A Collective Narrative Practice Methodology in the case of LGBTQI+ Muslims

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1. ABSTRACT

Introduction: Narratives of incompatibility predominate in research of LGBTQI+ Muslim identities characterising them as irreconcilable, reflecting wider narratives which continue to depict LGBTQI+ Muslims as a homogenous group experiencing continuous struggle. This study aimed to explore how LGBTQI+ Muslims live with their multiple identities, with the intention of creating collective resources from people's narratives

Methods: A collective narrative project recruited participants from social media and an existing community organisation to contribute to a resource that could be shared with other LGBTQI+ Muslims. Data was collected via individual interviews and a group interview.

Findings: LGBTQI+ Muslims face significant struggles within both LGBTQI+ and Muslim communities and experience challenges constructing positive identities. While LGBTQI+ Muslims may experience shame and rejection from these communities, they also adopt novel strategies which maintain important relationships while affording them opportunities to resist repeated victimisation.

Conclusion: LGBTQI+ Muslims are heavily problematised within dominant social narratives and the complexity of their identity configurations mean that clinical psychologists should be particularly cautious when making assumptions about what interventions are indicated to support their mental wellbeing. Further research should continue to listen carefully to LGBTQI+ Muslims' lived experiences and avoid reinforcing harmful societal narratives when assuming in which contexts LGBTQI+ Muslims may struggle or thrive.

2. INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with a definition of key terms used throughout, before outlining what is currently known about this topic and highlighting gaps that led to the current study.

2.1 Conceptual Definition of terms

2.1.1 Muslim

Around 3.4 million Muslims (followers of the Islamic faith) live in the UK, accounting for 5.1% of the total British population (ONS, 2018), with most living in England and the greatest concentration in London. The demographic includes over 54 national backgrounds and over 70 spoken languages, with a majority of British Muslims being of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Arab heritage. As with all major religions, Islam is a global religion with varying schools of thought with theological and geo-political significance, most notably in the division of Sunni and Shia Muslims, As such, any functional deployment of the term 'Muslim' is limited by the enormous diversity characterising this group, with complex configurations of language, ethnicity, religious traditions and cultural backgrounds informing and shaping the beliefs and practices that come to be described as pertaining to Islam. Furthermore, levels of religiosity also range from practicing to non-practicing, and while some operational definitions of Muslim mean exclusively those who follow Islam as a religious categorisation, others broaden such definitions to include Muslim as those raised in Muslim families or where Islamic culture is central to their upbringing, including those who class themselves as non-believers or atheist. Finally, while some Muslims may self-define as such, these identifications may be contested or unrecognised by other Muslims meaning that it is possible that some people who identify as Muslim are discounted as such by other Muslims, while others who would more readily identify as not Muslim may nonetheless be counted as such due to the perception of their being Muslim. For the purposes of the present study therefore, Muslim is defined as those who would self-define as Muslim.

2.1.2 LGBTQI+

In the present study, LGBTQI+ functions as an 'umbrella' term encompassing those who would identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and/or LGBTQI+ as well as intersex while the "plus" connotes other possible gender and sexual identities reflecting an increased awareness and reach for inclusivity and an assertion of the right for people to self-identify and for sexual and gender autonomy. For example, the "plus" includes sexual and gender identities which may face prejudice, marginalisation and discrimination but which do not fall into what have become increasingly normalised categorisations of LGB or T such as asexual people or identities with cultural significance such as the South Asian gender categorisation of Hijra or two-spirit identities of Native Americans.

The Q in LGBTQI+ is increasingly used as a reappropriation of LGBTQI+ as historically pejorative term used to describe oddity in the 16th century, and in the 19th century gaining its association with homosexuality and lesbians, gays, bisexual and trans people (LGBT) more generally. While for many older LGBT people living today, LGBTQI+ is a slang word heavily associated with abuse, in the 1970s the word was also 'reclaimed' by activists, especially among non-white LGBT people, in a radical rejection of assimilationist tendencies growing in LGBT political movements (Bronski, 1998) . Today, it is increasingly used to describe non-heterosexual and other non-normative sexual and gender identities providing a more over-arching term than LGBT which some argue reifies discrete categories failing to include those who might not readily identify as LGBT but who nonetheless share similar experiences of prejudice and discrimination At times, LGBT or variations such as LGB are used to connote the exact language in the studies cited or the specific populations considered, however when speaking generally and the use of a noun is required LGBTQI+ people is preferred (Barker, 2019).

2.1.3 LGBTQI+ Muslim

LGBTQI+ Muslim is the term I employ throughout my thesis, bringing together the definitions outlined above. It should be noted that "LGBTQI+ could be understood as an adjective and "Muslim" a noun, centring the Muslim identity and that this risks centring one identity over another, however where possible

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this author would prefer that readers consider LGBTQI+ Muslim as a compound noun, that is, a series of nouns wherein relationships are equal and potentially continuous.

2.2 The Struggles of LGBTQI+ Muslims

2.2.1 Literature Search Strategy

I will use Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory to structure a narrative review of the literature concerning the struggles of LGBTQI+ Muslims. Bronfenbrenner's theory posits five interrelated systems comprising the social environments which inform and influence an individual's development moving from those that are more immediate to much broader cultural aspects. This is helpful as it provides opportunities to describe both proximal effects of struggles which shape the daily lives of LGBTQI+ Muslims on a phenomenological level such as interactions with friends and family as well as distal influences characterising the socio-economic context within which LGBTQI+ Muslims lives take place including narratives pertaining to LGBTQI+ people and Muslims as disparate and intertwining collective identities within culture. This includes the enterprise of research itself and how these shape what is understood as the main issues relating to this group. As such, this review cannot be exhaustive but serves to highlight the major narratives of LGBTQI+ Muslim experience. A diagram showing each concentric field can be found in Appendix A.

In order to complete such a review I completed a scoping review, mapping the key concepts underpinning research areas and organising them according to the respective systems characterising Bronfenbrenner's model, acknowledging that psychological research in this area is small and that conceptual frameworks from adjacent disciplines such as sociology and political theory were prominent in cursory explorations of the topic and could add value. To explore relevant scholarship, a systematic search was guided by the query: "What is available on appropriate databases and within the grey literature in the area of LGBTQI+ people, Muslims and LGBTQI+ Muslims with regards to the narratives of struggle in their lives?" This followed guidance as articulated by Peters (2015) avoiding an overly narrow focus which would fail to capture the wider community and societal narratives which would form the basis of considering LGBTQIA+ Muslim's individual and collective struggles.

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Having completed an initial literature review as part of my research proposal, key papers and terms were identified which were indexed and employed in an initial search across multiple databases within psychological, healthcare and social science fields, such as PsychInfo, CINAHL, Scopus, Science Direct and Academic Search Complete as well as Google Scholar and the reference lists used on key websites such as those pertaining to the charitable organisations which claim to work with LGBTQI+ Muslims and the references lists of key books. A large number of search terms were generated through cross-referencing key papers seeking to capture the complex and multiple iterations possible for describing LGBTQIA+ Muslims and these papers' abstracts were then reviewed as a minimum check before making a decision as whether to include or exclude this in a secondary analysis e.g ("LGBTQI+" OR "Gay" OR "Homosexual" OR "lesbian" OR "LGBT") AND ("Mental Health" OR "Resistance" OR "Identity") etc. I also chose to be highly inclusive of grey literature such as reports and statements made by charitable organisations as it was acknowledged that the marginalisation of LGBTQIA+ Muslims might limit the extent to which traditional sources represent their voices and preferred language for expressing their identities.

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were used as a means for transparency and to support the replicability of my literature review:

Inclusion criteria: research exploring LGBTQIA+ Muslims' identity; research exploring LGBTQIA+ Muslim's mental health and wellbeing; research exploring Muslims mental health and wellbeing; research exploring LGBTQIA+ people's mental health and wellbeing; research exploring LGBTQIA+ people's identity; research written in English; research exploring LGBTQIA+ people and faith and religion

Exclusion criteria: research focusing on the lives of LGBTIA+ people outside countries typically described as "the West" as these would not tell me about narratives likely to impact British LGBTQIA+ Muslims; research not focusing on self-identified LGBTQIA+ people; research focusing in-depth on the lives of non-Muslim religious LGBTQIA+ people without reference to wider narratives impacting religious LGBTQIA+ people as this specificity risked generalising the struggles of LGBTQIA+ Muslims; research not written in English.

A narrative review was chosen for articulating these results as they allow a purposeful structuring of different research methodologies across disciplines (Ferrari, 2015) allowing for a nuanced discussion of the complex interplay of ideas which are relevant to a discussion LGBTQI+ and Muslim identities.

2.2.1.1 "Hard to Reach"

Little is known about the mental health outcomes of LGBTQI+ Muslims, and very little research has been completed specifically on this group. Epidemiological studies resting on quantitative methods, informed by logical positivist epistemologies, have typically tried to disentangle identities, which might otherwise be deemed to confound each other (Semlyen, Ali and Flowers, 2018), and use statistical assumptions which require a significant number of individuals to participate. LGBTQI+ Muslims might be understood from these perspectives as constituting a "hard-to-reach' group, referring to those who belong to minority groups that might be 'hidden populations' who do not wish to be found or contacted, actively seeking to conceal their identity (Duncan et al., 2003), as well as groups for whom mainstream research activities have failed to sufficiently attract and engage. According to this logic, LGBTQI+ Muslims are less likely than other groups to seek out or be approached for invitations to participate in research, including psychological research. Rather than a passive impartial science, epidemiological health research and its funders aim to reflect wider societal priorities. The failure to include LGBTQI+ Muslims in research can be understood as a significant health inequality which furthers their silence and oppression.

In social marketing, where this term is also used, hard-to-reach may simply mean more expensive to reach (Brackertz, 2007), and so the construction of hard-to-reach groups arguably stigmatises such groups, locating the problem of reachability within the groups. A critical reflection on the most common approaches taken may reveal that these are inappropriate, inadequate or irrelevant, thus, a solution would be to match groups to the more successful approaches used to involve them, which may require innovation. Additionally, the colonial legacy of intrusiveness and exploitation in psychological research of minority groups exacerbates the relationship between researcher and LGBTQI+ Muslims (Fanon, 1959). Hard-to-reach groups may be better understood as 'easy to ignore', where failed efforts to engage are incorrectly attributed to a

group's supposed complexity and resistance as opposed to a failure of sustained commitments from the institutions carrying out research. Finally, rigidity, underinvestment and poor communication in community initiatives may lead targeted groups and their representatives, who are often recruited into tokenistic roles with minimal support, to feel disillusioned with the process altogether, or even traumatised by the undemocratic structures, which position group members as responsible for their own advocacy and empowerment (Lightbody, 2017).

Members of hard-to-reach groups tend to have worse health outcomes than those who are not (Rockliffe, 2018), so that we might reasonably infer that LGBTQI+ Muslims are likely to experience risks equal to or more than those of the composite identities of "LGBTQI+" and "Muslim" alone, though it is also likely that the relative instability of this social categorisation as outlined previously means that any risks are distributed differentially with limited predictability. Nonetheless, I will now present an overview of major findings relating to LGBTQI+ Muslims with a focus on those completed in the UK.

2.2.2 Microsystem

LGBTQI+ people have poorer physical and mental health outcomes compared with heteronormative counterparts and are less satisfied by the health care services they receive. A meta-analysis by King (2008) found that LGB people experienced elevated risks for suicide attempts and ideation, and that the prevalence of depression across the lifetime was at least twice that of heterosexual controls with little heterogeneity; LGB people were also more likely to meet criteria for an anxiety disorder and to have substance misuse problems including alcoholism.

Studies indicate that the distress of LGBTQI+ people is higher when belonging to another marginalised group so that a gay person who is also trans, or a black person who is also gay is likely to experience higher rates of distress (Stonewall, 2018). This relates to what are described as more common mental health difficulties, such as low mood and anxiety, but also for other serious mental health difficulties (such as eating difficulties and psychosis), where experiences of discrimination are identified as a significant risk factor (Kidd et al., 2016). LGBTQI+ people are more likely to be accessing mental health

services than non-LGBTQI+ people (ONS, 2017) and are less satisfied with their life generally (ONS, 2017.). And despite shifting societal attitudes, young LGBTQI+ people continue to experience higher rates of distress than non-LGBTQI+ youth (Russel & Fish, 2016).

The most commonly cited psychological theories within psychological literature of LGBTQI+ people's distress are stigma (Goffman, 1968) and Minority Stress Theory (Meyer, 2003) and internalised homophobia as well more general iterations of shame. Stigma is a discrediting social marker experienced relationally, while Minority Stress Theory argues stigmatisation by others create distinct, chronic stressors for the person that compound each other. These stressors can be distal, such as experiences of discrimination and violence, or proximal, meaning internal processes such as fears around rejection, ruminative recollections of prejudice, effortful hiding and internalised negative attitudes. Internalised homophobia is one such construct of internalised attitudes which is theorised to disrupt the development of a positive gay identity, as is transposed to other LGBTQI+ identities. These intrapsychic attributes continue to affect LGBTQI+ people long after exposure to prejudice and discrimination (Brown and Trevethan, 2010; Hequembourg and Dearing, 2014).

1.2.3 Mesosystem

Extending the analysis of LGBTQI+ Muslims' experience beyond individually reported distress, in the case of largely quantitative studies, allows for a more comprehensive appreciation of the different ways in which LGBTQI+ Muslims find themselves at an intersection between ideas surrounding faith and religion, and sexual orientation and gender expression. However, in doing so there is a substantial risk of neglecting other identities, such as ethnicity and socioeconomic status, which may be more influential in certain contexts. For example, acceptance of LGBTQI+ people is consistently found to be higher in urban and suburban areas and among those with higher education or income (Bowman & O'Keefe, 2004), and religiosity among Muslims is highly dependent on age and country of origin, although the relationship between these factors is complex (Ansari, 2004; Pew, 2019). These factors may be especially relevant to understanding the lives of LGBTQI+ Muslims who like most LGBTQI+ people will conceal their identities from parents at an earlier age ,and whose context provides more or less opportunities for the assertion of their identities; for

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example, for those who leave the family home for university or live in large cities.

In conducting a literature review of LGBTQI+ Muslims and their experiences, some aspects relating to family and the community are most prominent and will be explored here, though notably in the UK context most of these studies' participants are almost exclusively South Asian Gay Muslim Men such that the generalisability of these findings to other LGBTQUIA+ Muslims is limited.

This relative overrepresentation may reflect the fact that South Asian people have a relatively long and established history of immigration and community-building within the UK forming a prominent social categorisation with sociohistorical significance attracting interest from multiple disciplines and the institutional powers which fund and legitimise research. Within academic psychological research, this is also reflected in the predominance of South Asian scholars such as Rusi Jaspal.

2.2.3.1 Family life

Family life, as depicted in the Qur'an, was created by God as a foundation for society, and duties to one's parents are privileged above all else except duties to God; conversely Muslim children are described as being born into a state of fitrah, meaning an awareness of God, which is to be protected and nurtured by parents. Moreover, disobedience of parents is described as ingratitude and is a major sin in Islam with one popular *Hadith*[1] being: "The father is the middle of the doors of Jannah", meaning the best gate of Paradise.

Children in Islam are expected to care for parents throughout their lives, and parents are encouraged to have children, as other Abrahamic religions which see such arrivals as a blessing. In the UK, Muslim households are typically larger than others, having more dependent children, and are less likely to be lone parented. Muslim young people are also more likely to live longer with their parents, and there is also a cultural expectation to stay until marriage and for the oldest son to remain after marriage. Muslims in the UK are more likely to live in a multigenerational household than non-Muslim households (Pew, 2019).

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[1] In Islam, Hadith refers to what most Muslims believe to be attributable to the prophet Muhammad.

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As such, Islam has placed great responsibility and authority with parents and their children to foster strong, loyal extended families which are in line with heteronormative ideals and gender roles (Siraj, 2010), where family is seen as a divine institution, with heterosexual marriage at its core (Hendricks, 2010) and a prohibition of premarital sex meaning that LGBTQI+ Muslims must contend with psychological consequences of transgressing the expectations of their family.

2.2.3.2 Migration and intergenerational differences

Intergenerational differences between first and latter generations of migrants are identified within the literature as potential sites of conflict where, for example, Jaspal et al. (2012) argue that first-generation British South-Asians, are likely to experience profound sociological and psychological consequences in migrating, contrasted with second generation, who may negotiate multiple identities.

The relationship to faith of Muslims living in the UK can also be understood by way of generational change and migration. Duderija (2007) suggests adherence to faith is magnified by migration and settlement, with beliefs and practices gaining new importance in a society where they are a religious minority, and adherence organised around communal and ethnic identities likely to be living in the same geographic area (Zubaida, 2003) and religious functions of mosques intertwined with community gathering, mobilisation and cultural expression (O'Toole, 2016). Language barriers faced by some first generation migrants as well as experiences of racism and discrimination strengthen communal identities (Billig, 1996).

For second and latter generations, there is evidence that religion is becoming increasingly important as an identity (Modood, 1994) Some argue that this identification is a reaction to rejection and rising Islamophobia within the white majority living in the UK, and provides solidarity among otherwise disparate ethnic identities who may, nonetheless, attend the same school or workplace and face similar levels of Islamophobia and racism. This has been conceptualised as a revision of the concept of *Ummah*, the global community of Muslims (Modood, 2005) which, while becoming more inclusive, has also led to the construction of a pan-ethnic, ecumenical vision of Islam largely divorced from the inherited and highly idiosyncratic ethnic and cultural elements which

characterised first generations. Anjum (2019) suggests that for both first and latter generations, a range of strategies are deployed to negotiate and rationalise these differences, especially where apparent conflict arises.

2.2.4 The Exosystem

2.2.4.1 Arranged marriage

Arranged marriage is a respected tradition within many Muslim communities living in the UK, especially among South Asian communities, where older family members have taken a central role in finding a suitable partner for single younger members; usually seeking out and assessing the background and character of a prospective partner through deliberately planned negotiations across family networks belonging to the same community (Grewal, 2002; Rashid, 2017). The form of, and reasons for arranged marriages vary widely and are not specific to Muslim families, but such arrangements can pose difficulties for LGBTQI+ Muslims.

Jaspal (2014) asked 12 British Asian Gay Men who considered themselves to be religious Muslims to maintain a diary over 1 month to record their experiences of discussions and family interactions related to marriage. The study found that the subject of marriage was experienced as threatening and evoked strong feelings of shame, guilt and disgust. Participants in the study reported avoiding situations where marriage was discussed and becoming increasingly preoccupied with the potential for future conflict and where family members persisted, anticipating the need to cut ties, coupled with feelings of increasing isolation. Where there were such strong narratives of the necessity of marriage, participants reported little recourse to alternative imaginings of their own future other than those characterised by loss and loneliness: the lack of control over one's future is experienced as a "no-win" scenario. Some LGBTQI+ Muslims, therefore, decide to proceed with arrangements with a view to suppressing their LGBTQI+ identity altogether or, otherwise, live this out discreetly. Even for those who do assert a LGBTQI+ identity, arranged marriages may yet be offered as a means to preserving the family network and its honour, with a view that LGBTQI+ identities may be transient. For LGBTQI+ Muslims in these positions, arranged marriages may be experienced as

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coercive (Samad and Eade, 2003), although reports of forced marriages are very rare (ONS, 2017).

2.2.4.2 Coming out

'Coming out' is a term used to describe LGBTQI+ people's self-disclosure of their sexual or gender identity to others, such as family and friends. As such coming out may constitute a performative speech act (Austin, 1962; Butler, 1990), changing the social reality between speaker and listener, but coming out is also understood as a developmental process of recognising one's identity and taking deliberate actions to integrate this within one's social life, so that coming out is an intrapersonal as well as interpersonal process (Russel and Fish, 2016). Coming out involves coping with societal attitudes and responses and LGBTQI+ people often assess the levels of risk involved in doing so, (Jaspal and Siraj, in press) although many LGBTQI+ people will have already faced prejudice and discrimination on the basis of being associated with a LGBTQI+ identity. Finally, some LGBTQI+ people may not choose to come out but are 'outed' by others due to information relating to their LGBTQI+ identity being discovered and shared by others.

Coming out is often described as a linear process and various studies have proposed developmental stage models which typically characterise a LGBTQI+ person's progressive assimilation and accommodation of an LGBTQI+ identity (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982). However, this has been critiqued as an essentialist concept, which obscures the highly contextual factors which shape coming out which occur across multiple relationships (Sedgwick, 1990). A powerful narrative that coming out is essential for positive identification as LGBTQI+ is, nonetheless, met with mixed results within psychological literature demonstrating the importance of contextual factors, where for some coming out improves wellbeing, life satisfaction and the quality of relationships, while others have shown higher rates of victimisation, for example in the overrepresentation of LGBTQI+ youth who are street homeless (Elisason & Schope, 2007). Similarly, not being out has been variously constructed as a dysfunctional coping strategy affecting physical and mental health outcomes (Herdt & Boxer, 1993) while for others the concealment of a LGBTQI+ identity is seen as having a protective function (Alvi and Zaidi, 2021; BPS, 2019)

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There is evidence to suggest that British Muslims are more likely than many other groups to hold views that LGBTQI+ identities are unacceptable. For example, of 500 British Muslims interviewed in a Gallup (2009) poll, none believed that homosexual acts were morally acceptable, compared with 35% of French Muslims. A further poll in 2016 found that British Muslims do not differ from the overall population on most issues polled, however, more than half think that homosexuality should be illegal (ICM, 2016), and just under half did not agree that it was acceptable for a gay person to become a teacher compared to 14% of the general population. Generally, acceptance of LGBTQI+ people in the UK is one of the highest in the world, and a positive view increases with each successive generation but decreases significantly among those with religious beliefs, so that the gap between religious and non-religious people is much wider than in the past (Pew, 2013, 2020; British social attitudes, 2020). Furthermore, among those with religious beliefs polled, Muslims are the least likely to hold positive views. A later Ipsos Mori (2018) poll found only 18% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that homosexuality should be legal, though noted that young Muslims were more likely to agree, with 28% of 18-24 year olds agreeing, suggesting generational factors are important and these considerations are generally not explored.

Narratives of incompatibility emerge as dominant themes within this literature concerning the lives of LGBTQI+ Muslims, where Bhugra (1997) noted feelings of regret, self-deprecation and self-hatred among many south Asian gay men, and Jaspan and Cinnirella (2010) in a qualitative interview study of 12 self-identified British Muslim gay men found that Muslim identity was commonly seen as good, while gay identity was seen as bad and evil, with some choosing to avoid socialising with other gay men due to the fear of disclosure and negative attitudes towards spaces associated with being LGBTQI+ (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2012). In another study interviewing South Asian Gay Men, Jaspal (2014) found that self-definitions of gay were often framed as incompatible and in conflict with self-definitions of Muslim. This meant that among non-Muslim gay men, participants were likely to downplay their Muslim identity but, conversely, endorse views which they regarded as typical of Muslims as a display of loyalty, even where participants did not strictly hold these views themselves (Jaspal, 2014).

Studies of other Muslim LGBTQI+ people are severely limited and reflect a paucity of acknowledgement of Lesbians and Lesbians of colour, who have historically been invisible, or their existence denied (Morin, 1977; Wilton, 1995), sometimes termed as Lesbian erasure. Such erasure occurs within wider society, but is also reflected within Queer studies and in the lack of representation within histories of people of colour. What few studies do exist tend to further the argument that Lesbian Muslims are likely to face significant conflict when attempting to reconcile their faith and sexuality and are likely to develop strategies to manage the apparent lack of acceptance in religious communities by refraining from practicing either their faith or sexuality (Yip and Khalid, 2010).

Characteristic of the literature concerning LGBTQI+ Muslims is the argument that not only are Muslims likely to hold strong negative views about LGBTQI+ identities but that their construction within Islam is deeply problematised on a theological level, where traditional scriptural interpretations have condemned these so that religious texts are a fundamental basis for stigma and discrimination. Levels of religiosity among religious communities in the UK vary and, in a survey, Muslims in the UK were more likely to see their religion as "very important" (74%) than Sikhs and Hindus (Madood et al. 1997). As such, LGBTQI+ Muslims who wish to maintain their faith share their situation with other LGBTQI+ people of faith who may be challenged by scripture, and censured by other community members drawing upon these interpretations.

2.2.4.3 Faith communities

Islam has no central governing body, meaning there is no single authoritative position on LGBTQI+ Muslims or LGBTQI+ identities more generally, however, across schools of thought a consensus is shared that homosexuality is forbidden and deserving of punishment. Many Muslim-majority countries have laws which criminalise homosexual activity and all countries which currently have a death penalty for homosexuality argue at least in part that these injunctions are based in Islamic law, simplistically referred to as Sharia[2] (Cviklova, 2012). These claims strengthen international narratives held by

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[2] Sharia, whose literal meaning is 'path to water' is God's will for humankind providing guidance for how Muslims should live as expressed in the Qur'an and Sunah in the words of Prophet Mohammed and can be contradistinguished from Islamic law, the body of law inspired by Sharia which governments pursue.

Muslims and non-Muslims that Islam is a religion intolerant of LGBTQI+ identities and homosexuality.

Expressed negative attitudes towards LGBTQI+ identities can be seen in conjunction with the strongly heteronormative principles of Abrahamic religions. Within Islam, the institution of marriage between man and woman is centred, with no other form of sexual activity permissible (*zina*), hence, relationships serve as a site for procreation, but also as a system for regulating sexual desire, where Islam is perceived to take a moderate stance towards sex as natural and good (Boudhiba, 1985), but restricted to partners who are accountable to each other, *zawaj*. Islam's position on homosexuality is perceived to be stated most clearly in the story of Lot as narrated several times within the Qur'an which describes the destruction of the city of Sodom and Gomorrah by God who condemned the depraved acts of its citizens where the prophet Lot inquires as to why citizens engage in "lecherous acts" and in the next passage states "in preference to women, you satisfy your lust with men" (Holy Qur'an, 2001 ed., 7:81). This story is common to all the Abrahamic religions in that the story has no specific term for same-sex relations but, in its recounting through the Qur'an, various terms, such as lewdness, abomination, transgressing all limits and deep in sin are deployed. Further evidence of explicit condemnation within Islam is only found in some lesser known Hadith collections although these attribute to Prophet Mohammed a call for the death penalty for both partners, while another Hadith is aimed at followers who might be seduced by 'beardless youths' reflecting the pederastic and homoerotic ideas common to many pre-modern societies. These hadith are deployed to strengthen a religious narrative that homosexuality is analogous to zina. There is no evidence within the Qur'an or Sunnah of affirmative attitudes towards homosexuality, however, there is no clear prohibition of sex between women where some scholars judge this to be *zina* but others clerics claim it is not a crime, only a sin (Loue, 2020). Attitudes towards other LGBTQI+ identities including gender expression are more ambiguous where, for example, effeminate men, known as *mukhannaths*, who lived as women in adulthood and played an important role within Pre-Islamic Arabian society, are cited in a hadith with Prophet Mohammed casting the men away from women's quarters, though some argue this is only because he appears to be demonstrating sexual thoughts towards other women (Hendricks,

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2010). In another chapter of the Quran, 'men without desire' are included among those for whom women need not dress modestly and it is recognised that some people are neither women nor men but have both characteristics. Debate concerning the legitimacy of trans identities within Islam is underlined by Ayatollah Homeini's *fatwa* of 1987 which authorised gender reassignment surgery (Zaharin, 2020) despite ongoing transphobia and persecution of this group (Outright, 2016) and Pakistan's parliament's recognition of a third gender in 2018, including the right to choose their gender on official documents and with its 2017 census recording approximately 10,000 transgender people (Basit et al., 2020).

The relative acceptance of trans identities and condemnation of gay identities are exoticised within Western media highlighting the ways in which Western narratives continue to Orientalise and centre their own narratives of progress over a pluralistic acknowledgement of Muslim-majority countries' capacity for self-determination. Similarly, an analysis of religious narratives of LGBTQI+ identities must also recognise the ways in which colonialism and neo-colonialist practices continue to shape understandings of homosexuality as a perversion against nature in the Judeo-Christian tradition, augmented by medical pathologisation and the infiltration of European opinion (Hones & Tell, 2010).

In the UK, Sharia has attracted significant media attention, with a government report generated in 2018 to address concerns that Sharia law might be being misused or applied in a way contrary to domestic law in England and Wales. The report focused on Sharia councils, which have been established since 1980, but concluded that most work was concentrated on marriage and divorce, which had sometimes left women vulnerable to the way "religion, culture and gender relations are inextricably intertwined…" so that " their own autonomy and freedoms can be overlooked and denied" (Gov UK, 2018, p3) but, ultimately, served a clear need for some Muslim communities; conceding that reports of overinvolvement in other matters. including those relating to upbringing of children, had been overstated. The Muslim Council of Britain, which is the best known organisation representing British Muslims, has been criticised and has opposed all major gay equality reforms, though it has also recognised government legislation to prevent discrimination including a supportive statement for the extension of the Equality Act on the grounds of

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sexual orientation (MCB, 2007). Although, its opposition to same-sex partnerships –where in 2006 its current leader Sir Iqbal Sacranie said same-sex partnerships "does not augur well in building the very foundations of society" (BBC, 2006) garnered more attention, the MCB's most recent secretary general, Zara Mohammed, has signalled change, stating Muslims should embrace tolerance on issues such as homosexuality and gay marriage (BBC, 2021). In most cases, British Muslims are most likely to receive religious education within the Mosque and Madrassa where what is taught is highly variable but unlikely to stray from traditional interpretations, which condemn LGBTQI+ identities as well as all sexual relations outside married between men and women. Otherwise, homosexuality remains taboo and is not talked about and denied (Murray, 1997) with those demonstrating overtly homosexual behaviour often ostracised (Kugle, 2013).

There are some examples of LGBTQI+ people being targeted by groups who allege to be representing Islam in their actions. For example, in 2012 three Muslim men from Derby became the first people in Britain to be convicted of inciting hatred on the grounds of sexuality after distributing leaflets calling for gay people to be killed, and in 2013 three men forming a "Muslim Patrol" group in East London were jailed for harassing and assault members of the public due to their transgression of Sharia, including those drinking alcohol and a gay man. Such incidents were condemned by local community mosques (East London Mosque, 2013), and appear to reflect wider trends in an increase of all hate crime –and their prevalence within media may say more about narratives which continue to frame British Muslims as a threat to society. Indeed, Stonewall's Living Together Report (2007) showed that, while religious attitudes are thought to be a cause of homophobic views, the majority of people with faith agree that homophobia needs to be tackled and laws need to protect LGBTQI+ people. Arguably, such narratives are themselves a form of hate crime, attacking communities who have limited access to platforms from which to defend themselves. The relationship between hate crime and the media is one that is known to be highly correlated showing the danger of sensationalising instances of hate crimes perpetrated by Muslims (Spalek, 2002; Ivandic et al., 2019).

2.2.4.4 LGBTQI+ spaces

Nowadays, all major cities within the UK and many others contain spaces designed for LGBTQI+ people, although their prevalence is in sharp decline (London Government, 2017) The historical proliferation and visibility of LGBTQI+ venues including 'gay villages' has been explained as stemming from a combination of factors but is closely associated with the anonymity of urban spaces which have allowed LGBTQI+ people who have been socially marginalised to migrate and form concentrated residential areas allowing for a shared material culture to emerge, most notably in the form of 'gay villages' or 'gay bars' (Skeggs, 1999)

The increasing commercialisation of Pride and mainstreaming of LGBTQI+ Venues has been critiqued by Skeggs (1999) as demonstrating a shift from a radical LGBTQI+ politics to one of appearance-based respectability and recognition with desires for legitimation, with Feliciantonio (2015) arguing that the transition of cities, such as London, from their industrial basis to a globalised arena for consumption, had meant LGBTQI+ venues have increasingly functioned as a marker for cosmopolitanism, tolerance and diversity. This aim for the acquisition of capital through neoliberal market forces and local council support, combined with a desire for respectability, means that LGBTQI+ venues have increasingly been maintained and developed by a male, white, liberal elite, converting cultural capital into economic entrepreneurship and, in the process, reproducing problematic representations of class, gender, race, sexuality and religion which are effectively exclusionary (Bell and Binnie, 2004). This may be encountered by LGBTQI+ Muslims in the case of overtly sexualised spaces which may not marry with religious identities, and the racialisation and fetishization of LGBTQI+ Muslims by spaces with a white majority. Jaspan and Cinnirella (2012), for example, found that some British South Asian Gay men visited LGBTQI+ venues in order to cope with a growing estrangement from their religious and ethnic identities, but felt they would be better understood by those with similar backgrounds. However, a further study by Jaspal (2017) showed British South Asian gay men withheld disclosing their religious identity, to prevent rejection or hostility from white gay men, in environments which did not adhere to 'political correctness' but openly discriminated on the basis of racist preferences for friendship and sex.

2.2.4.5 Conversion and Reparative therapy

Conversion therapy takes many forms, ranging from psychodynamic to behavioural therapies, but their shared ethos is that homosexuality is a developmental adaptation that can be changed (Karten & Wade, 2010), and that the distress caused by the sexual orientation can be eliminated through practicing abstinence (Byrd, Nicolosi, & Potts, 2008). In the UK, all major counselling and psychotherapy bodies have signed a "Memorandum of Understanding" declaring that conversion therapy is dangerous (BACP, 2019), though one in six psychological therapists had engaged clients in efforts to change their sexual orientation (Stonewall, 2018). Conversion therapies contribute to medical narratives which construct LGBTQI+ identities as pathological degeneracy and have traditionally coalesced with religious and cultural narratives which construct LGBTQI+ identities as sinful and abomination against the laws of nature (Drescher, 2015.)

Contemporary religious communities have also supported, and in some cases developed, their own conversion or reparative therapies for LGBTQI+ people and, even where such practices are not formalised or labelled as therapy, consultation and spiritual guidance may be pursued by individuals and/or their families. LGBTQI+ Muslims may, therefore, be invited or coerced into dialogues which position their LGBTQI+ness as a problem which can be solved, and which associate such an identity with moral deviance. The 2018 Faith and Sexuality survey found that nearly 70% of those who had undergone conversion therapy had suicidal thoughts, where Cisgender Muslim respondents were most likely to have been offered conversion therapy (19%) (Ozanne Foundation, 2018). Following the Queen's Speech on 11th May 2021, the UK government has confirmed that it will take legislative steps to ban conversion therapies, however, at the time of writing the progress appears stalled, following a much criticised consultation (BBC, 2021).

2.2.4.6 Hate Crimes

Hate crime is defined as perceived to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on personal characteristics, with a functional definition ratified in 2007 by the UK government's criminal justice system. The Crown Prosecution Service defines these with specific relation to factors of race,

religion, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity. Coming originally from North America, the term presumes the presence of a bias or discriminatory attitude from the perpetrator, formulated as a form of oppression rooted in reasserting social hierarchies and marking relative power relations through aggression and violence, often by groups (Craig, 2002). Racial hatred accounted for 72% of hate crimes in 2019/20 and 15% were based on sexual orientation. Where religion of the victim was recorded, half of racial hate crimes were against Muslims (CPS, 2020).

Hate crimes with regards to sexual orientation and transgender identity have also increased in recent years. Sexual orientation hate crimes remain the second most commonly recorded hate crime across the UK, next to racial and religiously aggravated. A Stonewall report (2017) found that white LGBT people experience less hate crime than those identifying with an ethnic minority or belonging to a non-Christian faith, with young people at greatest risk. Statistics from the most recent Gay British Crime Survey showed that four in five LGBTQ people had experienced anti-gay hate crime in their lifetimes (Antjoule, 2016), and recent research points to an increase in incidents of hate crimes committed against sexual minorities (Bachmann & Gooch, 2017) The same report also finds that the majority of people experiencing hate crimes do not report it to the police.

Increasingly, such hate crimes occur online on social media. The Gallup 2020 poll of online hate crime found that half of 700 LGBTQI+ respondents had experienced online abuse 10 or more times, with trans people most likely to face abuse. Online hate crimes can include outing and 'doxing', the publishing of private or identifying information about a person without their consent with 73% of victims knowing their offender in some form and of those who have reported their victimisation to the police, 72% being dissatisfied with the response. Similarly, patterns of anti-Muslim hate-crimes are replicated online (Awan, 2014), and anti-Muslim social media posts can be used as predictors of offline crime levels (Williams, 2020).

Current laws, therefore, mean that religions recognised legally as racial groups, such as Sikhs and Jews, are afforded more protection than Muslims. A number of changes proposed by the Law Commission in early 2021 recommended expansions of existing laws but noted that difficulties exist in providing a

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coherent legal framework, meaning that LGBTQI+ Muslims, especially trans Muslims, have limited protection.

2.2.5 The Macrosystem

2.2.5.1 Islamophobia

After the events of September 11th 2001, British Muslims continue to face high levels of scrutiny, with revived narratives concerning the supposed incompatibility between Islam and British society prominent in national media and politics, and Baroness Warsi commenting that prejudice against Muslims was now acceptable and 'passed the dinner-table test' (Warsi, 2011).

Wariness and suspicion towards Islam and racism towards those racialised as Muslim has a much longer history within the UK, for example, in the Salman Rushie affair and the Iranian revolution (Said, 1981). The term Islamophobia, popularised by the Runnymede Trust (1997) has increasingly been deployed to describe the broad range of discriminatory processes which affect Muslims, and is often defined as a kind of cultural racism, where religious and ethnic identities are conflated, othered and excluded from mainstream society, with hostile attitudes positioning Muslims as a threat. Similar to homophobia, Islamophobia has been criticised as a term semantically denoting an irrational fear response, but which in practice encompasses a much wider range of emotions, attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, some have proposed anti-Muslim hate as a less ideological term that focuses less on constructions and perceived attributes of Islam and more on the intentional interpersonal dynamics that underlie perpetrator and victim (Allen, 2010), though others argue that Islamophobia is more accurate in accommodating those who are not Muslim but who nonetheless come to be associated with Islam and attacked (Runnymede Trust, 1997); either by accident in the case of Sikh men, for example, or more purposefully by those who seek to intimidate and denigrate those perceived as defending Islam. In 2018, an All-Party Parliamentary Group of British Muslims developed a working definition of Islamophobia, while this definition was widely adopted by local councils, Muslim communities and academia, the current Conservative government has rejected the definition and announced intentions to launch their own process, however, this has not occurred (BBC, 2019).

The impact of hate crimes and pervasive Islamophobia is reflected in British Muslims' own reports, where a review of survey research by Ipsos Mori (2018) found that 40% of Muslims surveyed in 2010-2011 thought there was more religious prejudice towards Muslims then than there had been five years prior, with 61% believing there was more prejudice towards Muslims than other religious groups. A quarter of Muslims in 2010 also felt they had experienced discrimination in the past five years, increasing with younger Muslims (36%), with half of all Muslims facing discrimination attributing this to religious discrimination. More than half of reported cases happened on the street in interactions with strangers, and 10% of the sample felt this had also happened when applying for a job and by teachers at school. Overall, a quarter of Muslims reported they were worried or fairly worried about being physically attacked due to their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion, compared to 9% of the general population.

A more recent report completed by the Muslim Council of Britain (2021) explored and compiled evidence of the ways in which Islamophobia is expressed, focusing on the attitudes and behaviours of non-Muslims; including the presence of institutional and structural forms of racism which affect British Muslims. These more subtle forms of Islamophobia shape the lived reality of British Muslims' social and economic lives, and fuel political narratives which seek to limit the influence and opportunities afforded to British Muslims. Islamophobia is similar to the conspiratorial, suspicious beliefs mirroring anti-Semitic tropes which purport that Muslim immigration to the UK is part of a larger plan to make Muslims a majority in the country, endorsed by 19% in a Yougov poll (Runnymede Trust, 2017). 31% of young children believe that Muslims are taking over England and grossly overestimate their proportion of the total population, similar to other studies which show that people regularly overstate such claims; 43% of people also expressed concern if a mosque was built near them; while 71% of people would like closer monitoring of Muslim faith schools; and 47% were not willing to accept Muslims as members of their own family.

Islamophobic beliefs are reported to be endorsed across the political spectrum and embedded within government, where prominent politicians, including the Prime Minister, have expressed derogatory views, most infamously in Boris

Johnson's column for the Telegraph describing women wearing the burqua as "letter-boxes" (Johnson, 2018), demonstrating that, just as intersectionality creates multiple levels of disadvantage for British Muslims, Islamophobic views are amplified through compounded platforms of privilege so that the relationships between politicians, the media and the public intertwine. However, Islamophobia seems most acute within the Conservative party, where the perception of threat and dominance by British Muslims is coupled with beliefs of incompatibility and a rejection of their vulnerability: nearly 60% of members of the party polled believed some areas of the UK have been effectively colonised–believing there are some areas where Sharia law operates to such an extent that they are 'no-go' areas– compared to 32% of the general population (MCB, 2021); 55% stating they see Islam as a threat to 'our' way of life; and 41% stating Muslims refuse to integrate and promote physical violence of women. Less than a third think discrimination is a problem for Muslims, compared to 62% of the population. Within Labour, a survey of Muslim members found that 29% had experienced Islamophobia, and nearly half did not believe that the party took the issue seriously nor would have confidence in Labour's complaints procedure (MCB, 2021)

2.2.5.2 Media

Negative portrayals of Muslims in the media strengthen narratives that are harmful to their reputation and esteem within British society, constructing a 'negative conflictual framework' (Poole, 2004) of Islam on an international and domestic level. For example, analysing data based on 68 news items on domestic issues relating to Muslims as part of a three-month monitoring period, Sian, Law and Sayyid (2012) found nearly half of depictions within media articles and broadcast clips associated Muslims with negative behaviour, rising to nearly 80% in some tabloids. Similarly, in a content analysis of 974 newspaper articles between 2000 and 2008, three major themes of terrorism, religious and cultural issues, and extremism, meant that Islam is most commonly portrayed as a direct provocation to the West, and more fundamentalist, conservative views of Muslims are centred for questioning and criticism. A later report, commissioned by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB, 2018), also found that terrorism was the most frequent theme of depictions of

Muslims in both fiction and non-fictional portrayals. As such, British Muslims have little recourse to positive narratives of their identity in mainstream media.

Depictions of LGBTQI+ Muslims are growing fastest on non-traditional media, including social media, providing platforms for LGBTQI+ Muslims to self-determine their representation for little to no cost, yet here, as well, LGBTQI+ Muslims are exposed to attacking comments. Increasingly, popular hashtags on platforms like Tiktok, such as #QueerMuslims and #LGBTMuslim, attract personal stories from LGBTQI+ Muslims which are invariably followed by comments by users dubbed the 'Haram police' which range from "may Allah guide you" or "AstghafarAllah[i]" to threatening, abusive language. In some cases death threats are made and popular users temporarily suspend their accounts (Shadijanova, 2020). Popular Muslim scholars such as Mufti Menk, who have become massively popular and influential among young people, nonetheless, hold anti-LGBTQI+ views (Dayan, 2013) creating problems for LGBTQI+ Muslims hoping to join online Muslim communities; they may also encounter users who dedicate their platforms to espouse dismissive or hateful views and go largely unmoderated, meaning that affirmative narratives run alongside and compete with narratives denying or decrying LGBTQI+ Muslim identities.

2.2.5.3 Homonationalism and Homonormativity

The increased acceptance of diverse sexual and gender practices and identities, particularly within the West, has been widely framed as a narrative of progress; where the legislative success of fortifying LGBT rights is seen as demonstrating the success of democratic processes, coupled with shifting attitudes seen to represent the maturity of Western society, compared against those seen to be regressive or backward. Butler (2008, p.113) argues that as a project of self-legitimisation, the West has typically placed "Europe and the sphere of modernity as the privileged site where sexual radicalism can and does take place" contrasted with "putative orthodoxies associated with new immigrant communities". Such narratives have become strongly associated with liberalism, meaning that LGBTQI+ rights are seen as an inevitable development of modernity, preventing imaginings of pluralistic futures and asserting that "struggles for sexual expression depend upon the restriction and foreclosure of rights of religious expression", and where secularity means "anti-Islam" (Butler, 2008) These framings conceal the ways in which the West continues to

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reproduce neo-colonial narratives, that frame the War on Terror paternalistically aiming to liberate uncivilised Arabs, while at the same time demonstrating Western dominance over a tamed rogue state in thrall to irrational ideology. In the UK, these masculinist conceptions can also be observed in David Cameron's "muscular liberalism" (2015) and the psychologization of counter-terrorism efforts in the national PREVENT strategy (Younis, 2020)

Puar (2017) has contributed the concept of homonationalism to elucidate the ways in which the West has mobilised LGBT rights as a measure by which to evaluate the right to, and capacity for, national sovereignty to create a moral supremacist hierarchy, including the embrace of nationalist and xenophobic tendencies by more mainstream LGBT communities, while simultaneously reinforcing the exclusion of LGBTQI+ identities. This supports a reimagining of citizenship and nationalism that accommodates some gender and sexual diversity in the form of LGBT rights, but also demands assimilation, which combined with neoliberal market forces produce homonormativity, where LGBT politics uphold heteronormative politics and are siloed in a "privatised, depoliticised LGBT culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (Duggan, 2002, p.8). In homonormative narratives, the specific struggles and concerns of trans, non-binary, and genderqueer politics and activisms are all too often erased from discussions of supposedly LGBTQI+ struggles, mirroring the marginalisation of trans, non-binary, and genderqueer subjects from LGBTQI+ spaces and representations (Browne and Bakshi, 2013; Doan, 2010). LGBTQI+ Muslims, thus, occupy an intersectional social location between political and social cultures, and suffer oppression through this position (Rahman, 2010).

Critics of homonationalism have said that Puar has idealised a racialised other, reproducing norms whilst trying to deconstruct them and that homonationalism is also a concept created in the West that attempts to explain complex relations in the East therefore robbing LGBTQI+ activists in non-western countries from determining their own native narratives of oppression and progress with limited relevance to their daily lives (Rao, 2014; Schotten, 2016).

2.3 Mapping out Resistance

Reflecting on this literature review, LGBTQI+ Muslims' lives might be described as 'problem-saturated' (White and Epston, 1990), with an emphasis on the oppression and vulnerabilities of this group overlooking initiatives which might be understood as resistance, or which point towards the possibility of LGBTQI+ Muslim joy and health. Conventions within academic and clinical psychology have consolidated narratives that locate distress within individuals as an intrapsychic battleground, so that queerness and Muslimness are placed on an imagined binary of opposition; reinforcing wider societal narratives where LGBTQI+ Muslims act as ciphers for Western individualistic idealisms set against an oppressive Islamic monolithic culture. At the same time, the relative dearth of affirmative narratives of queerness among Muslims communities mean that LGBTQI+ Muslims must also confront narratives of illegitimacy, denial or imagined extinction. Rahman (2010, pp.84), himself a LGBTQI+ Muslim and scholar, summarises LGBTQI+ Muslim's dilemma as: "located at an intersectional site which is the aporia of the oppositional cultures discourse: the point at which the shrill denials of homosexuality as Eastern, or Muslims as ever being Western, can no longer exist as truthful or authoritative claims because we exist." Rahman (2010) calls upon researchers to produce knowledges drawn directly from LGBTQI+ Muslims themselves to challenge this 'hegemonic negativity'.

2.3.1 Examples of Knowledges of LGBTQI+ Muslims

There is some evidence that LGBTQI+ Muslims are producing their own knowledges to move away from these impasse. There are now at least five openly gay Imams in the world (Singh, 2016). Some of these have supported alternative exegesis of religious texts, such as Mushin Hendricks, who trained as an Imam in South Africa to inform his research on Islam and sexual diversity (Hendricks and Krondorfer, 2011). His organisation *Inner circle* functions as a mosque and social space for LGBTQI+ Muslims. In his academic work, he highlights Quar'anic verses which allow positive interpretations of homosexuality and the contradictions with Hadith routinely misappropriated to condemn LGBTQI+ Muslims, which must ultimately submit to the primacy of the Quar'an. He argues that the principal addresses of the Quar'an were aristocratic males in a deeply patriarchal state and that within a short time the Prophet

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Muhammad raised the status of women greatly and that his mission was not concluded in his lifetime but provides a foundation for the *ihjtihad*[3] of followers and jurists). He emphasises choice and freedom as central messages of the Quran and revises interpretations which typically associated the story of Lot with homosexuality (Hendricks, 2010), similar to those found in other LGBTQI+ revisionist Christian theologies (Cheng, 2011). Such theologies may be described as liberation theologies insofar as they attempt to offer a contribution and critique of contemporary problems with a focus on international movements rooted in racial, gender and economic injustices.

A number of organisations based in the UK are now working to achieve similar aims, foremost Imaan who work with LGBT Muslim people to provide a support network and advocate, for example organising the UK's first LGBTQI Muslim Pride (BBC, 2019). Shah (2006, pp.45) described workshops she developed for Imaan for "Demystifying Sharia" to promote more inclusive interpretations of Islam through contextualising Qur'anic verses perceived as misogynistic and homophobic, and fostered comradery among participants over a six week course. She was inspired by the work of Kugle (2010), a gay South Asian Muslim whose work offers critical reflection and analysis of Islamic scripture, jurisprudence and Hadith, and the educational projects attributed to critical pedagogue Paulo Freire. Apart from these spaces, LGBTQI+ Muslims have also organised their own recreational spaces, such as Club Kali, which offers parties and posts reflecting blogs on issues affecting LGBTQI+ Muslims (Basi, 2008), while notable drag queens, a mainstay of LGBTQI+ culture, are also featuring increased visibility of Muslims.

In deep contrast to these reformist initiatives, the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain (CEMB) is an organisation established in 2007 by self-identified apostates of Islam, many of whom are exiles from Iran, reject what they perceive to be regressive voices within Islam and the authority of Muslim community leaders who they accuse of representing a threat to secularism and universal freedoms protected in British law, including interference "in the private

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[3] Ijtihad is a an Islamic legal term meaning "independent reasoning" and has changed meaning over the course of history. Historically, the term related to the activity of qualified jurists justifying legal arguments, however contemporaneously the term is often deployed by those seeking to demonstrate entitlement for advancing reformist positions against historical judgements, as defined by Quadri (2021) in Oxford Bibliographies.

lives of women and men and their personal, emotional and sexual relationships and sexuality." (CEMB, 2021). They claim that apostasy is a liberatory act against the "shackles of theology" and organise events appropriating LGBTQI+ language of coming out to encourage celebration of the renunciation of religious identification as Muslim arguing that visibility counters the shame and isolation characterising some Muslim's relationship to the faith of Islam and supporting those facing threats by their families or members of their community. In 2017, CEMB attended Pride in London to protest the death penalty for homosexuality in the name of Shari law, attracting complaints from both the East London Mosque but also Imaan for promoting problematic narratives of Muslims and being Islamophobic, deepening divisions between communities. Gopffarth and Ozyurek (2020) argue that Ex-Muslim discourses may compound narratives which depict a contradiction between Western rational liberalism and religious illiberalism. These controversies underline the extent to which LGBTQI+ Muslims continue to construct their identities at risk, with consequences for inclusion or exclusion from not only LGBTQI+ people, Muslims but other LGBTQI+ Muslims.

The existence of liberation theologies, and grassroots organisations for LGBTQI+ Muslims as well as secularist organisations suggests that generating critical consciousness and affirmative stances towards LGBTQI+ Muslim's lives can be achieved, even against a backdrop of academic literature centring problematised framings of these identities.

2.4 Summary, Gaps and Aims

Reviewing the available literature demonstrates a lack of studies going beyond explorations of distress, with an emphasis on stories of victimisation and supposed incompatibilities in being LGBTQI+ Muslim, and an overrepresentation of South Asian Gay men offering little evidence of how LGBTQI+ Muslims survive and thrive in spite of their struggles. This contrasts with the efforts to rally and create collective resistance in community initiatives which have largely escaped scholarly attention. Therefore, psychological literature would benefit from further exploration of the skills and knowledges characterising this group using an approach which avoids the epistemological

assumptions privileging the researcher's agenda above what might form from a joint endeavour with LGBTQI+ Muslims (which will be elaborated upon in the Methodology section of this thesis).

In light of the gaps identified, and following a series of initial consultations, the following aims were generated:

- To hear the preferred personal and collective narratives, including those of creative resistance, of LGBT+ Muslims.
- To work directly with LGBT+ Muslims in a way that is experienced as meaningful and supportive and draws upon participatory action research for co-research.
- To co-construct a collective narrative methodology which can be shared with individuals and organisations who may find this useful

These aims will be guided by the key questions:

- What stories do LGBT+ Muslims tell?
- What do these stories say about how LGBT+ Muslims frame, account for and locate their experiences of oppression and connect these to their sense of identity?

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter will outline the research epistemology and methodology and describe and justify the form of data collection and analysis used. Ethical and procedural considerations, including amendments, will be discussed.

3.1 Epistemology

Epistemology concerns the assumptions of what constitutes knowledge and how it is known: "providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible" (Maynard, 1994, p.3). The reflexive researcher's epistemological position delimits appropriate methods to produce knowledge and the claims that can be made of what is found. In conducting this research, I am adopting a social constructionist position which asserts that LGBTQI+ Muslims' narratives are best understood as a result of social relationships, where reality is constructed by the complex and dynamic interactions between people and their historical, cultural and social context (Gergen, 1973).

This position allows me to consider how LGBTQI+ Muslims' narratives are emergent texts that reflect and reproduce relationships to their context, including the immediate research context between participant and researcher (McNamee, 2012). Social constructionism attends closely to the language used by people to describe their experiences and the performative power of language, providing a way of conceptualising the various ways that people's subjectivities impress upon and are in turn shaped by a social consensus of meaning, which serves as a foundation for communication. Between participants and the researcher, this co-creation in meaning occurs dialogically, where "each kind of utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances" (Bahktkin, 1986, pp.33) and in this research, it emphasises the role of the researcher and participants in co-constructing the knowledge produced.

Within research more generally, social constructionism repudiates realist assertions in the need to observe and measure universal truths; findings are a moment only, not absolute or generalisable and, therefore, researchers must take responsibility for the action of writing about other people and how these constructions can influence relationships between people and institutions and society as whole (Burr, 2003). In this way, epistemological positions are axiological: they pertain to values and perform a normative function in guiding not only the method but the form, tone and means of representing findings to an audience (Carter and Little, 2007).

For my study, social constructionism provides a theory of knowledge that encourages consideration of the broadest possible range of influences and does not control for or minimise factors which risk complicating analysis. In affording opportunities to explore multiple overlapping contexts, I will be encouraged to engage fully with the intersection of identities of LGBTQI+ Muslims, which form a site of potential struggle but which must also be a site of creative resistance (Afuape, 2011).

In adopting a social constructionist methodology, one must consider an appropriate approach that should afford a critical view of naturalism and attend to the diversity, including contradictory qualities, of meaning-making by and between participant and researcher as well as the research context and wider

context understood as complex relations and performance of power, including through language (Anderson, 2012). Complementing an acknowledgement of the ways in which LGBTQI+ Muslims have had a limited platform from which to self-determine the language used to describe them, the narrative turn in social science research has been credited with privileging participant's self-generated meanings whilst simultaneously allowing the researcher to examine narratives not as expressions of individual's internal states but as social phenomena. Given that the participants in this study are defined by their relation to a set of configurations of group identities, a narrative approach was chosen to pay careful attention to each's subjectivity, capable of performing alliances, conflicts and negotiations of individual and collective identities (Esin, Fathi & Squire, 2013). Finally, in attending to power relations from the beginning and how these can also be performed by the researcher, a narrative approach was thought to support a guiding ethic to hold the researcher accountable not only to the content of the stories told as a form of information but to the story of the research itself inviting a critical, tentative approach to interpretation. As narrative approaches have not achieved nor intend to seek a clearly defined protocol for analysis unlike other forms of qualitative research such as grounded theory or Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, this requires the researcher to reflect on how his analysis might best serve the interests of her topic, including those who choose to participate, inviting the possibility of developing and where necessary correcting analysis upon receiving feedback from participants (Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2013).

3.2. Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis (NA) was chosen as a method of data analysis, as this complemented the narrative framework informing the data collection process, and in line with social constructionist epistemology, allowing for an analysis of meaning with attention to the dominant narratives which shape individual and collective struggles and acts of resistance. Moreover, NA preserves the integrity of individual narratives, which cannot be wholly interpreted through a macroscopic lens, thus, protecting against reductionist trends and, instead, celebrates "a kind of politics-and theory- of the ordinary: ordinary LGBTQI+ people who live ordinary lives that are not effectively – nor, for that matter, humanely, described by arguments about 'bigger structures'" (Ritchie, 2015;

p211) NA does not attempt to satisfy sampling standards and procedures associated with a logical positivistic framework of "saturation" which aim for establishing generalisable findings, instead preferring detailed examinations of the storying of lives made by a small number of people.

People appear to deploy narratives readily across cultures to account for their experiences, meaning it is easy to elicit multiple stories. Moreover, unlike tests such as questionnaires, which generate fixed responses, people often revise their stories, even as they tell them, as well as engage in spontaneous elaborations responding to the present moment, including the context around them, providing a dynamic flow of telling and retelling which may feature humour, ambiguity, paradoxical claims, hyperbole and other eccentricities that all reveal conceptions of the self, others and the world (Butina, 2015).

Reissman (2008) argues that NA privileges the integrity of individuals and the stories they tell, encouraging the voice and humanity of the narrator as heard by the researcher to be preserved and accentuated, using a musical metaphor of slowing a composition down to appreciate it more fully. This in-depth form of analysis, thus, attends to moment-by-moment storying and re-storying, occurring in the context of an interpersonal process with the researcher, whilst honouring the ultimate singularity of individual participants set apart from all others. This seems important as LGBTQI+ Muslims are a marginalised group whose preferred narratives are susceptible to being overwritten by oppressive societal narratives, including those that dehumanise. Dehumanising practices can be understood as those that treat others as a means to an end, liken humans to inanimate objects, deny distinctively human attributes or obstruct the appreciation of such attributes by others (Mikkola, 2011).

Studying identity through narratives was first established in the field of personality psychology termed as narrative identity research. McAdams (2008, p.9) described narrative identity as stories of "our struggle to reconcile who we imagine we were, are, and might be in our heads and the bodies with who we were, are, and might be in social contexts", emphasising identity as fluid and transforming over time. This may be particularly relevant to LGBTQI+ people whose identity is often framed in relation to varying private and public performances (Butler, 1996).

3.3 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

An approach which serves the aim of hearing the preferred stories of LGBTQI+ Muslims must confront the pragmatic difficulties in engaging marginalised groups who are seen as 'hard-to-reach'. Furthermore, I was keen to ensure that whatever my approach to conducting this research, I sufficiently addressed issues of power and made opportunities for participants to shape the research. This would support participants to co-create a 'safe-enough space' (Roth, 2019) or a 'brave space' (Arao and Clemens, 2013) for dialogue oriented towards social justice and sharing their preferred stories where my literature review had identified that being openly LGBTQI+ Muslim was storied as risky and exposing. The negotiation of this space between participants encouraged LGBTQI+ Muslim creativity and, in this way, also served a desire to situate myself alongside LGBTQI+ Muslims and reduce the traditional power dynamics of researcher and researched (Radermacher & Sonn, 2007; Wadsworth, 1998).

The flexibility afforded by PAR challenges epistemic and structural conventions to academia and its institutions, which predominantly rely on instructional designs where objectives are identified *a priori*. In contrast, PAR encourages non-hierarchical ever-developing learning among participants who may reassess circumstances as they evolve and respond in turn (Simonsen & Robertson, 2012; Deleuze and Guattari, 1980). This positions the role of the researcher as facilitator of multiple possible knowledges, rather than an expert. This flexibility allows for marginalised knowledges to be centred and curtails the imposition of research agendas that can be experienced as neo-colonial, however is not sufficient alone as in interfacing with the institution and the ethical demands of her professional role as a psychologist she must also establish some boundaries to her work (temporal, spatial, thematic) and attend to the welfare of participants (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). This meant that, while PAR would inform and influence my conduct during this study, it could not be fully realised and, therefore, it would be important to consider what is generated by what is lacking in my part-implementation of PAR.

3.4 Collective Narrative Practice

Collective narrative practice can be defined as the anthropological researching of problems and an archiving of insider knowledges (Denborough, 2008). It provides opportunities to analyse both individual stories of struggle and creative resistance, as well as collective identities, and has been used in a wide range of contexts to document the skills and knowledges of people in response to collective trauma. For example, young Muslim women from Adelaide responded to the racism, sexism and islamophobia they faced with a video documenting their responses entitled: "We try not take people's hate into our hearts" (Dulwich Centre, 2017). Such documents serve my research aims by respecting the language and form of expressions participants choose, and encourages them to draw upon their life experiences and reflect on how these might be rooted in their history and culture. Collective narrative practice invites "double-storied testimonies" of struggle and strength (Denborough, 2008), trauma and triumph, and this marries well with an intention to avoid the pitfalls identified within my literature review that centre psychological problematised accounts of the lives of LGBTQI+ Muslims.

3.5 Liberation Psychology

Liberation psychology is most commonly associated with the work of Martín Baró, Baró (1996) asserted that the purported neutrality of traditional psychology failed to serve society's most marginalised and bore little relevance to the socio-political problems which perpetuated their oppression. Furthermore, it critiqued the claims of universality from experimental social psychology, which drew upon logical positivistic frameworks; additionally, most research relied upon white, middle class, undergraduate males for subjects. As such, liberation psychology supports a foundational methodological framework which avoids two tendencies within clinical psychology, identified as foreshortening the narratives of LGBTQI+ Muslims. In its effort to raise political consciousness, it helps highlight the way LGBTQI+ Muslims lives are affected by various ideologies and contextualises their distress within relationships of power (rather than individualised pathologies). Furthermore, in rejecting universality, it privileges the irreducible singularity of each participant's story, as opposed to

analyses which claim each participant speaks for their entire group. As such, liberation psychology concentrates its gaze both upon the othering processes by those in power upon those who are oppressed, and on alienation, the process by which individuals are estranged to their own humanity by way of their stratification into social class (Burton & Kagan, 2015).

3.6 Ontology: Faith and Sexuality

In considering the epistemological position of the current research, it is helpful to acknowledge that participants may hold positions that contrast with social constructionism. For example, expressions of faith are most commonly based in realist assertions on the existence of God and, similarly, sexual orientation is most often couched in the language of inherent sexuality, of being "born this way". The current study does not attempt to make any claims or counter-claims about the legitimacy of these naturalistic positions, but states simply that they are of interest, and are themselves formed contextually, idiosyncratic and develop over time (Bettridge, 2012).

In considering the significance of social constructionist claims in the case of faith and sexuality, respective claims from a social constructionist stance have generated seismic waves in the debates of so-called 'human nature'. Firstly, they put forward highly provocative, global, anthropocentric claims about a world tied irrevocably with human perception, so that religious and scientific concepts become only "words [...] for those with promises to keep" (Auden, 1976, pp.56), anchored to human actions and language. Secondly, they frustrate our intuitive sense of knowledge as something embodied or felt, trying to show that, instead, these stem from unacknowledged social practices and act covertly. It is understandable then that, for some, strong social constructionist claims can be experienced as invalidating personal experience and destabilising one's sense of integrity, denying marginalised groups their shared identities and histories (Pillow, 2007), which may in turn weaken political action. For LGBTQI+ Muslims volunteering to provide important stories from their lives, whose existence is already at turns questioned, denied and/or erased, and for whom this study is a potential audience, describing their identities as social constructs may be experienced as personal and constituting another attack from sites of institutional power (Freedman, 2017),such as the academy. Thus, while social constructionism's anti-essentialist stance has arguably done much

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to undermine the fundamentalist oppressive practices of hierarchies associated with religion and science, it would be naïve to assume all social constructionist research is interpreted as liberatory: the enemy of your enemy is *not always* your friend.

3.7 Representing Others

The current study aims to amplify the voices of LGBTQI+ Muslims within an emancipatory framework committed to social justice, whilst acknowledging that individuals have multiple identities which can be foregrounded and opinions which shift, meaning that the opinions of participants in this study cannot represent all LGBTQI+ Muslims. Moreover, any voices amplified are also interfered with by the processes of research and the researcher's lens, assumptions, etc. and, while efforts inspired by PAR have been made to redistribute power throughout, the present study's limited ability to fully adopt PAR mean that methodological factors shaping participants' stories are indivisible from the accounts generated (Arnstein, 1969). Thus, to elicit narratives, open questions in everyday language were used, inviting participants to respond in a manner not unlike that of a conversation, with supplementary, probing questions to encourage the thickening of stories. In each interview, my primary role was to be guided by the participant and, therefore, a fixed interview schedule was not required, nor desirable (Peck & Murray, 2008).

3.8 Ethics

Ethical approval was given by the University of East London (UEL) School of Psychology Ethics Committee (Appendix B). An information sheet and consent form was provided to participants directly via email (Appendix C; Appendix D) and, subsequently, revisited during an online pre-research meeting. Participants were informed of the purposes of the study and their rights, including to withdraw data and to stop at any point in the process. Confidentiality and anonymity were discussed in detail, such as procedures for eliminating identifiable information and how it would be stored, which can be found in the

Data Management Plan (Appendix E). Potential participants were also made aware that as this was a group process, the researcher could not assure them completely that others in the group would not break confidentiality and, as such, this remained a risk which should be considered.

3.9 Procedure

3.9 1 Sampling, Recruitment and Participants

Before starting my recruitment process, I was keen to consult with relevant organisations who might be interested in joining me to think about the research and to explore possibilities for collaboration, in line with the principles of PAR, which encourage researchers to work with existing communities and draw upon local resources (White, 2005). In determining who to approach, I chose to prioritise organisations specifically set up and led by LGBTQI+ Muslims for other LGBTQI+ Muslims, of which there are now several in the UK as these organisations were more likely to have organically formed to serve the community's needs (Montero, 2007).

After some time, one organisation responded with an invitation to meet, Hidayah, a charitable organisation founded in 2017 and whose mission is "to provide support and welfare for LGBTQI+ Muslims and promote social justice and education about our community to counter discrimination, prejudice and injustice." (Hidayah, 2021) Providing regular meet-ups for members, Hidayah also offers a mentoring programme, educational workshops, talks and well-being support such as signposting and discussion groups. Upon further discussion, they agreed to support the research by advertising my call for participants (Appendix F) to their members via their monthly newsletter and providing a space at their office for us to meet. They also invited me to attend several events for their members, where this was felt to be appropriate and events had specified that those who identified as allies to LGBTQI+ Muslims could attend; for example, a poetry night where members were invited to read their own or others' poems and a launch night for the organisation's podcast, which featured members discussing the intersection of faith and sexuality. During these meetings, I made myself known to the group as a researcher who had been recommended to observe and learn how the organisation engages with its members, making it clear that I was neither a LGBTQI+ Muslim nor

conducting any research on those present. The decision to declare myself openly was made in partnership with members of the board for the organisation, in an effort to strike a balance between being sufficiently transparent with members as to the reason for my presence, whilst minimising disruption to spaces designed to cater to the needs of LGBTQI+ Muslims above all else. In accepting these invitations to attend, I was mindful of community psychology principles of engaging with communities in their community, and to benefit from potential learning experiences from those in the community. I also thought this was important given organisations had told me that their members were not always trusting of external researchers and had become fatigued with repetitive calls to discuss their difficult life experiences.

Research utilising a narrative approach does not seek the kind of theoretical saturation common to other qualitative approaches, defined as the point at which "no additional data are being found… whereby the research can develop properties of the category" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; p61). Saunders et al. (2018) instead comments that "in narrative research, a role for saturation is harder to discern. Rather than the sufficient development of theory, it might be seen to indicate the 'completeness' of a biographical account" moving away from a thematic organisation of data to one which "tends to focus more on strands within individual accounts… these strands are essentially continuous, whereas themes are essentially recurrent" (Saunders et al, 2018, pp.124-125). As a result, insofar as narrative approaches do not rely on the identification of repetition as a marker of saturation, the researcher is asked instead to consider means by which narratives are enriched sufficiently through the process of data collection. In using a collective narrative practice methodology, where groups are formed for the purpose of telling and retelling stories, these considerations tend towards developing an appropriate context for their unfurling. For the current research, this means attuning to the duration of time and space within which participants speak, and so an initial aim of four to six participants was set. This was thought to be sufficient to allow some representation and diversity whilst affording ample time across meetings for participants to build trust and speak at length, effectively allowing each individual a chance to choose their own point of saturation.

3.9.2 Amendment to Procedure

On 26th March 2020, extensive restrictions on human activities were imposed across the UK in response to the reported emergence of COVID-19. As a result, I was no longer able to use the space offered, nor would we be able to meet in another space in person. Furthermore, as a result of the level of disruption to regular services, and an anticipated increase in the need for crisis support for their members, those members of staff who had expressed interest in co-facilitating any group process unfortunately withdrew. Due to their staff not being present at any subsequent meetings, we also discussed the appropriateness of my claiming to be working in partnership, and we concluded to, instead, promote me as an independent researcher within their existing networks. As such, an ethical amendment was made to accommodate changes to the methodology expected as a result of transitioning to an online format and to clarify the changing relationship with the organisation.

The nature of PAR means that relationships between the primary researcher and co-researchers are subject to transformation and a flexible response to changing environments is required (Baum, MacDougall & Smith, 2016). In the present study, the rupture caused by the restrictions prompted me to reflect on the desirability of continuing the research, especially given that a supportive relationship with an existing organisation had been broken and I would, therefore, need to act independently and be responsible for recruiting participants into an entirely new, online space. Given that the present study draws upon community psychology and collective narrative practice, these issues presented a crisis and I aimed to evaluate the feasibility and desirability of proceeding, conducting a cost-benefit analysis of continuation with key considerations identified (Appendix G)

3.9.3 Data collection

A total of five meetings of 1-2 hours duration were organised with participants at two-weekly intervals. Meetings occurred on Microsoft Teams and were designed to invite participants to influence and direct decision-making processes related to the central aim of the research, shared with potential participants.

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When planning meetings, I drew upon PAR to orient myself as primary researcher actively planning for opportunities where participants might influence the research process so as to work towards collaboration, considering the different needs of participants (Cargo & Mercer, 2008) and inspired by democratic values (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), and as part of an ongoing reflexive process of combatting power differentials (McTaggart, 1991).

The process of PAR is circular and iterative, involving spirals of change, acting, reflecting, replanning, acting and reflecting (Kemmis et al., 2014). To elicit narratives, open questions in everyday language were used, inviting participants to respond in a manner not unlike that of a conversation, with supplementary, probing questions to encourage the thickening of stories. In order to provide transparency and clarity as to how the current study developed, I have provided a short summary of each meeting below.

3.9.3.1 Session 1

I introduced myself and briefly revisited the participant information sheet, explaining the research aims and questions, and invited participants to share their preferred name and pronouns.

I then began a discussion around 'safe enough spaces' and how we would work towards this as a group, suggesting we come up with guidelines for the group. I also facilitated a conversation of hopes and fears, inviting participants to share these with each other. This invariably included participants sharing their reasons for joining the project and was combined with some self-disclosure of identities and values. For these exercises, I also participated in order to "warm the context" (Burnham, 2005:p15).

At the end of the meeting, I agreed to send some key quotes that reflected narrative approaches, a definition of creative resistance, and an example of a collective narrative document created by LGBTQI+ people and Muslims, taken from the 'encyclopedia of young people's knowledge and life-saving tips" (Dulwich centre, n.d) for us to discuss at our next meeting. This would serve as a shared foundation of our conversations of collective narrative documents and served as important scaffolding for participants to feel confident contributing as well as responding to a request by the participants to learn more about the approach.

3.9.3.2 Session 2

In our second meeting, participants reviewed the collective narrative document created by LGBTQI+ people and Muslims together, as well as the key quotes, reflecting on what interested or surprised them about this. Key quotes shared were:

"The problem is the problem, the person is not the problem" Michael White and David Epston

"An individual having unusual difficulties in coping with his environment struggles and kicks up the dust, as it were. I have used the figure of a fish caught on a hook: his gyrations must look peculiar to other fish that don't understand the circumstances; but his splashes are not his affliction, they are his effort to get rid of his affliction and as every fisherman knows these efforts may succeed." Karl Menninger

"When the Grand Lord passes the wise peasant bows deeply and silently farts." Ethiopian proverb.

This conversation led to a discussion on what values, skills or knowledges we might bring to the project. Participants explored their relationship to creativity and their own experiences of this, including involvement in similar initiatives, allowing us to shore up potential resources among us.

Finally, participants were invited to consider a preferred way of telling of stories, including the creative component. One participant suggested that I conduct individual interviews with participants, to ensure that I collect the most important stories of individual participants, whilst also encouraging further reflection to feed into a later group. This was endorsed by others and a further group meeting was scheduled for one months' time. Participants agreed that the creative component could come later in response to this meeting.

3.9.3.3 Individual interviews

Individual interviews were completed over the following two weeks, lasted approximately an hour each, and were audio recorded. At this point, one participant chose to withdraw from the study, the reasons for which are reflected upon in the discussion section. An introductory question was employed for each participant: "What stories from your life could you tell to help someone

understand the strengths and struggles of being LGBTQI+ Muslim?". Follow up questions were informed by collective narrative practice, drawing upon those found in Denborough (2008, p.36), expressed where appropriate to guide participants back to the telling of stories rooted in their experiences of strengths and struggles:

- What is the name of a special skill, knowledge or value that sustains you through difficult times?
- What is a story about this skill, knowledge or value – a story about a time when this made a difference to you or others?
- What is the history of this skill, knowledge or value – how did you learn this? Who did they learn it from?
- Is this skill or value linked in some way to collective traditions and/or cultural traditions?

3.9.3.4 Group discussion

After an acknowledgement of having lost one member to our group, we commenced a group discussion which was video recorded. We briefly reflected on the conversation and next steps. As a facilitator, I drew upon questions associated with outsider witnessing practices and followed guidance on how to perform this role to support the telling and retelling of stories (White, 2007; p.185) paying attention to four key parts: identifying the expression used, identifying the image, identifying resonance and identifying transport. For example, upon a story being told I asked "As you heard this story, what did it suggest to you about this person? What images come to your mind?" or "How do your own experiences affect how you are seeing them? Where has listening to this conversation taken you?"

3.9.3.5 Session four

One participant could not join us and sent his apologies. Those present chose to share more ideas with each other, including short pieces of writing they had made together. After sharing each other's writing, the two responded to each other's writing, with me asking questions from outsider witnessing.

3.9.3.6 Session five

We met again to plan possible actions to take forward. Participants expressed that they would be interested in working with existing organisations to share their stories and contribute to the collective narrative document. Participants reflected on the process of sharing stories with each other and agreed that it would be good to meet in person, once lockdown restrictions were lifted, to mark this. I agreed to complete a draft of the collective narrative document to share with the group.

3.9.3.7 Session six

A number of opportunities for collaborating were identified by the researcher and participants. We agreed to have a hiatus on meeting while I completed the draft of the collective narrative document and participants attended to various commitments coming up in the Summer. Participants were thanked for their contributions.

4. Analysis, Results and Discussion

The preferred stories of participants, told to me during the process of individual meetings, were retold in a collective retelling, where narratives were framed as responses to my invitation to answer the research questions. A dialogical-performativity narrative analysis was employed as this would support me in attending the ways in which stories told perform parts of their identity (Squire, 2014) attending to relational aspects of being interview which include an anticipation of the audience, namely myself as researcher and future readers of the research. While there is no standardised procedure for narrative analysis (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996) a close reading of texts with a 'performativity' lens hones focus and provides analytic strategies for identifying and organising individual narratives.

In the present study, transcripts were analysed, first as individual participants in dialogue with the researcher. In an interview context where excerpts may be published verbatim, performance and performativity were used as organising principles to appreciating the way multiple stories perform aspects of identity to present and imagined others. A "double listening" (White, 2004) allowed for stories of oppression and resistance to be heard where the researcher listens

for each in parallel and is open to the idea that these may be implicit even where oppression and resistance was not explicitly identified by the participant, in line with narrative approaches which eschew linear reasoning and embrace a both-and perspective on seemingly contradictory stories as representing a 'polyphony' of voices representing multiple subjectivities and which, while constitutive of identity accumulatively, can be amplified or dampened by context (Bakhtin, 1984).

The researcher listened to the recordings several times, and made reflexive notes during this process before transcribing each interview verbatim into written documents for analysis. After this familiarisation, the transcripts were re-read to identify stories with these highlighted and denoted. Stories were given provisional titles to support the differentiation of narratives. The researcher then reviewed each story with a focus on stories of struggle and resistance, asking of each story: does this story concern both faith, gender expression and/or sexuality? Do these stories of struggle suggest acts of resistance? Do these stories of resistance suggest a struggle against oppression? What change do these stories offer to the participant in relation to their context?

Stories were analysed in their entirety but are presented here in illustrative quotes, which serve the analysis, and are organised into a series of analyses of individual narratives and a collective narrative.

4.1 Individual Narratives

Participants were invited to write self-described characteristics they felt relevant and wished to share with potential readers and were asked to choose an appropriate pseudonym, presented below:

Chosen Pseudonym	**Self-described Characteristics**
Zubeir	I was 20/21 at the time of the research. I identify as a cisgender gay man and I come from a Mauritian background but I was born and raised in the U.K. I identify as a cisgender male but have often questioned my gender identity.
Murat	35, Assigned Male at Birth, Male, Turkish Cypriot
Mahmoud	30, Assigned Male at Birth, Male, British Bangladeshi

Following the chronology of events, I will now present narratives from the individual interviews, starting with how participants set-up the telling of their narratives followed by two major narratives.

4.1.1 Zubeir

Zubeir begins his story by summarising his position towards the topic of his identity as a LGBTQI+ Muslim rooted in his experiences of isolation, seemingly warning me of the pessimistic tone he will offer at times before honing his focus immediately upon straight Muslims living in the UK which he categorises into a 'rule of three' analysis whilst simultaneously acknowledging the breadth of an issue which he hesitates to simplify:

> The best way to properly describe it, it's quite a sad way to describe it, but it's probably isolated and lonely. I'd say because one you can't really find other people who are like you, and second of all, I think this is a really like this is a very very broad, interesting topic, but like in terms of like straight Muslim people like there's such a huge diversity of the kind of people you can meet like I found, especially in the UK I feel like in the UK you can categorize them into like 3 different categories.

Zubeir then sets the scene for understanding his struggles by foregrounding strict gender relations against behaviours such as drinking and smoking which he attributes to non-practicing Muslims coupled with an immediate reference to the most infamous punishment attributed to Islam, death by stoning. In so doing, Zubeir appears to reflect dominant narratives which portray a binary between Islam and the West (Butler, 2008), here characterised as a faith requiring abstinence and harsh injunctions compared to Western permissiveness and self-indulgence. However, upon employing this binary he similarly emphasises a 'fair majority' of Muslims who occupy a moderate position, though this claim is then arguably changed by reference to those whose is "neither here nor there", as if lacking complete coherence and relatively inflexible with regards to views of homosexuality:

> You get the people who are like very, very extremely religious [...] I used to work in this part of the library and it was often like filled with like other Muslim people like there were these men. They were so so religious that like if they saw women coming in they would just look down and like they

just wouldn't even look at her just because you know you not meant look at women and things like that. And then you get like, um? I'd say like a fair majority of people. Um, well, not a majority, but you get like another group of people who are like kind of moderate. Neither here nor there. Like yes, they practice their religion, but they're very like moderate about things. And then you get like a group of people who just like a very, like they don't really practice. They drink, they smoke, they do with these kind of things whatever and what I found is the way that you get treated amongst these people is so interesting and unique, like the religious people, the super religious people. A lot of the time, like depending on how I come over because they were literally just be openly like no I think like these people should be stoned [...] and like that's obviously expected like I didn't really expect anything else of them. But then, like what I find really really so interesting and really saddening is that like for the people who are like in the middle, that like neither here not neither here nor there.

Levels of religiosity vary greatly between Muslims, highly dependent on interrelating factors (Bowman, 2004). In articulating these extremes, Zubeir discursively establishes a focus on those most relevant to his own imminently unfolding narrative, simultaneously dismissing those occupying extremes.

4.1.1.1 "I guess she doesn't mean harm"

Zubeir's story gave me the sense of a voice of one who is confident having developed personal rules which help him protect the closeness he feels in his relationships and which helps mobilise his resources to keep people away who might do him harm:

> Honestly, The thing is, is that like to be honest, she's the only exception for me. She's the only person who I would let. Not let [...] but I think that's the only person who I hate to say this. But like can get away with it with me because I I know, I know her on a very, very deep level. I know how like very very well, and I know she doesn't [...] I guess she doesn't mean harm.

Zubeir initially foregrounds his freedom to choose who he gets close to, seemingly adopting a reflexive position where he "lets" his close friend break

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the rule, but he immediately switches to "can" suggesting two voices which seem to echo throughout the narrative. Stonewall (2007) show that while the majority of religious people agree that homophobia is wrong, religious attitudes remain a source for the justification and expression of homophobic views. It is unclear where the "I" that "hates to say" is one possibly performing regret at having allowed his rules to be broken in the past or one expressing discomfort of storying his closest friend as a person who does wrong by him, perhaps in the context of an interview where he imagines me or other audiences who might judge him for permitting these transgressions. In expressing his dilemma, Zubeir possibly prefigures and resists a dominant narrative which argues LGBTQI+ people and allies must challenge all forms of oppression as acts of courage towards collective liberation. Zubeir's use of the phrasal verb "get away with" asserts that his friend's behaviour is unacceptable but he narrates the extraordinariness of his relationship as a unique exception to his rules which he ultimately chooses to accept based on his individual wisdom. Arguably, the self that 'hates to say' therefore also directs our attention towards what has been achieved and what is at stake: a relationship that is special and so is worth saving. In reflecting and expressing the pain of this decision, Zubeir may resist a self-blaming narrative by engaging critically with the ultimate decision to maintain friendship.

Zubeir's narrative also features a less confident voice. He tells us that he does return to this decision at times and feels himself to be "really, really stupid" although even here Zubeir remains active, "putting myself" into situations:

> Then again, I think a lot of the time I stop and I think am I just being really, really stupid and really foolish like a lot of time. I will admit I think I'm being incredibly stupid putting myself around these kind of things, but apart from her I don't take that kind of [...] I don't take that kind of thing for anyone. Like if someone says that to me, that's it, like we're just not gonna be friends like that's it. We're not going to interact. I'm not going to put myself in my visit in a position where I speak to you.

Minority stress theory (Meyer, 2003) argues that LGBTQI+ people experience distinctive levels of stress based on their experiences of stigma and discrimination. Zubeir seemingly asserts the proactive way with which he manages less close relationships, contrasting the distinct strategies he uses.

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With those that are less close, Zubeir acts definitively, almost automatically. In so doing, Zubeir appears to counterbalance the ambivalence characterising his close relationships:

> Um? Other than that, you know, I think. I just have to [...] . I guess, accept that that's the way they think and that's the way that made to think. And I just have to move along.

Zubeir concludes this part of his story by highlighting how dominant narratives shape the ideas of others which he has the power the reject, although in turn he must accept that he cannot change their views. This acceptance could be said to be creative insofar as it strengthens his commitment to his dual strategies of keeping people close or away by relieving his friends of responsibility for their actions allowing for reconciliation and empathy while justifying rejecting others who might do him harm.

A final part of the story could be understood as Zubeir contextualising his interpersonal struggles by bringing attention to the collective struggles of LGBTQI+ Muslims and the threat of violence, reflecting the assessments of risk that LGBTQI+ Muslims make before deciding to come out (Jaspal and Siraj, in press). Zubeir conjures 'the West' to emphasise the ubiquity of hate towards LGBTQI+ Muslims by other Muslims on social media admitting feeling unsafe and therefore supports a framing of Zubeir's protection of his friendship as a survival strategy:

> I think one of the things that's a really big difference is that [...] she's not going to commit like an act of violence against me. Like I know this sounds strange, but, a lot of the time nowadays you go online and you can easily see on like TikTok, Twitter, Instagram. You can easily find very very young Muslim people who grew up in the West in the UK in the USA who will go online and talk about how they should stone gay people, how they should kill them, how they would want to hate crime them, how they would throw them off buildings. It's so easy to find people like that. and the thing is that I know that she's not going to do that to me. I know that there's no threat of like physical violence towards me, so I think that's another thing that plays a huge part in that.

The ubiquity of dominant narratives questioning the legitimacy and rights of LGBTQI+ Muslims and their sudden distancing effects characterising Zubeir's struggles are elaborated upon across the remainder of his interview, here referencing the widespread prevalence of homophobic views on social media (Gallup, 2021), including from respected and popular voices seen to represent mainstream Islam (Shadijanova, 2020). While threatening his sense of safety, Zubeir could be said to privilege stories of the ways in which such narratives undermine his felt sense of closeness to people in spaces he chooses to be in even where they appear otherwise to value him. Moving on from this story about the anonymity of social media, Zubeir provides two short stories of his being assaulted due to his perceived sexual orientation by strangers in the street and his sense of disbelief that such a thing happens at all, although official reports show that hate crimes towards LGBTQI+ people and Muslims remain and are increasing (CPS, 2020). However, even here Zubeir's language arguably dismisses the meaningless of these interactions which, while distressing at the time, have attracted an absurd quality in retrospect, instead choosing to focus on his pain at the lack of empathy expressed by his friend's sibling and her own subsequent denial of this:

> I did have like an incident where [...] now that I think back, it's quite funny to me, but like one time this homeless guy approached me and he was like do you have any money? And I was kind of scared at the time and I didn't have cash 'cause sometimes I'm scared if I take out my wallet they might snatch it and run off [...] so I said no and he was like you fucking faggot and just walked off. I was devastated at the time, but now that I look back, that's hilarious to me that he said that out loud. And then another time this guy just randomly like punched me as I was walking down the street and I don't know whether or not that was to do with like sexuality or whatever [...] I told my friend about it at the time and she was like in shock and she was so upset and her brother was there at the time and I found out through a friend of a friend that her brother said like "Oh well that kind of thing is always going to happen to people like him" [...] and I found out from the mutual friend who was present at that time that my best friend she sort of was like Oh no, he didn't mean it like that. He meant it as in someone of his race and his ethnicity. But [...] obviously

> I know what her brother meant by that comment. I obviously know what he meant by that. And honestly, that really stung quite deep.

In contrast to the perceived LGBTQI+ identity which provokes the physical violence of two strangers, Zubeir's voiced LGBTQI+ Muslim identity and testimony of his struggles being unheard seems to be experienced as the most hurtful. Zubeir uses an ambiguous language of physical presence to summarise his story and generates an image of embodied LGBTQI+ Muslim identity as liminal:

> Like you feel close, but you never feel like 100% there, you know.

Zubeir continues to use language evoking presence and erasure to describe how "you cannot be gay and Muslim at the same time – if you are one that cancels out the other" and finds the injunction to break apart his LGBTQI+ Muslim identity "disturbing" and "nonsensical" reflecting the imposition of narratives which construct LGBTQI+ Muslim identities as impossible (Rahman, 2010):

> Nothing's gonna change if I pray it away [...] and I think one thing that I've noticed about [...] the straight Muslim community as a whole is the way they say you cannot be gay and Muslim at the same time. If you are one that cancels out the other. And whatever nonsensical reason they give behind that, that's fine. But the thing is, when you look at [...] these men and women. These women don't wear hijab. These men – they're having sex before marriage, they're drinking, they're looking at women, committing sexual assault they're committing rape [...] they're committing all these different types of things which are equally a sin but that somehow never precludes them from being Muslim. [...] You can still be violent. You can still be Muslim and you can still like, you know, be an abuser and people will still accept your faith as valid, but for us it's like no. Once you're this you can't be that. And that only happens to us.

Zubeir could be said to be setting apart his own careful reasoning from the fixed ideas of others providing resources to rally himself against narratives which would ask him to choose his Muslim identity over his LGBTQI+ identity adopting a tone which is confidently defiant. Zubeir's earlier summary of LGBTQI+ Muslims lives being isolated and lonely are here transformed from individual

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struggle to collective struggle with anger expressed in a form of solidarity with other LGBTQI+ Muslims against those whose justifications for oppressive practices is experienced as hypocritical and unfair:

> They keep on pushing again and again and again. It's like you can't be both of them at the same time. It's either one or the other, but for all these other wide variety of people who don't wear hijab, smoke, drink, eat pork, do whatever. It's fine, so it's a very like. Hypocritical kind of thing and like you know you'd think that these kind of things come from like old people from like. People who grew up abroad, people who grew up in India, Pakistan, Turkey, whatever, no, absolutely not. This is coming from people. I go to University with people who grew up here their whole lives. People who were born and raised here. People who are doctors you know. Medicine students lawyers.

Zubeir seemingly rails against the narrative of incompatibility of being LGBTQI+ and Muslim not through arguing for the legitimacy of his existence but by underscoring the incompatibility of positions taken by other Muslims who also sin, casting the gaze back at those who would criticise him. Returning to examples concerning the intersection of gender relations and religion more broadly and then abusive behaviours, Zubeir implies a juxtaposition between those who would harm others relative to his sin which while not directly stated is evoked through the repetition of "again and again and again" portraying nonviolent resistance in the face of provocation.

4.1.1.2 "I don't need anybody else to define my faith"

Zubeir's relationship to his faith is articulated later in the interview, narrating the importance of community to Islam through activities such as communal prayers and going on pilgrimage and marriage which are a cornerstone of Islam related to conceptions of Islam as a global community of Muslims, the Ummah, (Modood, 2005).

> People say that completing half of your faith is getting married like once you get married. That's half of your faith completed [...] these kind of things that are just like impossible for people like me like these kind of things are not impossible, but they're very difficult for me. [...] Praying with other people I will still do it but I do feel uncomfortable and I feel like

> very much like unsafe [[...] So I think where that leads me to the end at the end of the day, it's like I don't need anybody else to define my faith and my religion. I've come to the point where, like I think I've had to accept that it's literally just between me and God and that's it. I'm not reliant on other people and how they think they get to interfere with that.

Zubeir's language of impossibility conveys a pained self, mirroring an oppressive language which would deny the possibility of being LGBTQI+ in the community of Muslims, while his language of discomfort and a lack of safety suggest a self still hoping for connection and who ultimately generates a radical possibility of salvaging his relationship to his faith through a personal relationship with God, akin to contemporary invocations by liberation scholars of *ihjtihad* entitling individuals to independent reasoning for moral judgements (Hendricks, 2010):

> I have to sit down and listen to like the like the speeches the imam gives, but I have to take everything with a pinch of salt and realize that you know like OK, these people aren't exactly accepting of me so I just have to pretend like they are. Take the lessons that I learned from them religiously or otherwise and apply it to myself.

Though he conceals his LGBTQI+ Muslim identity, Zubeir shifts focus from dominant narratives of being closeted or out to pretending as an act of resistance to being excluded. Zubeir adopts a critical and selective stance towards the imam's teachings. In keeping his identity private, it could be interpreted that he maintains access to an important spiritual resource.

Zubeir invokes the benevolence of God to give meaning to his struggle where his LGBTQI+ Muslim identity is not "some sort of cruel trick" but a call for deeper engagement with his faith, using the example of Hijab in relation to LGBTQI+ women to interrogate narratives at the intersection of religious and patriarchal norms

> Strictly speaking, Islamically women a sort of meant to like cover up in front of like men who they could potentially get married to, like men who aren't the fathers, uncles, sons, brothers, things like that. But then you think about like OK, what about like lesbian Muslim women like? Are they still supposed to cover up? What are they supposed to do?

Zubeir's narrative carefully avoids mirroring Western narratives that reduce wearing of Hijab as sexist oppression and imagines a LGBTQI+ Muslim theology. Concluding this story, Zubeir repudiates cruelty for compassion, advising that his own approach is to "think what would a kind loving God want me to do in my situation".

4.1.2 Murat

Murat's foregrounds identities as potential labels which can be experienced as oppressive and his struggle to contend with and break free from the dominant narratives which threaten his sense of himself as an individual with agency. Having recently begun to identity as "ex-Muslim", Murat might be said to position himself in strong opposition to the perceived influence of Muslim identity on families who might otherwise be best described as secular with traditional patriarchal values against his own emerging sexual identity. Instead of providing a meaningful foundation for navigating life, Murat seemingly describes the various means by which identity and dominant narratives limit the scope of his openness to the world and narrow his opportunities to build connection with others, including his parents.

Murat begins his narrative by discussing his early experiences at school explaining the various ways in which he was marked out as different to others and his inner experience of feeling different

> I think I mean I'm going back to when I was really small in primary school. You do always feel different, or you may feel different. Just because you look a bit different to other kids. Well, I looked a bit different. I wasn't so pale white skinned or you know stereotypically, sort British looking or what people consider to be British looking or English, although I never refer to myself as English. I say British. Another ongoing debate you know should I be calling myself English? But yeah, just growing up as a as a British kid in the school there's ways of feeling sometimes out of place and different. I mean, I did go to school in a very multicultural area, so I probably wasn't as aware of it in primary school, but I think I think maybe secondary school actually, probably more. I had

an unusual looking name and at that point I did identify as Muslim. If there was a tick box with religions on there, I would have ticked Muslim, that's what I was told from a young age. I was just told you're Muslim, you're Turkish. You know there was no other identity.

4.1.2.1 "It was all put on me"

Murat could be said to perform himself as an outsider from an early age for whom identities function superficially as labels marking him based on characteristics such as his skin tone, nationality, ethnicity and religion. Identities are located entirely within societal narratives, both in harmful stereotypes and bureaucratic 'tick box' exercises and more proximally, within family structures. His language would appear to construct an oppressed self where identities are received passively and enforced through multiple contexts.

It was all put on me. It feels like this is who you are and you have to stay in it and comply with it, but my parents weren't religious Muslims. I actually stress it was very secular [...] A lot of my family drink alcohol [...] They wouldn't eat pork [...] I didn't eat bacon till I think I rebelled around my teenage years and I would, I would eat it outside of the home, but we would never have bacon. My mum still doesn't cook pork or bacon or anything like that, but they drink. I mean, I've seen my parents go to casinos and when on holiday they've gambled [...] It was very secular, but also traditional as well.. when I was five or six and goes five, I got circumcised [...] I've never read the Quran. I've never grew up learning Arabic. It was all very like you're Muslim. But we're not we're gonna follow it.

Murat use of a conjunction 'but' signals a shift towards discussing his parents' positioning. He lists embodied practices such as eating pork, drinking alcohol and gambling which are typically forbidden for religious Muslims and contrasts this with his particular context as a Turkish Muslim in a family with both secular and religious traditions. Rhetorically, Murat could be said to juxtapose the arbitrariness of him being asked to comply with an identity of Muslim as a child and the apparent lack of embodiment of this identity in his family. Murat seems

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to define adherence to Islam as both a series of performative actions which go largely unfulfilled with the exception of eating pork, and on a linguistic level the awareness and understanding of the Qu'ran and Arabic which are unknown to him and which are also commonly associated as foundations to practicing Islam. Murat therefore arguably constructs an alienation from his own Muslim identity and the contradictory relationship of his parents whose own identification appears to lack meaning. In his narration, Murat performs the voice of his parents as simple emphatic statements, "you have to", "you are", seemingly reflecting his sense of being the recipient of a contextual force, told what he is unidirectionally and definitively.

> Other times I didn't feel othered [...] I mean you just go through life and you go through the day and you're not reminded that your name is a bit different, or you know. You're not all these terms [...] I'm not sure if I even like these terms, but sort of BAME, black and minority. Ethnic or POC [...] I don't know how comfortable I am with using them, but I do use them for people understand when I'm talking about things. The BAME experience, the POC experience. Um? But yeah, I think I think the overwhelming sense of tradition and culture was quite claustrophobic.

Murat might be said to narrate a past childhood defined in terms given to him by others, yet his interview is punctuated with asides expressing discomfort with contemporary terminologies of racialised identities, performing a kind of lexical restlessness and resistance against identity as fixed. In particular, Murat draws attention to the problematic over-inclusiveness of these terms and their essentialist assumptions, asserting that he uses them only pragmatically. As an interviewer, I wondered whether this dialogically functioned to remind me and potential readers to be tentative in our associations of Murat as an individual speaker with the social categorisations he deploys which risk associating him too strongly with dominant social narratives which he has feels oppressed by. Instead, Murat readily problematises these as they are deployed, which might be understood as performing his new found sense of agency over terms he can critique and choose for himself against an "overwhelming" background experienced as "claustrophobic". This introduces what to my interpretation is a salient tone of being trapped that prefigures his later construction of an escape.
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I was always think of being at home and being closeted and not being who I really am [...] it gradually dawned on me that I'm not going to follow the trajectory of what my parents wanted, which is, you know, have a have a wedding and have a have a son.. meet a nice Turkish girl and. Yeah, I remember broaching at one point being an atheist at the kitchen table, I think I must be in my teens, and obviously got into an argument with my dad. I mean, they couldn't even entertain the fact that I might be agnostic or being atheist [...] it was a big furore. So I thought I can't even say that like without causing these problems. If I tell them that I'm gay, this is unquestionable.

Murat contrasts a life that is predetermined with his own early attempts to construct his own identity which generate a "furore". Expressing non-belief, or apostasy, in young adulthood causes conflict in families as religious identities often function as markers of social values and beliefs as well as epistemological claims about the existence of God (Parekh & Egan, 2020). Murat reproduces narratives which position LGBTQI+ identities as an exceptional taboo where even atheistic beliefs are positioned lower than coming out in terms of offensiveness to his family's religious and cultural beliefs. In the face of this potential for rejection, Murat seemingly withdraws from others and constructs home as a site of trauma:

It's that it was a process of trying to break away [...] It's I mean, it's sad really. But like yeah, I wanted to just break away from everything from the culture. And from just being at home, I had to leave because I couldn't stay [...] I couldn't stay there and be gay. I still find it hard [...] like I went back to my family home end of last year around Christmas time to go and get some GCSE certificates [...] and they were in my like old room at home and then even going back to my old bedroom, I find it triggering. I actually don't think of my bedroom as a happy place I remember thinking all the dark thoughts and all that, you know coming to terms with my sexuality [...] I was quite very insular in my 20s I spent a lot of time in my room I didn't go out and socialize. I didn't make a lot of friends. I think obviously I wasn't seeing anyone romantically because

that was not an option. I didn't wanna lie to myself and you know? Get with a female [...] and it's pretend 'cause. It was just it was. Yeah it was just too challenging like I just. I wouldn't want that anyway [...] it feel like betrayal.

Murat's narrative voice seems to me as one of indignance and one that strongly positions himself as a victim where the privacy and innocence of his childhood bedroom is upturned into an experience of isolation wherein Murat was consumed with 'dark thoughts' struggling to reconcile his LGBTQI+ Muslim identities. I wondered the extent to which Murat had been able to tell this story of struggle before and how in telling this to me as a researcher and psychologist he performed a legitimisation of his suffering moving away from a silenced victim to a testimony in protest. His strategies for resisting a predetermined "trajectory" visited upon by others seem to me to be constructed as acts of loyalty to an authentic self touching upon narratives of intrapsychic selves that can internalise homophobia and shame (Meyer, 2003).

4.1.2.2 "A sliding doors moment"

Having established this scene, Murat then skips forward to his coming out, using the injunction "should" to perform his regret at having not done this earlier, although from his preparatory talk it is unclear to me whether this is meant for himself as a self who had internalised shame or as self oppressed by others. This apparent polyphony is maintained when Murat portrays this action as both an act of bravery, of deliberation and liberation, and as the inevitable bursting forth of a biological reality.

> I stayed in the closet for years and years and years when I should have come out. So I was 27 when I came out. I don't know why it happened on that day. But [...] it was the bravest thing that I think I've ever done. 'cause I could potentially still be in the closet missing, like, a sliding doors moment. If I didn't come out on that day. I mean, I may have come out a month later or six months later, 'cause I don't think someone's sexuality you can only suppress it for so long. You can't [...] We're sexual beings. We have chromosomes. We have hormones. We have all these things

buzzing around us. We have, you know [...] Well it came out after I was actually seeing a guy.

Murat uses the metaphor of a 'sliding door' to convey the serendipity of his coming out, but his use of the psychological language "suppress" could speak to the ways in which LGBTQI+ rights movements deploy both social constructionist and biological essentialist epistemologies of sexuality and gender as political strategies and LGBTQI+ people themselves often endorse a combination of both when providing ontological narratives of their lives or otherwise express these within psychological narratives of genetic influence and environment and people's coming out as an expression of a fundamental truth (Sedgwick, 1990). Murat's relationship seemingly acts as a catalyst for this emergence

> One of the first guys I'd been on dates with before I came out in secret, I was meeting in central London stuff. No one else knew and he wanted to hold my hand on one of the dates we were on and I said I can't, I can't be seen holding someone's hand. Another guy's hand. I think he felt discomfort 'cause he'd obviously can't come out years before he interested. He was of a different. I think he was even Lebanese. He had like an interesting background which was in was wasn't he wasn't um. He was in a stereoptypically so English guy and he was very comfortable with sexuality, where as I hadn't even come out to anyone. I think the read that reason was why he's broke things off after three weeks and it really upset me thinking I can't even have a fulfilling loving adult relationship with someone ever. Like enough's enough. I just went home and came out to my mum and I came back to my brother. And my dad didn't find out till five years later, so I had to keep it secret.

Taiwo Afuape (2015) uses the example of two lesbians refusing to hold hands to challenge normative assumptions of such behaviour as oppression by arguing that this also constitutes an act of resistance as both agree to express their love safely in private. Reflecting dominant narratives of public displays of affection as a performance of pride and being "comfortable with sexuality",

Murat stories his sudden decision to tell his parents as a breaking point after being painfully reminded of his oppression.

Concluding, Murat notes the cost of no longer speaking to his father but appears to place the onus for repairing the relationship on his parents. He narrates himself as someone at a point of acceptance, now concentrating on repairing the relationship with himself, again utilising what could be interpreted as psychological language as one wounded by low self-esteem looking to build relationships that will help him develop a positive identity as LGBTQI+ Muslim.

> But you know what, like? I don't need that sort of negativity. I need positivity and positive people around me. Positivity. So yeah, I'm not thrilled that my dad doesn't speak to me, but I've accepted it and he if he comes round he'll come round.

4.1.3 Mahmoud

Mahmoud's narrative centres his early experiences of religion and his particular context as second generation British Bangladeshi. I was struck by what seemed to me to be a measured tone performing a mature, empathic self looking back to a more vulnerable youth. Identifying now as a cultural Muslim, Mahmoud explores the intersection of faith, ethnicity and masculinity and the ways in which these continue to affect his relationship to his sexuality and Islam. Mahmoud begins by referencing the pervasive incompatibility narrative

> I guess the word or term LGBTQI+ Muslim sometimes to me, in my head, sounds like an oxymoron, like two opposing words [...] because that's usually how it kind of feels and it is often talked about as one or the other, like they're mutually exclusive when clearly there's a lot of LGBT Muslims as much as there are LGBT people so it's kind of funny how when I hear a term like gay Christian, it doesn't hit me as much as the term LGBTQI+ Muslim does. My experience is being British Bangladeshi growing up in a Muslim household and Muslim community. My parents were essentially first generation because they moved to the UK from Bangladesh and so I'm the second generation and because they were first generation it meant that a lot of their social life was just purely within

the Bangladeshi community. They might even be hesitant to talk to Pakistani communities. Obviously that might be to do with the the war of independence as well. It was very much like an immigrant community and that meant that the mosque was essentially a Community Center. I mean, it was actually called a Community Center.

Mahmoud strongly emphasises his subjectivity: "in my head", "sounds like", "kind of feels". He denotes a societal narrative "it is often talked about" and uses LGBTQI+ Christians comparatively to further underline this. He then problematises the LGBTQI+ Muslim categorisation outlining how his upbringing is specific to the sociopolitical events shaping community organisation among first generation Muslims settling in the UK in the aftermath of the Bangladesh Liberation War reflecting how mosque's functions are intertwined with migration and community settlement (Duderija, 2007; Hamid, 2016).

4.1.3.1 "I remember even at a young age, I was kind of questioning"

Explaining that his father co-founded the mosque, Mahmoud initiates a story that could be described as a kind that could be described as a kind of LGBTQI+ questioning focusing on masculinity and his religious education asserting the existence of this from young age:

> My mindset was very different as a young person because I was LGBTQI+ [...] I was questioning a lot of things at a young age [...] When we're in the mosque, it was very much, erm, a male space [...] it's a very segregated environment to be in. I remember even at a young age, I was kind of questioning like why do we have to do this? Why is it like this? [...] Even going down to like reading the Qu'ran [...] I could read Arabic but they didn't really teach me how to understand the stories and obviously, one of the stories is of Lot where, even at a young age, we've been told a man laying with man is forbidden and I don't know how old I was, maybe like 8 or 10 or 12 and but knowing that I did fancy boys [...] okay, so me having a crush on that boy means I'm going to go to hell and it's really a lot to process at a young age

Mahmoud performs his younger self through this story, whose difference to others apparently prompts an interrogative attitude towards norms. His use of rhetorical questions here could be interpreted as conveying the immediacy of

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inner monologuing though my analysis led me to believe the intonation is less naïve and more exasperated, as if Mahmoud is also signalling a continuity between a past mindset and his current outlook. Mahmoud recalls the story of Lot, traditionally used to condemn homosexuality (Hendricks, 2010), hearing about it at mosque and follows this was the use of the word "crush" which in effect could be said to perform a childhood sexual innocence juxtaposed bluntly with the invocation of punishment. His use of "process" could be said to suggest confusion and trauma, while his use of the word "obviously" I understood to be acknowledging the ubiquity of this story across Abrahamic religions (Cheng, 2011), and perhaps joining me as a researcher in a shared LGBTQI+ history of hardship, where the story of Lot as told to children might risk foreclosing early explorations of sexuality divorced from shame. Mahmoud continues explaining how shame is experienced internally, located within dominant religious and cultural narratives accompanied by an emerging fear:

> Growing up to about 15/16 and a lot of the boys from mosque would be second generation so we wouldn't be following the traditional rules of not having boyfriends and girlfriends and stuff. So a lot of the straight guys [...] they would have girlfriends secretly and they'd go smoke, smoke, weed, drink and the ones that would be caught and told off would often be sent back to Bangladesh to be corrected or go to an Islamic school to be become an imam so they can be fix of all that, you know, bad habit. So that was kind of like a real fear that I had in my mind is that if anyone knew that I was gay I would maybe be one of those kids that get sent away for two years and comes back as an imam.

Mahmoud's experiences seems to mirror Jaspal's (2021) characterisation of a struggle among second generation British South Asian negotiating multiple identities which in extremis present risks to self (Jaspal and Siraj, in press) however he also seems to extend narratives of internalised homophobia and threat to a collective struggle among all men frustrating the patriarchal norms of an older generation:

4.1.3.2 "It made me smarter because I had to survive"

Like many LGBTQI+ Muslims, and indeed LGBTQI+ people more generally, Mahmoud faced potential conflict and rejection from his family and community

upon coming out, deciding to do so when in a relationship. His narrative expresses pain but also concern for past and future Muslims oppressed by heteronormative cultures even while seemingly acknowledging this as his own ambition:

> I remember this one guy [...] there was a really badly kept secret that he had a gay lover [...] but because he had a wife and kids there was this weird double standard that he was still okay to be part of the community 'cause he's still upholding what he needs to do as a man [...] and the fact that he's got a boyfriend is like a dirty secret [...] and growing up I just didn't wanna be gossip, I didn't want people to think I'm immoral or perverted. I just wanted to grow up and have a husband. You know I wanted always kind of typical heteronormative things, but just with a man [...] You'd also hear about people who just disappear and, you know, we never talk about them again 'cause they run away from home [...] How many of them were LGBTQI+? [...] or like married to a white girl?

Mahmoud use of the word 'just' might suggest his indignance at his and others imagined losses, minimising his infractions of norms against a punitive community that he seems to portray as overreacting and shaming:

> I'm sure this guy knew that everyone knew about his boyfriend but [...] the difference between me and that person is he was very happy to have a wife and kids and boys and a boyfriend and live with the kind of shame that's thrown on him and deal with that noise every day [...] he signed up for it in order to stay in the community. Whereas I just wanted to be open and proud [...] The silence is an acceptance. The silence of shame.

In resisting 'the silence of shame', Mahmoud mirrors LGBTQI+ narratives of pride as liberation but he eschews outright condemnation of the 'double-life' characterising many LGBTQI+ Muslims who do not follow dominant coming out narratives. Instead, Mahmoud appears to bemoan how, as someone not "signing up", he not only breaks a social contract but is pathologized in line with reparative therapy narratives which construct homosexuality as deviant or mental illness (Ozanne Foundation, 2018):

> My parents got very defensive and they just wanted to like take care of me and fix me, whereas I was telling them I'm happy, I'm happy. I'm in a

relationship. Don't worry about looking for a wife [...] but all they could hear was like oh, something's wrong with him, we need to fix him.

Mahmoud concludes by retelling his identity as a cultural Muslim whereby refusing to absolutely split with Islam could be understood as enacting resistance against the "black and white" thinking he critiques, placing onus on the "institutional homophobia" of structured religion:

British Bangladeshi Muslims who are my age who will have had LGBT friends and or maybe LGBT themselves [...] they may pass on the kind of more liberal view of Islam down to their children, but I know for a fact even from my family, like there are some of us who are straight and still think like being LGBTQI+ is not within our community and they want to pass down traditions. Which is absolutely fine because as an immigrant community, a minority community we want to pass on our culture and our traditions down to our children so there and forget it. And recipes and clothing and stuff, you wanna pass out on. But then you also pass on that kind of like traditional conservatism as well, and I see it even with people within my generation. They want their children to grow up how they grew up, 'cause they think that's the right way to do it and it also means they don't want their children to grow up LGBTQI+ because they still believe in this idea of a heteronormative upbringing and are against gay marriage and stuff. So as much as I want to believe the next generation is going to be more liberal and more progressive, I know it's not going to be just as simple as the next generation after me, or it might be even more than that. And also if it's always kind of split 5050 [...] I think there's a lot of homophobia, institutional homophobia, in the way Islam is taught.

Mahmoud seems to argue that, rather than intrinsic to Islam as a religion, oppression is found within the pedagogy of Islam as taught within mosques and madrassa where LGBTQI+ identities are condemned as taboo (Murray, 1997). Mahmoud repudiates reductionist dichotomies of Western rational liberalism versus religious illiberalism (Gopffarth & Ozyurek, 2020):

If I don't say I'm culturally Muslim and I say I identify as atheist, then I'm really just turning my back on a lot of my past. [...] I've met a few people who identify as ex-Muslim. So people who have left their religion and to

me calling myself ex-Muslim seems like… anti-Muslim. And I don't want to be anti-Islam. It's just I don't think Islam is taught in a way that's inclusive to everyone.

From his experiences of oppression, Mahmoud reflects upon an earlier self and the skills which he has gained from these earlier experiences:

…it's made me smarter I guess 'cause I had to survive. And I have the privilege looking back 'cause I am who I am now, but it was an immense amount of pressure, knowing that you were in an environment, a community where everyone thinks you're gonna go to hell and if anyone knows you're gonna be kicked out and disowned by not just your family but your entire community.

Reflecting on Mahmoud's interview, I was struck by the sense in which despite having experienced extreme difficulties, he was able to attend to future generations of young Muslims extending his empathy to a religious Muslim community which he no longer felt a part of but wished to protect, both from 'Westernisation' and from institutionalised homophobic attitudes. I was left with the impression that his considered way of talking about issues of religion and sexuality performed the sensitivity he experienced a child while at the same time conveying great maturity providing a potential role model and candidate for mediating constructive dialogue across the often polarised sides of debate characterising the discussion of LGBTQI+ Muslims.

4.2 Collective Stories

After individual narratives were collected, participants joined in a group discussion and were invited to retell their stories with others acts as outsider witnesses, guided by question prompts taken from White and Epston (1990). As advised by Denborough (2008) I was there to guide and facilitate these discussions and support individuals to speak from their own experiences. This section therefore draws and builds upon these individual narratives to produce collective narratives enriched by the coming together.

4.2.1 "Invisible rules around dialogue"

Contrary to dominant narratives which portray LGBTQI+ Muslims' "coming out" as a single event of silence to potentially acceptance or rejection (Cass, 1979;

Coleman, 1982), participants spoke of their uneasiness in navigating relationships after coming out and the pervading silence of family and friends surrounding their identity:

> [Mahmoud] You're still kind of on edge as to what conversations you can bring up and what you can talk about… what's appropriate and it's always kind of invisible rules around dialogue that you don't really have with other friends [...] my youngest sister who's similar to my age is probably the most accepting of my being LGBTQI+ but even to a certain degree she's still wanting to not talk about stuff for the sake of the family or my parents feelings…

> [Murat] When I speak to my mum. We don't mention nothing. It's the unspoken thing [...] I don't like to bring it up 'cause I feel like it would just… it'll make her uncomfortable and yeah, and when I've done it before I could see her try to change the subject. So yeah, being gay is sort of like: That's your private business. You don't need to tell me about it [...] I did try that when I had a partner before but she would recoil. I could physically. I could hear it in her voice, and when I could see it, like to see her like recoiling from it, like she didn't want to talk about it or acknowledge it because it's difficult.

For Mahmoud, the silence of others prevents an opportunity to reassure his parents and share his joy, losing his role within the family and fixing him in a problematised position (Jaspal and Siraj, 2011):

> [Mahmoud] I guess by not talking about it you are kind of editing yourself and someone else is putting you back into the closet when you're already out. That's the kind of feeling I had with my family [...] when I came out. It was six years ago. I was in a relationship and I wanted them to understand that I was in a happy relationship with someone. But what happened was I came out and my family still didn't want to talk about my life in London and my partner and he was never allowed to come to any events either. So that was quite tough because I was out. I had done that. But now it's still like living two lives.

Mahmoud uses the same metaphors ascribed to people who are not 'out' but pointedly as a situation in reverse where his efforts to come out, something that

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is "done", is undone. He contextualises this within religious and cultural narratives privileging the institution of marriage (Hendricks, 2010) but clarifies that these silences not only affect discussion of relationships:

> [Mahmoud] You come from some cultures where you know people get married at twenty one and aren't supposed to have sex before marriage [...] you know we don't talk about that anyway. But there are other things like the volunteering work I do for LGBT stuff [...] I'd like to talk about that which has nothing to do with sex and marriage, but it's still LGBT stuff.

While silence can be conceptualised as an act of resistance among LGBTQI+ people who are not 'out', the silence of others is experienced oppressively as a silencing. At times, these silences were nonetheless storied as overlaid with intense feelings which were also unspoken leaving participants to interpret what these might mean:

> [Murat] Whenever she spoke to me, there's like a sadness in the way she spoke to me, as if saying when am I coming home and why am I still gay like why am I not doing stuff that she expects me to do.

Participants also narrated the ways in which these silences were accompanied by other negations of their LGBTQI+ Muslim identity:

> [Zubeir] I think I relate completely because I feel like in the way she speaks to me [...] there's always like a hope that I'll be different. She's always saying things like "Oh, when you get married, and when you get married to a woman" and things like that and "when you get married and have kids" and I remember she even told me that her mum said that I should always… what was the phrase her mum said… that I should wait! And see what happens.

Betraying the linear temporal assumptions of coming out which is conceptualised as a trajectory from 'closeted' to 'out', participants joined in narrating a collective struggle where the performative speech act of coming out (Harvey 1997) performs an ambiguous function within relationships where the social reality does not shift to a critical juncture, one where acceptance or rejection occurs but instead the coming out only generates silence. Key relationships are seemingly maintained 'as usual' but are stalled and steeped

with feelings of hurt and uncertainty. Furthermore, this silence prevents a thickening of the storying of LGBTQI+ identity beyond coming out effectively leaving participants feeling labelled and stigmatised within limited pre-existing cultural and religious narratives. Unable to tell personal stories of their queerness which would challenge these, participants narrated being left to interpret and guess at their family and friend's feelings and beliefs which also go untold.

Against dominant narratives which might story the silence of family and friends as rejection, ignorance or hatred or pathologise such silences as denial, Murat offers hope albeit from a position seemingly favouring possibilities within people rather than within institutions associated with Islam for acceptance:

> [Murat] They are conflicted because they still love you! These are people who love you and their religion, their faith is fighting against this or at odds with it.

Later, Murat elaborates upon this offering a story of someone who also must "wait and see" effectively reclaiming this language for Zubeir, narrating himself as one who has now overcome the fears and risks associated with coming out allowing for self-acceptance and the chance to live their LGBTQI+ Muslim identity openly:

> [Murat] You just hope deep down that that my mum will love me regardless. And you hope that she does, but I think she's also finding it difficult. I mean, she's known for five to six years now. But even then, we don't talk about it. She never met my ex. I was with my ex-boyfriend for five years and they never met 'cause I tried to make her meet me and him a couple times to come round when we were living together and she would just avoid the subject. She'd say she was busy and this just happened so many times it used to make me really upset and then I just couldn't let it make me upset. I just thought you know, I need to live my life and be happy. I want her to be in my life but I'm just gonna give it time.

In this collective story, participants' pain and longing to breaking silences is expressed powerfully between LGBTQI+ Muslims who had all in their individual interviews spoke to their struggle of feeling isolated and alone. However, they

also could be said to express a commitment to theiQr loved ones and each other in sustaining connection as acts of resistance in the form of hope and empathy. In listening to these stories, I noticed they tended to centre mothers over fathers and sisters over brothers. I considered the purported intertwining relationships between sexism and homophobia oppressed under patriarchy and which position men as guardians of normative values, where male homosexuality is most strongly sanctioned (Siraj, 2011) which appear across many cultures but which for LGBTQI+ Muslims manifests not only in relation to Islam but in homonationalist narratives too.

4.2.2 "I diversity out"

Similar to the individual interviews, narratives in the group began by foregrounding the struggles LGBTQI+ Muslims faced with other Muslims, however participants then shared stories of struggles faced with other LGBTQI+ people. This discussion was longer and livelier than in individual interviews. Being a white, gay male researcher I became more conscious of how stories of oppression from people like me were harder to tell in individual interviews and more likely to come out in the coming together of a group who could support and advocate for each other.

Mahmoud initiated this collective narrative with a summary of his intention to reclaim a connection to his Muslim identity having immersed himself within LGBTQI+ cultures:

> [Mahmoud] And I think I'm at a point in my life where I'm like, how do I recapture some of the culture I've distanced myself from when I was younger without realizing [...] The more I have distanced myself from that, like the more westernized I quote, unquote, am [...] I don't want to lose that [...] I just realized I should be appreciating all my differences in all my identities and I'm actually closer to my gay identity cause that's something I've always been focusing on, like getting to know about my gay life and letting the other side go and now I wanna learn how to recapture some of that now I'm older.

Mahmoud touches upon narratives of double lives and incompatibility using a metaphor of loss to describe the difficulties of creating a coherent LGBTQI+ Muslim identity although his use of "quote, unquote" perhaps conveys the

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inadequacy of simple dichotomies between West and othered identities, leading Murat to describe his own loss of family connection and the othering within LGBTQI+ culture

> [Murat] I wanted to meet people who would enrich my life and have positive energy around me but [...] you get a lot of like [...] questionable comments and responses from mainly gay white men and you get exoticized and othered. So you get that othering even within the gay community

If participants had problematised the assumptions of coming out narratives as a definitive transition by storying the relative silence of their Muslim friends and family, they nonetheless drew upon this when narrating hopes for a liberatory period of immersion in LGBTQI+ cultures wherein they could find a 'chosen family' and romantic partners. However, participants also emphasised their dissatisfaction with encounters that left them feeling further marginalised:

> [Murat] Mainstream gay culture is geared towards white gay culture, white gay men and I still feel outside of it [...] on the margins of mainstream gay culture as well. I just don't see the representation there [...] it's non-existent [...] I didn't really feel part of it in either. I sort of feel in between.

Mahmoud then questioned the appropriateness of embracing a lifestyle which risked decentring values linked to his identity as a South Asian man, arguably drawing upon narratives that contrast Western individualistic from Eastern collectivist cultures, expressing a will to achieve relative independence from the need to fit in with normative standards:

> [Mahmoud] I guess Islam and our culture is so community focused, family focused [...] going away from a community, we maybe think instinctively you want to search for another community to replace that. But then the question is, do we need a gay community really, because being gay isn't just about being part of a community but like you say just being happy and open about who you and having loved ones around you, friends and stuff like. Should we really be trying to fit into LGBT spaces made for white males and like non-Muslims, Christians? […] Where's that need coming from? That needs coming from needing a

community, but that community doesn't need to be the gay community, [...] it could be allies, straight friends as well [...] unfortunately the gay spaces aren't inclusive enough for that to be the first option sometimes for where your chosen families can be based or found.

In the face of further exclusion, participants could be seen to reject homonationalist trappings that would have them subsume their ethnic and religious identities within a LGBTQI+ homonormativity in order to find meaningful connection with peers and activist groups aligned with their collective struggle

[Zubeir] I went to heaven once with friends [...] . That was OK [...] but it just felt a bit like [...] white. But recently I know someone who's president of the XXXXX London LGBT Society and they started their own like project for LGBTQI+ people of Color. So I've started working on the charity division for that

[Murat] LGBTQI+ POC LGBTQI+ Muslim Club Nights or like events and stuff [...] I was looking into it before the pandemic [...] I definitely want to explore that more and find some more inclusive spaces. But yeah, in terms of mainstream gay culture, I don't feel necessarily a part of that.

Avoiding commercialised venues serving a white, liberal elite (Skeggs, 1999), participants appeared to narrate a possible future of increased visibility of LGBTQI+ Muslims within affirmative spaces such as Club Kali reflecting their own life experiences (Basi, 2008) and I was aware that our group had also functioned to connect these individuals at different stages of their explorations to share knowledges and resources even in the context of lockdown restrictions.

Apart from these more material inequalities which faced LGBTQI+ Muslims, participants also offered stories of dating and relationships and the ways in which potential partners undermined or exoticized their identities creating further barriers to what seemed to be a developing theme of seeking connection. Zubeir began this with a story of another's call for him to reject his Muslim identity altogether:

[Zubeir] Others who aren't Muslim and who are like straight or gay and white, they kind of don't really get it [...] They're kind of like what are you doing? Your religion clearly says this [...] Why do you even care?

Jaspal and Cinnirella (2021) found that British South Asian gay men feel better understood by men of similar backgrounds and encounter racialisation and fetishization with others. Murat, himself as a London-born Muslim expresses shock and bemusement when potential partners' questions betrays their racism:

[Murat] you get lots of comments like when did you come to England? I had one guy meet me once [...] and he said to me I didn't expect you to speak like that and I was like how did you expect me to speak? Yeah, I just I was just completely like shocked [...] I had all sorts of comments [...]. when did you come to the country, where you from? [...] I just I just roll my eyes now I find it so tiring and actually not everyone is doing it in a racist way [...] they're being inquisitive, but the way they wording it is not alright

In comparison to silence and silencing, Mahmoud joined Murat in a collective narrative of over-inquisitiveness by LGBTQI+ people experienced as intrusive and ignorant to the struggles faced by LGBTQI+ Muslims, telling a story of how his non-homonormative coming out story is received by others in the LGBTQI+ community:

[Mahmoud] Yeah, I will also sometimes find people, mostly in dating, 'cause that's when I have to kind of like introduce myself and talk about myself more and get to know someone [...] people are interested in my life experience as a LGBTQI+ Muslim. And then when the asked me about it and then when I talk about it, it's like, well, that's a lot, yeah? Because it's like it almost scares them off, I think for people, it seems like such a big thing. And it is, I guess, but it's like. Part of the reason why I don't like talking about it anymore too, like straight away 'cause it can overload people.

[Murat] Being gay and being closeted and then coming out to people and [...] dealing with that. But we've got this extra element. This extra thing which a white gay man doesn't want to deal with [...] I kind of decided I'm

going to [...] avoid white gay men [...] It was just a subconscious thing of what I was being attracted to. So I [...] diversify out.

As a white, gay man, at this point I became acutely aware of my own position in the group as a researcher and psychologist who had called upon LGBTQI+ Muslims to tell me their stories, albeit in a 'safe space' within a particular framework. Touching upon narratives of internalisation racism, Mahmoud calls attention to the irony of my presence joining participants in laughter:

[Mahmoud] I probably did the same, mostly with White English Anglican kind of men, No offence, James. [all laugh] [...]

This laughter returned gaze towards me during a latter period of discussion where I had been silent for some time. It prompted me to consider the extent to which I was being experienced as an oppressor, peer or ally, and I was suddenly grateful that this questioning of my group membership had been aired inoffensively unlike the stories of exclusion I had heard in a striking reminder of my white privilege. Mahmoud encourages Murat's initiative to resist these stories of internalised and externalised oppression:

[Mahmoud] But if they can't understand some of your life experience or empathize with it… it creates another another hurdle. So yeah, I totally recommend diversifying [all laugh]

[Murat] Yeah [...] there was a stigma around me coming out when I did from some gay men because I mean some gay men told me I probably wouldn't date you 'cause you're not that experienced, or you've not done much and I got that sort of stigma from them, but they just didn't understand my situation and it came from, my background.

On an interpersonal level, the equivalence by white gay men of later coming out with immaturity or inexperience in LGBTQI+ Muslims might be said to reflect wider racist narratives of progress that position Muslims as behind the West, undeveloped or uncivilised (Butler, 2008) ignoring crucial differences between their contexts. The group went on to discuss this in relation to sexualisation and fetishisation of their bodies:

[Murat] Another big thing in the gay community is about how black and brown and non-white body is fetishized and I mean it probably doesn't fit

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in this conversation. But I hate the word 'masc' and I hate being called 'masc'. I just don't like that word […] I think there might be something there about objectifying me more because I'm […] not white looking.

[Mahmoud] Has anyone asked you to dress up as an imam?

[Murat] No I haven't had that [laughter] I'm sure I've been called Aladdin or something before. Like you know, the stereotypes. I've never had that though, have you?

[Mahmoud] There is the whole priest fetish or kink. All the religious trauma turned into a sexual fetish. People want a dumb Muslim […] in porn whenever you see Arab men its always top or dominanting. Black people get it as well.

[Zubeir] I've noticed this really like a lot amongst like South Asian Hindu people. They have like a like a sort of fetishized Muslim people as being like very masculine bearded mostly like handsome like dominant kind of thing you know and like. It's really strange, I find it very weird.

5.FURTHER DISCUSSION

Summarising the findings from the present study, I refer to the research aims and questions. Firstly, in seeking to hear the preferred personal and collective narratives including those of creative resistance, I hoped to redress an imbalance within the existing literature which approached LGBTQI+ Muslims within a predominantly logical positivistic framework tending towards generalisable claims about the truth or nature of a LGBTQI+ Muslim reality, a stable social categorisation characterised predominantly by experiences of inner conflict. This approach was rooted in a literature base which characterise LGBTQI+ Muslims as experiencing stressors relating to their marginalised, minority identities exacerbated by their intersectionality (Jaspal, 2014; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010) as opposed to this being a potential resource, and it was claimed that LGBTQI+ identities were experienced as incompatible and in conflict with cultural or religious identifications with Islam (Murray, 1997; Shadijanova, 2020). These findings, whatever their usefulness in articulating the challenges faced by LGBTQI+ Muslims, did relatively little in producing

knowledges of the strategies LGBTQI+ Muslims draw upon to cope with these difficulties and how they speak of these including how they situate and justify them within the wider narratives of gender, sexuality and faith. In emphasising the conflicts characteristic of LGBTQI+ Muslims attempting to carve out a positive identity, existing literature tended to reproduce narratives of this as an inherently flawed enterprise, while this research pointed to the possibilities of LGBTQI+ Muslims creatively reinterpreting traditional roles and boundaries associated with their identities, especially when given an opportunity to meet together and consolidate the meaning of their actions through articulating these to each other.

This study focused on a small group of LGBTQI+ Muslims who, while self-affiliating with this category, were also individuals with major differences. Furthermore, this study aimed to centre LGBTQI+ Muslim voices, utilising a participatory methodology. A collective narrative methodology was chosen for this group asking: "What do these stories say about how LGBTQI+ Muslims frame, account for and locate their experiences of oppression and connect these to their sense of identity?"

Within individual and collective narratives, participants in my study constructed themselves as facing significant, enduring struggles to maintain positive LGBTQI+ Muslim identities. Struggles were located in proximal contexts commonly cited within existing literature such as family and friends and in wider contexts such as within religious institutions and school, but this study also drew attention to less commonly cited sources such as LGBTQI+ spaces and social media. Dominant narratives which problematised LGBTQI+ Muslim identities greatly shaped the ways in which participants received and conceived of their identities, storying a transition from a private experience of encountering these narratives to more public interactions which generated conflict coupled with the development of strategies for resisting these. A number of strategies constituting acts of resistance were deployed, most notably in the form of rejecting reductionist narratives which framed resolution to conflict as a binary of choosing one identity over another. Participants instead reconfigured their relationships in novel ways to maintain connection to valued aspects of their LGBTQI+ and Muslim identities and reject oppressive aspects. Participants also shifted focus from their LGBTQI+ Muslim identities to their respective material

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and political contexts when considering their struggle and the sources of hardship. This created opportunities for validating their suffering whilst also mobilising agency to act according to their own values and beliefs.

Another broader research aim was of co-constructing a collective narrative methodology which could be shared. An initial partnership that faltered in the context of lockdown restrictions meant that the ongoing collaboration and commitment to developing this with sufficient investment from contributors was more difficult to achieve. Deciding to proceed independently, a small group of participants working within the time-frames of completing this thesis were unable to share the narrative document outside the group, but a draft is currently in the process of receiving feedback. Denborough (2008) advises that an initial draft of the document is not usually done collectively and may be completed by the researcher, but in discussion we agreed to continue efforts to bring LGBTQI+ Muslims together to contribute, including re-approaching a relevant organisation which remain ongoing. The research was successful in facilitating spaces for participants to influence the direction of research, and the transparency of sharing key resources informing the research to generate discussion follow participation principles. Following the initiative of group members, we met for individual interviews before coming together as a group to discuss, creating a safe enough space for the telling of stories, and much of this discussion occurred without prompt from the researcher. This methodology successfully allowed for participants to locate their experiences of oppression and connect this to their identity but included an appreciation of the skills, knowledges and acts of resistance which characterised these avoiding overly problematised accounts, and a range of ideas were expressed respecting each participant's unique construction of their identity through language that was their own.

5.1 Critical Review and Limitations

5.1.1 Epistemological

If questioning constructs of religion and sexuality can be experienced as invalidating, so then can social constructionist claims about the oppression of LGBTQI+ Muslims. Feminist and LGBTQI+ critiques have accused poststructuralist theories of underplaying the impact of structural power and, therefore, minimising resistance, which poses a challenge to those hoping to work alongside using principles from community psychology and PAR and which promote the role of agency (Weedon, 1997). Critical Realism, for example, while it asserts that much of the world is socially constructed, also rejects a hard relativist stance, acknowledging the material effects of a reality which imposes on individual actions. Such a view is appealing in that, theoretically, it accommodates all that is transcendent from religion, as "what is real is real even if it does not act or otherwise manifest itself in a way that is observed" (Archer, Collier & Porpora, 2013, pp.99) and the biological claims of LGBTQI+ rights movements. Similarly, critical realism calls attention to the visceral definitiveness of pain inflicted against LGBTQI+ Muslims. A critical realist stance allows for "judgemental rationality" (Bhaskar, 1978) about an objective, shared reality, inviting those with contrasting views to debate the relative merits of each other's beliefs and refine them accordingly. To adapt Bateson's use of Korzybski's (1933) phrase (1972) "the map is not the territory", this might be particularly relevant to political issues where two people with different 'maps' set out to venture on the same 'territory' and, hence, must negotiate an agreed path. While critiqued as fence-sitting, critical realism also sets a bottom line for reality, namely, that we must ultimately share the same earth together, providing a moral imperative to reject relativist stances at times where conflicting opinion curtails freedom of expression as argued by some LGBTQI+ Muslims, including LGBTQI+ Muslim diasporas.

As a researcher whose own beliefs around the topics of faith and sexuality are constantly changing, such fence-sitting would paradoxically force me into a position of drawing a line or what realities are more or less real, engaging in a

debate over 'death and furniture[4] (Edwards, Ashmore and Potter, 1995) and ultimately this self-imposed power was rejected in favour of a social constructionist stance allowing a happy impasse to such metaphysical questions and promoting a more modest relationship to the stories of people's lives and my representation of them.

5.2.2 Methodological

Although narrative analysis allows for an in-depth exploration of individuals and their performances of identity, including polyphonic readings of the many voices expressed within their preferred stories, this remains a very small-scale study whose participants should not be expected to reflect the breadth of experiences characterising the diverse social categorisation of LGBTQI+ Muslim used throughout. Indeed, while this study aims to offer insight into the strengths and struggles of LGBTQI+ Muslims, the extent to which the participants recruited represent this social categorisation must be understood as restricted by their being gay cisgendered men. This may be particularly relevant to this study where participants horizontally featured narratives relating to the predominance of masculinity in understanding and negotiating Muslim identity. As a methodology, narrative analysis does not attempt to generate generalisable findings and the participants recruited to this study identified as LGBTQI+, however as term which encompasses the widest possible range of gender and sexual identities it is important to consider what stories might have been told had this group been more diverse. Similarly, the variability of possible stories from LGBTQI+ Muslims of different generations, ethnicity, relationship status and religiosity would greatly enrich the exploration of the stated research given their prevalence as additional factors storied across interviews. It is notable that recruitment to this study mirrored an over-representation of cisgendered gay men within studies of LGBTQI+ Muslims.

As a result of lockdown restrictions, this study was limited to recruiting participants to meet online, and it is unclear the extent to which potential participants may have been restricted by this logistical requirement although it is

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[4] Death and Furniture are evoked as emblematic examples of very common objections to relativism and social constructionism, where opponents typically talk about a 'bottom line' to such arguments, where furniture and material objects appear to constitute a reality that cannot be denied and death represents human misery and the abuse of power as a reality that should not be denied.

likely that this introduced several biases, not least towards LGBTQI+ Muslims who had sufficient privacy and resource to access online meetings and speak openly about their experiences. One potential participant named this as a barrier, and while PAR afforded flexibility to offer other forms of contributing such as via email correspondence, ultimately this person declined.

My sampling strategy utilised the networks of an existing organisation as well as social media, reaching a broad base of potential participants. However while this study had aspired to recruit LGBTQI+ Muslims of different sexual and gender identities, the participants in this study mirrored representativeness within the literature, being predominantly cisgender gay men. Recruiting through an existing organisation's network and twitter, it is possible this attracted those sharing my perceived characteristics as a gay cisgender male. While the epistemological assumptions of this study do not seek to achieve representativeness for the sake of generalisability, the lack of diversity may mean important voices are not heard. Participants in this study attributed patriarchal influences I to their oppression, but this oppression is likely to affect men, women and other gender identities differently.

While narrative research does not necessarily strive for saturation unlike many other approaches, this study's very small sample size places serious limitations on the conclusions that can be drawn especially with regards to the third research aim co-constructing a collective narrative methodology as while these ideas were drawn upon and appeared to support an enrichment of narratives through processes of telling and retelling, additional participants would have led to an exponentially more elaborate potential scope of these processes compared to just three participants, the smallest possible group. The three participants in this study were able to respond at length to each other's narratives so that my role as facilitator was made simpler with little need to pay careful attention to allowing fair and sufficient time for individuals to speak, and this was maintained between sessions insofar as I had only a small number of people to remain engaged with and coordinate whereas a larger group may have led to additional challenges that did not become apparent. The lack of diversity in such a small group meant that important differences between individuals did not need to be attended to and were not drawn out in discussion and it is not clear whether this would have been experienced as useful as per

the research aim had this happened. This means any conclusion that such a methodology would be useful for all groups of LGBTQI+ Muslims is extremely tentative.

5.2.3 Participatory

In order to ground my approach in a framework, I referred to the participation ladder (Arnstein, 1969) which describes a gradient scale of participation and which provides a way of reflecting on the participation nature of the research as it progresses. Inherent to the ladder is a hierarchical positioning of full "citizen control" as maximally participatory and while this was not possible throughout my research, it remained an aim throughout the project to evaluate each manoeuvre and a means of interrogating decisions to define whose needs these would serve.

Aspiring to position myself alongside LGBTQI+ Muslims, I positioned myself as a researcher-psychologist, leading on organising meetings and sharing key resources including a theoretical framework with which I was more familiar, generating a power imbalance. Ambitions of transparency may have nonetheless positioned me as expert as some resources required some explanation, placing me in a didactic role. Partnering with an existing organisation may have levelled power relationships further allowing me to draw more on their expertise and resources in a project more aligned with PAR principles.

5.2.4 Verification and Validation

Creswell (2014) defined qualitative validity and reliability with regards to verifying the accuracy of findings established during the process of employing qualitative procedures and recommends researches select at least two of eight validation strategies to promote credibility, guided by the lens used by the researcher (Creswell & Miller, 2012). With regards to narrative research, he articulates several key criteria which can be used to evaluate the quality of a study, which I will now briefly address.

Firstly, Creswell (2012) advises that the researcher should keep a focus on a smaller number of individuals than in other forms of qualitative research, emphasising that as few as one or two individuals can satisfy this criteria. In my

research, I had initially hoped for a greater number of individuals to allow for representative voices from the many possible identity configurations within LGBTQI+ Muslims, however were I to do this study again differently, I would hone my focus on a smaller subset of this wider group. This would have potentially made recruiting easier, as I have hypothesized that those who dropped out in the study may have felt that the space within which stories would be told did not feel sufficiently safe or satisfy a sense of being a cohesive group of shared experiences. Regardless, finishing with three participants has allowed for this criterion to be filled, as well as the second which recommends that a study reports on the participant's life stories as told through stories, as each participate offered several stories following a narrative arc.

A third criterion advises that these experiences be 'restoryed' into a chronology, and in this criterion I feel I have achieved mixed results, insofar as it has not always been as clear as I would have liked the transport occurring for participants in the duration of our conversations, however participants have tended towards narrative arcs inherent to developmental ideas of learning more about oneself, sharing these discoveries with others and learning from the responses of others, for example in the experience of discovering one's sexuality and confronting a fear of coming out to others. A fourth criterion of including significant details of the context of the stories has been supported by the inclusion of basic autobiographical details, though I had initially been reluctant to include these which risk stereotyping participants according to racial and ethnic categorisations which are too often bundled in with ideas of Muslimness. Were I to complete this study again, I would pursue different means by which participants could provide information about themselves to contextualise their stories, for example through longer autobiographical written pieces or the use of photos and other media.

A fifth criterion suggests that narrative research should include an analysis of the story's themes that emerge, and while I believe this has been completed, I have been largely unable to fulfil the sixth complementary criterion in collaborating with participants to verify, contribute to and approve the story as presented in this thesis. This, partly due to time constraints, is a source of some anxiety for a researcher conscious of the ways in which LGBTQI+ Muslims are spoken for, and my relative power as a clinical psychologist to draw upon

psychological language to interpret and assert through an academic publication my way of seeing the stories that have been recorded. Were I to complete this study again, I would want to ensure that I had more time to do this, and that participants felt sufficiently equipped to do this. However, I also expect that where particpants feel they might contribute more to how their stories are presented, this will manifest in the collective narrative document itself which is still being prepapred and which in any case we hope will be read and serve LGBTQI+ Muslims looking to see themselves reflected in the stories presented there.

One strategy Creswell (2014) advises to support the verification of qualitative research is an exploration of potential biases influencing the researcher who, in most cases ultimately is responsible for how stories are presented. Aware that potential readers will have now completed reading my interpretations of participants narratives, I will now explore at length this topic in the next chapter.

5.3 Reflexivity

Qualitative research acknowledges researcher's own judgements, values and biases as lens through which they decide how to engage in research including the analysis of data (Morawski, 2005). Providing an account of my relationship to this research is one attempt at transparency, disclosure and reflexivity and guides critical readers to my personal, professional and academic rationale and interest in the research. Readers may identify points of connection and similarity between myself and research participants, but also note important differences, foremost among them my having not ever been Muslim.

Being racialised as white, I grow up in a culture which communicates that my whiteness is "morally natural, average, and ideal" (Sue & Sue, 2008, p.21) where whiteness refers to the "invisible privileges and power relations which systematically maintain structural, racialised and intersectional hierarchies and oppression, via various ideological and cultural practices" (Wood & Patel, 2008,p.16). As such, racialised white individuals risk perceiving themselves as cultureless and unbiased while at the same time benefitting from white privilege; the institutionalised invisibility of whiteness creates a homogenised imagined norm against whom all other cultures are set apart as novel objects for study and criticism (McIntosh, 2003). As well as holding white privilege, I am a

cisgendered male. In a patriarchal society, gendered males are privileged above females and other gendered bodies and because I'm cisgendered, I receive further unearned benefits.

In conducting the present study as a gay man, I ventured to study a group of people to whom I don't belong, which creates feelings of uneasiness and trepidation. Muslims and LGBTQI+ Muslims are often represented in a highly problematised way and Islamophobia is mainstream. Muslims have limited access to platforms to represent themselves to the public, and there is a trend of increased attention towards Muslims from a range of disciplines including psychology which can contribute to their oppression, othering and marginalisation by way of objectifying, exploiting and essentialising them. Similarly, I am writing at a time when transgender and other LGBTQI+ identities' legitimacy is fiercely debated which are not only distressing but create serious consequences for those who face the prejudice and discrimination inflamed by this (Zanghellini, 2020). A promised ban on conversion therapies has stalled, creating frustration and mistrust among LGBTQI+ people who reasonably doubt the commitment of the current government. Finally, I am writing at a time when decolonising practices are rightfully opposing the dominance of conceptualisations of race, gender and sexuality cradled in the global north, while at the same time LGBTQI+ activists internationally are having their efforts thwarted, sometimes violently, by those invoking this same decolonising language (Rao, 2014). During this research process, I have gained an increased awareness of the ways in which LGBTQI+ Muslims are impacted by a tendency to simplify highly nuanced articulations of problems or otherwise avoid important conversations altogether. I have also been struck by the way psychological languages of trauma and shame, ubiquitous in people's narratives of their own lives, offer much for to legitimise stories of suffering, but offer little and may even curtail stories of strength outside limited concepts such as resilience and coping. This project has encouraged me to continue discovering liberatory concepts to contextualise distress while validating the impact of important events.

During my education in theatre studies and psychology, philosophical ideas of dispassion and disinterest have generally been privileged - to be critical was to take a step back from the object you are asked to look at. However, from this

study I now believe more strongly that not only is there value in being closer to the thing you're trying to understand but that taking a step back can be a lot like being a voyeur, at times a bystander to a crime. Taking a step back is a position of false assumptions, chiefly that I am politically unimplicated in the thing I'm observing. However, simply being reflexive on ways in which I may be complicit with oppressive practices does not relieve me of responsibility or make this acceptable. I hope that my explicit naming of this nonetheless serves in a small way of violating assumptions of whiteness which as a racialised group and ideology rarely acknowledges itself, its effects and its profound ignorance. It is clear that there is currently a push-back against critical race theory in many areas of society and although I am tempted to conceptualise this as the death-throes of some regressive attitudes, I remain committed to observing and resisting further polarisation and pursuing dialogue in touch with the psychological motivations of strident calls for action and to do this non-violently (Rosenburg, 2015), embracing pluralistic understandings over invective or compromise.

Situating myself in relation to this research, I think of my own experiences growing up and developing awareness of my own sexuality which I came to recognise and later identify as gay and which drew me into a repeated practice of listening to and telling stories about this part of me in a range of contexts and which provided a foundation for considering my sexuality as an important individual and collective identity. This was not least because in some contexts being gay drew significant interest from others: I quickly became aware of the strong feelings and powerful ideas expressed in relation to sexuality including those that constituted a threat or injunction against a 'way of life' which was variously described as evil, a moral failing or mental illness. In the playground at school, I had rejected the term. After all, to describe something as gay was simply the most common way of describing something that was bad, but even then it seemed to carry a special meaning in policing relationships between those of the same gender, especially men. As I grew older, it was strange for a word so adamantly rejected to become central to my sense of self, and to shed the unkind associations of this word and replace them with feelings of pride. Later, I would meet people for whom figuring things out meant the potential of losing a lot that mattered to them. I realised how lucky I could be – some of

these new friends were people of faith, including Muslims who I met primarily in Turkey where I lived for some time and then Leeds. At around the same time, having been born in Luton I became aware of the rising Islamophobia and extremism which characterised Islam in ways I struggled to recognise among my new friends. It seemed a rare but important joy to meet LGBT Muslims living happily enough and skilfully in such a difficult context. All this time, my relationship with faith was also changing – having never been to church as a child on Sunday, as I grew up fascinated by eccentricities of religion fuelled by its relationship to poetry and literature, dropping my Physics A-level last minute to study world religion and then attending Quaker meetings sporadically for several years while at the same time raging atheistically against conservative values which seemed to threaten my own before coming to loathe the intolerance and heartlessness of so-called "New Atheism" (Wolf, 2006). Considering participants in this study, I am humbled to consider the gentle explorations that characterise my emerging identities, and saddened to consider participants pain while hopeful that this study may have contributed a small part to what is an ongoing process, but with different stakes, for all people.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Individual Level

The majority of literature concerning LGBTQI+ Muslim utilises Western understandings of internalised homophobia as shame in individualistic terms (Meyer, 2003; Boiger, 2013).. While this may have some applicability for LGBTQI+ Muslims, it is also important to consider how psychotherapeutic approaches to shame may fail to incorporate LGBTQI+ Muslim's cultural, social and political contexts including mainstream religious interpretations of their LGBTQI+ identity which will remain important to religious LGBTQI+ Muslims. Psychologists should consider that Qur'anic verses explain diversity among human beings as God's plan (El Fadhl, 2002) but that Muslim revisionist scholars typically use essentialist epistemologies to argue for tolerance towards homosexuality (Kugle and Hunt, 2012) and approaches which ignore or discredit the ontological and theological claims of religious belief may lack acceptability and be ineffective. Psychologists should consider directing

LGBTQI+ Muslims towards existing authoritative liberatory resources, create space for spiritual crises that may result from emerging LGBTQI+ identifications whilst maintaining an affirmative stance (BPS, 2019). LGBTQI+ identifications may ultimately deepen relationships to faith (Lev and Edmiston, 2014) but for some deconversion and apostasy may be liberatory especially where forms of abuse have been already been perpetrated (Parekh and Egan, 2020).

Psychologists should be aware of biases against religious belief; they are less likely to be religious than the populations they serve (Delaney, 2007), receive minimal training and guidance on addressing it within therapy (BPS, 2017; Betteridge, 2012), report difficulties with raising religious beliefs (Crossley and Salter, 2005) and have historically pathologised religion (Loewenthal, 2000) meaning clients may fear and avoid disclosing religiosity (Mayers et al., 2007). Psychologists should avoid attributing distress to religious belief simply because clients express this in religious terms. Islam has a comprehensive language of conceptualising suffering and an Islamic psychology, which clients may be familiar with and prefer. Both religion and psychology aim to address distress; religious and psychological ideas have potential for conflict, conflation but also multiplicity and integration (Betteridge, 2015).

Within the LGBTQI+ community, there are powerful narratives about the importance of coming out as an important liberatory step in the maturation of a positive LGBTQI+ identity. LGBTQI+ Muslims in this study have felt stigmatised for this and psychologists who tacitly endorse coming out may compound this stigma, who tend towards developmental stage models and conceptualising emerging adulthood as a period of exploration and increased independence. Yet young people in marginal social positions are less likely to experience this (Syed & Mitchell, 2013). LGBTQI+ Muslims may privilege maintaining valued relationships over coming out. Services should explore fears and beliefs around the risk of rejection and harm but avoid assuming this as the main factor driving decisions. Coming out may have unpredictable effects and participants in this study have spoken of ambiguous acknowledgements by family and friends, including the ongoing expression of homophobic attitudes even while remaining generally supportive. More appropriate frameworks such as invitations for "coming in" may be more appropriate, where Hammoud-Beckett (2007), a narrative therapist supports her client to construct their undisclosed LGBTQI+

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indentity as a "treasure chest" centres the agency in being selective and challenges shame associated with being 'in the closet'.

Psychologists should be aware that the way they formulate and report on LGBTQI+ Muslims difficulties may generate an unhelpful overemphasis on family and communities at the expense of wider socio-political factors which impact upon this group who remain systemically disadvantaged and stigmatised by mainstream society. Institutions such as the police, health and social care and governmental policy feed into problematic narratives of Muslims. Psychologists, who act as representatives and agents of statutory services may use strategies for engagement with LGBTQI+ Muslims and their networks which resemble or reproduce hostile or coercive practices, framing these within psychological languages that obscure the legitimate concerns of communities wary of surveillance and intervention (Younis, 2021).

5.4.2 Community Level

LGBTQI+ spaces are not necessarily affirmative, safe spaces for LGBTQI+ Muslims where mainstream LGBTQI+ venues often reflect the secular values of a white elite (Skeggs, 2003) organised by capitalist motivations with a dominant aesthetic that is highly sexualised with high levels of drug and alcohol use (Green and Feinstein, 2013). Studies show that minority stress and internalised stigma correlates strongly with risky substance use among LGBTQI+ people who remain at a higher risk of substance misuse problems than the general population and religious belief may protect against substance misuse where this is prohibited, but may also increase risk for those withdrawing from religion (Koenig, 2015). Non-religious Muslims may also feel unrepresented, and participants in this study have voiced experiences of racism and Islamophobia as well as being exoticized and fetishized by LGBTQI+ people. McBride (2005) has written of how 'racialised desire' among gay men objectifies based on a white gaze while Ahmed (2017) has written of the "institutional lines" where bodies that might not appear white still have to inhabit whiteness if they are to be accepted and simultaneously make other bodies hyper visible creating "political and personal trouble". Community stakeholders within LGBTQI+ communities must do more to dismantle the assumptions of whiteness within LGBTQI+ spaces, challenge racism and support spaces which address the specific religious and cultural needs of LGBTQI+ Muslims.

LGBTQI+ Muslims in this study have shared stories of the pervasiveness of negative attitudes towards them within faith communities that are keen to protect traditional values related to their religious and ethnic identities in a national context where they remain early generation migrants and a minority, presenting a dilemma for those wishing to protect the wellbeing of LGBTQI+ Muslims while respecting their right to collective self-determination representing a long standing tension between the right to religious freedom and secularist traditions within UK equality law seeking to protect LGBTQI+ people from discrimination. This study suggests that approaches which portray Muslim communities as launching a 'war on LGBT kids' (BBC, 2019) is unlikely to be constructive and only deepen existing suspicions, divisions and polarisation. A recent example of this may be the "No Outsider" lessons which were paused across several primary schools in Birmingham in 2019 with several weeks of protests where media and political narratives were reminiscent of 'clash of civilisations' discourses and accused Muslim communities of being irredeemably patriarchal and anti-modern, where LGBTQI+ rights are weaponized rhetorically as representing a threat from a monolithic Islam similar to dichotomous thinking surrounding the wearing of a veil by women, which led to increased gendered Islamophobic attacks on women (Zempi, 2016). Engaging Muslim communities may mean avoiding antagonistic strategies invoking white saviour dynamics and ignoring the complex socioeconomic interrelations and historical context underlying patriarchal norms. Communities should consider pursuing mediation which utilises non-violent communication (Rosenberg, 2015) to clarify the needs and requests of Muslim communities while asserting the need to protect LGBTQI+ people from psychological, spiritual and physical harm. Participants expressed great loneliness and suffering from the hermeneutical injustice (Fricker, 2006) of repeated religious negative representations of LGBTQI+ identies suggesting the need for accessing affirmative narratives for LGBTQI+ identities at an early age; more than half of LGBTQI+ pupils say there isn't an adult at their school they can talk to about being LGBTQI+, and just one in five pupils report having learned about where to go for help and advice about same-sex relationships, with just one in ten within faith schools (Stonewall, 2017).

Participants in this study express cautious optimism about the future of Muslim acceptance of LGBTQI+ identities, suggesting fatalistic narratives about Muslim communities are inappropriate. Women, in particular, emerge as potential allies, reflected in research showing that that 52% of American Muslims now agree with the statement: "homosexuality should be accepted by society", nearly double from those polled a decade ago in 2007 with women being even more supportive, 63% compared to 24% (Pew, 2020). This study took a tentative, curious approach to perceived problems. similarly initiatives taken by self-identified allies of LGBTQI+ Muslims should be humble and consider Reynold's (2010, p.8) warning that "the potential fall out of backlash of our actions as allies will on the oppressed people, not us".

5.4.3 Research

This study employed a collective narrative approach to support story-telling of struggles and strengths, centring LGBTQI+ Muslim voices with participatory principles that encouraged participants to propose the means by which data was collected, suggesting that individual interviews would support them in preparing for a collective sharing of stories. Collective story-telling can be a step towards collective action through reflecting on shared struggles, diffusing power inequalities and reauthoring of problem-saturated narratives (White, 1999) and in this study, participants shared their skills, knowledges and strategies for resisting their oppression. This happened more when participants met as a group, suggesting that researchers should not underestimate the extent to which stories-told and stories-untold depend on context and a reflexive consideration of the researcher's positionality is paramount. Research should continue to focus on creative resistance in clients who may initially privilege stories of struggle rooted in a language of mental health and trauma reflecting the marginalised groups' expectations of the interests of researcher-psychologists about their lives. Researchers could therefore ask: How can researchers avoid foreclosing marginalised group's acknowledgement of their strengths and skills by way of assumptions made about why have been approached? How can psychological researchers approach groups in a way perceived as neutral as opposed to problem-focused and pathologizing?

This research has shown that LGBTQI+ Muslim identities include other intersecting identities such as ethnicity and generational differences which must

also be considered. This research has shown that there is value and meaning in gathering individuals identifying as LGBTQI+ Muslim, but an overrepresentation of research on South Asian gay men may neglect communities with different historical relationships to religion such as Turkish or Iranian communities who have living memory of secularist and Islamic traditions. This study suggests that research should continue to explore normative assumptions about LGBTQI+ Muslims' in relation to other identities. They might ask: How do LGBTQI+ Muslims from secular government ran countries differ from those in supposedly theocratic states? To what extent do South Asian gay men's concerns represent those of South Asian lesbians, and what are the key differences?

5.5 Dissemination

Findings have been shared as part of a staff presentation for a major charity specialising in supporting refugee and asylum-seeking people. I also intend to continue contact with the original organisation who I was unable to work with to identify potential opportunities for collaboration, and the collective narrative document is in the process of being evaluated by participants for dissemination with other organisations willing to work with us for further development.

6. CONCLUSION

This collective narrative participatory project engaged with a small group of LGBTQI+ Muslims allowing for a novel experience of telling and retelling of preferred stories. In doing so, participants shared their experiences of struggles and strengths in a collective act enabling them to comment and reflect on their experiences and the dominant narratives which continue to envelop and narrow how their identities are imagined and understood. From their distinct and multiple perspectives, each participant in this study centres human relationships based in honesty, fairness and love over and above claims about identities and ideology. Moreover, as opposed to experiencing their LGBTQI+ Muslim identity as a flawed enterprise characterised by conflict and compromise, the three participants in this study revealed creative strategies which opened up possibilities for living within and alongside oppressive narratives of themselves.
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Articulating these provides opportunities for other LGBTQI+ Muslims to adopt these novel, strategic approaches to the dilemmas they may face whether they choose to remain a strong faith and life in accordance with Islam or a less close relationship; they also offer ways of re-defining acts which have become associated within an overly simplistic, restrictive and stigmatising narrative of the being liberated as LGBTQI+.

By listening carefully to these stories and presenting narratives focusing on acts of resistance against oppression, an account of LGBTQI+ Muslims as passive, isolated victims due to their ethnoreligious and sexual and gender identities is rejected in favour of one which attends to the ways in which LGBTQI+ Muslims demonstrate to themselves and to each other a "commitment to collective struggles conceived as an ongoing process of becoming conscious of their presence as actors in the world" (Suissa, 2017, pp.875).

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8. APPENDICIES

APPENDIX A – BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY
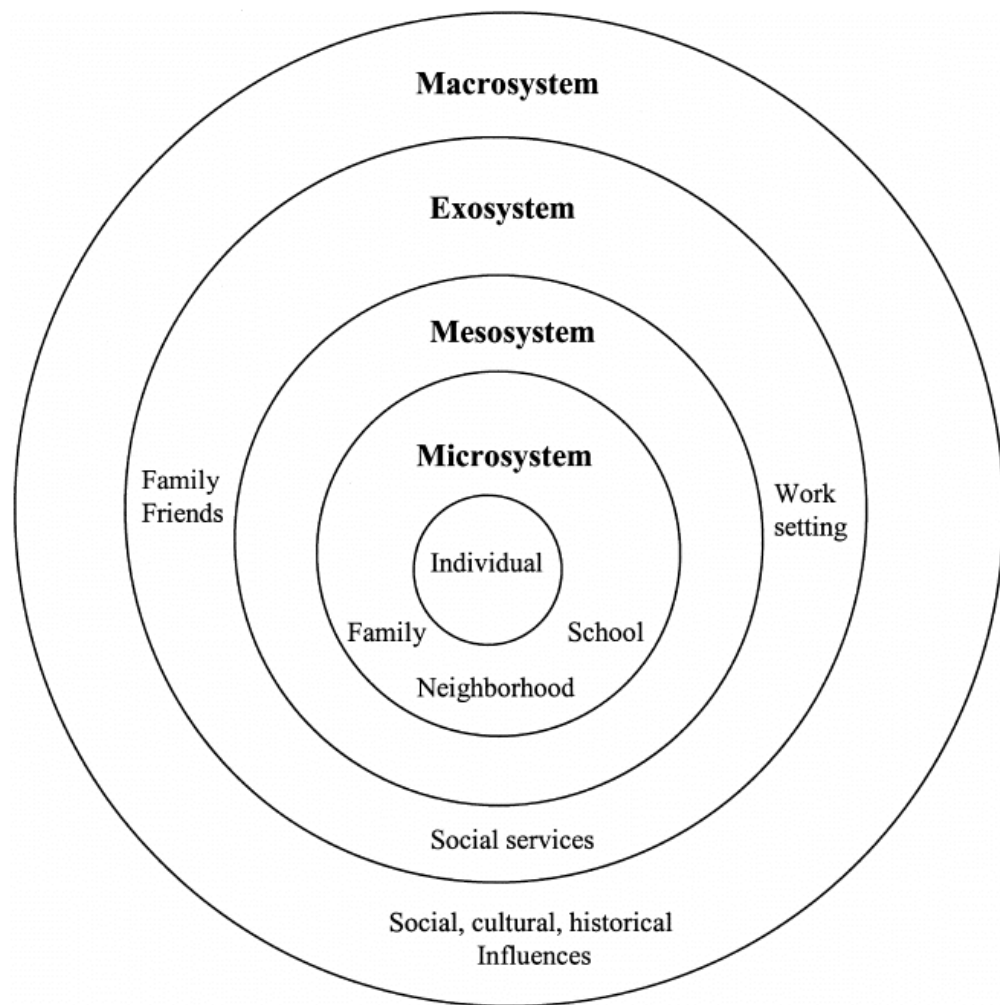
APPENDIX B – ETHICAL APPROVAL

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

REVIEWER: Milda Perminiene

SUPERVISOR: **Maria Castro**

STUDENT: James Michael Byrne

Course: DClinPsych Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Title of proposed study: A Collective Narrative Practice Methodology in the case of LGBTQI+ Muslims

DECISION OPTIONS:

1. **APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.

2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED <u>BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES</u>** (see Minor Amendments box below)**:** In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is <u>not</u> required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made <u>before</u> the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.

3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below)**:** In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY

(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)

APPROVED

Minor amendments required *(for reviewer)*:

Major amendments required *(for reviewer):*

Confirmation of making the above minor amendments *(for students)*:

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name *(Typed name to act as signature):*

Student number:

Date:

(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER *(for reviewer)*

Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?

YES / NO

Please request resubmission with an adequate risk assessment

If the proposed research could expose the <u>researcher</u> to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

☐   HIGH

Please do not approve a high risk application and refer to the Chair of Ethics. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be

permitted and an application not approved on this basis. If unsure please refer to the Chair of Ethics.

☐ MEDIUM (Please approve but with appropriate recommendations)

[+] LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any).

Reviewer *(Typed name to act as signature)*:   Milda Perminiene

Date: 21/07/2020

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE:

For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UELs Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard

Participant Information Sheet

1 **Why am I being asked to participate in creative writing sessions**

I am trainee clinical psychologist. I am a gay man who is passionate about issues surrounding equality and minority groups. I will be facilitating creative writing workshops to draw upon themes from our discussions. I hope do a piece of research with those who take part.

~~research with those who take part.~~

2 **What will happen if I take part?**

At the sessions, everyone will be invited to write creatively on topics drawing upon themes which form the basis of Hidayah's current discussion groups. You will have a chance to share your poetry with the group, and to reflect on the process of writing and the work of others.

3 **Do I have to take part?**

No. Taking part in the research is completely voluntary. You can take part in the creative writing sessions if you choose and not take part in the research.

4 **Can I change my mind?**

Yes. If you do choose to take part in the research, you can withdraw at any time. You don't have to explain why. You can also withdraw your data from the research up to two weeks from your participating in a creative writing session.

5 **Can I get more information?**

Yes. If you have any questions please contact me or my supervisor.

We can also arrange to meet to speak about the research and answer any questions you might have about this and the longer participant information sheet.

My name: James Byrne (Trainee Clinical Psychologist)
My supervisor: Dr Maria Castro Romero (Senior Lecturer)
My email address:
My supervisor's email address: m.castro@uel.ac.uk

University of
East London

Participant Information Sheet

Confidentiality and Anonymity

 Your priacy and safety will be respected at all times. The researcher and supervisor will have sole access to audio recordings and your creative writing pieces, and identifiable information will be removed at the point of analysis to protect your anonymity. After a period of time these recordings will be deleted.At the point of compiling a collection of creative writing, participants will be invited to contribute but are under no obligation to do so and may do so using a preferred name or pseudonym.

In accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act, anonymised data will be kept for 5 years in the case of subsequent publication of the project after which all data will be destroyed. Data will be used for write up and possible academic presentations but we will also think about additional ways to share findings in a way that reaches a wider audience. Your contact details will be stored by myself on an encrypted electronic file which will be password protected.

As the data collection will take place in a group format, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. However, all people present at the group will be asked at the beginning and reminded at the end to keep the group confidential, including in the realm of online social media. It will be made clear that this means not discussing participants personal information outside of the session to anybody else.

University of
East London

Participant Information Sheet

Interested in taking part? Please read the further information below.

What is the purpose of this study?

LGBT+ Muslims, both practicing and non-practicing, are a minority who face multiple challenges and there is a distinct lack of visibility and awareness of the voices, hopes and needs of LGBT+ Muslims. It has been suggested that one important way to challenge perceived negativity about LGBT+ Muslims is to produce further knowledge about their experiences and identities.

Why creative writing?

We aim to produce a small book of creative writing contributions over the course of the sessions with a view to sharing these with other LGBT+ Musims. We will think carefully about the opportunities available to us for further distributing this to further the aim of raising awareness and visibility of LGBT+ Muslim stories.

Creative writing allows participants to share stories which are important to them, rather than answering questions which have been designed by an interviewer. It can draw upon real lived experienced or be fictional, and draws upon the language, symbols and characters that seem most relevant to the writer. Creative writing allows people to write from multuple perspectives and employ the language and imagery which feels most important to them.

University of East London

Participant Information Sheet

Where will my creative writing be kept?

Your creative writing will be stored securely by the researcher in a locked cabinet.

How will I benefit from taking part in this study?
Participation in this study is voluntary and you will not be reimbursed for your time, however it is hoped taking part will be a valuable opportunity to:
- Reflect on your identities and experiences of being an LGBT+ Muslim
- Practice writing about these through a creative writing medium
- Contribute to a community project leading to the publication of a small booklet designed to be read by others including other LGBT+ Muslims.

What will happen in the creative writing sessions?

You will then be invited to attend a small group of approximately five other participants. A topic will be introduced and we will briefly discuss this before being invited to respond creatively to the topic. If you choose to share your writing, other participants will listen to this and then respond to what you have written with an emphasis on which parts they identified with. These conversations will be audio recorded and kept by the researcher.You can expect to be invited to more than one group, but your attendance and participantion in individual activities is your choice.

At the end of the project, you will be invited to contribute pieces of creative writing to a booklet. Your authorship can be anonymised or you may choose to use a pseudonym.

University of
East London

Participant Information Sheet

What happens next if I decide to take part in the study?

I will arrange to meet with you in person. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions before being asked to sign a consent form of which you will be given a copy.

Contact Details

If you would like further information about this research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.
James Byrne
Trainee Clinical Psychologist

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor:
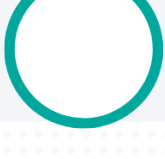
Dr Maria Castro Romero
School of Psychology
University of East London
Water Lane
London
E15 4LZ   m.castro@uel.ac.uk

Email:
Or Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee:
Dr Tim Lomas
School of Psychology
University of East London
Water Lane,
London
E15 4LZ   t.lomas@uel.ac.uk

University of
East London

Consent Form

Initials here

1	I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet and have had an opportunity to have my questions about this study answered by the researcher.
2	I agree to maintain the confidentiality of information discussing during group sessions and understand that my own confidentiality can only be guaranteed insofar as others respect this agreement.
3	It has been explained to me how my information will be stored, and will happen with my information once the study has been completed.
4	I am aware that as part of this study, I will be asked if pieces of creative writing generated during the process of my being part of the study can contribute to a small book to be read by members of the public.
5	I am aware that my participation is completely voluntary and I can withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason. I know to contact the researcher if this is the case.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)   Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

....

Participant's Signature   Researcher's Signature

....

Date: ....

University of East London

APPENDIX E - DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

APPENNDIX F – COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF CHANGE OF PROCEDURE

Setting

Transitioning to an online space would mean a dramatic change to the setting of the telling of stories. Foremost, the unity of an embodied space is disrupted. Early in the pandemic, literature began to emerge from psychological professions reflecting upon the sudden shift to near-total remote online working. This presents challenges to groups wishing to cultivate a warm context that is consistent and containing, and obscures transitions in and out of the space.

Being placeless, remote participation similarly can affect the 'sensation of being there'. or what is sometimes called presence. and which is storied as supporting feelings of connectedness to others (Russel, 2015). The lack of feeling present may restrict expressions. if not by way of technical quirks (such as online platform's automatic selection of one voice and muting others), then by the indeterminacy of the gathering or collective presence (Riva et al., 2014). In gatherings where non-verbal communications are important, displaying only a participant's head and shoulders in a way that is non-directed –for example, eyes not looking directly at an intended listener (O'Malley, 196)– may threaten the felt sense of acting as a collective. In collective narrative methodologies, a sense of shared united among individuals is sought, a 'communitas' (Turner, 1969) achieved through the ceremonial re-telling of stories resembling an oral ritual.

In choosing to proceed with the research in digitally mediated spaces, I was aware that, while these differed significantly from the more usual ways of communicating and relating common to groups, the emerging literature was quickly developing to provide guidelines for practice clinically and in research.. Interestingly, some of these acknowledged that demand for working this way had existed prior to the pandemic, and the crisis had spurred innovation. Anecdotally, I had also heard stories of clients engaging with therapy, when they had not before, demonstrating potential for remote working to increase access. I began to change from a problem-saturated view of digitally mediated spaces to one that saw it as an opportunity, and this shift of perspective prompted me to reflect on my own history of using such spaces, that I myself

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had been helped greatly by the presence of so-called online communities at times in my own life with regards to my sexuality and mental health, spaces I would not have dared to enter physically. As such, an online collective narrative practice may not be so unfamiliar after all: queer+ness has historically occupied liminal physical spaces within society, and the internet has often been regarded as a safehaven for hidden, fragmented groups (Miles, 2018)

Recruitment

Moving participation from in-person to online meant that it was now practicable to recruit from across the UK, as opposed to just London, widening potential participation in my study. However, it also meant that participants would most likely need to join the group from home. This would require them, for the sake of confidentiality, to have a private space available. This would clearly not be possible for some LGBTQI+ Muslims, who may not be 'out' and would, thus, affect the pool of potential participants, excluding those for whom joining would constitute a risk.

Community psychology encourages practitioners to work creatively with barriers to access, and to adapt proactively. As such, while I had imagined that meetings would be helpful for establishing relationships, I reserved the possibility that participation could be flexible and varied, allowing for participants to contribute in different ways. Therefore, I chose to explore this as part of my conversation with potential participants and did not make being able to attend online meetings an exclusion criteria.

Risk

Conducting the research independently of a partnering organisation meant that any existing policies and associated processes could not be used, therefore, increasing the risk to participants by removing a resource, should participants become distressed. Goffman (1961) argues in *Asylums* that the institutionalisation of settings designed as safe for the distressed is characterised by surveillance and control, rationalising the elimination of freedom and autonomy. Such safety discourses contribute to modern risk-averse cultures (Slemon, Jeniks & Bungay, 2017). As such, practitioners working with populations deemed to be 'risky' should be aware of the ways in which risk-averse cultures reproduce exclusionary oppressive practices. As

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such, I reasoned that a revised risk assessment could address any significant changes and remain safe.

Representation

The loss of a partnering organisation also meant the loss of potential co-researchers and marked the most important threat to the research as envisaged. It had been hoped that preliminary meetings with volunteer co-researchers would develop a collective narrative methodology that could be used with a second group of participants. This would allow an exchange of skills and knowledges, as well as the sharing of power between myself and the organisation, building accountability into the decision making process and increasing the participation of LGBTQI+ Muslims. By working independently, I was concerned that the research would move too far away from community psychology and PAR principles to legitimately claim this as inspiration and, by removing accountability partners in the form of co-researchers, I risked reproducing the problematic relationships between psychologists, and particularly white psychologists, and marginalised groups, as articulated in my literature review.

Ultimately, I accepted that my research would not fulfil the level of participation I had initially hoped, nor were the means of dissemination or any collective narrative methodology as clear has beforehand. However, given the commitment of time and resource spent by the organisation in supporting me and my participation in their events, there was an ethical problem in abandoning the research due to this alone. Furthermore, it had been community psychology and participation action methodology's adaptability and flexibility that had been a strength in meeting the research needs of LGBTQI+ Muslims initially, including in the face of challenges. I resolved to remain in contact with the organisation and offer to partner later, and to work reflexively according to the same power-sharing principles, albeit in a less formally embedded way. In choosing this, I had in mind the analogy of the drop of a pebble where "no matter the size of the pebble, the change it creates can be widespread" and to have reasonable hope in the wisdom of collective narrative practice, my skills as a psychologist, and the agency and creativity of participants.

Creative Acts of Resistance and the Stories of LGBTQ+ Muslims

My name is James, and I am a trainee psychologist from the University of East London interested in the experiences of LGBTQ+ Muslims. I am interested in hearing stories of the struggles and strengths that LGBTQ+ Muslims draw upon when thinking about the relationship between their gender identity, sexuality and faith.

So much research doesn't reach beyond the people who participate, so I would like to create a group where we can generate poetry, stories and words of wisdom that we can discuss and then share with others who might benefit.

As this is a group working together on a project, I hope we can meet for around an hour for a couple of weeks but this can flexible depending on the level of participation you feel most comfortable with.

For more information or an informal chat, you can email me: James Byrne on u1826608@uel.ac.uk

University of East London

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

School of Psychology

REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT TO AN ETHICS APPLICATION

FOR BSc, MSc/MA & TAUGHT PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE STUDENTS

Please complete this form if you are requesting approval for proposed amendment(s) to an ethics application that has been approved by the School of Psychology.

Note that approval must be given for significant change to research procedure that impacts on ethical protocol. If you are not sure about whether your proposed amendment warrants approval consult your supervisor or contact Dr Tim Lomas (Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee. t.lomas@uel.ac.uk).

HOW TO COMPLETE & SUBMIT THE REQUEST

1. Complete the request form electronically and accurately.

2. Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (page 2).

3. When submitting this request form, ensure that all necessary documents are attached

(see below).

4. Using your UEL email address, email the completed request form along with associated documents to: Dr Tim Lomas at t.lomas@uel.ac.uk

5. Your request form will be returned to you via your UEL email address with reviewer's response box completed. This will normally be within five days. Keep a copy of the approval to submit with your project/dissertation/thesis.

6. Recruitment and data collection are **not** to commence until your proposed amendment has been approved.

<u>**REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**</u>

1. A copy of your previously approved ethics application with proposed amendments(s) <u>added as tracked changes</u>.

2. Copies of updated documents that may relate to your proposed amendment(s). For example an updated recruitment notice, updated participant information letter, updated consent form etc.

3. A copy of the approval of your initial ethics application.

Name of applicant:	James Byrne
Programme of study:	DclinPsych Professional Doctroate of Clinical Psychology
Title of research:	A Collective Narrative Practice Methodology in the case of LGBTQI+ Muslims
Name of supervisor:	Maria Castro Romero

Briefly outline the nature of your proposed amendment(s) and associated rationale(s) in the boxes below

Proposed amendment	Rationale
Abstract: addition of "via social media and approaching…" p.3	It is no longer possible to partner with the organisation as planned due to ongoing demands on the board's time and resources

	due to COVID-19. Nevertheless, they have agreed to support the research through disseminating call for participants through their own communications. I also plan to use my own social media posts to recruit potential participants.
p.6 change from wording which suggests I am working in direct partnership with an organisation to wording which only mentions that I am working with the more general group of LGBT+ Muslims and plan to consult with relevant organisations where possible	No longer possible to work with an organisation directly due to COVID-19 and therefore participants are unlikely to have shared affiliation to an organisation or existing network
p.7 change of wording from members of a specific organisation to more general demographic group	Same as above.
p.8 change of research aims from wording suggesting direct working with a partner organisation to general demographic group.	Same as above.
p.9 change of wording suggesting confidentiality and anonymity may be	Need to acknowledge that dissemination has changed in line with the fact that there is

threatened by members of the partnering organisation being able to identify individuals due to close affiliation between members to more general wording suggesting participants being identified in their general social networks as a result of dissemination of the research. Also, change of wording from dissemination being the partner organisation and more general description of what will be disseminated.	now no agreement to share the research with the partnering organisation.
p.16 change from organisation partner wording to more general wording	Change from partnering with organisation to more general demographic
p.16 change of recruitment strategy to include relevant organisations media and my own social media	Same as above.
p.17 change of dissemination from partnering organisation to more general	Same as above.
p.18 change from data wil be kept in cabinets to only online	As research is happening online, there will be no physical pieces of paper to store securely in a cabinet
p.27 Change of call for participants from only text to brightly coloured poster with more general wording and explanation of research	To make the call for participants more appealing as will now need to call for participants from general public
p.29 and p.31 change of wording on participant information form from mentioning specific organisation to more general wording	No longer working with a partner organisation

Please tick	YES	NO
Is your supervisor aware of your proposed amendment(s) and agree to them?	Yes	

Student's signature (please type your name):　　　James Michael Byrne

Date:　　　　　　　　39/20/2020

TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWER		
Amendment(s) approved	YES	
Comments		

Reviewer:　　Tim Lomas

Date: 12.11.20