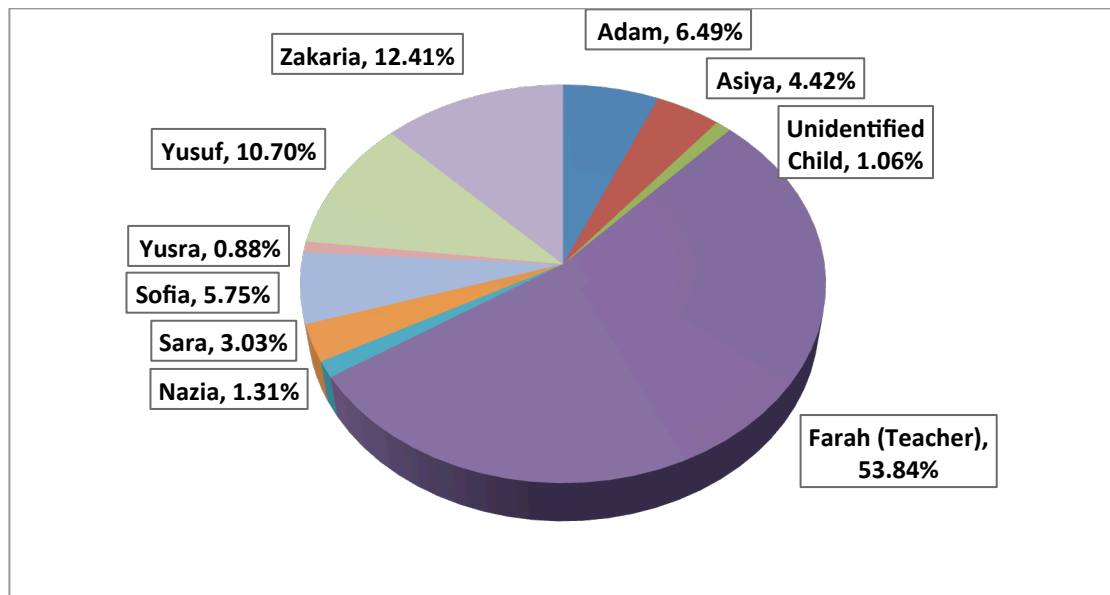
Figure 7.1 Children's halaqah: relative participation by percentage according to words spoken
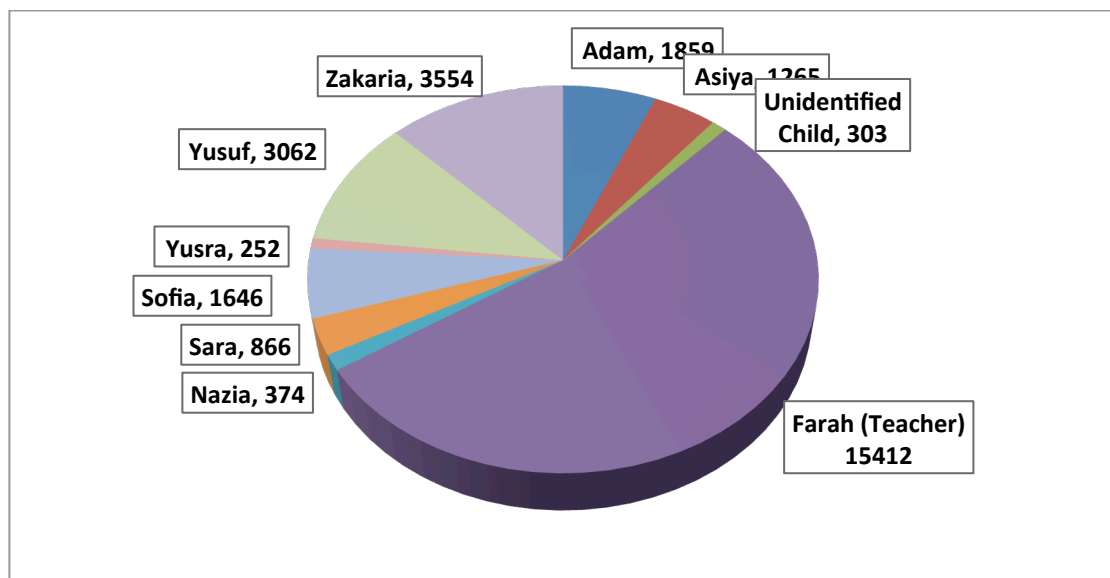
Figure 7.2 Children's halaqah: number of words spoken per participant
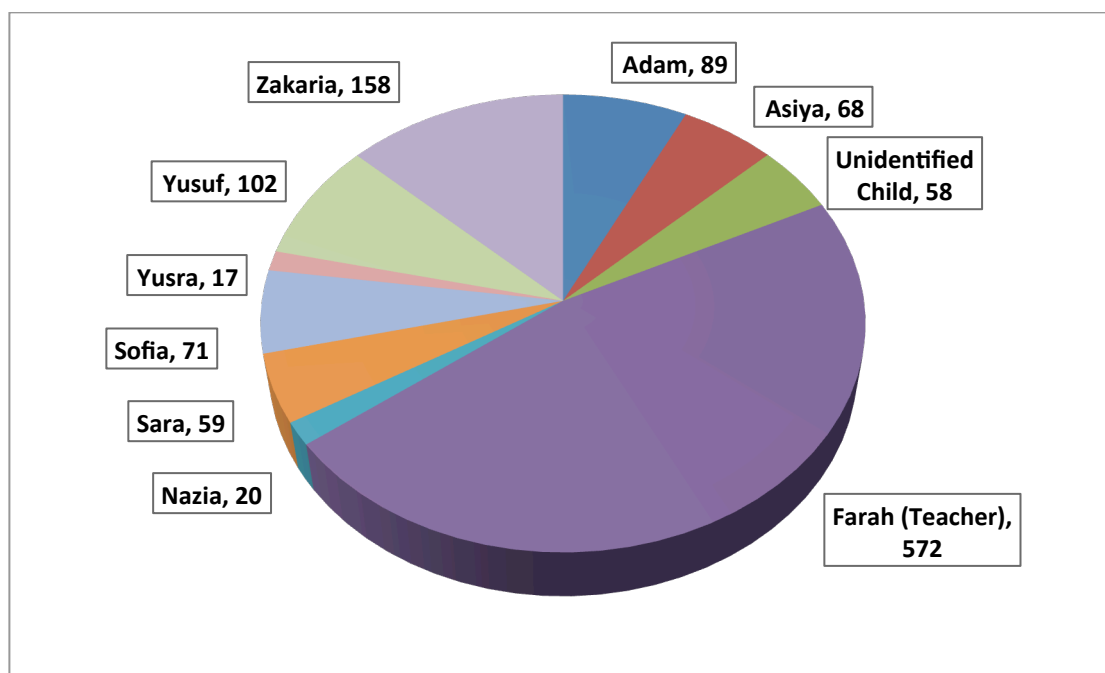
Figure 7.3 Children's halaqah: number of utterances per participant
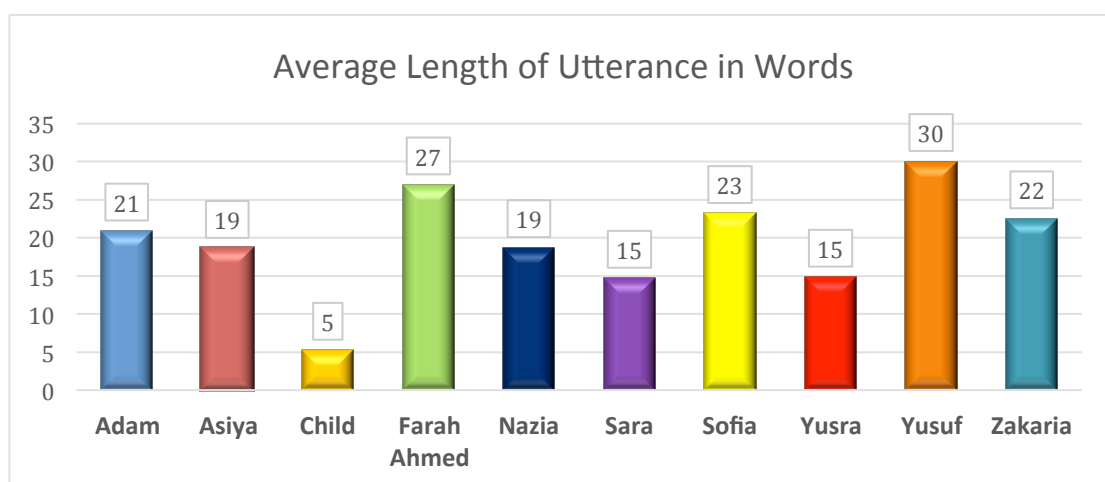
Figure 7.4 Children's halaqah: average length of utterance per participant

The most interesting findings are in relation to deeper layers of how classroom interaction, that is, the numbers of utterances for individual children; and average length of utterance, which far exceeds what is normally recorded in primary classrooms. One useful existing study for comparison is that of Smith, Hardman, Wall & Mroz (2004), which investigated teacher talk in the whole class section of Literacy and Numeracy lessons that were following the lesson format expected in the 'National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies'. They found that,

> 'teachers spent the majority of their time either explaining or using highly
> structured question and answer sequences. Far from encouraging and

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extending pupil contributions to promote higher levels of interaction and cognitive engagement, most of the questions asked were of a low cognitive level designed to funnel pupils' response towards a required answer…. Open questions made up 10 percent of the questioning exchanges and 15 percent of the sample did not ask any such questions. Probing by the teacher, where the teacher stayed with the same child to ask further questions to encourage sustained and extended dialogue occurred, occurred in just over 11 per cent of the questioning exchanges. Uptake questions occurred in only 4 percent of the teaching exchanges and 43 percent of the teachers did not use any such moves. Only rarely were teachers' questions used to assist pupils to more complete or elaborated ideas. Most of the pupils' exchanges were very short, with answers lasting on average 5 seconds, and were limited to three words or fewer for 70 per cent of the time. It was also very rare for pupils to initiate the questioning.' (Smith, Hardman, Wall & Mroz, 2004 p.408)

This detailed description is useful for appreciating the significance of the halaqah format for primary classroom talk. As Figure 7.3 demonstrates, the majority of children are heavily engaged in the dialogue, the halaqah key questions, given in Appendix 3, illustrate the open nature of the questioning and the intention to allow the dialogue to continue and develop. There are no more than six questions for a 45-minute halaqah session. This allows for open and extended speculative and probing dialogue. Figure 7.4 demonstrates that, unlike mainstream classrooms where whole-class teaching results in short exchanges, with children uttering three words or fewer for 70 percent of the time, the average children's utterance ranges from 15-30 words depending on the participant. Even the two participants who rarely spoke, Yusra (17 utterances) and Nazia (20 utterances), contributed on average 15 and 19 words respectively. Indeed one of the children, Yusuf, spoke on average longer than the teacher, using 30 words in comparison to 27 words. On the whole, the lengths of utterances were far more balanced between all individual participants, including the teacher. Although Yusuf's utterances were the longest, he did not make the most contributions, making 102 contributions in comparison to Zakaria's 158 contributions. Zakaria roughly contributed one utterance for every four utterances from the teacher. The data in Table 7.1 suggests that, in these halaqah sessions, children have a voice and are participating actively, rather than only responding to teacher's questions with

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short utterances while the teacher dominates talk time.

7.2.1 Children's halaqah: SEDA findings

The above participation data does not allow for an evaluation of the quality of dialogue. Further questions including, how dialogic the interactions are; whether and how far the dialogue was extended; how far the teacher used uptake or probing questions to encourage elaboration and/or consideration of differing viewpoints; still need to be addressed in order to generate answers to ERQs 3 and 4. SEDA analysis is therefore carried out in order to explore the dialogic potential of halaqah. The full SEDA scheme with detailed definitions of codes is available in Appendix 6. A condensed version is provided in Table 7.2. For the purposes of SEDA analysis, discussion that ensues from a specific question, and is perceived as potentially strongly dialogic, is selected in order to determine a communicative event (CE). This excerpt constitutes approximately ten percent of the total dataset. The full coded excerpt can be found in Appendix 7. Table 7.3 reports the frequency of each SEDA 'Communicative Act' (CA) identified in this excerpt.

Table 7.2 SEDA condensed version (Hennessy et al., 2016)

	I – Invite elaboration or reasoning			R – Make reasoning explicit
I1	Ask for explanation or justification of another's contribution		R1	Explain or justify another's contribution
I2	Invite building on / elaboration / (dis)agreement / evaluation of another's contribution or view		R2	Explain or justify own contribution
I3	Invite possibility thinking based on another's contribution		R3	Speculate or predict on the basis of another's contribution
I4	Ask for explanation or justification		R4	Speculate or predict
I5	Invite possibility thinking or prediction			
I6	Ask for elaboration or clarification			B – Build on ideas
			B1	Build on /clarify others' contributions
	P – Positioning and Coordination		B2	Clarify/elaborate own contribution
P1	Synthesise ideas			
P2	Evaluate alternative views			C – Connect
P3	Propose resolution		C1	Refer back
P4	Acknowledge shift of position		C2	Make learning trajectory explicit
P5	Challenge viewpoint		C3	Link learning to wider contexts
P6	State (dis)agreement/ position		C4	Invite inquiry beyond the lesson
	RD – Reflect on dialogue or activity			G – Guide direction of dialogue or activity
RD1	Talk about talk		G1	Encourage student-student dialogue
RD2	Reflect on learning process/ purpose/ value/ outcome		G2	Propose action or inquiry activity
RD3	Invite reflection about process/ purpose/ value/ outcome of learning		G3	Introduce authoritative perspective
			G4	Provide informative feedback
	E – Express or invite ideas		G5	Focusing
E1	Invite opinions/beliefs/ ideas		G6	Allow thinking time *[optional when not verbally explicit]*
E2	Make other relevant contribution			

Table 7.3 Children's strong dialogue excerpt: SEDA coding frequencies

Communicative Act (CA)	Children	Farah	Total
B – Build on ideas	7	10	17
B1 Build on or clarify other's contribution	6	5	11
B2 Clarify or elaborate own contribution	1	5	6
C- Connect	2	6	8
C1 Refer back	1	2	3
C2 Make learning trajectory explicit	0	1	1
C3 Link learning to wider contexts	1	2	3
C4 Invite inquiry beyond the lesson	0	1	1
E- Express or invite ideas	6	4	10
E1 Invite opinions, beliefs or ideas	0	1	1
E2 Make other relevant contribution	6	3	9
G – Guide direction of dialogue or activity	2	27	29
G1 Encourage student-student dialogue	0	0	0
G2 Propose action or inquiry activity	0	0	0
G3 Introduce authoritative perspective	2	4	6
G4 Provide informative feedback	0	3	3
G5 Focusing	0	8	8
G6 Allow thinking time [optional when not verbally explicit]	0	12	12
I - Invite Elaboration or Reasoning	0	47	47
I1 Ask for explanation or justification of another's contribution	0	3	3
I2 Invite building on, elaboration, (dis)agreement, evaluation, of another's contribution or view	0	17	17
I3 Invite possibility thinking based on another's contribution	0	12	12
I4 Ask for explanation or justification	0	0	0
I5 Invite possibility thinking or prediction	0	1	1
I6 Ask for elaboration or clarification	0	14	14
P – Positioning and Coordination	34	4	38
P1 Synthesise ideas	6	2	8
P2 Evaluate alternative views	6	0	6
P3 Propose resolution	0	0	0
P4 Acknowledge shift of position	2	0	2
P5 Challenge viewpoint	5	1	6
P6 State (dis)agreement or position	15	1	16
R – Make reasoning explicit	16	3	19
R1 Explain or justify another's contribution	8	2	10
R2 Explain or justify own contribution	5	1	6
R3 Speculate or predict on the basis of another's contribution	2	0	2
R4 Speculate or predict	1	0	1
RD - Reflect on dialogue or activity	5	8	13
RD1 Talk about talk	4	6	10
RD2 Reflect on learning process, purpose, value, outcome	1	2	3
RD3 Invite reflection about process, purpose, value, outcome of learning	0	0	0
Uncoded	23	13	36
Total CA			179
143/179 turns were qualified with CA			80%

7.2.2 Children's SEDA findings: teacher and learner roles

The coded excerpt is too lengthy to be included here and can be found in Appendix 7; hence, extracts from the excerpt are given to illustrate specific points. However, this is not always possible; hence, some of the discussion refers to lines that can be found in the Appendix 7.

In the excerpt as a whole, all the children participate in the dialogue at least once. I participate as both teacher and researcher during halaqah that are part of the normal timetable, but are recorded for research purposes. Table 7.3 shows that a high proportion of turns (143 out of 179 or 80 percent) are qualified as dialogic moves, corresponding to at least one SEDA CA, 106 turns are assigned one CA, 24 are assigned two and eight assigned three. All eight of the scheme 'clusters' or parent codes are applied and 28 of the 33 available CA are applied. There are 47 instances where I as the teacher, invite elaboration or reasoning, which includes inviting positioning. There are a corresponding 16 instances of children's utterances coded as reasoning (R codes) and 34 coded as positioning (P codes). These dialogic moves are associated with higher-order interthinking (Mercer, 2000). There are a further seven instances of children building on each other's ideas (B codes) and six instances of children making other meaningful contributions to the dialogue (E codes). The SEDA team includes E codes as dialogic moves because prior research (Rojas-Drummond, Mazón, Fernández, & Wegerif, 2006) has recognised their importance to the co-creation of understanding and inter-subjectivity. Dialogue is a socio-cultural phenomenon that relies on contextualised discourse surrounding reasoning and positioning. Moves that build on contributions (B codes), for example, in line 56 where Adam builds on my contribution, saying, 'but sometimes you can choose not to', are essential in opening up new possibilities in the dialogue. It is significant, that here Adam as a learner is building on the teacher's contribution to open up new possibilities, indicating 'democratic' dialogue. Moreover, dialogue is often characterised by thinking aloud, where thoughts that are not yet fully formed develop through expressing ideas (E codes), which generates interthinking. For example in lines 2-8, Yusra is beginning to articulate a thought in response to a very challenging question. This is supported through my encouraging Yusra in her thinking process.

Table 7.4 Extract demonstrating thinking aloud

Line	Agent	Discussing whether there is a conflict between being autonomous and being Muslim	CA 1	CA2	CA3
1	Farah	[Do you think there's a conflict] in having good shakhsiyah and being a strong Muslim, having Shakhsiyah Islamiyah and being somebody who thinks for yourself or being independent, is there a conflict between those two things?	I2		
2	Yusra	Um, maybe	U		
3	Farah	Maybe, not sure, wha…why, why might there be a conflict?	I3		
4	Yusra	Um, because um if you are strong and like um and you are um (.) like um	E2		
5	Farah	Independent [and strong]	E2		
6	Yusra	[Independent]	U		
7	Farah	Yeah	U		
8	Yusra	Um you can still be um strong, so you'll still be the both things (.) um so even if you're strong you can still be independent and even if you're independent you can still be strong	P1		
9	Farah	So you think there isn't a conflict, that you can be an independent person but have strong Shakhsiyah Islamiyah (.)	B1		

Although she is not expressly taking a position and providing a justification, Yusra's hesitant but thoughtful contribution is actually an excellent example of dialogic pedagogy in action, where the teacher is not only encouraging thinking aloud but is also providing the space to do so. The teacher's role, both as role model and as facilitator in dialogic whole-class teaching, is very much emphasised by Alexander (2004, p. 38) and is also a central concern in the Islamic concept of *t'alim* underpinning halaqah.

In these research halaqah, the teacher acts as a role model for the children, but sparingly. There are three instances where I model reasoning, four instances where I take a position, ten instances of building on ideas, and four instances of other meaningful contributions. These dialogic moves contribute to lengthy chained sequences, which although mediated by the teacher, demonstrate genuine dialogue that includes several members of the group, for example the extended chained sequence of dialogue that occurs between lines 29-94, given in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5 Extract demonstrating a chained sequence of dialogue.

29	Farah	Alright let me ask you another question, do you think that being a good Muslim, let me put it this way, and having good shakhsiyah, as a Muslim, do you think that if you, if you're not independent in your thinking, can you be a good Muslim? Can you have good shakhsiyah and not be independent?	I3	G6	
30	Farah	(4)	G6		
31	Farah	Zakaria	I3		
32	Zakaria	You could but um, (.) yes you could but there could be some bad things about it because you should be kind of independent and in between, independence and not being independent, should be in between because if you're not independent (.) dependent everyone else you mi…you might ask someone else, someone else might say something to you um which is not part of Islam and they make it up (Farah: mhm) you might believe them	R2	P2	RD1
33	Farah	Hmm, that's ve…Zakaria made a really interesting point; he's saying that if you're not independent in your thinking and you're just trying to be a good Muslim (.) then you could follow somebody into the wrong thing. (.) If you don't think for yourself and somebody tells you that (.) 'oh this is what it means to be a good Muslim' you could go and do a bad action (.) because you haven't thought about it for yourself and you haven't (.) made your own decision, that's what you're saying?	R1	RD1	
34	Zakaria	Yeah	U		
35	Farah	Yusuf, what do you think?	I2		
36	Yusuf	I agree	P6		
37	Yusuf	because then you don't (1) because if you try your hardest not to um ruin your Shakhsiyah and once you do one bad action and you ke…and you do it twice and three times then it starts becoming a habit so you should make your own choices	R1		
38	Yusuf	because other people might influence you to do bad and some people might influence you to do good, so you've got to actually find different opinions of what's right (Farah: mhm) so maybe like go to maybe somebody who you know you can trust and then you should ask them and (.) check what their view is on it and ask people, other people that you can trust so that you actually know which wha…what's [right and what's wrong]	R2	P2	RD1
39	Farah	[Ok] So you should find out different opinions on, even within Islam you should go and Nazia, try and find out different opinions on what different people are saying and then make a decision for yourself?	I2	G5	RD1
40	Yusuf	Yes	P6		
41	Farah	Ok, and do, would you say you need to have good knowledge to be able to do that?	I2	G5	
42	Yusuf	Yes	P6		
43	Yusuf	because you need to know about what's ri…what's right and you need to know what's wrong (Farah: mhm) you need to know about the prophets and you can learn about the lessons that they had like instead of being really	R2	G3	

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		harsh to animals, just because you…um then…that means… you might…you as might…might be nice to animals as well,			
44	Farah	Ok, right, Sofia	I2		
45	Sofia	Um, what I think i…if you just uh like obviously you learn things yourself as well, you don't just learn it from the people around you or like uh (.) like you have…it's a bit of both, you should be a bit independent and a bit uh like uh (Farah: mhm) asking people questions and [like that]	P1	RD1	
46	Farah	[But i]…if somebody's not independent in their thinking can they have good Shakhsiyah Islamiyah, Sofia?	I3	G5	
47	Sofia	Um, er	U		
48	Farah	Can they be a good Muslim?	I3	G5	
49	Sofia	Um, (.) uh not as much as a independent [and]	R4		
50	Farah	[Not as much] as if they're an independent person, ok. Uh, um Zakaria I need to see Adam, what, what do you think Adam?	I2		
51	Adam	Well, I still don't know if this a yes or a no (Farah: mhm) 'cause um being independent can be relatively good and bad because if you're independent the good thing is that you wont get any false knowledge (Farah: mhm) you'll just stick with what you know, but also you wont learn anything new, and if you are not [independent you]	R1	P2	
52	Farah	[No, you could be] independent and go out and learn new things all the time,	P5		
53	Farah	(.) isn't it?	I5		
54	Adam	Yeah you can	P6		
55	Farah	Yeah you can go, you can be choose to go and learn new things	B2		
56	Adam	But you, but sometimes you can choose not to	B1	P2	
57	Farah	Sometimes you might choose not to, so now we're coming onto something, if you're independent you could choose to do bad things isn't it?	I3	G5	
58	Adam	(Hesitatingly) Yeah	U		
59	Farah	So is it better to be not independent so that you always do the good things and be told what it is to be a good Muslim, (.) would it be better if we in, in, in this school we told you how to be a good Muslim, how to be a good Muslim, how to be a good Muslim and we didn't really develop you into independent thinkers because we might be afraid that you then, might then go do bad things	I3	C4	RD2
60	Zakaria	(Unclear)	U		
61	Farah	Ah yes Zakaria [come on]	I3		
62	Zakaria	[Should] actually be in the middle of being independent and not independent because if you're in the middle, so if I'm kind of independent (Farah: mhm) then I will listen to the good stuff yeah, I will listen to what they have to say and then I'll research on myself that's the (Farah: mhm) the, [not independent bit]	P1	R1	
63	Farah	[Ok, if you're an] independent person are you gonna come, are you always going to make the right decision?	I3	G5	
64	Zakaria	No, but, can I finish 'cause, (other children talking) it's	U		

		kind of, it's kind of [if you're being independent]			
65	Farah	[Go on, go on, sorry]	U		
66	Zakaria	So basically um if you, if someone asked you uh, tells you something (Farah: mhm) and you think about it (Farah: mhm) yo…you listen to them that's not independent and the independent bit you go home and research about it (Farah: mhm) yourself so this being in the middle be taking part in both	P1	R2	
67	Farah	Ok, alright, ok, Yusuf what do you wanna say?	I2		
68	Yusuf	Well, Zakaria is kind of right	P6		
69	Yusuf	because you should be an independent thinker and so that you should only actually listen to something that you know is true, 'cause if you had some new information then you should, like Zakaria said, research about it 'cause it, then, (Farah: ok) if you've never heard it before they might just [make the stuff up]	R1	P1	
70	Farah	[I'm] asking you if you're an independent thinker what happens if you make the wrong choices? You're saying that you have to make, be an independent thinker so that you follow the right path and you do the right things.	I1		
71	Zakaria	You have to be both.	P6		
72	Farah	You have to be both? So you have to be independent and make the right choices	I6	P6	
73	Zakaria	Independent and not be indepen (.) well	P2		
74	Farah	No, no think about it (Zakaria carries on) sto…stop repeating what you're saying 'cause you've said this about three times right, I'm asking you the question, (2) if you i…if you're an independent person thinking for yourself, you decide things for yourself, you're autonomous, remember we (Yusuf: yep) talked about that word autonomy? Ok, now say you're an autonomous [person]	I1=	G4=	C1=
75	Child	[What's an autonomous person again?]	U		
76	Farah	[and you make the wrong decision] you, say you're an autonomous person and you decide that (.) you wanna do (.) things that Muslims shouldn't do, or that you don't even wanna be a Muslim then what?	=I1	=G4	=C1
77	Adam	Oh woah, oh man!	P4=		
78	Farah	Yeah	U		
79	Adam	That's blown my mind	=P4		
80	Farah	That's blown your mind, ok don't use words like 'man' in school and I don't think its very good Shakhsiyah to use words like 'oh man it's blown' ok, speak properly	U		
81	Farah	alright, I've just blown his mind, Sofia what do you think?	I2		
82	Sofia	Um er	U		
83	Child	Oh sorry can we repeat again it just slipped out my head.	U		
84	Farah	Ok, what if we, everybody tries to be autonomous and independent but then some people make the wrong	I3	G5	

		decisions, some people go and do bad actions with it, what if then?			
85	Child	(Whispering) I can think of (unclear)	U		
86	Farah	(2)	G6		
87	Farah	Go on Yusuf	I3		
88	Yusuf	Ok, so if some people decide to do it (Farah: uhuh) surely other people will probably give them advice [because]	R3		
89	Farah	[Ah ok,] coming on to naseeha, Amr bil ma'roof, nahee ana a'lmunkar ok, there we have that,	C3		
90	Farah	ok good point,	G4		
91	Farah	Asiya	I2		
92	Asiya	I wanted to say what he said	P6		
93	Farah	You wanted to say what he said, so so…other people could advise them [ok]	B1		
94	Yusuf	[Yeah you could've asked people]	B2		

As a teacher, I do not expound my views or state an established position; rather the dialogue is genuinely open. This is a difficult feat to achieve and many halaqah teachers struggle to get this right. Extensive training and modeling is carried out in Shakhsiyah Schools to support teachers in developing these skills. However, this excerpt demonstrates that in this 'whole-class' halaqah situation the teacher is skilfully conducting and co-ordinating the dialogue, not only through invitation and nomination but also through scaffolding moves designed to take the dialogue forward. These moves are designed to prompt children towards the metacognitive domain through self-reflection and reflection on their learning, see for example, lines 29-33 and 50-59. It is only towards the end of the CE (line 117 onwards) that I introduce an authoritative perspective. However, I guide the dialogue in other ways with 27 instances of my utterances coded as G. Twelve of these are allowing thinking time, which is essential to genuine dialogue but often compromised in whole class teaching, where 'pace' is considered important for learning. Table 7.6 gives some examples of allowing thinking time.

Table 7.6 Extract demonstrating teacher allowing thinking time

165	Farah	(2)	G6		
166	Farah	Does that make sense?	I6		
167	Yusuf	Yes, can I just say something?	U		
168	Farah	One minute. (2)	G6		
169		And at the end of the day, it's up to us whether we do that or we don't do that.	B2		
170		(2)	G6		
171	Farah	No one can actually make you do it	B2		
172		(2)	G6		
173		So i…ultimately it's up to you.	B2		

174		(2)	G6		
175		Which means that, it's very important that you have your own thinking skills.	B2		
176	Farah	(3)	G6		
176	Farah	(3)	G6		
177	Farah	Ok, I think I've said everything I want to say,	RD2		
178	Farah	ok who wants to talk now? Yusuf, Go on.	E1		

These 12 instances do not include shorter pauses within utterances (.), for example in lines 12, 32, 45 shown in Table 7.5, which illustrate different children pausing as they think aloud. This is also evident in my participation as the teacher, for example in line 33. This indicates a more 'democratic' relationship between teacher and learners than one usually found in primary classrooms, including those in Islamic faith-schools. This is not to say that the teacher abdicates responsibility. In fact, there are eight instances of focusing, which involve my bringing the children back to the question, for example lines 46 and 48 (Table 7.5), where I focus the children's attention on the juxtaposition between being independent and being a good Muslim. There are three instances of providing informative feedback, one of which is acknowledging a good point, but the other two clearly show me as the teacher encouraging Zakaria to think more carefully (Table 7.5 lines 74/76), and Yusuf to think independently (line 125). Towards the end of the CE, I introduce an authoritative perspective to address the question that has been the subject of the dialogue; this is recorded in four instances of G3. In two further instances of G3, the children also introduce an authoritative perspective (lines 43 and 106), by referring to Islamic teachings to guide their thinking, providing evidence of their understanding of the 'Halaqah Ground Rules' (see Appendix 1), which state that children can refer to Islamic texts.

7.2.3 Children's SEDA findings: Rarely Observed Communicative Acts: Connect and Reflect on Dialogue

The SEDA scheme includes three 'clusters' of CA that are considered to be highly dialogic, but are recognised by the SEDA authors as infrequently observed in classroom talk. These are P (Positioning), C (Connect), and RD (Reflect on Dialogue). Positioning is discussed alongside Reasoning in Section 7.2.4. There are eight instances of utterances coded as 'Connect' (C codes); six are attributed to the teacher and two to children. For example, in line 74/76 (Table 7.5), I challenge Zakaria to consider the possibility of autonomy leading to the rejection of Islam

altogether. This possibility is not explicit in the initial question that triggers this CE, but I refer back to the question, seeking to make this tension explicit, in order to deepen the dialogue. In line 128, Zakaria makes the link between autonomy and choice, referring back to an earlier CE in the halaqah. Moreover, in line 164, in explicating the authoritative perspective, I reintroduce the concept of autonomy as understood in the Islamic worldview. This shortly follows line 160, where having patiently co-ordinated a meandering open dialogue, I attempt to draw ideas together by linking them to an authoritative perspective, 'Ok, alright, let me, let me, ok, let me just bring this together now, just listen carefully'. In doing so, I make the learning trajectory explicit to the children.

The children also demonstrate the ability to connect their learning to their life experiences, another core feature of halaqah drawn from the concept of *tarbīyah*. In line 16 (Table 7.7), Sofia connects learning to life-experiences and learning from those around you. In doing so she engages in metacognition; she identifies the sociocultural idea that human interaction leads to learning through the co-construction of meaning; this utterance is therefore also coded as RD1.

Table 7.7 Extract illustrating a child making connections and reflecting on dialogue

16	Sofia	Um I think er like er (other children whispering) when you're around like we all learn from er like obviously we learn from er like other people so like erm say you're speaking English in your family then you're like little brother will obviously like er learn from you so you're, so you learn from your people,	R1	C3	RD1 =
17	Sofia	it is good to er learn from other people and ask questions, [it's good to do that]	P6		=RD 1
18	Farah	[Ok so you feel that] it's good to learn from others and not just try and think for yourself	B1	RD1	
19	Sofia	Yeah	P6		
20	Farah	[Ok]	U		

In line 59 (see Table 7.5), we see another example of a relationship between the 'Connect' CA of inviting inquiry beyond the lesson, and the RD2 CA 'Reflecting on Dialogue'. This occurs when I invite the children to consider whether a Muslim school should develop autonomy in Muslim children. There is evidence of a metacognitive dimension to the dialogue as there are a total of 13 RD codes, eight

attributed to the teacher and five to the children. Children are conscious of learning through talk and through social interaction, with three different children's contributions being coded as RD1. In the final utterance in the CE (line 179), Yusuf recognises how the series of halaqah culminate in a deeper understanding of the authoritative Islamic perspective, and that children's own thoughts, reflections and dialogue are echoed in the Islamic worldview. He sums it up by saying, 'So basically, you just repeated everything we've said for the last four days'.

7.2.4 Children's SEDA findings: Reasoning and Positioning

Having discussed the 'Connect' and 'Reflect on Dialogue' CA, it is important also to consider the prevalence of the Positioning (P) CA, which is a conspicuous characteristic of this excerpt. Positioning is not regularly observed as a feature of classroom talk, but is strikingly prevalent here. Undoubtedly this is due to the fact that the teacher's central move is to pose an open and complex question that asks participants to take a position: 'Do you think there's a conflict in having good shakhsiyah and being a strong Muslim, having shakhsiyah Islamiyah and being somebody who thinks for yourself or being independent, is there a conflict between those two things?' I then encourage and scaffold the children to take a position, to provide justification, and to respond to others' positions. This approach leads to a lengthy chained dialogic sequence (lines 29-94, see Table 7.5), which can be considered in more detail. It begins with my refocusing the dialogue onto the question by rephrasing it, 'let me put it this way'; this is followed by a four second pause to allow for thinking time. I then nominate Zakaria (line 31), inviting possibility thinking, which is coded as I3. The second coder disagreed with this coding decision because the utterance is simply my stating Zakaria's name. In normal SEDA coding, naming someone is considered nomination, as opposed to invitation, because it is considered impossible to know what the teacher's intention is. However, in this case, the researcher is the teacher and I am fully aware that my intention was to draw Zakaria in to the dialogue by providing an answer to the specific question posed in line 29 already coded as I3. The rephrased question in line 29 is designed to make the children consider that there isn't a black and white answer to the original question, and to consider the possibility of nuance. Zakaria responds to this invitation by recognising that the answer isn't straightforward, and that there is the possibility that without autonomy or independence, the 'wrong' decision could be made (line 32: R2,

P2, RD1). In line 33, I take this idea further, rephrasing his words to make the possibility explicit (R1, RD1). I ask Zakaria to confirm that I have conveyed his meaning accurately, which he does. I then invite Yusuf to contribute (line 35: I2); it is not explicit in my words, but my intention was for Yusuf to address Zakaria's point, which was the reason for rephrasing it. Yusuf understands this and takes a position, stating 'I agree' (line 36: P6). He continues by offering a justification (line 37: R1) and developing his ideas and evaluating alternative views (line 38: R2, P2, RD1). This is one example amongst many where the children take a considered nuanced position that is aware of alternative viewpoints, and justify their position. It is also an example of how they are being carefully scaffolded to do so by the teacher. In the next few lines, I ask them to elaborate, repeatedly rephrasing the question to encourage them to face the tension that may exist within it. I also invite others into the dialogue to clarify the nuances and connect to/reflect on wider learning. In line 50, I invite Adam in (I2), and he has the confidence to say 'Well, I still don't know if this a yes or a no' (line 51: R1, P2), demonstrating his understanding that to take a position he needs to reflect on the alternative possibilities and provide a justification. Adam's utterance is an acknowledgement of uncertainty; this is a form of higher order thinking that is not quite captured by the available codes. The codes, P2 'evaluate alternative views' and R1 'explain or justify another's contribution', that are applied here do not capture the essence of this communicative act as a thinking process. Through encouraging sounds such as 'mhmm', I support Adam's acknowledgement of uncertainty and his thinking aloud. Although such sounds could be perceived as reinforcing a line of argument, here they are being employed by the teacher, whilst a child is thinking aloud; therefore, they can be better understood as encouragement to continue articulating his thought process, and indeed that was my intention in line 51. Nevertheless, in line 52, I challenge the viewpoint that he is beginning to articulate (P5), and in line 53 I explicitly invite him to think deeper and evaluate the possibilities (I5). The dialogue between Adam and the teacher continues until line 61, when I invite Zakaria back into the dialogue and scaffold his thinking, encouraging him to take it one step further, and in line 67 I also invite Yusuf to elaborate further. By line 76, I decide to introduce the possibility of autonomy being negative because it could generate a choice to leave Islam, opening up the idea for the children that autonomy as a value may clash with other values (I1, G4, C1). From the children's reaction, it seems that this possibility has not occurred to them and this leads to some

animated dialogue. I would have continued the dialogue but the lesson was running over and I therefore decide in line 96 (C3, G5, I2) to consider whether this possibility is alien to Islam by introducing the authoritative perspective. This entire episode from line 29-94 (Table 7.5) involves nuanced positioning, challenging viewpoints and carefully drawing out possibilities. As such, it can be characterised as highly dialogic. Moreover, SEDA is a development that draws on Alexander's (2004) dialogic principles (see Figure 4.4). Thus, the prevalence of the SEDA codes indicates that these halaqah uphold an ethos that embodies these principles. The vast majority of the talk in the research halaqah is somewhat similar to the section that has been coded. However, there were some examples of talk that cannot be considered in any way dialogic. These are given in Appendix 7.

7.3 Young People's halaqah participatory data

The young people's halaqah differs from the children's in that it was not conducted during school time in a scheduled lesson, but instead was organised solely for the purpose of data collection. The halaqah were held in a Shakhsiyah Schools' classroom on a weekend. The age range was broadly post-secondary, that is, 15-19 years. This section of findings from the young people's halaqah follows a similar format to that of findings from the children's halaqah given in Section 7.2. Table 7.8 demonstrates that the young people are much more confident in participating in open dialogue, their contributions are considerably more evenly matched with the teacher than in the children's group. However, there is a range of variations in relation to the different ways participation is measured, and this is illustrated in Figures 7.5 to 7.8.

Table 7.8 Young people's halaqah: quantitative participatory data

Young People's Halaqah	Relative % of words spoken	Words spoken	Utterances	Average length of utterance in words
Abdullah	17.88%	7673	105	73
Amina	7.93%	3403	130	26
Fatimah	18.32%	7862	121	65
Ibrahim	6.50%	2791	56	50
Kulthum	4.03%	1728	61	28
Qasim	18.63%	7996	212	38
Zaynab	7.72%	3314	64	52
Participant Total		**34767**	**749**	
Farah (Teacher)	19.01%	8158	238	34
Totals		**42925**	**987**	
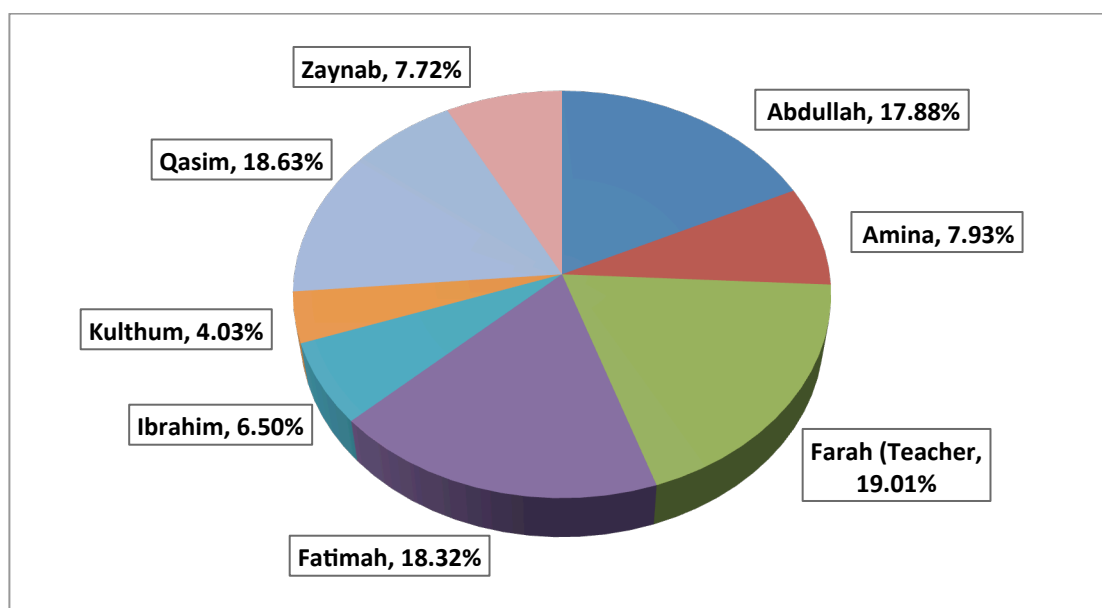
Figure 7.5 Young people's halaqah: relative participation by percentage

Looking at the relative percentage of talk time, the range is from 4 percent to 19 percent. Although there is a clear variation, there is some parity between participants when contrasted to whole-class settings, where it is common to find some students who do not take part at all. This could be due to the 'class size' as there are only seven participants. Nevertheless, it is significant that the teacher contributes only 19 percent of the talk time, in comparison to the usual estimate of the proportion of teacher talk as 66 percent (Cazden, 2001).
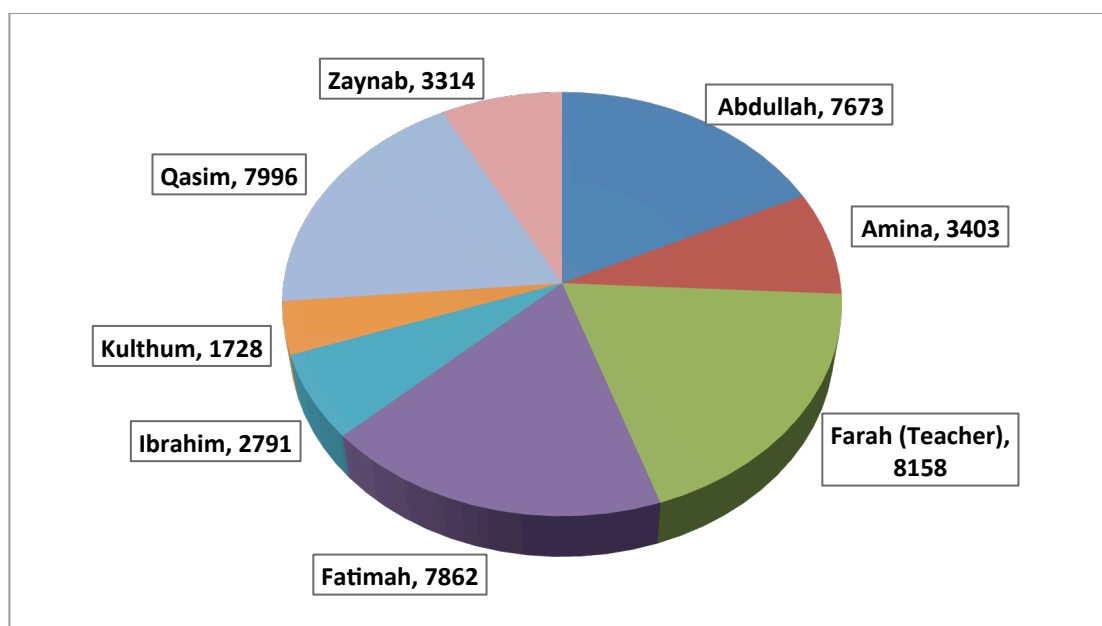
Figure 7.6 Young people's halaqah: number of words spoken per participant

In terms of the length of contributions measured by number of words spoken, given in Figure 7.6, there are three young people who are fairly evenly matched with the teacher in the 7-8000 range; the other four participants also make substantial contributions.
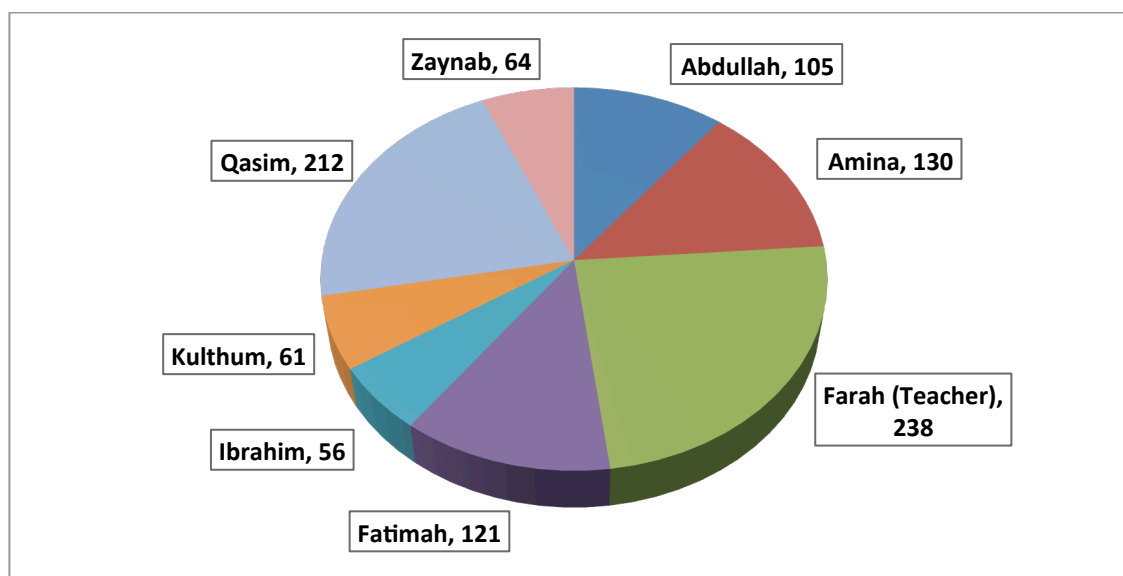
Figure 7.7 Young people's halaqah: number of utterances per participant

In terms of the number of utterances, the teacher's turns constitute 238 out of a total 987, or 24 percent, or a ratio of 1:4 turns. This is is significantly different from the more common Flanders' 'rule' that two-thirds classroom talk is teacher talk, through IRF exchanges, indicating a ratio of 2:1 (Alexander, 2001; Cazden, 2001). Although Qasim, Abdullah and Fatimah contribute a similar number of words, Qasim's number of utterances is almost double those of Abdullah and Fatimah, indicating that either he does not speak at length, or that he also frequently makes very short contributions as well as longer ones. Moreover, proportionally Ibrahim and Kulthum's number of utterances are around half of those of Abdullah and Fatimah, indicating that although they contribute, they do not speak at length. This is a very different way of understanding their participation to the relative percentage of talk time in Figure 7.5, and the number of words spoken in Figure 7.6, both of which indicate much lower participation.

Average Length of Utterance in Words
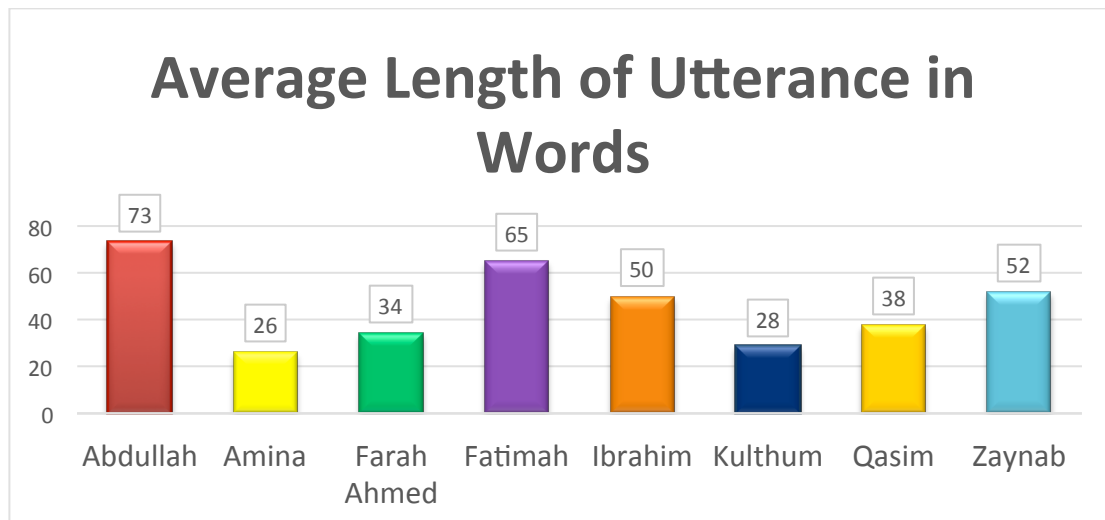
Figure 7.8 Young people's halaqah: average length of utterance per participant

The average length of utterance in words is astounding, even for me as a researcher who is familiar with halaqah. As a teacher, who has taught in primary, secondary and post-16 classrooms, I am acutely aware that classroom constraints would extremely rarely allow learners to speak at length in the way that they do in these halaqah. Moreover, it demonstrates the high level of equity between participants, with five out of the seven learners speaking on average at substantially greater length than the teacher. Furthermore, all participants contribute at length, Kulthum, whose average at 21 words is the lowest, is clearly making lengthy contributions. Halaqah is facilitating detailed dialogue in that participants are able to freely express their ideas at length, such as, Abdullah, whose average contribution is the highest at 73 words. The format of halaqah, as an opportunity for reflection and dialogue, not simply a 'lesson', enables this reflective 'democratic' approach to dialogue in the group.

Exploring the total recorded data in these ways has demonstrated the potential for halaqah to facilitate 'democratic' dialogue within an Islamic paradigm. Although within halaqah they take on the role of learners, these young people's knowledge, experience and reflections are valued as a source of knowledge about the educational experiences, ways of thinking, and decision-making processes adopted by Muslim young-people in Britain. However, to evaluate the quality of the dialogue, it is important to consider participant contributions in more detail. SEDA analysis is therefore carried out in order to explore the dialogic potential of halaqah with young people. For the purposes of the SEDA analysis, a communicative event (CE) of approximately ten percent of the total talk time is determined. Discussion that seems

to be an excerpt of strong dialogue, and ensues from a specific question is selected for this purpose. The full coded excerpt can be found in Appendix 7. Table 7.9 reports the frequency of each SEDA 'Communicative Act' (CA) identified in this excerpt.

Table 7.9 Young People's strong dialogue excerpt: SEDA coding frequencies

Young People Strong Sample Type of Dialogic Move	Young people	Farah	Total
B – Build on ideas	13	1	14
B1 Build on or clarify other's contribution	6	1	7
B2 Clarify or elaborate own contribution	7	0	7
C- Connect	10	6	16
C1 Refer back	0	5	5
C2 Make learning trajectory explicit	1	0	1
C3 Link learning to wider contexts	9	1	10
C4 Invite inquiry beyond the lesson	0	0	0
E- Express or invite ideas	2	0	2
E1 Invite opinions, beliefs or ideas	0	0	0
E2 Make other relevant contribution	2	0	2
G – Guide direction of dialogue or activity	22	15	37
G1 Encourage student-student dialogue	0	0	0
G2 Propose action or inquiry activity	0	0	0
G3 Introduce authoritative perspective	22	5	27
G4 Provide informative feedback	0	0	0
G5 Focusing	0	10	10
G6 Allow thinking time [optional when not verbally explicit]	0	0	0
I - Invite Elaboration or Reasoning	6	17	23
I1 Ask for explanation or justification of another's contribution	3	5	8
I2 Invite building on, elaboration, (dis) agreement, evaluation, of another's contribution or view	1	7	8
I3 Invite possibility thinking based on another's contribution	1	2	3
I4 Ask for explanation or justification	0	0	0
I5 Invite possibility thinking or prediction	1	1	2
I6 Ask for elaboration or clarification	0	2	2
P – Positioning and Coordination	56	4	60
P1 Synthesise ideas	10	0	10
P2 Evaluate alternative views	9	1	10
P3 Propose resolution	2	0	2
P4 Acknowledge shift of position	1	0	1
P5 Challenge viewpoint	18	1	19
P6 State (dis)agreement or position	16	2	18
R – Make reasoning explicit	49	5	54
R1 Explain or justify another's contribution	21	4	25
R2 Explain or justify own contribution	19	1	20
R3 Speculate or predict on the basis of another's contribution	9	0	9
R4 Speculate or predict	0	0	0
RD - Reflect on dialogue or activity	1	0	1
RD1 Talk about talk	0	0	0
RD2 Reflect on learning process, purpose, value, outcome	1	0	1
RD3 Invite reflection about process, purpose, value, outcome of learning	0	0	0
Uncoded	26	4	30
Total CA			146
116/146 turns were qualified with CA			79%

7.3.1 Young people's SEDA findings: learner roles

As with the children's excerpt, all the young people contribute to the dialogue. Table 7.9 shows that a high proportion of turns (116 out of 146, or 79 percent) are qualified as dialogic moves, corresponding to at least one SEDA code; 106 turns are assigned one CA, 46 are assigned two and 22 assigned three. All eight of the scheme 'clusters', or parent codes, are applied and 23 of the 33 (70 percent) of the available codes are applied. This differs from the children's SEDA analysis, and the ten omitted codes will be analysed further in an evaluation of SEDA. However, closer analysis of uncoded lines shows that much of the uncoded text is due to several people talking at once. In fact, 15 out of the 20 uncoded lines feature this type of animated dialogue, as everyone wants to get involved. These are not allocated a speaker, but recorded as, 'several people talking at once' (lines 20, 39, 43, 53, 61, 63, 65, 67, 69, 73, 96, 99, 109, 113, 125). An example is given in Table 7.10; the text in line 22 also shows how participants are interjecting in the dialogue.

Table 7.10 Example of several people talking at once

Line	Agent	Is there a conflict between being autonomous and being Muslim?	CA 1	CA2	CA3
19	Farah	The question is do you think that being able to make decisions for yourself, being an autonomous person (.) con is a, conflicts with being a Muslim who submits to Allah? That's the question I'm asking you.	I2	C1	G5
20	Several people	No, no, no it doesn't, I don't think so, it doesn't no	P6		
21	Farah	Ok	U		
22	Fatimah	Because [unclear] each act you do, you're making [Qasim: you're teaching] your making an autonomous decision [Amina: Yeah] and am I doing this for Allah or am I doing this for some sort of worldly gain, am I even doing this act at all, every, every time you, we pray five times a day, every time you get up to pray, you're making the conscious decision, am I, am I submitting to my Lord, or do I decide not to do that, do I believe in this or do I not and that's five times a day that you're making, you're reassessing you're um, that you're I don't know quite how to explain it, you're, [unclear] I suppose your spiritual position and do, do you, are, are you still as firm in your belief as you were a few [hours ago]	R2	P6	

A further eight uncoded lines are due to repetition caused by more than one person talking at the same time (lines 45-47, 86-88, 118-119), and three are where someone is trying to interject, but is cut short (27, 79, 141). All these lines could actually be

evidence of the high dialogic quality of the excerpt, as opposed to an indication that there is a lack of dialogue because they are uncoded. Certainly, these sections of the excerpt could be identified as interthinking through 'exploratory talk' (Mercer, Wegerif & Dawes, 1999). If these lines were allocated a code, then the total coded lines would be 141 out of 146, that is, 97 percent of the excerpt. It is clear from this, that learners are keen to contribute, and engaged in exploring ideas together through dialogue.

Furthermore, Table 7.9 demonstrates that there are frequent examples (49 instances) of learners engaged in explicit high-level reasoning by (R codes); 56 instances of relative positioning in relation to each other and to external ideas (P codes); and 22 instances of guiding the dialogue through an authoritative perspective (G3). There are a further 14 instances of learners clarifying and building ideas (B codes); and two instances where they make another relevant contribution to the dialogue (E2). Learners also engage in invitation, with six instances of (I codes); and in nine instances connect their learning to wider contexts (C3); in one instance they make the learning trajectory explicit (C2); and in another they reflecting on the learning process (RD1). These dialogic moves by learners are discussed in much more detail below.

7.3.2 Young people's halaqah SEDA findings: the teacher's role

In this excerpt, the teacher's role is distinctively reduced in relation to expected teacher participation. The young people make 116/146, that is, 79 percent of the contributions, whereas I make 30/146 or 21 percent of the contributions. This agrees with the findings for the whole dataset, given in Figure 7.5. There is an overall impression that in these halaqah, I as the teacher-researcher do not need to guide the young-people's dialogue in the same way as is required in the children's halaqah. This is evidenced in comparing the quantitative participatory analysis given for the children's and young people's groups in Tables 7.1 and 7.9, and Figures 7.1-7.8. Moreover, this is also evident in the extended sequences of dialogue between participants which require no input from me, for example lines 39-57 given in Table 7.11, a total of 28 sequential utterances, before a contribution from the teacher. This absence of the teacher differs distinctly from the more common IRF exchange and even in comparison to much more dialogic examples of classroom talk (Cazden, 2001 pp. 43-59; Hennessy et al., 2016 pp. 36-39). However, fine-grained analysis shows

the importance of the teacher's role in facilitating the dialogue.

Table 7.11 Example of extended dialogue without teacher contribution

38	Farah	but the point I'm asking you is a bit more philosophical I suppose than that, but the point I'm asking you is that, if you've decided your submitting to Allah, are you still autonomous?	I1	C1	G5
39	Several People	A few people start talking [How can you]	U		
40	Qasim	[But then you've just decided, but you just said if you decide to submit to Allah]	R1	P5	
41	Fatimah	[You decide how you submit to him]	R2		
42	Amina	I don't think you can, in that sense [unclear], if you're taking it that way, I don't think anyone can totally be autonomous, there's no way you can live your life without being guided or following something [unclear 2-3 people] but then there's always ideas [that you follow] [Qasim: the fact is] you can't just totally just randomly make your own way.	R2	P4	
43	Several People	[I don't know] Lots of people talking at the same time	U		
44	Zaynab	[That would be an autonomous decision to randomly make your own way though]	R2	P5	
45	Kulthum	[I think if you]	U		
46	Qasim	[Yeah]	U		
47	Zaynab	[If you follow the]	U		
48	Qasim	Because, atheists as well you know they follow nature in some, for some people like they follow, they say that nature, Mother Nature, all that kind of stuff [unclear] so they're even saying that they don't have a god and they don't have a religion [But whatever], they still follow a certain aspect of life [yeah]	R1	P5	C3
49	Zaynab	Yeah but if, I mean, when you decide that you're going to submit to Allah, it's not like all your powers of decision making are suddenly taken away from you, you still have the choice to do it this way or that way or to even just stop, there's still a [choice there]	R2	P5	
50	Fatimah	[Yeah but] there are ḥadīth warning you that some people may practice for their whole life and then all of a sudden, they'll lose it, you'll always have that, the option is always there to just back out and [unclear]	R2	G3	
51	Qasim	[It's like that], it's like but the question is if you decide to submit to Allah [so you decided]	R2		
52	Ibrahim	If once you become Muslim, I don't think [you're obviously] you're completely autonomous, I think you lose some of that [yeah]	P5		
53	Several People	Lots of people talking	U		
54	Kulthum	I agree with that	P6		
55	Kulthum	because [unclear anyway] all the choices you make say you know you're saying for example pork's haram you, so you're not eating pork, you make that choice but your making that choice because you want to be a Muslim so [unclear] so if you want to be a Muslim you have to make	R1	G3	

		[these choices,] [Ibrahim: Your decision is going to be based on] yeah, I mean um if you, if you go against them, then say you don't pray five times a day then you know it's a, that's not being a good Muslim so all your choices are you know to try and become a better Muslim so it's not completely (.) autonomous (.) so if you think about it			
56	Amina	But then you can't be fully autonomous, because, like say if your not Muslim and like you really um I don't know, you really respect your mother so you'll do what your mother says or you'll like stay with her, you'll live in her house, you'll help her and things like that or I don't know [Yeah]	R2	P5	C3
57	Qasim	[Yeah but] it could also be like your love for your family, your love for her, or probably you could, you could say in that aspect that with non-Muslims they (unclear) because they love their parents they just wanna do it 'cause they	R1	P6	

A closer analysis of the 'Guide' (G) codes reveals that G1 'encourage student-student dialogue' is not applied in either the children or young-people's halaqah. This demonstrates that all participants have an understanding of the nature of halaqah as a dialogic activity, and have the skills to contribute to the dialogue. Therefore, encouragement from the teacher or other learners is not necessary. The excerpt begins with a lengthy contribution from me, as the teacher-researcher, attempting to take the dialogue forward (lines 1-4).

Table 7.12 Teacher refocusing an open complex question and inviting taking a position

Line	Agent	Is there a conflict between being autonomous and being Muslim?	CA 1	CA2	CA3
1	Farah	So do you think that, that, is what your saying, that you need to, every Muslim has to come to these kinds of conclusions for themselves	I2		
2	Farah	or, I mean, let's go back to this notion of freedom and autonomy, do you think there's a conflict between a western concept of autonomy, being, making decisions for yourself because in the West, that means being able to decide you know the rights and wrongs in life, that's what it actually means	I3	C1	G3
3	Farah	because in relation to education which is the purpose of this research the idea is that when you have a secular school you're not saying anything from any religion your saying that what you're trying to do is get the young people to be able to either choose their religion or choose, if they don't have a religion then to choose on their own basis what they think is right and wrong.	R2	C3	G3
4	Farah	Do you think there is a contradiction between the concept of autonomy, either that concept or any kind of concept of autonomy and being a Muslim because somebody raised earlier this notion that to be a Muslim means to submit, So what do you think of that, I mean it's the second question there, do you think that the concept of autonomy conflicts with being a Muslim?	I2	C1	G3

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As with the children's excerpt, I pose an open complex question that requires both possibility thinking and evaluation of different positions. Although the question is clearly an inquiry question, I do not code this question or the similar one that opens the children's excerpt as G2 'propose action or inquiry activity'. This is an omission on my part as a coder. G2 is not applied at all in this excerpt. However, the G3 'introduce authoritative perspective' code is applied 27 times, five times to teacher utterances and 22 times to participant utterances. In contrast, in the children's excerpt, it was applied to four teacher utterances and two teacher utterances. Table 7.13 gives an example.

Table 7.13 Example of young people introducing an authoritative perspective and making connections to prior learning

75	Zaynab	[That] comes from an original point though because [there is] you've already decided that Allah *subhanawataala* (glory be to Him most High) that because He created us, because we have to worship Him, He has the authority to tell us what is right and what is wrong [therefore we know]	R1	P1	G3
76	Qasim	[Because he knows us better]	R1		
77	Fatimah	[So your making the autonomous decision] to accept His authority [Zaynab: Yeah] but your making the decision [unclear] to submit as well so your making a decision to no longer decide what's right and wrong for yourself but to submit to somebody [to um a a set of guidelines]	R1	P1	G3
78	Qasim	[If you accept Allah's got] authority in the first place you'll follow whatever He [yeah] is giving for you because you want, your following it to begin with [unclear] so whatever he gives	R1	P1	G3
79	Fatimah	[Unclear] any other autonomous decision left	U		
80	Amina	So you made the decision whether [Fatimah: Islam] to I think with both parties where they are trying to attain the highest level of freedom or the highest level of uh submission, they, they're both um like not being fully autonomous	P1		
81	Amina	[But] because I remember this um this curriculum that a teacher showed me and she showed a woman which was like in full black and like a full *niqab* (face veil) and everything and there was another woman and she was wearing a, wearing like um, you know she was wearing you know the way non-Muslims dress outside and she was wearing a miniskirt and high heels and everything and there was a question posed upon it and it was saying um which uh umm society is like male dominated like which one of these women are oppressed and the, the answer was like there is a, they're both male dominated and oppressed or their both, like not oppressed so its [like unclear]	R1	P2	C3

The authoritative perspective consists of participants often referencing Islamic teachings, for example lines 64, 78, 136, and sources, namely Quran (lines 24, 98, 102) and *Hadīth* (lines 15, 50); an example is given in Table 7.14. In other instances, the young people demonstrate awareness of different perspectives in Islamic teachings, for example, in lines 6, 18, 34, 35.

Table 7.14 Example of young people referencing Islamic texts

98	Farah	I mean let's go back to Surah Shams now [Unclear] where it talks about the *nafs* (self)[unclear] isn't it	G3		
99	Several People	Lots of people talking	U		
100	Amina	[It' your emotions [Unclear]it technically isn't]	E2		
101	Qasim	[In a way it's your own, it's autonomous, it's yourself, [Unclear]	E2		
102	Fatimah	Like in Surah Shams it says um whoever purifies it and whoever lets uh (.) personally I think a better translation is and whoever lets the bad side become more dominant it's implied that there are two sides to the nafs, there there's one which is yearning for Allah [unclear] and there is one which is yearning for all your based desires and the question is which one do you let become more dominant, and Islam is a quest to let the, the one which yearns for Islam to become more dominant	P1	G3	

These examples demonstrate knowledge and agency; the young people are confident of their Islamic knowledge, and are willing to apply their agency in referencing texts and teachings to justify their position. As the teacher, I introduce the authoritative perspective in relation to Islam on three occasions, and in relation to secular beliefs on two occasions. However, I do not feel the need to 'Provide informative feedback' (G4); there are no instances where this code is applied in the young-people's excerpt, in contrast to three occasions in the children's excerpt. My use of G5 'Focusing' is more balanced; it is used on ten occasions in the young people's excerpt and eight in the children's. This shows that focusing is a core skill for dialogic teaching. As participants claimed in the thematic analysis, open collaborative dialogue can easily meander, and it is important to keep it on track and focused on the original inquiry. However, in this extract it is only necessary for me to do this on average one in every 15 turns, which leaves space for learner participation. Interestingly, unlike the children's group, there is no need for me to 'allow thinking time' (G5). This could be interpreted as a lack of facilitation on the part of the teacher, but reading through this

excerpt, that evaluation does not ring true. Instead it is evident that the young people are heavily engaged in the dialogue and need no prompting to contribute. Instead, they are respectfully competing with each other in animated dialogic exchanges. This is evident from the uncoded lines 'several people talking at once'.

The 'I' codes generally tend to be applied to the teacher (17 instances in this excerpt). In SEDA, these are broken down into types of invitations in order to tease out the teacher's role in the dialogue. However, in this excerpt there are also six instances where learner's utterances are coded as 'I'. There are five instances where I ask for 'explanation or justification of another's contribution (I1), and 3 instances where Ibrahim does. I use these invitations to rephrase points in order to encourage others to consider potential implications, to focus and deepen the dialogue (lines 38, 82, 89, 97), or to move it on by exposing a contradiction in order to draw out nuanced perspectives (line 60). Ibrahim seems to use this type of invitation to subtly and politely challenge other's viewpoints, which consequently leads to a deepening of the dialogue (lines 23, 66, 68), as shown in Table 7.15.

Table 7.15 Example of young people inviting others to contribute

65	Several People	A few people talking [I have] [You're asking the same thing]	U		
66	Ibrahim	If you make a decision based on what you believe like when your belief, does that not make you autonomous?	R3	I1	
67	Several People	Lots of people talking [Exactly] [This way] [Also I mean]	U		
68	Ibrahim	Do you have to make a decision (.) like not based on [doesn't make sense] anything	I1	R3	P5
69	Several People	Lots of people talking	U		

None of the other young-people's utterances are coded as I1, or I2 'invite building on/elaboration/ (dis)agreement/evaluation of another's contribution'. In line 28, it seems that Ibrahim is challenging the viewpoints presented thus far, but because his language is couched only in questioning and he seems to be simply repeating/ asking for clarification of the sentence, it cannot be coded as P5. Instead, my response to him is to say, 'That's what I'm asking, what do you think?' I understand that he is challenging others' viewpoints, but want him to be more specific. It can be inferred,

though not established, that Amina understands this too, because she responds to the question and reiterates the viewpoint that Ibrahim was subtly challenging. However, she was attempting to speak earlier, so it may be the case that she is simply seeing Ibrahim's contribution as rephrasing the question. The others support Amina building on her argument until line 52, when Ibrahim feels that he now needs to take a position, and only then is his utterance coded P5. This section (lines 28-52), given in Table 7.16 demonstrates that halaqah achieves the kind of extended dialogue that Alexander (2008) defines as dialogic teaching.

Table 7.16 Example of extended dialogue, illustrating Fatimah's use of existing knowledge (G3); Ibrahim's use of asking for explanation/justification of another's position (I1); and Amina building an argument (Reasoning and Positioning Codes)

28	Ibrahim	[I mean if you] are a Muslim and you're practicing does that, does that mean that you're, that you're not, that you're still autonomous? That if, if you know, if you don't really make decisions that are I'm going to do this or not, if you just do it anyway because you think that that's being, that's what being a Muslim is about that's, you have to do these things, does that mean you're still autonomous?	I2		
29	Farah	That's what I'm asking, what do you think?	I2		
30	Amina	I think, um [unclear] Islam encourages us [to be autonomous] it actually tells us	P6		
31	Qasim	[Because you've got to make your own decisions]	R1		
32	Amina	To, to always, um like question our decisions, question our intentions, why we're going to do a certain action or not, so in a sense you are being autonomous	R2	P5	
33	Qasim	And because, like otherwise why would there be, um if, if Islam was not being about um auton tch, if in Islam you're not meant to be autonomous then becoming a revert is autonomous, they chose their religion, and you could say, because if they believed it to be right and if someone said to them it's right, believe in it.	R1	P5	
34	Qasim	Also, you could say that in, when the Prophet *salAllahiwasalam* (peace be upon him) said all the actions are about your intentions so to make an intention, you have to make the intention, not someone makes the intention for you, you make it, it's your intention, so you'll be autonomous in that moment by making you're intention that I am gonna do this.	R2	P5	G3
35	Fatimah	Also in Islam, there are quite a few things which are grey areas where you have to make a decision, is this actually the right thing to do, is this what Allah would want me to do because it's unclear, there's some things which are left you're unsure about like um, for lack of a better example, there are cased where some people say like in Libya, where Gaddafi stood up and said it's kufr to turn on your leader, from Islam	R1	G3	C3

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		it's kufr to turn on your leader and then the question arose do I um, do I try and put um, support the uh, the oust, the ousting of a tyrant or do I do what is supposedly the right thing from Islam and follow my leader? Which one from Islam is correct, which one should I do?			
36	Qasim	But you're also converting your own knowledge though	B1		
37	Farah	Yeah but the thing, the thing is that's true so as a Muslim you consciously decided to live within a particular framework, so you're thinking within that framework, but within that framework you have to make some decisions and every time you make that decision, you, you're kind of recommitting to your framework, your belief right,	R1	C1	
38	Farah	but the point I'm asking you is a bit more philosophical I suppose than that but the point I'm asking you is that, if you've decided your submitting to Allah, are you still autonomous?	I1	C1	G5
39	Several People	A few people start talking [How can you]	U		
40	Qasim	[But then you've just decided, but you just said if you decide to submit to Allah]	R1	P5	
41	Fatimah	[You decide how you submit to him]	R2		
42	Amina	I don't think you can, in that sense [unclear], if you're taking it that way, I don't think anyone can totally be autonomous, there's no way you can live your life without being guided or following something [unclear 2-3 people] but then there's always ideas [that you follow] [Qasim: the fact is] you can't just totally just randomly make your own way.	R2	P4	
43	Several People	[I don't know] Lots of people talking at the same time	U		
44	Zaynab	[That would be an autonomous decision to randomly make your own way though]	R2	P5	
45	Kulthum	[I think if you]	U		
46	Qasim	[Yeah]	U		
47	Zaynab	[If you follow the]	U		
48	Qasim	Because, atheists as well you know they follow nature in some, for some people like they follow, they say that nature, Mother Nature, all that kind of stuff [unclear] so they're even saying that they don't have a god and they don't have a religion [But whatever], they still follow a certain aspect of life [yeah]	R1	P5	C3
49	Zaynab	Yeah but if, I mean, when you decide that you're going to submit to Allah, it's not like all your powers of decision making are suddenly taken away from you, you still have the choice to do it this way or that way or to even just stop, there's still a [choice there]	R2	P5	
50	Fatimah	[Yeah but] there are hadīth warning you that some people may practice for their whole life and then all of a sudden, they'll lose it, you'll always have that, the option is always there to just back out and [unclear]	R2	G3	
51	Qasim	[It's like that], it's like but the question is if you decide to submit to Allah [so you decided]	R2		
52	Ibrahim	If once you become Muslim, I don't think [you're obviously] you're completely autonomous, I think you lose some of that [yeah]	P5		

As the teacher, I use I2 for similar purposes to I1, asking questions to generally support the intensive dialogue that is happening here, I rarely use I1 or I2 to invite someone else into the dialogue, as they are all willing to contribute. The exception is in line 130, where I ask Ibrahim if he is still holds his original view, because I want to draw him out to take a position.

There are three instances of I3 'invite possibility thinking based on another's contribution' and two of I5 'invite possibility thinking or prediction. This type of teacher questioning heavily assists in deepening the dialogue to enable learners to consider alternative perspectives. For example, in line 95, I suggest 'try putting yourself in a position of like, you're not a Muslim, you can choose what you want to do, how do you think you would make decisions?' Again it is not just the teacher that engages in this type of dialogic move. In line 103, Fatimah engages in possibility thinking, whilst involving the other participants in her thoughts by asking questions about freely following your desires without a moral code; this prompts Zaynab in line 106 to ask a series of challenging questions about motivation and morality (I3). This type of skilful rhetorical possibility thinking through a series of questions indicates a level of higher-order thinking and confidence amongst leaners that is rarely found in secondary classrooms. There are no instances of anyone asking for 'explanation or justification', and only two instances of the teacher 'asking for elaboration or clarification'. As the teacher, my invitations are not seeking consensus, rather I am seeking to facilitate contrasting voices that are mutually engaged through reasoned positioning.

7.3.3 Young people's SEDA findings: learners' 'Reasoning' and 'Positioning'

The lack of invitations asking for 'explanation or justification' (I4) and 'elaboration or clarification' (I6) could be explained by the prevalence of R 'Reasoning' and B 'Build on ideas' CA, which occur 49 and 14 times respectively. These account for over half of the young people's total contributions. As the young people are explicitly reasoning and building on ideas, it becomes unnecessary for the teacher to invite these types of contributions. There are 21 instances of R1, where a young person explains or justifies another's contribution, see for example in line 37, Fatimah explicitly provides reasoning for how Muslims can be autonomous within the Islamic framework, 'but within that framework you have to make some decisions and every

time you make that decision, you, you're kind of recommitting to your framework, your belief, right'. Here she reasons that the choice is recurrent because all actions are ultimately based on a choice. However, in line 55, Kulthum provides reasoning for a counter position, arguing that you make the choice to follow Islamic rules because you want be Muslim, so once you have decided to be Muslim, you no longer have the choice, you have to follow the rules, so you are not fully autonomous. This is followed by line 56, where Amina builds on an argument she had made previously. Amina's utterance is one of the 19 instances of young people's contributions that are coded as R2 'explain or justify own contribution'. Amina argues that no one can be fully autonomous; all people are influenced by something.

These are just some examples of the high-level reasoning that occurs in long dialogic sequences between the young people in this excerpt. In contrast, there are only four instances of R1 attributed to the teacher, and one instance of R2, indicating that the teacher is not providing the reasoning for the learners; rather the young-people are actively reasoning through dialogue with each other. Furthermore, there are nine instances coded R3, where the young-people speculate or predict on the basis of another's contribution. For example, in line 66 Ibrahim speculates out loud, 'If you make a decision based on what you believe, …does that not make you autonomous?' Interestingly there are no utterances ascribed R4 'speculate or predict'. This shows that there is more evidence of young people responding to others when introducing their own ideas, as opposed to introducing ideas unconnected to the dialogue. This demonstrates a high level of dialogic responsiveness to each other, and is clear from the prevalence of young people's utterances coded as CA that involve responding to others (B1:6, I1:3. I2:1, I3:1, P5:18, P6:16, R1:21, R3:9). The young-people clearly position themselves in relation to each other's ideas, providing justifications and qualifying their positions with nuanced reasoning that often does not entirely accept or reject others' ideas, but leads to a deeper more nuanced evaluation of different perspectives. They seem to illustrate a Bakhtinian sense of meaning being generated and developed through on-going complex dialogue, whilst demonstrating the agency required in taking a position.

Table 7.17 Example of an extract with several Positioning and Reasoning CA

105	Qasim	[Your] nafs is part of you, so if you follow your nafs, you're still making your own decision to follow it [hmm] [if your not] and if you don't believe in anything else, that's what you're going to [If you] follow	R3		
106	Zaynab	If you don't have an ideal if you don't believe in God, if you don't believe someone has set out right or wrong, then (.) what are you, why wouldn't you be a slave to your desires? Why wouldn't you want to satisfy yourself? What reason would you have to do anything good in the world? What reason would you have to think that that's right and that's wrong?	R3	I3	
107	Qasim	[Because that's what you follow]	B2		
108	Kulthum	[I know], but when you're young, you're still taught like morals and things so you do have, you can just	R1	P5	
109	Several People	Lots of people talking all together	U		
110	Fatimah	You're making your own decisions, I, I uh I think that this is right, I think this is wrong, where are these morals coming from, then you're a slave to wherever they came from. [Umm] (.) you can't originate your own laws from with, from within yourself, it doesn't, it doesn't make sense, life doesn't work like that, you can't just do decide all of a sudden, ok I think um stealing is good, it's good, it, it doesn't work like that, you, you have to have reasons behind it and when you look back those reasons always relate to some sort of an experience that you've had [yeah] [that's true]	R1	P5	
111	Farah	So what you're saying is that even people who don't follow a religion, they're following some other type of belief or framework or morals so then [maybe not unclear] they, they're being autonomous within [unclear] Ok!	R1		
112	Farah	So how many of you think there is a conflict between autonomy and being a Muslim and how many of you feel that there isn't really a conflict?	I2	G5	
113	Several People	Lots of people talking	U		
114	Qasim	[There isn't]	P6		
115	Zaynab	[I don't think] there's a conflict]	P6		
116	Ibrahim	[I don't think]	P6		
117	Farah	Sorry	U		
118	Zaynab	[I don't think there's a conflict]	U		
119	Qasim	[I don't think there's a conflict]	U		
120	Farah	You don't think there's a conflict?	G5		
121	Kulthum	I think there's a little bit	P6		
122	Farah	A little bit of a conflict	I6		
123	Kulthum	Yeah not a lot	B2		
124	Fatimah	I think people misunderstand what it means to be autonomous sometimes	R2		
125	Several People	Lots of people talking	U		
126	Farah	Because it depends on how you're defining it [yeah]	B1		
127	Qasim	Depends on how you see it yeah, but from my viewpoint I think that there's no conflict.	P6		
128	Farah	[Ok]	U		
129	Qasim	[It goes hand in hand]	B2		

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130	Farah	What about you Ibrahim, you, you felt that there was a conflict to begin with, do you still feel [that?]	I2		
131	Ibrahim	[I don't know really.] I mean I'm still not sure, I mean if I, if I make a, if I make a decision um hrmhrm (clears throat) because, because I believe in, I believe um that's the right thing from what I've learned from being a Muslim, does that make me not autonomous? I mean if I choose not to eat pork because I know that's haram, does that, does that make me not autonomous, I mean I've made a decision not to eat pork because that's what I believe hrmhrm (clears throat) so I'm, I'm not sure about whether that makes me autonomous or not.	R2	P2	
132	Amina	The way I, the way I see it is that if being, like uh, within the framework of Islam and being within the framework of any society, um you're still not fully autonomous so either way you're still, yeah, it conflicts with both of the frameworks. It doesn't	R2	P3	
133	Farah	So do you think Islam, in your understanding of Islam, do you think Islam defines the human being as autonomous or as not?	I3	G5	
134	Zaynab	[As autonomous, that's the difference between] [Unclear]	P6		
135	Ibrahim	[As autonomous I would say] [unclear]	P6		

Positioning (P) codes are rare in classroom talk, because learners are not often explicitly asked to take a position. The full excerpt begins with a CA, whereby the young people are explicitly asked to take a position: 'do you think that the concept of autonomy conflicts with being a Muslim?' This provides some of the explanation for the extremely high instances of P 'positioning' codes, which are applied to 56 lines of young people's utterances or 48 percent of their contributions in this excerpt. Table 7.17 gives an example of a section of the excerpt that has substantial evidence of Positioning and Reasoning CA. In contrast, four positioning codes are ascribed to the teacher's contributions, demonstrating that the usual role of the teacher as the possessor of knowledge to be transmitted to learners has been reversed here. The young people demonstrate sophisticated positioning, almost always tied in with reasoning. There are 16 instances of P6 'state (dis)agreement or position', most of which are embedded in animated dialogue. There are 18 instances of P5 'challenge viewpoint', meaning that a viewpoint is challenged on average after every six moves, a strikingly high statistic. Some of these moves are quite emphatic for example, in line 11 Zaynab says, 'I think also it's ridiculous to assume that just because you have a certain education it makes, um like you could have a secular education, it makes you more free to make decisions', followed by extensive reasoning (R2) in line 12. P5

'challenge viewpoint' is almost always combined with R1 or R2, and often involving some nuance for example, in line 32 Amina states her position and provides reasoning, '[Islam tells us] to always, um like question our decisions, question our intentions, why we're going to do a certain action or not, so in a sense you are being autonomous.' Amina's use of 'so in a sense' indicates that she is open to other ways of looking at it. There is, however, only one instance of an explicit acknowledgment of a shift of position (P4). In line 42, having consistently argued that she feels that Muslims are autonomous, Amina recognises that this autonomy is not absolute, but she qualifies that with questioning whether autonomy can ever be absolute, 'I don't think you can, in that sense [unclear], if you're taking it that way, I don't think anyone can totally be autonomous'. Here Amina displays a high level of self-reflection, and the willingness to shift her position, but also the confidence to keep questioning how that shift actually works.

The young people are capable of developing a nuanced position, as is evident in the two utterances coded P3 'propose resolution'. So by line 132, Amina has considered the various perspectives and settled on a more nuanced position: 'the way I see it is that if being, like uh, within the framework of Islam and being within the framework of any society, um you're still not fully autonomous so either way'. There are nine instances where the young-people 'evaluate alternative views' (P2). In line 7, Fatimah explains that in choosing to be a Muslim you have to evaluate alternative views: 'so, the only way that you can come to that, it can't be forced down your throat, you have to have your own, your own internal debate I suppose, which eventually, you come to the conclusion either you want, you want to submit or you don't'. In line eight, also coded P2, Qasim builds on Fatimah's idea by recognising that choosing to follow a particular path, means you will be learning it from someone else.

There is continuous development in the dialogue. Ten dialogic moves are coded at the highest Positioning level, P1 'synthesise ideas'. This is a strikingly high number and demonstrates the young-peoples' willingness to listen to each other and to develop their own thinking as they do so. Nine out of ten CA coded as P1 are to be found in the second half of the excerpt, demonstrating the development of the dialogue over time. In line 71, Qasim sums up the synthesis that most of the young people are beginning to accept: 'you already believe in that, so base, basing the decision on your

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belief is technically being autonomous even though your belief comes from something else'. It is also noteworthy that the E 'Express or invite ideas' code which is so frequently observed in classroom talk is rare in this excerpt. Only two of the young people's utterances are coded as E2 'make other relevant contribution', which indicates an utterance that is useful to the dialogue but does not have the characteristics of another of the more dialogic CA such as B, R, P, G or C. E codes are considered dialogic but indicate utterances that are usually more vague or less focused than the other codes in the scheme. This demonstrates that this halaqah excerpt is a significantly focused dialogic exchange, with a high level of responsiveness and focused Positioning and Reasoning from participants.

7.3.4 Young people's SEDA analysis: rarely observed communicative acts: 'Connect' and 'Reflect on Dialogue'

Like P 'Positioning', C 'Connect' and RD 'Reflect on Dialogue' codes, are also considered highly dialogic but recognised by researchers to be rarely observed in classroom dialogue. In this excerpt, there is only one instance of a CA being coded as RD2. In line 137 Ibrahim reflects on the learning process as he begins to consider his previous understanding of Islamic teachings in relation to this discussion: 'I think what I learnt, from the beginning…' This utterance is also coded as C2 'Make the learning trajectory explicit', as Ibrahim is linking his current learning to previous learning in halaqah in Shakhsiyah schools.

There are a remarkable ten instances of young people's utterances being coded as C 'Connect'. This equates to 8.6 percent of young people's contributions making connections in the dialogue. Nine of these are C3 'Linking learning to wider contexts', for example in line 14 Qasim relates the dialogue to being educated in an Islamic faith-school, and in line 18 Abdullah builds on this by relating it to a parent's level of religious commitment. In line 35, Fatimah links personal autonomy to political beliefs and, in line 56 Amina recognises how personal relationships for example with parents, impact personal autonomy. This demonstrates the young people's ability to contextualise their learning, which is a major aim of halaqah. There is also one instance of C2 'Make the learning trajectory explicit'. As the teacher-researcher, I also make connections; in one instance I 'Link learning to wider contexts' (C3) and in five instances, I 'Refer back' (C1). My aim is to deepen the

dialogue by encouraging the young people to keep considering the same question from different angles, for example in lines 19 and 38. My utterances are often coded I 'Invite elaboration or reasoning' in combination with either G 'Guide direction of dialogue or activity' or C 'Connect'. Sometimes they are coded with all three. Although this indicates skilful dialogic teaching, the most important feature of this excerpt in relation to the teacher's role is that of absence of the teacher's voice. I do not dominate the dialogue, contributing only 20 percent of utterances. My aim is to pose the question and to sit back and allow the dialogue to develop. I only interject when it is necessary to re-focus or deepen the dialogue. This type of teacher role is an ideal in halaqah, and it is achieved with this group of young people. There are no instances where I have to nominate a participant, the young people are able to engage in the dialogue respectfully without prompting or nomination being required, which is incredibly rare in classroom situations. Neither is it necessary for me to ask for alternative perspectives, as the young people have the agency and confidence to do so without prompting. Indeed, they actively try to consider other people's perspectives, whilst retaining their own individual views. This demonstrates a high level of agency in their thinking.

In Chapter 8, I consider ERQ5 in more depth: What evidence, if any, is there in the dialogue created in halaqah of participants' personal autonomy in the form of questioning, reasoning, critical thinking, self-reflexivity and confidence in one's own position whilst respectfully seeking to understand the other? However, this is preceded by critical reflections on SEDA and on my role as an insider-researcher.

Chapter 8 Critical Reflections and Exploratory Further Analysis

In this chapter, I critically reflect on the data analyses processes; and begin some further exploratory analysis regarding a potential co-relation between dialogic pedagogy and the development of personal autonomy.

8.1 Reflection on the use of SEDA

As stated in Chapter 3, I was fortunate to be involved in the late stages of the development and testing of SEDA, and contributed to the dialogic interthinking between coders that resulted in some of the final layers of evaluation reported in Hennessy et al. (2016). Many of the observations in that paper are pertinent to my experience in coding these two excerpts. For example, there were instances where it was difficult to distinguish between two codes in the same cluster, for example in line 52, Ibrahim's utterance appears to simply state disagreement P6, however what precedes this is consensus on an argument that is being built by a number of participants. Ibrahim has previously challenged that consensus through asking questions and now, in stating a contradictory position, he is challenging this consensus. As Hennessy et al. comment, these kinds of discrepancies are resolved by coding at cluster level, indeed inter-coder reliability can only be generated at cluster level (Hennessy et al. 2016).

There are, however, other utterances that cannot be resolved through coding at cluster level, particularly for speakers who speak indirectly. For example, in line 28 Ibrahim does not explicitly challenge the other speakers, choosing instead to rephrase the question and ask for clarification, as a means of disagreeing with what is being said. Thus his utterance is coded as I2, instead of P5, which demonstrates that human dialogue is full of inferences that are often missed in codes requiring explicit evidence. These inferences are essential to the sociocultural activity of creating meaning, but are impossible to pin down in a rational objective manner. As an analytic scheme SEDA has to maintain objectivity; however it recognises this sociocultural ambiguity and allows researchers the space to be reflexive (2016), and provides the flexibility to adapt the scheme to specific circumstances. Thus I am able to be more flexible in coding my own utterances, as I know my intentions.

Additionally, I sometimes employ P codes without explicit intent, if the overall meaning demonstrates that the participant is taking a position. I draw on gestures and intonation in the video and audio recordings in making these coding decisions.

Hennessy et al. (2016) recognise that more dialogic interactions are often less explicit, and therefore more difficult to code. This is because such exchanges rely on established relationships of 'mutual addressivity' (Sidorkin, 1999) and have the features of 'interthinking' (Littleton & Mercer, 2013), which creates challenges for coders. Nevertheless, the detailed SEDA codes within each cluster are very useful for enabling fine-grained analysis, that is, a 'richer interpretation of the data' through examining the 'subtleties of the dialogue' (p.40). This is how I have used SEDA in discussing these excerpts, looking in detail at the type of dialogic move and the level of skill involved. For example, in the P cluster, there is a vast difference between stating agreement (P6) and synthesising ideas (P1). Thus, the detailed coding, despite lacking the reliability of cluster level coding, allows analysis of the type of dialogic move and the level of cognitive skill involved. This is essential in evaluating the relationship between dialogue and learning. The detailed codes in SEDA are purposefully organised hierarchically for this reason.

The young people's excerpt was also particularly challenging to code, due to lengthy utterances, which is unusual in classroom talk. Although I did segment some utterances, as suggested by the scheme, I felt that it was more useful to apply up to 3 codes per utterance rather than use excessive segmenting, which would lead to the same code being applied several times to the same utterance. Although according to SEDA, this can be mitigated by the use of the =sign, that is quite an awkward task, particularly when using Nvivo. In reviewing my coding, I found that on one occasion I failed to use the =sign. In lines 66-68, Ibrahim is making the same point, but I forget to add an =sign to the I1 and R3 codes to indicate that this is a continuation. This indicates that it was probably best to apply more than one code to an utterance, as opposed to extensive segmenting.

SEDA has provided a way to approach these data in a way that enables some quantification and basic statistical analysis. By identifying and counting linguistic and dialogic moves, there is a mixed-methods flavour to some of this analysis, which is

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important in order to demonstrate the dialogic quality of participants reasoning, positioning, and responsiveness to new ideas. Conducting SEDA analysis allows identification of higher-order thinking in the halaqah dialogue. The categorisation of linguistic moves into SEDA communicative acts allows analysis of the language structures that exist in this higher order thinking. In this way, it becomes possible to compare halaqah to other forms of dialogic pedagogy and practice, thereby leading to an answer to ERQ 4. However the linguistic moves identified by the SEDA analysis, are abstracted from what was actually said, and the meaning contained therein. This remains a challenge in dialogue analysis because according to sociocultural theory, dialogue is never free of context. The thematic analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 attempts to mitigate this by exploring in detail the cultural contexts of, and meanings emerging from the dialogue, that is, participants views of autonomy, authority, and halaqah in comparison to other forms of education. In both the thematic and SEDA analyses, my presence as teacher/head teacher and as insider-researcher is a crucial feature of the social context and indeed of the dialogue itself. This equally applies to the analytic process, which in itself can be seen as a dialogic exercise between the researcher and the data. The following section offers some reflections on my role as an insider-researcher in relation to the data analysis.

8.2 Reflections on my role as an insider-researcher

During the SEDA development process, it was noted that coders who have a direct experience of teaching were more likely to draw on their professional experiences to make 'inevitable inferences about the goals and intentions' of the speakers' (Hennessy et al., 2016 p. 41). The SEDA team considers it essential that any inference must arise from the data and not the coder's own experiences. However, for this project, my closeness to the aims of the research, to the participants as their head teacher and in some cases as a friend of the family, and to the subject of the study as a pedagogical initiative that I have developed for years, can only have an inevitable impact that must be openly declared. I have already made clear that there are two coding decisions in which I felt it was necessary to modify the application of SEDA. Firstly, it seems to me artificial to strictly apply the scheme to my own utterances and code only the apparent meaning. I know my own intentions and it seems almost disingenuous to ignore these. Secondly, I had posed a question that required participants to consider their position and therefore again it would be artificial to only

code their utterances as taking a position where they used explicit language such as 'I agree'. However, going beyond these specific research decisions, I am also aware that, from a Bakhtinian perspective, I am able to read meanings into the data that would not be apparent to someone without my personal characteristics; such as, a non-Muslim; a non-Shakhsiyah schools staff member; a researcher without an existing relationship with these participants and their parents; someone with less of a commitment to halaqah as a pedagogy; or a researcher who does not have other aspects of my background, for example a degree in Philosophy or a specialist interest in the overlap between Islamic and western thought. As with every researcher, my work is context specific. However, my role in this research is much more high stakes than most, because it is a culmination of many years of professional dedication to the development of halaqah as a form of dialogic pedagogy.

Therefore, it was very important to conduct inter-coder reliability tests both for SEDA and the thematic analysis. For SEDA, the detailed existing scheme would have allowed a Cohen's kappa calculation to be performed. However, due to the complexity of the scheme and the substantial amount of intricate data involved, I was not able to find an experienced SEDA coder to conduct blind coding on a voluntary basis. Therefore, I decided that it would be sufficient for an experienced colleague to check my coding and record the percentage agreement. A colleague randomly selected 42/420, which is ten percent of the total utterances, to check my coding. She agreed 37 out of 42 or 88 percent of the coded utterances and disagreed with five out of 42 or 12 percent of the utterances (See Appendix 5). I completed a similar exercise with a teacher from Shakhsiyah schools for the thematic analysis. Due to the extent of the total data coded thematically, she was not able to check ten percent. Instead she randomly selected 100 utterances and checked whether she agreed with my coding; there was 97 percent agreement (See Appendix 7).

I am also conscious of my role as the teacher in this research, due to my professional commitment to dialogic pedagogy, I consciously use 'un-teacherly' behaviour, trying not to direct the learners towards one direction or the other. This is not simply due to my additional role as researcher in these halaqah. Of course, as a researcher, I must maintain neutrality and that could explain this behaviour, however, I am also motivated by my personal educational philosophy. As a dialogic teacher, I know the

importance of allowing dialogic space, I subscribe to the values that inform the educational setting, and allow thinking time through pauses designed to encourage the sharing of ideas and evaluation of different positions. The findings presented in this thesis are therefore qualified by the context of data collection described in detail in earlier chapters. Dialogue of this quality, with the nuanced meanings that it generates, depends on the ethos and classroom values generated by the teacher and the teacher's professional skill in crafting suitably complex, yet open, key questions to stimulate and develop dialogue; skill in facilitating the personalisation of the dialogue in order to imbue it with meaning; and skill in scaffolding the positioning and reasoning in the dialogue by encouraging the use of wider contexts and authoritative perspectives. The participants in this thesis claim that this kind of teacher behaviour in halaqah has helped them develop personal autonomy. Some evidence of that autonomy has been highlighted in the discussion of the SEDA analysis.

I will now consider in more detail if there is clear evidence of personal autonomy in specific participants contributions as they engage in the dialogue in these halaqah.

8.3 Findings and Discussion: Evaluating individual participants as autonomous dialogical Muslim-selves

ERQ5: What evidence, if any, is there in the dialogue created in halaqah of participants' personal autonomy, in the form of questioning, reasoning, critical thinking, self-reflexivity and confidence in one's own position while respectfully seeking to understand the other?

Whilst much of the discussion in Chapter 7 addresses ERQ5, it does not fully address a hypothesized relationship between dialogic pedagogy and the development of personal autonomy. I had originally sought to demonstrate at least a co-relation between high quality dialogue and features of autonomous behaviour. I had, therefore, planned to conduct a third layer of analysis, which would have involved devising an analytic scheme based on Dearden's (1975) definition of the characteristics of an autonomous individual, and the conceptualisation of shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self, given in Chapter 3. However, due to the size of this project, this is not possible; therefore, I hope to pursue this further analysis in postdoctoral

work. Nonetheless, in order to begin some initial exploration of the data in relation to this potential co-relation, I focus on just two participants, one from each group, to examine the quality of their dialogic contributions in relation to Dearden's definition of autonomy. In doing so, I offer some further reflections on ERQ5.

8.3.1 Selecting participants

The choice of participant was determined by my initial reading of the transcripts. Considering that the theoretical concepts of freedom, autonomy, authority, Islam and submission are not easily accessible to young minds, I had anticipated that participants would require some time to engage with these concepts deeply before drawing conclusions. However, unexpectedly, in both groups an early contribution from one participant clearly negates the dichotomy between freedom and Islam, which I present to them as a point of discussion. These contributions strike me as both having dialogic and autonomous qualities. Although, I cannot definitively determine through this study whether or not higher dialogic skills correlate with a stronger autonomous behavior; the discussion below may nevertheless offer some insights into how thought generated through dialogue, encourages cognitive higher-order thinking and personal characteristics that are defined by Dearden as autonomous.

In the young people's group, early in the initial session, Fatimah offers a nuanced and balanced conclusion synthesising Islamic identity with personal autonomy. My introduction to the halaqah draws on a particular section of the Quran that talks about the *nafs* (self), and then poses the question of what participants think of the idea of personal autonomy. Within the first two-three minutes of the discussion, Amina identifies the relationship of the self with itself, linking this with the self's freedom and agency. *'I think you build yourself as a person as well, because you're thinking for yourself, you're being freethinking, so you're able to explore what kind of characteristics you have'.* Fatimah responds, *'I think, building on what Amina just said, that you build up your character by making these decisions, it's shown here, in Surah Shams, that Allah says the person who has purified themselves…, so wouldn't that indicate that that's what our lives are about, the purpose of our life is to make decisions and to make the right ones. And so each person has to go through that journey of, of which decisions are they making'.* To my surprise, within the first few minutes the young people had succinctly articulated the Islamic teaching on personal

autonomy. Nevertheless, I continue this initial halaqah session for another hour and a half, allowing the discussion to develop, and to draw to a close naturally. This is because Shakhsiyah Schools teachers are advised that if one learner is able to address the point fairly quickly during a halaqah, it is still important to probe the discussion further in order to consolidate learning for both that individual, and to deepen the discussion for the wider group. Thus, as the 'teacher' in this instance, I continue the dialogue, and this early resolution of the tension between autonomy and Islam is probed repeatedly in the ensuing discussion, where Fatimah is given the opportunity to demonstrate her personal autonomy.

In the children's group, I felt that the Quran text was too challenging and that the concepts needed to be discussed in a more basic way. I therefore asked the series of child-friendly questions given in Appendix 3. Children were first asked to discuss their views on being free to make their own decisions, and then their views on being Muslim, enabling them to consolidate their understanding of these two concepts before discussing them together as potentially dichotomous. As the discussion progressed, to my surprise, Zakaria anticipated the final question about conflict between the two ideas. Zakaria's cognitive process demonstrates the nature of Halaqah, as a pedagogy that allows for extended reasoning and dialogue through the juxtaposition of ideas and the generation of questions, in addition to a basic understanding of personal autonomy.

Farah: *I want to move on; I'm going to ask you a question now. (The) first question I asked you is, what do you think about making your own decisions and you all said yes, yes, yes, yes, yes we must make our own decisions, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, we must think for ourselves, right? Am I right?*
Some Children: *Mmm Yeah*
Farah: *Then I asked you: do you wanna be a Muslim and you all said yes, yes I'm really happy to be a Muslim, am I right? Anybody not thinking that?*
Zakaria: *No*
Farah: *No, ok, sorry*
Zakaria: *I, I'm thinking that um, (1) I am happy yeah, I, tha…that's true [Farah: mmhmm] but (.) I also get the chance to think for myself so…*
Farah: *You get the chance to think for yourself, you've pre-empted my question*

Zakaria; my question is do you think that thinking for yourself conflicts with being a Muslim? Ok, we've just said being a Muslim is to submit to Allah; do you think that you can be a Muslim and still think for yourself? (1) Or do you think that if you're a Muslim you're not thinking for yourself?

From this exchange, it is evident that Zakaria has some existing thoughts on the concept of personal autonomy. It also demonstrates that he is comfortable to think aloud during halaqah, and to articulate the stirrings of an idea in his mind about the tensions that he is beginning to identify in the discourse. This exchange also illustrates how halaqah as pedagogy is designed to draw out such questions and facilitate cognitive dissonance, in order to appreciate multiple perspectives. It is therefore not entirely unexpected that these two participants' personal understandings initially do not perceive a dichotomy between the concepts of freedom and Islam. Nevertheless, through the ongoing questions that are posed to him or her, each participant demonstrates awareness as to why others may perceive such a dichotomy. In the remainder of this chapter, I look at Zakaria and Fatimah individually, choosing just one contribution to illustrate that they meet Dearden's definition of an autonomous individual. Many of these individual contributions meet more than one of these autonomous characteristics. Moreover, there were numerous contributions that could have been selected to illustrate each characteristic. Table 8.1 gives examples of Zakaria's contributions.

Table 8.1 Zakaria and Dearden (1975, p.7)

Characteristics of an autonomous individual according to Dearden (1975, 7)
(i) wondering and asking, with the right to ask, what the justification is for various things which it would be quite natural to take for granted;
Um, well I have thought about it, but not really questioned, I thi…I thought that it, about Allah I was thinking believing in Allah, uh why actually, why do we actually do that and actually thinking why Allah has asked us to do this and s…something like that…
(ii) refusing to agreement or compliance with what others put to him when this seems critically unacceptable;
No, but, can I finish 'cause, (other children talking) it's kind of, it's kind of, if you're being independent… So basically um if you, if someone asked you uh, tells you something and you

think about it, yo…you listen to them that's not independent and the independent bit you go home and research about it yourself so this being in the middle, be taking part in both
(iii) defining what he really wants, or what is really in his interests, as distinct from what may be conventionally so regarded;
Yes, finally! Um you could er there is a conflict, so if you were so independent and I do have um good shakhsiyah but I don't know everything about Islam I might, someone might try tell me some new stuff about Islam which I (.) which I don't know about yeah, and I don't know about but I'm so independent (.) I don't want to listen to them, so I'm too independent in myself… You could but um, (.) yes you could but there could be some bad things about it because you should be kind of independent and in between, independence and not being independent, should be in between because if you're not independent (.) dependent (on) everyone else you mi…you might ask someone else, someone else might say something to you um which is not part of Islam and they make it up, you might believe them
(iv) conceiving of goals, policies and plans of its own, forming purposes and intentions of his own independently of any pressure to do so from others;
Because if you don't make your own decisions, so for example if I, if I had someone who, like my brother, my older brother, if I don't make my decision for myself and I just copy him all the time, I won't learn, learn later in life, so when he's not there with me, I won't learn how to do stuff for myself, and I won't be able to make my own decisions, so you should try and make your own decisions at a early age so you, so (Farah: mhm) you'll use that, so you can use that later in, when you're older in life.
(v) choosing amongst alternatives in ways which could exhibit that choice at the deliberate outcome of his own ideas or purposes;
[you should] actually be in the middle of being independent and not independent because if you're in the middle, so if I'm kind of independent, then I will listen to the good stuff yeah, I will listen to what they have to say and then I'll research on myself… So basically um if you, if someone asked you uh, tells you something and you think about it, yo…you listen to them that's not independent and the independent bit you go home and research about it yourself, so this being in the middle be taking part in both
(vi) forming his own opinion on a variety of topics that interest him;
Well the, it's not always say, it's not always that because sometimes no it doesn't improve your thinking skills because people might start repeating of what they said before and keep repeating it and also some [Farah: So you disagree with what Asiya's saying?] Well, not totally because it depends and um secondly um some people could, listen, like they could listen to it

and think about it and if they didn…don't know they could actually think about it, make them…inspired by what the teacher's saying and by this topic and they might go home and think about it, research about it and come back to school and have more knowledge.
(vii) governing his actions and attitudes in the light of the previous sorts of activity.
Ok, (unclear) uh it actually makes me feel, well, makes me feel worried (2) that I might actually change, my mind might start looking at other people thinking that they're doing right, when they're doing wrong, (Farah: mhm) that might happen. Or, and, oth… and then secondly, I actually think uh this is kind of like a challenge for me, so I, so I can try a, try do my best and then

8.3.2 Zakaria demonstrating personal autonomy

The dialogic contributions in Table 8.1 demonstrate that, at the age of ten years, Zakaria displays confidence, independence and some autonomous thought. A substantial number of Zakaria's utterances in this table can be described as thinking aloud, where he considers alternative positions, and develops half thought out ideas. In (i), Zakaria describes how he questions his own belief in Allah, and in (ii), he demonstrates that he is confident in maintaining his own opinion and verifying information for himself, whilst recognising that he can learn from others. Here, he demonstrates agency in his own thought process, saying, 'No, but, can I finish'. Neither does he accept others to make assumptions about what he is thinking. Zakaria is also able to define what he really wants; in (iii), he reflects on the possibility of becoming arrogant in your independence and not listening to or learning from others; he is careful to insist on a balanced, open-minded, thoughtful and reasoned autonomy. In (iv), he reflects on how he makes his own decisions, giving the example of being conscious that he should not simply emulate his older brother. In (v), Zakaria meta-cognitively discusses his decision-making processes, explaining that he listens to others, thinks about their views, and then carries out his own research, before making a decision. In (vi), Zakaria considers the possibility of simply repeating other people's views, before talking at length about how to research something for yourself. This demonstrates a willingness to take an autonomous stance. Finally, in (vii), Zakaria seems to be prepared to act on his own claims of autonomy. In responding to a question I pose, about how the children feel about the idea that Islam requires them to be autonomous and take responsibility for their actions, he is open about his trepidation of personal responsibility; yet he confidently depicts personal autonomy as

a challenge that he is willing take on. Zakaria's honesty indicates a maturity that is rare in a ten-year old, and is itself a sign of his confidence and independence.

Table 8.2 Fatimah and Dearden (1975, p.7)

Characteristics of an autonomous individual according to Dearden (1975, p.7)
(i) wondering and asking, with the right to ask, what the justification is for various things which it would be quite natural to take for granted;
I think it takes time to come to that conclusion though because, as a child [Qasim: you just follow your parents] No, I find that personally I find as a child I questioned it all the time, it took me a very long time to come to the conclusion through, not just (through) intellectual means but other means as well, even emotionally to come to the conclusion that that was the truth, something I believed in, that there you make a conscious decision, do I believe in this, do I not believe in it, [murmurs of agreement] and I think you throughout the experience you have throughout your childhood you somehow you learn from everything that you go through and you look at other people's lives and you learn more about Islam, you learn more about other religions, you learn more about different ways of life, about the way society functions, about the way uh, the household functions in your own home and then you compare the two and you think about different things and I think ultimately that decision is made after childhood. I think personally, I don't think that you can say that as a child you're completely steadfast to it and there's no questioning after it. I think throughout your life you're always going to be questioning it but you make a conscious decision.
(ii) refusing to agreement or compliance with what others put to her when this seems critically unacceptable;
That's what I experienced when I went to (Independent Islamic Adult Seminary) where they were Muslims and they, they talked about things that were going on in the world and such, but when I actually conversed with them, I found that they, they didn't have the ability to question things in the same way I did, and I found that there were things lacking. Like, they couldn't, they couldn't challenge something, if someone said something on the news, they would automatically believe it and, and, they might say, "Oh, these are official figures, maybe more people have been killed" or something like that, but they wouldn't know how to tackle someone whose making an intellectual claim. They wouldn't understand how to take apart somebody's argument, and they wouldn't, it wouldn't occur to them that perhaps someone is saying this so that…
(iii) defining what she really wants, or what is really in her interests, as distinct from what

may be conventionally so regarded;
Because each act you do, you're making you're making an autonomous decision, and am I doing this for Allah or am I doing this for some sort of worldly gain, am I even doing this act at all, every, every time you, we pray five times a day, every time you get up to pray, you're making the conscious decision, am I, am I submitting to my Lord, or do I decide not to do that, do I believe in this or do I not and that's five times a day that you're making, you're reassessing you're um, that you're I don't know quite how to explain it, you're, I suppose your spiritual position and do, do you, are, are you still as firm in your belief as you were a few hours ago
(iv) conceiving of goals, policies and plans of its own, forming purposes and intentions of his own independently of any pressure to do so from others;
I think Halaqah helps you to know where you stand, like a lot of people they seem to say that they, um like they were saying that they just follow the crowd, and do whatever everyone else wants to do. You often hear people talking about how they want to find themselves, and they don't know who they are, and I think Halaqah, because it gives you that confidence to make decisions for yourself, and because you can think about things, without needing anybody else to sort of put those thoughts into your head, you can think about things yourself, you can formulate your own opinions, your own ideas about something. You're quite sure of where you stand and who you are.
(v) choosing amongst alternatives in ways which could exhibit that choice at the deliberate outcome of his own ideas or purposes;
I think um building on what Amina just said that um you build up your character by making these decisions it's shown there in Surah Shams that Allah says the person who has purified themselves, who made the right decisions, they're the ones who are successful, so wouldn't that indicate that that's what our lives are about, the purpose of our life is to make decisions and to make the right ones. And so each person has to go through that journey of, of which decisions are they making and in the end you find out did you make the right ones or the wrong ones.
(vi) forming her own opinion on a variety of topics that interest him;
To be a Muslim you have to make the autonomous decision to take the Shahadah and to say that you believe in it and that's the biggest decision you have to make in your life, as a Muslim, and it's said that people who just say it, it doesn't count you have to have that, that conviction in your heart, so, the only way that you can come to that, it can't be forced down your throat, you have to have your own, your own internal debate I suppose, which

eventually you come to the conclusion either you want, you want to submit or you don't
(vii) governing her actions and attitudes in the light of the previous sorts of activity.
I think the fact that we're Muslims and we live in this society it forces us to be autonomous because we have to, [yeah] we're constantly being told something different to what we believe so we had to make conscious efforts to make sure we remain on that straight path, like um (.) recently up until about a few months ago I was so intent upon pursuing a career in fashion and then you know, loads of people told me you can't do that with Islam, it would be so difficult for you to become successful, there are things you would have to compromise on. And I was very intent upon it and I said, no I'll do it somehow, I'll skirt around it and then (.) recently when all the stuff about Syria happened and all these things that were going on and you just think to yourself it's not worth it you, you reassess what means most to you and you realize that, hang on a second I, I want to do something for the sake of Allah and you realize that you've got to do something to help the *ummah* (Muslim community), you can't just follow whatever it is you want to do because at the end of the day that's what you're there for, so it gives you direction in your life and you have to make that autonomous decision to, to follow that.

8.3.3 Fatimah demonstrating personal autonomy

Fatimah is the youngest member of the young people's group, aged only 15 years. She is quick to demonstrate that personal autonomy is something that she values. From her dialogue, it can be understood that she understands life as a journey that is embarked upon by a dialogical Muslim-self, who has the agency to make decisions and act upon them. In (i), Fatimah describes the process of thought that led her to have conviction in her Islamic beliefs. She is very candid that, as a child, she questioned everything, looking for justifications and critically evaluating adults' claims. She talks about being reflective about her circumstances and about what she observes in wider society. In (ii), Fatimah describes her autonomous attitude as a student in a religious seminary, she critiques unquestioning acceptance of information and ideas. She describes her tendency to critically evaluate what she is being told, and to deconstruct arguments that she comes across. In (iii), Fatimah shows that she has thought carefully about what it means to be autonomous, and how this relates to her religious beliefs. She describes her worldview, which she has arrived at through considerable thought. It is one in which she consciously and continuously makes autonomous choices, 'because each act you do, you're making an autonomous

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decision'. Fatimah is able to discuss the processes of making choices, recognising that any individual does not think or act in isolation; there is always a cultural context for making choices, that one's actions occur in a broader dialogue with the other, and with the world. In (iv), she appreciates that the dialogic processes of halaqah facilitate reflection and enable a sense of dialogic identity, 'you're quite sure of where you stand and who you are.' She talks about the importance of critically evaluating your own thoughts and ideas and opinions. She acknowledges that halaqah is an immensely useful vehicle for engaging in this type of thought, and for developing the skills of autonomous thinking. She gives importance to a sense of personal certainty, in being confident in your own opinion. In (v), she builds on these ideas by recognising that decisions and actions have 'outcomes', and that these outcomes have consequences. In this sense, she seems prepared to take on personal responsibility. In (vi), this responsibility is extended to opinions and beliefs, as she describes how autonomous beliefs arise through 'internal debate'.

Finally, in (vii), she discusses how being an autonomous Muslim is essential when living in a secular society. She describes how she was determined to pursue a career in fashion, which, because of the dominant culture in the fashion industry, would lead to a lot of difficulties in maintaining her religious principles. It is not this challenge that changed her mind, but rather the realisation that she could do something more altruistic and worthwhile with her life. She credits this thought process to her religious beliefs but candidly states, 'you have to make that autonomous decision to, to follow that'. She seems to be very conscious of her own ideas in relation both to the secular society and to other Muslims who inhabit her lifeworld. Elsewhere in the dialogue, Fatimah discusses her worldview as one where a person conquers his or her own *nafs* (lower self or base desires). She is therefore not only able to conceive of and formulate goals and plans in relation to her 'material life', for example a career in fashion as in vi, but also her spiritual life, thus demonstrating a high level of autonomous thought, and personal self-control. In the overall dialogue on autonomy, Fatimah describes how her autonomous thought determines her actions. She recognises life as an autonomous dialogical journey and she acknowledges that autonomous thinking and decision making require nuanced reflection, even within the Islamic worldview, 'later on you, you're not too sure about things, and things need to be explored in a lot more depth, because life is more complicated when you grow

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older.' Fatimah's thoughtful reflections indicate that she is a confident young woman, who has a strong autonomous character, which is embedded in her personal religious beliefs.

Fatimah and Zakaria are two individuals who participated in the research halaqah. This chapter has demonstrated that the majority, possibly all the participants, demonstrate critical thinking, independence in their opinions and other autonomous characteristics. Furthermore, participants credit these characteristics to their education through dialogic halaqah.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

The title of this thesis is: *Pedagogy as Dialogue between Cultures*. One of its aims is to draw attention to the potential for generating intercultural understanding, through the vehicle of a dialogic interface across Islamic and secular-liberal conceptualisations of how human beings learn, and their capacity to think and act as autonomous individuals. This potential is activated by examining the use of halaqah as an Islamic dialogic pedagogy, functioning in secular-liberal Britain, with the aim of developing shakhsiyah Islamiyah, which is an Islamic conceptualisation of an autonomous self. Chapters 1 and 2 lay out the necessary sociological and philosophical groundwork for this theoretical dialogue to take place. Chapter 3 meets this aim by laying out the relevant educational research literature, and providing a positive theoretical response to the overall research question: *can the Islamic dialogic pedagogy of halaqah help develop Muslim children's shakhsiyah (personhood, autonomy, identity) in twenty-first century Britain?* Chapter 4 details a culturally appropriate methodology to investigate this theoretical possibility and test similar claims made by teachers and school leaders in a pilot study. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present and discuss findings from an empirical study involving children and young people who have been educated through halaqah. The findings show that not only do the children and young people concur with teachers' and school-leaders' views, but also that they make deeper claims about the dialogue in halaqah developing their critical thinking skills, their independence of thought, and hence, their personal autonomy. Moreover, basic quantitative and SEDA analyses reveal that these research halaqah are strongly dialogic in a number of ways. Furthermore, comparing the contributions of individual participants with Dearden's (1975) characteristics of an autonomous person in Chapter 8, demonstrates that at least two of the participants meet his descriptors.

In this concluding chapter, I draw on the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 3 and the empirical findings presented and discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, to provide a fuller answer to the overall research question. To do so I work backwards through the nested approach given in Figure 1.1, moving through an examination of the pedagogic potential of dialogic halaqah; to its capacity for enabling personal autonomy; and onto the sociological implications of this research. In doing so, I

demonstrate the contribution made to the fields of Islamic education in Britain and educational dialogue research. I then detail some potential applications of the research. Finally, I consider the limitations of the study and put forward suggestions for further research.

9.1 Contributions to the fields of Islamic education in secular-liberal Britain and of educational dialogue research

In Chapter 3, I carry out some theoretical work to develop existing Islamic theories of dialogue, autonomy and education. This development is necessary for updating Islamic educational practice to meet the needs of young Muslims in secular-liberal multicultural societies, such as Britain. Moreover, it is essential because it provides an authentic alternative that challenges the negative discourse around young Muslims, which portrays them as potentially vulnerable to 'extremism' and 'radicalisation'. Furthermore, I seek to demonstrate how this contributes to the field of educational dialogue research through investigating halaqah, a uniquely cumulative daily dialogic practice, which offers the space for British Muslim children and young people to collectively explore their concepts of self in relation to others, and their place and role within local, national and global communities.

9.1.1 Pedagogical implications for a) dialogic education and b) for Islamic education in secular-liberal Britain

a) Implications for dialogic education

Alexander (2004) highlights the importance of the cumulative principle in educational dialogue, which is a core component of his theory of 'dialogic teaching'. He recognizes, however, that due to the structures of contemporary schooling, this is immensely difficult to achieve. Dialogic teaching is cumulative when "teachers and children build on their own and each other's ideas and chain them into coherent lines of thinking and enquiry" (Nurkka, Viiri, Littleton, & Lehesvuori, 2014, p. 54). In contemporary schooling, curriculum and assessment arrangements do not often allow for the space and time to facilitate this kind of on-going cumulative dialogue. The same is true of the vast majority of Islamic faith-schools in the UK. However, by incorporating daily halaqah into a purposefully planned curriculum, Shakhsiyah Schools have created a structure whereby teachers can initiate, encourage and guide cumulative peer-peer dialogue over a period of up to eight years. It is this unique

configuration, which has been enhanced by Alexander's dialogic principles and other research in the field of educational dialogue, that is described by the children, young people, teachers and school-leaders as immensely useful for developing the dialogic, critical thinking and autonomous characteristics discussed in Chapters 5-8. Moreover, according to participants, it provides the space for the development of shakhsiyah Islamiyah, which can be conceived as a dialogical Muslim-self. Furthermore, the findings from the quantitative and SEDA analyses given in Chapter 7 provide substantial and reliable empirical evidence supporting these claims. The statistics comparing proportionality of teacher to pupil talk, particularly in relation to the length of utterances, is especially striking, and offers a useful comparison to existing studies of classroom talk (Alexander, 2001; Howe & Abedin, 2013; Mercer & Dawes, 2014). Moreover, the SEDA analysis demonstrates that halaqah has strong dialogic features, and participants exhibit the skills associated with high quality dialogue. These findings contribute to the growing international literature using SEDA to analyse educational dialogue for a range of purposes and in a variety of settings.

Additionally, the unique nature of halaqah demonstrates that the specific configuration of a daily dialogic space placed at the core of a school's curriculum, can facilitate a strongly sociocultural approach to education in any school. The potential benefits of this include developing a sociocultural attitude in learners, whereby they understand education to be on-going lines of collaborative enquiry based around powerful knowledge for learning and personal development; as opposed to absorbing transmitted knowledge for the purposes of regurgitation in standardised tests. Placing a dialogic space at the heart of the school day has the potential to create coherence in the curriculum, by incorporating personal, social, emotional, citizenship and metacognitive education into a cumulative dialogue; which facilitates children and young people reflecting on themselves as persons and as learners, thereby taking ownership of their learning. Such a whole school approach should then facilitate collaborative dialogic enquiry to be incorporated into different areas of learning, such as Science or History. In this sense, the empirical findings of this thesis are a useful contribution to existing understanding of the cumulative principle in educational dialogue.

b) Implications for Islamic education

In relation to Islamic education, in Chapter 3 a range of mainstream educational dialogue literature, both theoretical and empirical, was compared and contrasted with Islamic theoretical educational concepts that have been developed to underpin halaqah as dialogic pedagogy, that is *tarbīyah*, *t'ālīm* and *t'ādib*. By drawing these comparisons, this thesis contributes to emerging literature on contemporary Islamic education (Abu-Bakar, 2018; Memon & Zaman, 2016). It provides Muslim educators with culturally authentic pedagogical tools, by harnessing traditional halaqah to translate these Islamic educational concepts into contemporary schooling in new ways. It demonstrates that early Islamic critical dialogic pedagogy (Niyozov & Memon, 2011) can be harnessed as *tarbīyah* to meet the needs of Muslim learners in secular-liberal societies. Participants are clear that halaqah provides a more dialogic and critical approach to education than that currently employed in most Islamic faith-schools and supplementary schools; that it helps learners to make sense of Islam in relation to their own lives and contexts. Moreover, this thesis establishes that *t'ālīm* can be understood not only as transmission of sacred knowledge, but also as the unique human capacity to acquire *mafhūm* (understanding) through the use of *'aql* (intellect); that thinking is intimately linked to *nutq* (speech/language); and that the use of language involves a dialogic process of thought to generate *ma'ná* (meaning). This is evident in participants' dialogue about how halaqah supports the development of their thinking and independence. Moreover, the meanings generated through halaqah are actualized through dialogue with the self, that is, an internally persuasive discourse that is generated through an interface with others' ideas in the halaqah setting. This self-reflection is evident in participants' candid contributions in the dialogue and can be understood as a form of *t'ādib*.

The close affiliation of halaqah with Prophetic practice and classical Islamic education provides a unique opportunity to re-examine and re-evaluate contemporary Muslim educational practice, in relation to these core Islamic educational concepts. The research presented here provides a clear model for the use of halaqah as dialogic pedagogy within an Islamic worldview. The findings of this study demonstrate that dialogic halaqah is not only achievable in contemporary Britain; but that it can potentially transform the Islamic education of young Muslims, from a transmission based model that has lost the dynamism of early Prophetic education, into a context

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sensitive, yet religiously driven renewal of halaqah as critical dialogic pedagogy. This is not to say that contemporary Islamic education is wholly uncritical and transmission-based. This is not the case. Rather, the point at hand is that the theory and practice of dialogic halaqah can serve to generate professional discourse about the critical and dialogic qualities of contemporary Muslim classroom practice, and offer a way of authentically evaluating theory and practice.

9.1.2 Philosophical implications: shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self imbued with agency

This thesis proposes an understanding of shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self imbued with agency. In displaying the characteristics of an autonomous person, as defined by Dearden (1975), participants exhibit their unique personal commitment to, and embodiment of Islamic teachings, that is, their shakhsiyah Islamiyah. Their voices serve to deconstruct the liberal critique of the dangers of Islamic education. They actively address the liberal dilemma about Islam in general, and Islamic education in particular, arguing that all education systems arise from a particular worldview. They argue that it is not only the secular-liberal worldview that encourages critical thinking or personal autonomy. In doing so, they echo H. Alexander's critique of a 'view from nowhere' (2015, p.81).

Participants recognise that Muslims living in secular-liberal societies need to continuously *choose* to be Muslim. For example, Fatimah says, *'I think the fact that we're Muslims and we live in this society, it forces us to be autonomous because we have to, we're constantly being told something different to what we believe, so we had to make conscious efforts to make sure we remain on that straight path'*. She draws attention to Habermas' (2006) argument that the secular continuously impinges on the religious self. However, participants also recognise that shakhsiyah Islamiyah is not the same as a liberal notion of personal autonomy, that it exists always in relation to Allah; that this self is seeking to stay on *'the straight path'*; that in doing so, it engages in a relationship with self and others. Fatimah's perspective could support Mahmood's (2004) thesis that intercultural understanding of autonomy/agency needs to move from a focus on the autonomous individual, to a language of personhood/selfhood and being, a language that recognizes personhood in different, possibly more communitarian ways. The perspectives presented in this thesis

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potentially support Mahmood's argument by illustrating how participants understand shakhsiyah Islamiyah as simultaneously 'autonomous', and yet always acting in relation to Allah, self and others. In this sense, the notion of shakhsiyah Islamiyah as a dialogical Muslim-self is an important contribution to on-going philosophical and sociological questions about the education of Muslims in Britain and other secular-liberal societies. Participants' perspectives are presented here as possibilities, which may be contradicted by other young Muslims. Although, their perspectives and dialogue have been rigorously subjected to two forms of analysis and critically evaluation, nevertheless, further empirical research and philosophical interrogation is necessary to test these potential philosophical implications.

9.1.3 Sociological implications: the Islamic dialogic pedagogy of halaqah as an alternative to the government's PREVENT agenda in educating British Muslims

Chapter 1 introduces some sociological concerns that on the surface are only tangentially related to the core research aims of this thesis. The issues raised therein are not directly addressed in the data collection, analyses or findings; nevertheless, the findings of this thesis have implications for these issues. Whilst this research is pedagogical in nature, the socio-political context cannot be ignored; the sociocultural polyphony (Bakhtin, 1981) of the discourse on educating Muslims continues to impinge on my research. As detailed in the preface, during the course of this research, political actions by the Secretary of State directly impacted me as a British Muslim, my work as a school-leader, and my family-life as a parent. Furthermore, these political actions directly affected the participants in this study, particularly the children who participated in the research halaqah just a few weeks after an Ofsted inspection. This is evident in the data, where the children initially think that the questions about freedom and making choices are to do with the Fundamental British Value of 'individual liberty'. In doing so, the children identify an important implication of this research. As religiously observant Muslim children and young people, committed to a culturally-coherent conceptualisation of personal autonomy in the form of shakhsiyah Islamiyah, these participants' views expressed in the findings, should allay the host society's fears of the lack of the promotion of 'individual liberty' in Islamic faith-schools. However, this last statement does exactly what I am seeking to avoid and what Mahmood (2004) warns against, that is, it justifies the Muslim community's philosophical and pedagogical approach through an externally

imposed framework of values. The competing narratives around the Trojan Horse affair (Richardson, 2014a), may have similar goals of navigating British Muslim integration, but unlike the government narrative, my narrative and that of other British Muslim educators, draws from both Islamic and British traditions. As a school-leader, I do not accept a politically defined version of 'Britishness' to be imposed on my school community. I do not wish to justify our understanding of personhood, individual liberty or autonomy through a secular-liberal lens. Furthermore, this research offers an insider perspective, which may be useful to school-leaders who lead schools with Muslim pupils. As such, it meets a need identified by Shah (2008, 2009, 2015).

In Chapter 1, I argue that critical thinking and personal autonomy are just as important for Muslim young people in resisting the government discourse of securitisation, as for navigating authoritarian viewpoints presented by parents, teachers and religious leaders. In Chapter 5, the children and young people say that their parents and teachers support them to think critically and independently. They also recognise that they need to resist the dominant narrative; demonstrating that these young people have a different approach to 'individual liberty' to the one taken by Ofsted, which seeks to impose secular-liberal values upon Muslims in a crude heavy-handed manner. Ofsted could take the approach of many other non-Muslim educators in looking for shared values and teasing out similarities and differences in order to give young people an appreciation of nuance and difference. However, they have adopted the government narrative that conservative Islam is a threat to the dominant secular-liberal values. Even more perturbing, is the extended narrative that not promoting FBV equates to extremism and is a sign of radicalisation, which presumably leads to political violence. With this flawed approach the government has tied FBV with PREVENT, and thus the entire narrative about British Muslim schooling has become about securitisation.

This thesis aims to promote an alternative approach. It seeks to challenge the dominant 'extremism and securitisation' narrative, which UK and European governments impose on to the lived experiences of British Muslim children and young people. It does so by proposing that the safe-space of open dialogic halaqah facilitates children and young people to draw on Islamic teachings, as well as their

shared British heritage and context, as sources for their dialogue, and enables them to relate these teachings to their lived experiences in Britain. This thesis argues that it is precisely this dialogic space that develops critical thinking, independence, resilience and personal autonomy in an authentic way. The data shows that the young people are certainly aware that they have a choice in maintaining or rejecting the Islamic worldview. If the goal of secular-liberal governments is personal liberty and human dignity, then surely this approach should be valued over a blunt imposition of a state-sanctioned reading of what 'British' or 'European' Islam should be.

Robin Alexander has repeatedly shown that the DfE fails to take seriously the capacity of dialogue to promote democratic citizenship (2006, 2008a). This thesis proposes that opportunities for cumulative dialogic learning in mainstream education could facilitate safe spaces for moral and democratic dialogue about contemporary issues, particularly the thorny issue of the transition of European societies from mono-cultural to multicultural entities. According to Habermas (2006) this transition has led to a crisis of secularity, which in turn, is manifesting itself in the 'extremism and radicalisation' narrative about the presence of Muslims in Britain and Europe. This crisis has created a political and media atmosphere that exacerbates the double-consciousness that is the daily experience of British Muslims.

9.1.4 Dialogue, autonomy and double-consciousness: young Muslims navigating their multiple identities, through developing a dialogical Muslim-self

This thesis is partially motivated by a personal desire to harness the anxiety caused by double-consciousness. It aims to do this by developing cross-cultural understanding through contrast and comparison; and researcher understanding through a reflective internal dialogue, within a liminal intellectual space. It is also important to consider whether participants' experiences consist of double-consciousness, and if so, are they aware that this is the case. Although this was not an explicit research question, it can nonetheless be addressed through the finding that neither the children nor the young-people perceive a dichotomy between being independent/autonomous and being Muslim. Neither are the children aware of the perceived contradiction. The children do not initiate discussion about feeling as if they are functioning between cultures; on the contrary, their discussion of peer-pressure is limited to playground behaviour. Thus their experience of primary education is very different to my own as reported in

my Masters thesis. Furthermore, their dialogue confirms teachers and school leaders' claims, that children in Shakhsiyah Schools do not feel the same sense of bi-cultural dichotomy that the founders of the schools had sought to eliminate.

The young people however, having experienced many other forms of education, initiate a substantial amount of discussion about their experiences in non-Muslim settings and situations. They are very conscious of having to navigate their multiple identities and they discuss at length how they feel in relation to peer expectations and societal norms. The young people do not escape double-consciousness and describe some challenging episodes. Like all young people, they are still very much engaged in developing their own personal identity/shakhsiyah. Nevertheless, they demonstrate remarkable confidence, self-assurance and reflexivity. They claim and demonstrate a strong level of autonomy in their thinking and behaviour. Furthermore, they are conscious of and welcome dialogic experiences, and embrace double-consciousness as a characteristic of their religious-selves, and seek to develop their shakhsiyah Islamiyah through their life experiences. Amina describes the internal dialogue that is generated by living within contrasting worldviews, *'when I've been questioned by non-Muslims, so like, because their way of thinking is totally different to ours, they're constantly questioning things in a way.., in a, in a different like aspect to us, and so I often wonder how I would explain it to them from Islam, and how I would like find out the answers and like really expl.., make them understand'*. The young people are aware that concepts of autonomy-authority, freedom-submission can be understood as aporia, that is not either/or, but interdependent. They instantly respond to the Islamic teachings introduced from the Quranic chapter surah al-Shams, Amina says, *'but you're submitting on your own freewill'*; indicating that freewill allows a choice, and in some ways that choice is always dependent on something external. Qasim points out that all choices have consequences, and these create conflicting thoughts, *'so it's always that conflicting thing'*. These young people have benefitted from a consistent epistemology underpinning their early education, which is in stark contrast to the epistemological differences experienced by young Muslims in the state sector (Coles, 2008; Shah, 2008, 2009; Ipgrave; 2010). This thesis argues that this early education in general, and halaqah in particular, facilitates the self-reflective dialogic attitudes that these young people display. Although it cannot entirely remove double-

consciousness, dialogic halaqah prepares young Muslims for the reflexivity needed to make sense of functioning in multiple paradigms. The children and young people are very conscious of their agency in reflecting on and developing their own shakhsiyah, demonstrating that they embody a core aim of the schools.

9.2 Methodological reflections, potential applications, limitations and suggestions for further research

The findings from this study, it is hoped, are reliable and persuasive. Its strength lies in providing a vicarious experience for the reader in understanding young Muslims. However, as the subject of the research is a unique case, these findings are not easily translated across other contexts. Nonetheless, this research has a range of potential applications, although some of these are dependent on further research. Prior to discussing potential applications and limitations below, and offering recommendations for future research in Section 9.3, I offer some final methodological reflections.

9.2.1 Methodological Reflections

This section builds on methodological reflections in Sections 4.4 and 4.7 in relation to insider research and in Sections 8.1 and 8.2 in relation to the use of SEDA. In Ahmed (2014a), I explored the parallels between the subject of the research, that is, the challenge of educating children with multiple identities functioning between worldviews, and methodological challenges of generating research that is authentic to such a community. These challenges also apply to this doctoral study. As an insider researcher, I function in a state of double-double-consciousness, that is, I am researching my own community using a framework of 'western' style research based on ontological and epistemological premises that are alien to my community. The use of halaqah as research method attempts to ease this challenge, however my place in these halaqah as a high-status insider playing the role of the 'teacher' in some ways, further compounds this challenge. It raises questions of whether the use of halaqah as a data collection method can be replicated, and if so in what context, and to what end? As indicated in the preface, this doctoral study is a continuation of my self-reflexive journey as a double-conscious Muslim-self living in twenty-first century Britain. Whilst, I have managed to somewhat successfully navigate the challenges of using halaqah as a data collection method in these two studies, I recognise that they are set

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in a very specific community setting where halaqah is a very familiar practice. In other similar communities, such a research method may prove useful, however I do not claim that it will be relevant to all Muslim communities. Indeed, if a different researcher attempts to use halaqah to collect data in Shakhsiyah schools or elsewhere, she may face different challenges.

In the course of this research, I have learnt that the layers of purpose and meaning generated within classroom dialogue require very specific tools in order to enable rigorous analysis. Subjecting halaqah dialogue to thematic and SEDA analyses, enabled me to fully see the potential latent within dialogic halaqah as an educational practice. The findings from the thematic analysis were heartening in confirming that different members of the Shakhsiyah Schools community share my perspectives about this potential. The findings from the SEDA analysis confirmed that halaqah can indeed be described as a dialogic pedagogy. Nevertheless, as a school leader, I am acutely conscious that such high-level dialogue is not easily generated in classroom settings. A large number of factors will impact the quality of the dialogue in any classroom, and Islamic school-leaders will need to nurture both the ethos in their school and the skills of their teaching staff, if they are to fulfill the potential of dialogic halaqah. Given pressures from Ofsted and other sources, it will be a challenge to convince school-leaders to devote so much time to embed dialogic halaqah into school life. My journey therefore continues in the dissemination of these findings and in possible future research as detailed in Section 9.3.

9.2.2 Applications and limitations in Shakhsiyah Schools

This study establishes triangulated evidence that participants from the entire Shakhsiyah Schools' community, children, former pupils, teachers and school-leaders, all believe that dialogic halaqah develop personal autonomy. Within Shakhsiyah Schools, the research is already being applied in the following ways. First, the key questions in the three research halaqah on freedom and dialogue given in Appendix 3. have been incorporated with some modifications into the year six curriculum. Second, some of the young people requested regular extra-curricular youth halaqah, and plans are in place to develop high quality halaqah key questions aimed specifically at the 11-14 and 15-18 age ranges. A limitation of this research is that unlike the children's halaqah, the young people's halaqah were held with a small

number of participants as a data collection exercise as opposed to a scheduled lesson. As such, it is not appropriate to compare the findings directly with secondary classroom settings. Nevertheless, there is potential for a future Shakhsiyah secondary school to incorporate halaqah as daily practice into the timetable and curriculum. Finally, different aspects of the findings from this thesis are being used to develop Shakhsiyah teacher education programmes, for example, teachers are engaged in CPD to explore how *tarbīyah*, *t'ālīm* and *t'ādib* underpin halaqah. Moreover, teachers are participating in trials to develop T-SEDA, which is a tool being developed by the SEDA team for use by teachers to evaluate dialogue in their own classrooms.

9.2.3 Applications and limitations in Islamic education

While these findings provide valuable evidence related to the practice of halaqah in Shakhsiyah Schools, they also have potential to be influential far beyond Shakhsiyah Schools. Although the strength of the data presented here relies on the context specific detail, dialogic halaqah can be utilised in a range of Muslim educational settings, including full-time Islamic faith schools, Islamic seminaries (Dar al Ulum), Islamic supplementary education (after school and weekend 'madrasahs'), informal halaqah in family and community settings, and Islamic teacher education. Halaqah as a dialogic space has the potential to facilitate culturally-coherent dialogic Islamic education in the British context. However, further research may be necessary before this potential can be fulfilled. The research halaqah in this study consist of small groups of seven-eight participants, and are therefore not representative of schools where class sizes are likely to be 30. However, in many independent Islamic faith-schools class sizes range from 15-20, and whole class dialogue circles have been shown to be effective in 'Philosophy for Children' (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 2010), and 'Dialogic Literary Gathering' formats (Flecha, 2000; Hargreaves & Garcia-Carrion, 2016). It is therefore plausible that halaqah could become daily practice in Islamic-faith schools, and similar dialogic circles could become daily practice in mainstream schools.

9.2.4 Applications and limitations in mainstream schooling

Wide dissemination of this research may generate interest amongst educational professionals and possibly policy makers. This may in turn lead to further studies in mainstream schools, researching innovative practice that uses daily cumulative

dialogic circles to support a core curriculum focused on personal development. This study has shown that in the specific context of Shakhsiyah Schools, Muslim children are able to engage with their fundamental beliefs and values from within their own worldview, whilst respectfully aiming to understand the values and worldviews of others. In the state sector, daily dialogic circles that value multiple worldviews could be highly effective, both in meeting the needs of Muslim and other children from immigrant or mixed heritages, and indigenous British children who are caught up in a British/European crisis of identity. They could be a truly intercultural dialogic space that creates a positive discourse of difference and multiculturalism, as opposed to the PREVENT securitisation discourse of othering and marginalisation.

Furthermore, there is strong interest in the potential of educational dialogue to improve pupil engagement and attainment. Recently, two large studies funded by the EEF (EEF, 2017) and ESRC (Howe, Hennessy, Mercer, Vrikki, & Wheatley, 2017) respectively are being conducted. Both are focused on identifying the forms of educational dialogue that can improve pupils' test scores. They aim to use the impact on test results as leverage to convince policy makers of the utility of specific pedagogies. This PhD research is not concerned with test results as such; like Flecha's (2000) and Alexander's (2008a) work, it is concerned with supporting personal, social, moral and ethical development. Flecha, Alexander and other researchers acknowledge that successful pedagogies are essentially ontological, in that they rely on teachers and learners being able to understand and adopt the worldview or theoretical framework whence the pedagogical actions emerge. Without this commitment, meaningful change is unlikely.

9.2.5 Applications and limitations in teacher education

I am not convinced that educational dialogue researchers (Howe and Abedin, 2013) are correct in arguing that clear and systematic quantitative and qualitative evidence on how adaptations to classroom talk can impact learning will provide a model which can be applied effectively, and thus improve practice. In my experience as a practitioner training and mentoring teachers in facilitating halaqah, such models will often be misinterpreted and poorly applied by teachers; particularly when they are perceived to be yet another initiative imposed by either government or the school leadership. One of the aims of this thesis is to conduct theoretical work alongside the

empirical data analysis, in order to develop a clear theoretical framework underpinning halaqah as pedagogy, which can then be translated into teacher education and continuous professional development. Only when teachers understand theory for themselves and self-assess its application in their own work, is reflexive practice generated, which then brings about positive outcomes for learners (Day & Sachs, 2005). This is a long and complex process that requires clear theory for teachers to engage with, appropriate and, hopefully, internalize through ongoing support. This study sheds light on the processes and outcomes of halaqah through participant voice, that is, through children's and young people's accounts and views of their experiences of halaqah. The rich reflexive data presented here can contribute to teacher education and practice within the Islamic education, and inform the wider educational dialogue field.

Moreover, by purposefully conducting this research in a faculty with an established history of educational dialogue research, I aim to generate intercultural understanding amongst educators, researchers and academics in wider British society. Dialogic halaqah are essentially 'lessons' conducted in school time; research about how they operate and what they can potentially achieve is very relevant to all educators interested in education for autonomy. As a case study, this research can potentially be used in teacher education to exemplify what high quality educational dialogue might look like and how it might be generated.

9.3 Recommendations for future research

Chapter 3 illustrated that educational dialogue researchers are ever conscious of the tension between teacher authority and learner autonomy. It highlighted the aporia inherent in the act of teaching itself as an act that uses authority with the intention to liberate. It recognised that this challenge is even more pronounced in Islamic education. It also began some theoretical work to draw on Islamic holism to embrace this aporia and to develop a theory of a dialogical Muslim-self. This work needs to be further developed. Additionally, although my conceptualisation of shakhsiyah Islamiyah involves emotional, personal and spiritual dimensions, limitations of space have not allowed for these aspects to be fully explored.

Suggested further theoretical research questions:

1. How might Islamic and continental philosophies of knowledge, personhood and education influence an understanding of *shakhsiyah Islamiyah* as a dialogical Muslim-self?

2. What relationship does a Muslim-self, conceptualised as a dialogical being, have with the *tarbīyah, t'alīm* and *ta'dīb*, that is, educating for the personal, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual development of Muslims?

3. What impact might such a conceptualisation have on the double-consciousness experienced by Muslims in a modern or postmodern world?

In terms of its empirical contribution, this study may not provide the kind of evidence considered conclusive through the use of randomised control trials and the like. It does, however, provide a basis to support the hypothesis that dialogic pedagogy generates personal autonomy, which could underpin further quasi-experimental research. Although dialogic qualities are observed in halaqah, and autonomy is observed in participants, further studies are required to fully demonstrate a causal link. Moreover, the claims made about the cumulative impact of halaqah would benefit from further exploration, for example by a longitudinal study that tracks how specific lines of enquiry develop within halaqah over months or years; or one that follows up former pupils once they are in their twenties and thirties. Finally, the findings from this study may support an argument to conduct daily multi-paradigmatic dialogic circles of learning in mainstream schools.

Suggested further empirical research questions:
1. What type of further analysis of existing data could investigate a link between dialogic halaqah and individual participants autonomy?

2. How do cumulative lines of enquiry develop in dialogic halaqah over time?

3. Is there a relationship between emotional and spiritual development through dialogic halaqah and the development of personal autonomy?

4. What kinds of dialogic circles of learning could support the development of personal autonomy, and democratic and intercultural education in mainstream British schools?

This research reveals the value of incorporating dialogic teaching and learning into Muslim and non-Muslim educational practice. It argues that all children are entitled to

opportunities to discuss and debate their place in contemporary and future society. All children have the right to develop the skills and aptitudes of self-reflection, critical thinking, personal autonomy, and empathetic understanding of others. These essential skills are necessary for young people to purposefully contribute to ever-changing communities and societies. In the case of the Muslim community, halaqah provides an authentic religious practice as a vehicle for Muslim children to explore, develop awareness of, and understand themselves as Muslims in twenty-first century Britain.

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Appendix 1: Halaqah Ground Rules

What does Halaqah Look Like?

- *Halaqah* is held daily and first thing in the morning after assembly where possible
- Classes consist of a maximum of fifteen children and children and teacher sit on the floor in a circle
- Teachers follow the school 'Halaqah Curriculum' but are responsible for their own schemes of work and planning.
- The *halaqah* is the core lesson of a half-termly thematic scheme of work and serves the purpose of tying together the theme into meangingful-integrated learning through a holistic creative curriculum.
- *Halaqah* is usually led by the class teacher, although it can be led by a member of the SLT, the Arabic teacher, a visitor, or in Key Stage 2 one of the class children
- *Halaqah* begins with Qur'an recitation and ends with a group supplication
- All children are encouraged to participate, it is normal practice for children to engage in extended discussion amongst themselves with teachers acting as facilitators
- Depending on the topic, sometimes teachers will be doing a lot of explaining so the children can understand key concepts prior to engaging in a discussion
- Teachers may ask children to talk in their talk partners or small groups for some time in the *halaqah* and the feedback to the whole group.
- If no child raises a point the teacher considers important to the topic or concept under discussion, the teacher will raise it her self or ask a child if this is what she meant.
- The *halaqah* discussion uses Islamic sources of Qur'an and Sunnah (practice of the Prophet) as references. Other sources such as children's wider reading or television or personal experiences are also referred to.

Ground rules for Halaqah:

- One person talks at a time, in younger groups the child with the teddy has the turn to speak
- Children are encouraged to use their 'listening ears'
- Children are expected to respect everyone's point of view
- Children are encouraged to ask each other for clarification and challenge each other's points during the discussion
- Children are expected to provide reasons for their points
- Children are encouraged to support each other's points if they agree.
- Children are encouraged to share examples from their own experiences related to the topic or concept under discussion
- Children are encouraged to use core vocabulary related to the topic or theme.

Child friendly version: Our Class Rules for Halaqah

1. We will refer to Qur'an and Sunnah to understand the topic.
2. We will talk together to think about the topic.
3. We will share what we know with each other.
4. We will ask everyone to say what they think.
5. We will pay attention and try to think of good ideas about the topic.
6. We will give examples to explain our ideas.
7. Everyone will listen carefully to others and consider what we hear.
8. We will give reasons for what we say.
9. We will try to agree about what we think.
10. We will agree to disagree and respect everyone's opinion.

Appendix 2: Participants Information Letter and Consent Form

(Young people were sent a similar letter directly, for children this letter was sent to their parents.)

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As salam alaykum wa rahmatullah wa barakatuh

I am writing to you to request your assistance in my PhD project at the University of Cambridge: *Exploring Halaqah (circle-time): an Islamic oral pedagogy enabling autonomy and a culturally coherent education for Muslim children in a pluralist society.*

What am I doing?

I am attempting to develop the practice of halaqah in Muslim schools and to create better understanding of Muslim schools in wider society. The topic of my research is 'halaqah as a means to develop autonomy in an Islamic sense'. So I am looking at whether young Muslims who were taught using halaqah are able to think for themselves and make their own decisions? I would like to find out if they are more likely to be autonomous in their thinking than those who were taught using a more traditional Islamic studies format? I am also interested in how these young Muslims understand their Islamic identity; are they more committed or less committed to Islam? Are they able to discuss Islamic beliefs critically? I am also interested in the quality of dialogue and discussion that can happen in halaqah, how this happens and whether it relates to developing critical thinking?

Whose help do I need?

I am looking ideally for 8 current children at Shakhsiyah Schools aged 10-11 i.e. in the current year 6. Children should ideally have spent at least 4-5 years in Shakhsiyah schools and have parents who fully understand and support the ethos of the schools. If your child is new to the school it will still be useful for him/her to attend. I have already conducted Halaqah collecting the views of young people aged 16-18 who attended Shakhsiyah schools and are now in further/higher education.

What will I need from you?

I will need you to consent to your child taking part in four halaqah sessions (including an introductory halaqah to the project) that will be held in school during school time hopefully during October/November 2014. In the initial halaqah I will explain to children exactly what the purpose of the study is, what will happen during the halaqah and what happens to what

they have said after the halaqah. Also I will explain the code of ethics I have to follow to keep children anonymous and to protect them and I will answer any questions they might have. Children will also be asked to sign a consent form and will have the right to withdraw at any time and only need to participate to the level they want to. In the halaqah children will discuss their views on some of the issues I have described above.

I have also attached a list of key questions that children will be asked during the Halaqah so that you are fully informed. I will talk around these questions so that they are not put in a blunt manner to children. They are recorded in this way so that I have a series of simple prompts in front of me and I am not reading out lengthy pieces of text.

How will this help Muslim schools and Islamic education?

The finding from this study will be published in journals and presented at conferences. They will also be used to develop the training of teachers in how to give effective halaqah in Shakhsiyah schools and beyond. Depending on the outcome, the study may help non-Muslims understand that Muslim schools don't indoctrinate children and do foster critical thinking.

I will meet parents to explain the project further and to answer any questions on Tuesday 14th October 2014 at 9am in Shakhsiyah School. Slough Branch

Thank you for reading this letter and considering my proposal. The consent form is attached.

Wasalam

Farah Ahmed

Director of Education

Consent Form

You are welcome to return this form to the school now OR after the initial meeting when I have explained things more fully and answered your questions.

Please complete the form below to indicate your consent to your involvement in this PhD research project at the University of Cambridge: *Exploring Halaqah (circle-time): an Islamic oral pedagogy enabling autonomy and a culturally coherent education for Muslim children in a pluralist society.*

Please Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

4. I agree to the halaqah / focus group / consultation being audio recorded

5. I agree to the halaqah / focus group / consultation being video recorded

6. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

Name of Parent   Date   Signature
_____   _____   _____

Name of Child   Date   Signature
_____   _____   _____

Name of Researcher   Date   Signature
_____   _____   _____

Name, position and contact address of Researcher: Farah Ahmed, Director of Education and Research, Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation, PhD Candidate, University of Cambridge

Appendix 3: Research Halaqah Key Questions

Halaqah Key Questions

	Children's Key Questions	Young People's Key Questions
Pilot Halaqah: Introduction to research	I introduce the purpose of the halaqah and inform children of my research questions, ethics and ask them their opinion on the exercise. We begin some general discussion on the topics in order to clarify terms and ensure everyone understands what is happening. Children are informed that they can justify their opinions as they wish including referring to Islamic sources if they wish to do so and as they would in any other halaqah.	I introduce the purpose of the halaqah and inform participants of research questions, ethics and ask them their opinion on the exercise. We begin some general discussion on the topics in order to clarify terms and ensure everyone understands what is happening. Participants are informed that they can justify their opinions as they wish including referring to Islamic sources if they wish to do so and as they would in any other halaqah.
Halaqah 1: Talking about Freedom, Islam and autonomy	What do you think of the idea of being able to make your own decisions? What does it mean to think for yourself? What does it mean to be a Muslim? (Submission to Allah) How do you feel about being a Muslim? Why are you a Muslim? Do you think that 'thinking for yourself'/ 'making your own decisions' conflicts with being a Muslim? Sometimes we all have questions. Have you ever questioned believing in Allah or believing in Islam? If so how did you deal with it? How did other people around you deal with it?	What do you think of the idea of personal autonomy? Do you think this conflicts with being a Muslim? How do you feel about being a Muslim? Have you ever questioned your beliefs? If so how did you deal with it? How did other people around you deal with it?
Halaqah 2: Talking about Halaqah	Tell me about your experiences of halaqah in Shakhsiyah schools. Does halaqah differ from other lessons, other schools or other educational experiences you have had? How? Have you had other classes in Islamic studies, maybe after school or in a Saturday school? Are they the same as or different to halaqah? How? Tell me what you enjoy about halaqah and what you don't enjoy? Do you think it helps you to learn? In what ways?	Tell me about your experiences of halaqah in Shakhsiyah schools. Does halaqah differ from other lessons, other schools or other educational experiences you have had? How? Have you had other classes in Islamic studies? Are they different to halaqah? How? Tell me what you enjoy about halaqah and what you don't enjoy? Do you think it helps you to learn? Is there anything else it helps you with?

	Is there anything else it helps you with? Is there anything you don't like about it?	Is there anything you don't like about it?
Halaqah 3: Halaqah, Shakhsiyah and Autonomy	Let's think about halaqah and being able to make our own decisions. Do you think halaqah helps you develop the ability to think/decide for yourself? The stated aim of halaqah in Shakhsiyah schools is to develop shakhsiyah Islamiyah. What do you understand by the words shakhsiyah Islamiyah? Do you feel halaqah has developed your shakhsiyah Islamiyah? Is there a conflict between shakhsiyah Islamiyah and being able to think/decide for yourself? What is it about halaqah that helps you develop the ability to think/decide for yourself? (To be asked if positive response to previous questions) Do you think that talking together helps develop the ability to think/decide for yourself? If so, how does that work?	Let's think about halaqah and autonomy. Do you think halaqah helps you develop autonomy? The stated aim of halaqah in Shakhsiyah schools is to develop shakhsiyah Islamiyah. What do you understand by this term? Do you feel halaqah has developed your shakhsiyah Islamiyah? Is there a conflict between shakhsiyah Islamiyah and autonomy? What is it about halaqah that helps you develop autonomy? (To be asked if positive response to previous questions) Do you think that talking together helps develop autonomy? If so, how does that work?

Appendix 4: Participants' Educational Backgrounds

Table 1: Children's Halaqah: participants' educational backgrounds

Name	Years in Shakhsiyah School	Full-time Education history Ages 3-19 until August 2013
Adam	6	Spent a year abroad with family
Zakaria	7	In Shakhsiyah Schools aged 3-10
Yusuf	7	In Shakhsiyah Schools aged 3-10
Asiya	6	Spent a year in local state funded Muslim school
Nazia	7	In Shakhsiyah Schools aged 3-10
Yusra	5	Started end of Reception year
Sara	6	Started beginning of Reception year
Sofia	2 months	Just started Shakhsiyah School, Attended a mainstream state school prior to joining Shakhsiyah

Table 2: Young People's Halaqah: participants' educational backgrounds

Name	Full-time Education history until August 2013 including timespan
Abdullah	Homeschooling – Precursor to Shakhsiyah Schools Parents Collective Early Years and Primary Boys and Girls (2 years) **Shakhsiyah School (6 years)** Homeschooling - Parents Collective Secondary Boys and Girls (1 year) Independent Islamic Boys Secondary (1 year) Independent Islamic Boys Secondary Boarding Seminary (1 year) Homeschooling – Parents Collective Secondary Boys and Girls (2 years)
Qasim	Homeschooling – at Home with Parents Early Years and Primary (1 year) Homeschooling – Precursor to Shakhsiyah Schools Parents Collective Early Years and Primary CoEd (3 years) **Shakhsiyah School (3 years)** *Hifz* one to one programme before and after school (4 years) Homeschooling – Parents Collective Secondary Boys and Girls (6 years) Continues *Hifz* before school only (5 years) Independent Islamic Boys Sixth form – Has completed *Hifz* of the entire Qur'an and continues *Hifz* revision around his Sixth-Form commitment
Ibrahim	Independent Islamic Primary School abroad (founded by parents) **Shakhsiyah School (4 years) Finished Early** Homeschooling – at Home with Parents Secondary (1 year) Mainstream Secondary Grammar CoEd (5 years)
Amina	Homeschooling – at Home with Parents Early Years and Primary (2 years) Homeschooling – Precursor to Shakhsiyah SchoolsParents Collective Early Years and Primary CoEd (3 years) **Shakhsiyah School (3 years)** Homeschooling – Parents Collective Secondary Boys and Girls (6 years) Mainstream Academy Sixth form Girls (2 years)
Zaynab	Homeschooling – Precursor to Shakhsiyah Schools Parents Collective Early Years and Primary

	CoEd (2 years)
	Independent Primary School abroad (3 months)
	Homeschooling – at Home with Parents Early Years and Primary (8 months)
	Independent Primary School abroad (3 years)
	Shakhsiyah School (2 years)
	Homeschooling – Parents Collective Secondary Girls (3 years)
	Independent Islamic Girls Secondary (2 years)
	Mainstream Grammar Sixth form Girls
Kulthum	Independent Islamic Primary School abroad (founded by parents)
	Shakhsiyah School (4 years)
	Homeschooling – Parents Collective Secondary Girls (3 years) Age 14-16: Mainstream Comprehensive Secondary Girls (2 years)
	Mainstream Grammar Sixth form CoEd
Fatimah	Homeschooling – Precursor to Shakhsiyah Schools (1 year)
	Shakhsiyah School (5 years) Finished Early
	Homeschooling – Parents Collective Secondary Girls (5 years)
	Independent Islamic Adult Seminary (1 year)

Table 3: Forms of education attended by young people and use of halaqah

Form of Education	Use of Halaqah
Shakhsiyah School	Daily Dialogic Halaqah
Mainstream	
Mainstream Comprehensive Secondary Girls	No Halaqah
Mainstream Secondary Grammar CoEd	No Halaqah
Mainstream Academy Sixth form Girls	No Halaqah
Mainstream Grammar Sixth form Girls	Girls organised weekly Halaqah (Not Dialogic)
Mainstream Grammar Sixth form CoEd	No Halaqah
UK Independent Secondary/Adult Islamic Education	
Independent Islamic Boys Secondary	No Halaqah
Independent Islamic Boys Secondary Boarding Seminary	No Halaqah
Independent Islamic Boys Sixth form	No Halaqah
Independent Islamic Girls Secondary	No Halaqah
Independent Islamic Adult Short Courses – more modern versions of traditional seminary courses	No Halaqah but Q&A
Independent Islamic Adult Seminary	No Halaqah but Q&A
Independent School abroad	
Independent Primary School abroad	No Halaqah
Independent Islamic Primary School abroad (founded by parents)	No Halaqah
Home schooling variations	
Homeschooling – at Home with Parents Early Years and Primary	Daily Dialogic Halaqah
Homeschooling – Precursor to Shakhsiyah Schools Parents Collective: Early Years and Primary CoEd	Daily Dialogic Halaqah
Homeschooling – at Home with Parents Secondary	Weekly Dialogic Halaqah
Homeschooling – Parents Collective Secondary Boys and Girls	Weekly Dialogic Halaqah
Homeschooling – Parents Collective Secondary Girls	Daily Dialogic Halaqah
Hifz one to one (Mainly Part-time)	*Tafsir* Halaqah
Informal / Part time Islamic education	
Weekend / After-school Madrasah	Halaqah with Q&A some dialogue
Informal Weekly Youth Halaqah for Boys	Halaqah with Q&A some dialogue

Appendix 5: Thematic Analysis Codebook, Inter-coder Test and Screenshots

Stage 1: Familiarization with the Data and initial identification of broad themes

Broad Themes

- Freedom and Autonomy
- Being Muslim and Submission
- Authority and Control
- Others and Outside Influences
  Islamic beliefs and teachings
- Shakhsiyah Islamiyah
- Halaqah
- Other Islamic forms of education/pedagogy
- Secular forms of education/pedagogy
  Personal Experiences
- Childhood and adulthood

Youth Halaqah 1

- freedom
- autonomy
- freewill
- determinism
- choice and decision making
- submission
- family influences
- parent-child-family dynamic
- social influences
- reflexivity
- shakhsiyah
- halaqah
- traditional madrasah education
- mainstream UK education
- nafs
- authority
- respect
- Islamic teachings
- knowing what's right
- being accountable
- being independent of parents/growing up
- belief being forced on young people
- questioning your belief
- comparing your way of life with secular society
- being able to question/knowing you can ask questions
- being strong in your own belief through reason
- being open to other ideas
- compare Islam to Christianity
- Ghazali/Classical scholars
- 'traditional' parents
- Coming across other versions of Islam - leading to questioning Islam
- Learning from experiences - leads to a better understanding - more
- Non-Muslim criticisms of Islam making you develop your understanding of Islam

- How can Islam be misinterpreted? (Terrorism)
- Gender differences on the issue of women covering or is it due to more understanding of the Islamic approaches to hijaab?
- Understanding the evidences for something in Islam for yourself.
- Requirement in Islam to come to the faith by yourself and not follow blindly
- Autonomy in relation to following 'other people' within Islam
- following an Imam
- following the crowd
- upbringing will always influence you - no 'objective' freedom
- secularism is still biased
- Every act is a conscious decision
- concept of niyyah
- can you have full autonomy?
- What is it to be oppressed?
- Conflict between being Muslim and being autonomous?
- Is a human being autonomous in Islam?
- Peer Pressure
- Peer Pressure form Muslims as well as non-Muslims
- Judgement in the afterlife
- Muslims in this society are forced to be autonomous because society not from Islam
- Not every Muslim is able to withstand peer pressure

Children's Halaqah 1

- Making the right decision - Responsibility
- Need good character to make good decisions
- Discussion about when your old/mature enough to make your own decisions
- Asiya: Opportunities to make decisions in school prepares you for making them in later life
- How can you tell if someone is mature enough to make their own decisions
- Very young people can be mature as Sahaba were in the past. Now people less likely to be like that
- Discussion about Ali's choice at the age of 8 to become Muslim
- Making decisions for yourself
- Influenced by parents
- Influenced by friends
- Thinking for yourself
- Being a Muslim, sacrificing for Allah
- How do children feel about being a Muslim - Happy, grateful to Allah
- Thinking for yourself
- Choosing for yourself
- Freewill: Asiya it's both
- You make the choice to pray, it's an active decision
- Questioning your faith - all agree that they have done that
- Some internal apprehension/fear about thinking about it
- Have thought about it for themselves
- Important to think about it

Youth Halaqah 2 and 3

- Enjoyed it
- History
- I could relate to it
- Teachers open to questions
- Teachers encourage all children to participate

- Halaqah as core of thematic curriculum so learning interlinked
- collective not individual activity
- thinking
- learn rather than study
- relevant to current situations and children's experiences
- children able to talk about things they wanted to - this could change the optic of the Halaqah
- debates would start
- asked to research at home and bring in ideas
- children part of moving on the thought process
- Learnt about each other
- EY/early primary Halaqah more the teacher talking
- EY/early primary children asked to give own examples related to an Islamic concept
- EY/early primary children asked to give a follow up example at end of Halaqah which showed how the Halaqah had impacted their learning
- Children's personalities impact how much they would participate
- EY/early primary teachers would encourage children to participate
- Teacher's personality/teaching style impacted the Halaqah
- Value of talk/dialogue
- different participants appreciate different teacher styles
- Sometimes open Halaqah, children allowed to choose the topic
- allowed to go off topic
- asking a question would change the topic
- Compare to a 'talk' (lecture)
- Discussion useful to learning
- artefact/quote/ayah/hadith as a prompt to an open discussion
- learn from other thoughts/ideas
- Halaqah generates a thought process
- Teacher as guide/facilitate/correct through introducing an authoritative perspective
- talk/dialogue as opposed to teacher monologue generates thinking
- enables you to construct your own viewpoint/position
- different forms of Halaqah
- Helpful at primary age to learn through discussion/older you want more detailed information about the topic before the discussion
- Format where knowledge being given about a topic is not necessarily allowing listeners to 'go deeply' into the topic
- teacher-learner relationship in Shakhsiyah Halaqah very personal
- More formal academic learning styles doesn't relate the content to to the learners personal interests/question/lives and teacher learner relationship isn't there
- Shakhsiyah Halaqah emphasis on children's understanding and implementation of understanding
- Teacher learner relationship as trabiyah/parenting
- Traditional Halaqah discussion was in higher education not primary education
- Islamic teachings have to be interpreted more carefully when your older as life becomes more complex so you need more discussion
- Primary education is about understanding key concepts
- Muslim learners needs are different now than in past Islamic societies because we are living in a non-Islamic society
- Living in this society you don't pick up Islamic concepts from daily life so need a more interactive halaqah
- Building a fundamental understanding early allows deeper exploration of concepts at an older age.
- Need discussion with children so that they don't have misconceptions from an early age
- Discussions at end of Halaqah allow good quality formative assessment
- GCSE Islamic studies, very basic knowledge taught form an outsider viewpoint, more focused

on Islam and societal issues. Can't compare with Halaqah because serves a different purpose
- In Islamic secondary schools the basic GCSE may be enhanced by Halaqah type discussions as students are already familiar with the content.
- A-level Islamic studies taught in a dry way, wasn't used as an opportunity to widen perspectives about Islam - not related to you as a person
- GCSE and A-level Islamic studies requires Muslim students to step outside of their faith in order to address the questions from an outsider perspective
- GCSE and A-level are not suitable for Muslims to learn their religion because they are not confessional
- Independent Islamic Adult Seminary - designed to preserve Islam and give information of it, not develop understanding of it - no discussion relating it to personal understanding - even scholar's need to understand how it relates to the real life circumstances of the people they need to guide. - Introducing a Halaqah into the course would be beneficial to the students as scholars - Asking questions not a normal part of the culture here - students reluctant to contribute
- Independent Islamic Adult Short courses - lots of approaches, spiritual, hands on, some single perspective (one Shaykh's viewpoint)
- Independent Islamic Boys Secondary Boarding Seminary - Simply teaching one Shaykh's teachings - students young, had very little prior knowledge of Islam, teaching was focused on memorising and reading Qur'an, learning Arabic - no history even -
- Weekend / After-school Madrasah - Halaqah mainly teacher led with Qur'an stories etc but sometimes Q&A would lead to discussions - enjoyed this a lot - took a lot away from it
- Informal Weekly youth Halaqah for Boys - Only from one madhab - not clear what is being covered or why
- Shakhsiyah Halaqah relates to you personally so more diverse, caters for students from different backgrounds instead of one ethnic-religious Islamic tradition - students don't always stay on topic, this can be good or bad - teacher's value wider knowledge and understanding - helps students voice their opinion - on same level as teacher so not intimidating - others say they can find pressure to speak - but this is a good personal development for the future - supportive teachers give you the confidence to say , i don't understand what's being said
- Mainstream Schools - teachers don't care - just about passing exams -
- Halaqah - very personal, about the here and now - not about GSCEs, A-levels - discussion constantly moves do maintains students interest - stronger relationship between teacher and student - more like parenting - 'you can expand your knowledge as well 'cause you have other people talking and helping you out a lot' - interactive so engaging therefore enhancing learning - open dialogue without bidding for attention is beneficial - making connections and formulating opinions - higher order thinking
- Because it's to do with our religion, it links with us
- Discussion about whether group work without the teacher can be productive - disagreement, suggestion that someone would usually take the lead
- Halaqah and Autonomy - different ideas, develops ability to think for yourself, decide your own opinions
- Shakhsiyah - being morally upright - reflective about your own character - standing up for what is right - listening to your conscience and making the right decisions (There seems to be an implication that the 'right decisions' come from Islam) - reflecting on other's perspectives strengthens your Shakhsiyah - you may change your own position - develop positive character qualities - relates to your life
- Halaqah develops a strong sense of identity and understanding of Islam
- Halaqah means I am more openminded , able to see different perspectives, question things more
- find young Muslims not from Shakhsiyah to be less thinking, less autonomous, more accepting of things, follow the crowd,
- halaqah gives you the confidence to make up your own mind
- Find that they have more in common with older people than young people
- Social justice element of halaqah, more aware of what is going on in the world

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- young people's conversation tens to be shallow, materialistic, celebrity driven, they have a different set of values
- Halaqah is like one big conversation but with the teacher so scaffolded
- Lot's of discussion about friendship, different views expressed - can have different types of relationship, interesting to meet different types of people
- Halaqah definitely develops thinking skills

Children's Halaqah 2

- We talk about Islam, relate our theme to it
- Asiya: "It's really fun because we get to talk whatever we want so we can say whatever we want"
- Sofia: "discuss things in depth"
- Sofia: "make lots of links to it"
- Sofia: "Teacher asks us questions"
- Halaqah is about sharing ideas, mind mapping, writing down everyone's opinions, break it (topic/concept) down, draw on existing knowledge
- freely talk about what we want to learn, individual research
- although teacher decides research topic
- Sometimes Halaqah is decided by the children
- Children have 'lots' of participation in the Halaqah
- Halaqah and other learning sometimes decided by the children
- Children sometimes lead the Halaqah
- Sometimes there are mini debates, planned and unplanned
- Teacher has to ask lots of questions and tries to get the children really engaged.
- Teacher tries to involve everyone, she wants to know what their ideas are.
- She asks children to explain in a simpler form so everyone can learn
- Teacher asks children to elaborate on each others ideas
- Teacher wants to check that children are listening
- through elaborating, we lead onto each other's answers to get the right answer
- through elaborating others can understand the original point, Yusuf "break it down into easier words"
- Elaborate: to get the children to think at a deeper level
- By talking, you learn from other children
- What is the value of 'extended dialogue'
- You get help with your thinking from other people's opinions
- Zakaria: three things, speaking skills and vocabulary, learn from other children, enables you to make choices, whilst listening your choosing what to say
- Yusra: Listening
- Sofia: Helps you gain confidence
- Express feelings, ideas and thoughts
- Asiya; thinking skills
- Adam: you think deeply and then you answer the question
- Zakaria: you are inspired to think more about it and find out more about it
- What other people say makes you think further about what you're saying
- Asiya: It expands your brain
- Difference between Halaqah and other lessons
- Helps you to learn about your religion
- Halaqah gives you time to think, and helps you express your thinking
- You sit dow and think about your religion and what you're really working for.
- Discussion about Halaqah in comparison to Maths and KUW. Can learn about Muslim mathematicians and scientists
- Sara: It's different because can ask any questions about topic and express your feelings about the topic (choose)
- Sofia: it's more in depth

- Asoya: We sit in a circle
- Sofia: Prophet sat on a floor in a circle
- Yusuf: You look at other people and interact differently
- Discussion about Halaqah in comparison to Islamic Studies. Halaqah oral, I.S is writing. More questions and discussion in hallaqah. Your confined by a textbook
- Questions in textbooks don't 'lead' onto other questions i.e. don't go into depth. You can't express all your thoughts in writing an answer to a textbook question
- Zachary: I.S basically Comprehension whereas Halaqah makes you use more of your brain
- Hearing and sharing ideas
- Interesting what other people think. they may think differently to you
- We can disagree with each other nicely
- Don't have enough time for Halaqah we have a lot more to say. Halaqah often spills over the allocated 45 minutes.
- Sitting on the floor: It's more respectful. feels better, nice, it's a place of sajdah,your closer to the earth

Children's Halaqah 3

- Halaqah helps you make your own decisions
- Because you get to express your feelings which gives you confidence to make your own choices
- you listen to everyone' else's discussion which gives you confidence to make choices
- you have to decide how to respond to a question - that's making a choice
- there are open questions in halaqah as well as closed ones - open questions e.g. how do you know Allah exists?- like making a choice inmate depth
- Asiya: (In Halaqah) you have to think and think and think to get the best answer - so helps your thinking skills and making decisions for yourselves
- Adam: You have to try to think of the best possible (more intellectual) answer. Does think it helps you to make your own decisions when you grow up.
- Sofia agrees
- Zakaria: If topic is the same level in Literacy and Halaqah, you will have more thinking skills development in Halaqah so the level of the content is relevant as well.
- Farah: So does talking develop thinking skills more than writing?
- Yusuf: Yes because you are being an independent thinker, working out for yourself which opinion is right.
- Zakaria: talking more enjoyable
- Sara: I prefer writing as you have more time. in talking other people get to talk
- Muhammad: With talking you get other people's ideas so it's better
- Yusuf: talking you find out other people's opinions
- Zakaria: Computers can't yet make comments on what your writing. Computer made by a person so you could be sharing that person's ideas
- Sofia: You can look back at your writing, so won;t forget it
- Adam: Writing is your own ideas, Halaqah there's other people's ideas
- Teacher explains that dialogue can happen through written texts. Children say that both Halaqah and writing useful.
- Children say that they remember things they learnt form Halaqah in year 3
- Shakhsiyah Islamiyah: is about character.
- Character is different to behaviour but both can influence each other
- You can be influenced by your friends
- How would you describe someone who isn't influenced? - Strong, not two-faced, boring, good, independent
- Yusuf: Everyone agrees with me. - No I don't
- Talking about someone who makes decisions for themselves
- There is a difference between being good and being independent - you need to be both

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- Define Shakhsiyah Islamiyah as being a good Muslim, obeying Allah, giving da'wah, praying, having knowledge of Islam
- conflict between shakhsiyah Islamiyah and being an independent thinker - take time to understand the question
- Zakaria and yusuf: you have to think for yourself but it's a bit of both
- Sofia: It's a bit of both
- Kids don't realise that being independent means you could make the wrong choices! Discussion doesn't go onto who decides what the right choice is.
- Allah wants us to be autonomous. Happy to be autonomous, feel responsible., 'worried' about making the wrong choice, I will try even harder, because I now it's down to me, proud
- Other people can give you naseeha

Codebook Stage 2[13] - Generating Initial Codes (Open Coding)

Phase 1 – Thematic Analysis - Stage 2 – Generating Initial Codes	Units of Meaning Coded
Authority and Control	31
Being a Follower	8
Being Muslim and Submission	63
Being an Autonomous Muslim	22
Other Religions	7
Childhood and Adulthood	28
Freedom and Autonomy	273
Choice and decision making	140
Choosing to be Muslim	45
Choosing within Islam	12
Making the right choice	23
Point of reference for decision making	23
Freewill and Determinism	8
Responsibility and Accountability	14
Thinking independently	70
Being an Individual	16
Questioning	22
Rebelling for the sake of rebelling	1
Halaqah	177
About Islam	6

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[13] Codebook -Stage 2 – Generating Initial Coding involved deconstructing the data from its original chronology into an initial set of exploratory codes

Basis for research and further learning	7
Children's Voice	13
Collaborative Learning	20
Developing Thinking	13
Dialogue and Dialogic Teaching	17
Expression skills and confidence	5
Giving your opinion, being reflective	11
Making Decisions, Developing Autonomy and Shakhsiyah	14
Oral not Written Lesson	7
Questioning, Depth and Making Links,	21
Sitting in a Circle	6
Teacher's role	13
Islamic Beliefs and Teachings	40
Not Sure	5
Other forms of Islamic Education or Pedagogies	30
Adult Alimyyah Course	4
Adult Independent Islamic Short Courses	1
GCSE Islamic Studies in an Islamic Setting	1
Islamic Home Schooling Groups	0
Primary Islamic Studies, Madrasa, Kuttab	1
Secondary Dar al Uloom Boarding School	2
Youth Halaqah	1
Others and Outside Influences	87
Parents and Family	29
School Peers and Friends	34
Personal Experiences	9
Secular forms of Education or Pedagogy	20
Shakhsiyah Islamiyah and Personhood	43
Character	18
Nafs	5

Codebook Stage 3[14] - Searching for Themes (Developing Categories)

An open coding exercise was conducted with other coders. This led to the inclusion of some new codes and clarification of others. Not all suggested codes were included in Stage 4.

Phase 1 – Thematic Analysis - Stage 3 – Searching for Themes	Open coding exercise with other coders. Codes added and comments noted	Units of Meaning Coded
Action	Tahreem Sabir	2
Authority and Control		37
Being a Follower		8
Limitation	Sultana Parvin-Urmi	2
Rules	Tahreem Sabir	2
Trust for Teacher	Tahreem Sabir	2
Being Muslim Submission		63
Being an Autonomous Muslim		22
Other Religions		7
Childhood and Adulthood		58
Age - Maturity	Tahreem Sabir	29
Intellectual Development	Tahreem Sabir	1
Critical Thinking	Tahreem Sabir	2
Freedom and Autonomy		283
Choice and decision making		144
Choosing to be Muslim		45
Choosing within Islam		12
Consequences	Tahreem Sabir	4
Making the right choice		23
Point of reference for decision making		23
Freewill and Determinism		8
Learning to be autonomous		1
Responsibility and Accountability		14
Thinking independently		75
Being an Individual		17

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[14] Codebook – Stage 3 – Searching for Themes – involved merging, renaming, distilling and clustering related coded into broader categories of codes to reconstruct the data into a framework that makes sense to further the particular piece of analysis.

Independence	Tahreem Sabir	4
Questioning		22
Rebelling for the sake of rebelling		1
Halaqah		177
About Islam	Is Halaqah a specifically Islamic form of learning? How does the Islamic paradigm impact children's learning?	6
Basis for research and further learning		7
Children's Voice		13
Collaborative Learning	Includes learning from peers	20
Developing Thinking		13
Dialogue and Dialogic Teaching		17
Expression skills and confidence		5
Giving your opinion, being reflective		11
Making Decisions, Developing Autonomy and Shakhsiyah	Added Personal nature of Halaqah, making it relevant to the learner and the teacher learner relationship into this.	14
Oral not Written Lesson		7
Questioning, Depth and Making Links,		21
Sitting in a Circle		6
Teacher's role		13
Islamic Beliefs and Teachings		40
Judgement	Tahreem Sabir	1
Knowledge	Tahreem Sabir Sultan Parvin-Urmi includes wisdom	5
Learning	Tahreem Sabir Sultana Parvin-Urmi adds using what you learnt later	2
Not Sure		5
Other forms of Islamic Education or Pedagogies		30
Adult Alimyyah Course		4
Adult Independent Islamic Short Courses		1
GCSE Islamic Studies in an Islamic Setting		1
Islamic Home Schooling Groups		0

Primary Islamic Studies, Madrasa, Kuttab		1
Secondary Dar al Uloom Boarding School		2
Youth Halaqah		1
Others and Outside Influences		92
Dependance	Tahreem Sabir	1
Parents and Family		29
Role model	Sultana Parvin-Urmi	1
Historical Figure Role Model	Tahreem Sabir	2
School Peers and Friends		34
Societal Norms	Tahreem Sabir	2
Tarbiyah	Tahreem Sabir	1
Perception	Tahreem Sabir	4
Personal Experiences		9
Secular forms of Education or Pedagogy		20
Self confidence	Tahreem Sabir	4
Self Evaluation and Reflection	Tahreem Sabir Includes self awareness	9
Shakhsiyah Islamiyah and Personhood	Includes behaviour	46
Character		18
Morals	Tahreem Sabir Sultan Parvin-Urmi Includes values and manners	3
Nafs		5
Stereotypes	Tahreem Sabir	1
Thinking	Tahreem Sabir	1

Codebook Stage 4[15] - Reviewing Themes (Drilling Down)

Phase 1 – Thematic Analysis - Stage 4 – Searching for Themes	Developing Code Definitions for Coding Consistency (Rules for Inclusion)	Units of Meaning Coded
Halaqah		308
About Islam	Is Halaqah a specifically Islamic form of learning? How does the Islamic paradigm impact children's learning?	9
Basis for research and further learning	Includes thematic learning.	9
Children's Voice and Open nature of Halaqah	Includes children bringing examples from home so a seamless learning between home and school	14
Collaborative Learning	Includes learning from peers and student participation.	26
Developing Autonomy and decison making skills		35
Giving your opinion, being reflective	Includes recognising difference	19
Developing Expression and Confidence		7
Developing Shakhsiyah and Individuality	Includes developing relationships between children and in the class and children's development outside school learning Includes openness of discussion Includes self evaluation Personalised and contextual (Tarbiyah)	19
Developing Thinking		44
Questioning, Depth and Making Links,		27
Dialogue and Dialogic Pedagogy	Includes open discussions as well	20
Education other than Halaqah	Includes a section in Children session 3 on the difference between Halaqah as oral lesson and writing in literacy.	62
Other forms of Islamic Education or Pedagogies		36
Adult Alimyyah Course		5
Adult Independent Islamic Short Courses		1
GCSE Islamic Studies in an Islamic Setting		1
Islamic Home Schooling Groups		0
Primary Islamic Studies, Madrasa, Kuttab		1

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[15] Codebook – Stage 4 – Reviewing Themes involved breaking down the now reorganised codes in to sub-codes to better understand the meanings embedded therein.

Secondary Dar al Uloom Boarding School			4
Youth Halaqah			1
Secular forms of Education or Pedagogy			20
Oral not Written Lesson			12
Sitting in a Circle			10
Teacher's role and relationship with student	Includes personal nature of Halaqah, making it relevant to the learner and the teacher learner relationship into this.		18
Personal Freedom and Autonomy			476
Childhood and Adulthood			70
Age of Maturity	Includes the necessary intellectual development to have the maturity to be autonomous		16
Learning to be Autonomous			28
Choice and decision making	Includes the capability to make decisions and deciding for yourself		148
Choosing to be Muslim			36
Choosing within Islam			15
Consequences, Responsibility and Accountability	Includes reflecting on consequences of an action.		13
Making the right choice			28
Point of reference for decision making			26
Freewill and Determinism	Bear in mind that the 'teacher' actively steers the discussion away from this so as not to distract from the concept of autonomy.		9
Shakhsiyah Islamiyah and Personhood			145
Character	Includes, values, morals, manners and personal qualities		17
Knowledge	Includes wisdom Include learning and education in relation to character or Shakhsiyah		12
Nafs	Includes dealing with emotions and desires		11
Self confidence			26
Self Evaluation and Reflection	Includes self awareness and evidence of self evaluation etc as well as talking about it		69
Thinking independently	Includes being independent DOES NOT include making choices as that is covered under Choice and Decision making		71
Being an Individual	Includes being autonomous		19
Questioning and Critical Thinking			14
Rebelling	Includes why do people rebel against authority?		6

Submission, Authority, Limitations and Outside Influences	A broad category that covers anything that limits freedom and autonomy or influences decision making and behaviour. Includes beliefs and value systems	286
Authority and Limitations to Autonomy	Includes rules	29
Being Muslim and Submission		120
Being an Autonomous Muslim		36
Islamic Beliefs and Teachings		49
Others and Outside Influences		134
Being a Follower		12
Other Religions		6
Parents and Family		33
Role model		2
School Peers and Friends	Includes peer pressure but generally also about friendship groups and wanting to fit in and get along	24
Societal Norms		24
Teachers	Include the Islamic notion of respect / trust for teacher	4

Codebook Stage 5[16] - Defining & Naming Themes (Data Reduction)

Phase 1 – Thematic Analysis - Stage 5 – Searching for Themes	Code Definitions for Coding Consistency (Rules for Inclusion)	Units of Meaning Coded
1 Freedom and Autonomy		449
1.1 Childhood and Adulthood		70
1.1.1 Learning to be Autonomous		28
1.1.2 Age of Maturity	Include the necessary intellectual development to have the maturity to be autonomous	16
1.2 Choice and Decision Making	Includes the capability to make decisions and deciding for yourself	148
1.2.1 Making the Right Choice		41
Consequences, Responsibility and Accountability	Includes reflecting on consequences of an action.	13
1.2.2 Choosing to Be Muslim		36
1.2.3 Choosing within Islam		15
1.2.4 Point of Reference for Decision Making		26
Knowledge	Includes wisdom Include learning and education in relation to character or Shakhsiyah	12
1.3 Thinking Independently	Includes being independent DOES NOT include making choices as that is covered under Choice and Decision making	65
1.3.1 Questioning and Critical Thinking		14
1.3.2 Being an Individual	Includes being autonomous	19
Rebelling	Includes why do people rebel against authority?	6
1.4 Shakhsiyah Islamiyah and Personhood		133
1.4.1 Character	Includes, values, morals, manners and personal qualities	17
1.4.2 Self Evaluation and Reflexivity	Includes self awareness and evidence of self evaluation etc as well as talking about it	80
Nafs	Includes dealing with emotions and desires	11
1.4.3 Self confidence		26
2 Submission and Authority	A broad category that covers anything that limits freedom and autonomy or influences decision making and behaviour. Includes beliefs and value systems.	286
2.1 Authority and Being Limited	Includes rules	41
2.1.1 Being a Follower		12
2.2 Being Muslim and Submission		120

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[16] Codebook – Stage 5 – Defining and Naming Themes involved conceptually mapping and collapsing categories into a broader thematic framework.

2.2.1 Islamic Beliefs and Teachings			49
2.2.2 Being an Autonomous Muslim			36
2.3 Others and Outside Influences			122
2.3.1 Parents and Family			33
2.3.2 Friends and School Peers	Includes peer pressure but generally also about friendship groups and wanting to fit in and get along		24
2.3.3 Teachers and School	Includes the Islamic notion of respect / trust for teacher		6
Role model			2
2.3.4 Societal Norms			30
Other Religions			6
3 Halaqah			308
3.1 Collaborative Dialogic Pedagogy			109
3.1.1 Collaborative Learning	Includes learning from peers and student participation.		26
3.1.2 Oral Circle	Includes the lesson does not involve writing so not about literacy		22
Sitting in a Circle			10
3.1.3 Dialogue and Dialogic Pedagogy	Includes open discussions		20
3.1.4 Children's Voice	Includes open nature of Halaqah. Includes children bringing examples from home so a seamless learning between home and school		14
3.1.5 Teacher's Role	Includes teacher's role and relationship with student. Includes personal nature of Halaqah, making it relevant to the learner and the teacher-learner relationship.		18
3.1.6 Basis for Further Learning	Includes thematic learning.		9
3.2 Developing the Individual person			114
3.2.1 Developing Autonomy	Includes developing decision making skills		42
Developing Expression and Confidence			7
Giving your opinion, being reflective	Includes recognising difference		19
3.2.2 Developing Thinking			44
Questioning, Depth and Making Links,			27
3.2.3 Developing Shakhsiyah and Individuality	Includes developing relationships between children and in the class and children's development outside school learning Includes openness of discussion Includes self evaluation, personalised and contextual character education (Tarbiyah)		28
About Islam	Is Halaqah a specifically Islamic form of learning? How does the Islamic paradigm impact		9

	children's learning?	
3.3 Comparison with Other Pedagogy	Includes a section in Children's session 3 on the difference between Halaqah as oral lesson and writing in literacy.	62
3.3.1 Secular Mainstream Education		20
3.3.2 GCSE and A-level Islamic Studies		1
3.3.3 Traditional Islamic Education		32
Adult Alimyyah Course		5
Secondary Dar al Uloom Boarding School		4
3.3.4 'Modern' Islamic Education		3
Adult Independent Islamic Short Courses		1
Primary Islamic Studies, Madrasa, Kuttab		1
Youth Halaqah		1

Codebook Stage 6[6] – Creating the Report (Analysis & Write up)

A major change was made in that the Freedom/Autonomy and Authority/Islam/Submission themes were collapsed into one overall theme. This was due to the overlap that had always been noticed but became increasingly apparent during the write up.

Phase 1 – Thematic Analysis - Stage 5 – Searching for Themes	Code Definitions for Coding Consistency (Rules for Inclusion)	Units of Meaning Coded
1 Freedom, Autonomy, Authority, Islam and Submission		636
1.1 Childhood and Adulthood		70
1.1.1 Learning to be Autonomous		28
1.1.2 Age of Maturity	Includes the necessary intellectual development to have the maturity to be autonomous	16
1.2 Thinking Independently	Includes being independent DOES NOT include making choices as that is covered under Choice and Decision making	158
1.2.1 Questioning and Critical Thinking		14
1.2.2 Being an Individual	Includes being autonomous	19
1.2.3 Parents and Family	Includes supporting autonomy as well as authority	33
1.2.4 Teachers and School	Includes the Islamic notion of respect / trust for teacher	6
1.2.5 Friends and School Peers	Includes peer pressure but generally also about friendship groups and wanting to fit in and get along	24
1.2.6 Societal Norms		30
1.3 Exercising Autonomy - making choice and decisions, choosing to be Muslim	Includes the capability to make decisions and deciding for yourself	268
1.3.1 Making the Right Choice		41
1.3.2 Choosing to Be Muslim		36
1.3.3 Choosing within Islam		15
1.3.4 Point of Reference for Decision Making		26
1.3.5 Being an Autonomous Muslim		120
1.4 Shakhsiyah Islamiyah and Personhood		107
1.4.1 Character	Includes, values, morals, manners and personal qualities	17
1.4.2 Self Evaluation and Reflexivity	Includes self awareness and evidence of self evaluation etc as well as talking about it	80

2 Halaqah as Islamic Dialogic Pedagogy for developing Shakhsiyah		308
2.1 Halaqah as Dialogic Pedagogy		109
2.1.1 A Collaborative Islamic Oral Circle of Learning	Includes learning from peers and student participation.	48
2.1.2 Children's Voice and Teacher's Role	Includes open nature of Halaqah. Includes children bringing examples from home so a seamless learning between home and school	32
2.1.3 Positioning, dialogue and differing perspectives	Includes open discussions	20
2.1.4 Purposeful, Cumulative and Thematic Learning	Includes halaqah as a basis for research and further learning. Includes thematic learning.	9
2.2 Halaqah in Comparison to Other Forms of Education	Includes a section in Children's session 3 on the difference between Halaqah as oral lesson and writing in literacy.	62
2.2.1 Secular Mainstream Education		20
2.2.2 GCSE and A-level Islamic Studies		1
2.2.3 Traditional Islamic Education		32
2.2.4 'Modern' Islamic Education		3
2.3 Developing shakhsiyah Islamiyah in each Individual child		114
2.3.1 Developing Thinking		44
2.3.2 Developing Autonomy	Includes developing decision making skills	42
2.3.3 Developing Shakhsiyah Islamiyah	Includes developing relationships between children and in the class and children's development outside school learning Includes openness of discussion Includes self evaluation Includes personalised and contextual character education (Tarbiyah)	28

Thematic analysis inter-coder reliability test

Transcript	Number of codes checked	Agreed	Disagreed	Number of individual of codes checked						
				1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3
Children 1	18	18	0	1	6	6	5	0	0	0
Children 2	16	16	0	0	1	1	0	8	0	6
Children 3	16	16	0	0	4	3	3	1	0	5
Young-People 1	15	14	1 1.3.5	0	3	7	3	0	1	0
Young-People 2	17	17	0	1	1	0	0	5	2	8
Young-People 3	18	16	2 2.2.3 2.2.3	0	2	1	2	5	3	3
Totals	100	97	3	2	17	18	13	19	6	22

The second coder randomly checked 100 instances of coding. The details are given in the table. She differed on 3 occasions, all of which were to do with how original codes had been subsumed into parent codes. The first occasion was to do with 'Islamic beliefs and teachings' being coded as 'being Muslim', which had been subsumed into 'being an autonomous Muslim' because the bulk of the coded text talked about autonomy as well. The second coder felt that while the broader text covered this, the specific subtext in one utterance that had been coded in this instance did not relate to this code. This was one of the early attempts at coding, where I had not coded a sufficient amount of text to indicate the specific code used. Later I began to code broader sections of text, as it was difficult to pinpoint codes in meandering dialogue. The second coder agreed with this approach.

The other two occasions were to do with the code definition. In an effort to reduce the number of codes, I had combined Islamic faith-schools with *Dār al Ulūm* and *Ālimiyah* courses, under a heading 'traditional Islamic education'. The second coder pointed out that Islamic faith-schools do not technically constitute traditional Islamic education.