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The religious and social correlates of Muslim identity: an empirical enquiry into religification  
among male adolescents in the UK

Leslie J Francis\*

University of Warwick, UK

Ursula McKenna

University of Warwick, UK

Author note:

\*Corresponding author:

Leslie J Francis

Warwick Religions & Education Research Unit

Centre for Education Studies

The University of Warwick

Coventry CV4 7AL United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)24 7652 2539

Fax: +44 (0)24 7657 2638

Email: [leslie.francis@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:leslie.francis@warwick.ac.uk)

### **Abstract**

For the first time in 2001 the Census for England and Wales included a question on religious identity. The assumption was that religious identity predicts distinctiveness of social and public significance. This paper tests that thesis among male adolescents (13- to 15- years of age) who participated in a survey conducted across the four nations of the United Kingdom. From the 11,870 participants in the survey the present analyses compares the responses of 158 male students who self-identified as Muslim with the responses of 1,932 male students who self-identified as religiously unaffiliated. Comparisons are drawn across two domains defined as religiosity and as social values. The data demonstrated that for these male adolescents self-identification as Muslim encased a distinctive profile in terms both of religiosity and social values.

*Keywords:* Religious identity, Muslim identity, religiosity, social values

### **Introduction**

The self-awareness of the United Kingdom as a multi-ethnic and multi-faith society has been slow and unevenly crystallised. Such slowness is perhaps best seen through the lens of the official statistical offices and the design of the decadal census. The national census is not simply intended to describe the population but also to serve national and local government in the strategic and equitable distribution of resources. Confirmation that religification across the United Kingdom had indeed rehabilitated the visibility of religion within the public domain was seriously affirmed when it was recognised that the decadal census could not realistically and adequately fulfil its intended purposes if religious identity remained unrecognised and unrecorded.

Under devolved political powers, the Office for National Statistics has oversight of the decadal census for England and Wales (treated largely as one entity) with two separate offices taking responsibility for Northern Ireland and for Scotland. To avoid undue complexity, the following narrative is restricted to the situation in England and Wales. After debate and uncertainty the question on ethnicity was introduced to the census in England and Wales for the first time in 1991 (see Coleman & Salt, 1996; Peach, 1996; Dale & Holdsworth, 1997; Ballard, 1997). Prior to this there had been several abortive attempts to raise with the Office for National Statistics the case for including a religious question in the census. However, it was discontent with the adequacy of the ethnicity question, taken in isolation, to generate an adequate profile of the changing face of society in England and Wales that gave rise during the mid-1990s to serious consideration about including a question concerning religious identity in the 2001 census. Several important voices from ethnic and religious communities were being heard to say that second and third generation citizens wanted to be recognised less in terms of their ethnic roots and more in terms of their current religious identity. Indeed this is a point that has been well documented by research among

young people which has found that second generation Asians have increasingly wished to define themselves through their religion rather than through their parental country of origin or nationality (see Shaw, 1994; Modood, 1997; Alexander, 2000; Archer, 2003).

During the mid-1990s three working groups emerged in quick succession. The first working group was convened under the ecumenical instrument of the Christian Churches. The second working group was convened by the Inter-Faith Network. The third working group was established by the Office for National Statistics as the Religious Affiliation Subgroup of the Census Content Working Group (see Sherif, 2011).

The Office for National Statistics was very cautious about allowing a place for religion within the national census. It was the groups' chair Leslie Francis's first job to clarify the multi-dimensional nature of religion as conceived within the social sciences. He pressed the case that religious affiliation like ethnicity is an aspect of personal and social identity and as such a proper matter for public concern. In this sense religious affiliation constitutes a proper component for the national census, unlike religious belief and religious practice. Still unconvinced the office for National Statistics took the view that the 1920 Census Act specifically precluded questions about religion and the Government of the day failed to find time for an amendment to the Act. That the religious question still made its way into the 2001 census has a lot to do with the weight and clarity of the Muslim voice (see Sherif, 2011).

As part of the preparatory work underpinning the case for the religious question in the 2001 census, Fane (1999) organised an important and powerful case to rehabilitate self-assigned religious affiliation as a theoretically coherent and socially significant indicator. Fane drew on Bouma's (1992) social theory of religious identification according to which he defines religious affiliation as a useful social category giving indication of the cultural background and general orientating values of a person. Although a self-assigned religious identity might also imply commitment to practice and adherence to belief, it does not

necessarily do so. Bouma (1992, p. 108) suggests that religious affiliation might remain significant without either practice or belief in terms of exposure to the particular cultural background that it represents. The value of Bouma's sociological theory of religious identification is that it allows self-assigned religious affiliation to be perceived and analysed as a key component of social identity, in a way similar to age, gender, class location, political persuasion, nationality, ethnic group and others (see Zavalloni, 1975).

Building on this platform the Indicative Business Case for the Religious Question in the 2001 Census (paragraph 2.5) made the following case:

Scientific research in areas (for example) of psychology, sociology, gerontology and health care is pointing increasingly to the importance of religious indicators for predicting a range of practical outcomes. For example, international empirical research indicates the different patterns of social support required by the religious elderly, the speedier recovery rate from certain illnesses among some religious subjects, the different patterns of substance abuse among religious teenagers, and so on... In other words, knowing about the distribution of religion within society could promote the more effective and efficient targeting of resources, and indicate the presence of fresh partners in provision.

It is against this background that Francis's research group began to take a particular interest in testing the power of self-assigned religious affiliation to explain individual differences of personal and social significance. There were two purposes in doing this. The first purpose was to question the utility of the census employing the single category 'Christian' rather than distinguishing between different denominations. It was possible to explore this issue by drawing on data from the British Social Attitudes Survey. For example, Francis (2003) demonstrated that Catholics, Anglicans and members of the Free Churches had significantly different profiles in terms of personal and social correlates. The censuses in

Scotland and Northern Ireland were wise enough to recognise this fact, but not in England and Wales.

The second purpose was to explore the profiles of the other five religious groups named in the census (Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and Sikhs). This time, however, the British Social Attitudes Survey was not such a useful source in light of small numbers of each of these religious groups captured within general survey data. It is here, however, that Francis's Teenage Religion and Values Survey proved to be useful (see Francis, 2001a; Robbins & Francis, 2010). This survey set out to capture responses for 34,000 13- to 15-year-olds across England and Wales precisely to allow the smaller religious groups (Methodists as well as Muslims) to gain visibility.

Drawing on the Teenage Religion and Values Survey, the following picture began to emerge of young Muslims educated within the state-maintained sector of schools across England and Wales. For example, Francis (2001b, 2001c) set side-by-side the responses of 349 self-identified Muslims, 13,676 self-identified Christians, and 13,360 young people who identified with no religious group in respect of a range of salient issues. Of particular pertinence from this survey were issues concerning religious beliefs, personal values, attitudes toward alcohol, and views on sexual relationships. In terms of religious beliefs, 92% of self-identified Muslims believed in God, compared with 55% of self-identified Christians and 24% of the religiously unaffiliated. In terms of personal values, 68% of Muslims felt their life had a sense of purpose, compared with 61% of Christians and 50% of the religiously unaffiliated. In terms of alcohol, 68% of Muslims agreed that it was wrong to become drunk, compared with 20% of Christians and 16% of the religiously unaffiliated. In terms of sexual relationships, 49% of Muslims considered that it was wrong to have sexual intercourse outside marriage, compared with 15% of Christians and 11% of the religiously unaffiliated.

Drawing on a different source of data, namely the English and Welsh contribution to the International Empirical Research Programme Religion and Human Rights 1.0 at Radboud University in Nijmegen (see van der Ven & Ziebertz, 2012, 2013), Francis and Robbins (2014) set side-by-side the responses of male students who identified themselves as Christian (N=224), as Muslim (N=111) or as religiously unaffiliated (N=212). Of particular pertinence from this survey were issues concerning the theology of religions, experiencing God, religion in personal life, and religion in public life. In terms of the theology of religions, the exclusivist view that people can only receive the truth in *my* religion was espoused by 46% of Muslims, 23% of Christians, and 15% of the religiously unaffiliated. In terms of experiencing God, 78% of Muslims agreed that they trusted God never to abandon them, compared with 59% of Christians, and 6% of the religiously unaffiliated. In terms of religion in personal life, 82% of Muslims agreed that their life would be quite different had they not their religion or worldview, compared with 42% of Christians and 15% of the religiously unaffiliated. In terms of religion in public life, 69% of Muslims agreed that religious people should stand up publicly for the disadvantaged, compared with 48% of Christians, and 33% of the religiously unaffiliated.

### **Research aims**

Building on the studies published by Francis (2001a, 2001b) and Francis and Robbins (2014), the aim of the present study was to draw on the quantitative strand of the Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity Project conducted within the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (see Francis, Croft, Pyke, & Robbins, 2012; Arweck, 2017) in order to examine more fully the religious and social correlates of Muslim identity. The quantitative strand of the project gathered data from nearly 12,000 students between the ages of 13 and 15 years attending state-maintained schools within each of the four nations of the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales) and within London as a special case.



Drawing on these data the aim of the present paper was to select areas from the extensive survey that reflected issues of relevance to the religious and social identity of Muslim students and on these variables to compare the responses of Muslim students with the responses of religiously unaffiliated students. The comparison with religiously unaffiliated students is designed to test the religification hypothesis with clarity, by setting side-by-side young people identified by their Muslim identity and young people who reject all religious identities. Given the importance of sex difference in areas related to religion (Francis, 1997; Francis & Penny, 2014), the analyses were conducted for this paper among only one sex, namely male students.

These data were employed to address three specific research aims. The first research aim focuses on the demographic profile of young male Muslims to examine both the diversity within their backgrounds and the extent to which their religious identity is important to them. This aim tests the saliency of religification for young Muslims. The second research aim focuses on the religious profile of young male Muslims, and does so by exploring the following eight themes: religious identity, religious importance, religious self-assessment, religious conversation, religious influences, studying religion at school, religious beliefs, and God images. This aim tests how rooted religification is within the lives and experience of young Muslims. The third research aim focuses on the values profile of young male Muslims, and does so by exploring the following six themes: personal wellbeing, social wellbeing, attitude toward religious plurality, living with religious plurality, living with cultural diversity, and living with religious difference. This aim tests the extent to which religification among young Muslims is reflected in a distinctive profile of social values.

## **Method**

### **Procedure**

As part of a large multi-method project on religious diversity designed to examine the experiences and attitudes of young people living in the multi-cultural and multi-faith context of the UK, classes of year-nine and year-ten students in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and in London (13- to 15-years of age) were invited to complete a questionnaire survey during 2011 and 2012. The participants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, and were given the choice not to take part in the survey. The level of interest shown in the project meant that very few students decided not to participate. The sampling frame set out to capture data from at least 2,000 students in each of the five areas, with half attending schools with a religious character within the state-maintained sector and half attending schools without a religious foundation within the state-maintained sector. The schools accessed a representative sample of young people from across the UK.

### **Instrument**

The *Religious Diversity and Young People* survey was designed for self-completion, using mainly multiple-choice questions and Likert scaling on five points: agree strongly, agree, not certain, disagree, and disagree strongly. In the present analysis two groups of items were identified from the instrument to map the following areas: the demographic profile of the students, their religiosity and their social values. Religiosity embraces the themes of religious identity, religious importance, religious self-assessment, religious conversation, religious influences, studying religion at school, religious beliefs and God images. Social values include personal wellbeing, social wellbeing, attitudes toward religious plurality, living with religious plurality, living with cultural diversity, and living with religious difference.

### **Participants**

All told across the five areas (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and London) 11,870 students submitted thoroughly completed questionnaires. At least one

student self-identifying as Muslim was present in 11 of the 12 schools in England, 9 of the 11 schools in London, 10 of the 13 schools in Wales, 9 of the 16 schools in Scotland, and 3 of the 13 schools in Northern Ireland. The following analyses draws on the responses of the 158 male students who self-identified as Muslim and the responses of the 1,932 male students who self-identified as religiously unaffiliated.

### **Analysis**

The data were analysed by means of SPSS, employing chi square 4 x 2 contingency tables, combining the agree strongly and agree responses into one category, and the disagree strongly, disagree, and not certain responses into the second category.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Theme 1: Demographic profile**

In terms of their residency in the UK, 69% of the 158 male Muslim students had lived in the UK all their life, and a further 17% had lived in the UK for at least ten years; 11% had lived in the UK for between five and nine years, and 4% had lived in the UK for less than five years.

In terms of their ethnic background, 59% of the 158 male Muslim students self-identified as Asian: Pakistani (30%), Bangladeshi (14%), Indian (6%) and Other (9%). A further 12% self-identified as Black African, 3% as Black Caribbean, and 1% as Chinese; 11% self-identified as of mixed ethnicity, and 3% as White; and 12% selected the 'Other' category.

In terms of their linguistic background, 64% of the 158 male Muslim students reported that they spoke English as their main language at home.

In terms of personal identity, the participants were asked 'What would you say is the *most* important to your identity?' and given a check list including the following: Being Christian, Being Hindu, Being Muslim, Being Buddhist, Being Jewish, Being British, Being

Welsh, Being Irish, Being Scottish, Being English. The majority (86%) of the 158 male Muslim students chose 'Being Muslim'.

In terms of family life, the majority of the 158 male Muslim students identified their parents' religion as also being Muslim: mother (93%) and father (92%).

In terms of attendance at the Mosque, very few of the 158 male Muslim students claimed never to attend (4%) and a similar proportion claimed that their father never attended (5%); 35% claimed at least weekly attendance for themselves and 49% for their father.

In terms of personal religious practices, 59% of the 158 male Muslim students claimed to pray every day and a further 12% at least once a week; 29% of the 158 male Muslim students claimed to read holy scripture (eg, Qur'an) every day and a further 29% at least once a month.

In terms of receiving instruction in their faith, 82% of the 158 male Muslim students claimed to have attended religious classes outside school (eg, Madrasah).

## **Theme 2: Religious profile**

The survey contained a range of attitudinal items, rated on a five-point scale, that accessed eight themes relevant to illustrating the student's religious profile. These eight themes have been styled as follows: religious identity, religious importance, religious self-assessment, religious conversation, religious influence, studying religion at school, religious beliefs, and God images. Each of these eight themes will be examined in turn.

### ***Religious identity***

The set of items concerned with religious identity explored the students' perceptions of the importance of religious identity to themselves, to their fathers and to their mothers. The data highlight the centrality of their religious identity to Muslim students. Almost nine out of every ten Muslim students agreed that their religious identity was important to them (88%), and almost as many agreed that their mother's religious identity was important to her (86%)

and that their father's religious identity was important to him (80%). There is little surprise that only around one in ten of the religiously unaffiliated students agreed that their religious identity was important to them (9%) and a similar proportion agreed that their father's religion was important to him (8%) and that their mother's religious identity was important to her (12%). These data support the distinctive importance of religious identity in the lives and in the homes of male Muslim students.

- insert table 1 about here -

### ***Religious importance***

The set of items concerned with religious importance explored the students' perceptions of the importance of religion in the lives of those closest to them in terms of family (parents and grandparents) and in terms of friends. The data highlight the importance of religion in the lives of those closest to Muslim students. Thus, 90% thought that religion was important to their parents, 83% that religion was important to their grandparents, and 54% that their religion was important to most of their friends. Again there is little surprise that only a minority of the religiously unaffiliated students felt that they were surrounded by religiously motivated people. Thus, 11% thought that religion was important to most of their friends, and 10% thought that religion was important to their parents. The proportion rose to 24% who thought that religion was important to their grandparents. These data support the view that male Muslim students tend to be surrounded by family and friends who think religion to be important.

- insert table 2 about here -

### ***Religious self-assessment***

The set of items concerned with religious self-assessment covered two themes: assessment of the self as religious and as spiritual and assessment of the connection between religion and life. In terms of the first theme, three quarters of the Muslim students regarded

themselves as a religious person (77%) and one third of the Muslim students regarded themselves as a spiritual person (34%). In terms of the second theme, between two thirds and three quarters of the Muslim students felt the importance of religion in their daily lives. Thus, 73% agreed that religion played a major role when making important decisions in their lives and 71% agreed that their life had been shaped by their religious faith. Yet again there is little surprise that very few of the religiously unaffiliated students regarded themselves as a religious person (3%) or even as a spiritual person (9%). Very few of the religiously unaffiliated students felt that their lives had been shaped by religious faith (5%) or that religion played a major role in making important decisions in their lives (5%). The difference in the worldview of male Muslim students and the religiously unaffiliated students around them is quite sharp.

- insert table 3 about here -

### ***Religious conversation***

The set of items concerned with religious conversation explored the extent to which students talked about religion with those closest to them (mother, father, grandparents and friends). The data demonstrate that religious conversation played a central part in the lives of Muslim students. At least three in every five Muslim students often talked about religion with their mother (65%) and with their father (60%). Almost as many Muslim students often talked about religion with their friends (49%) and with their grandparents (43%). The situation is quite different among religiously unaffiliated students. Among religiously unaffiliated students around one in ten often talked about religion with their mother (9%), with their father (9%) and with their grandparents (8%). Slightly more often talked about religion with their friends (14%). Male Muslim students are sustained by an environment in which it is natural and normal to engage in conversation about religion.

- insert table 4 about here -

### ***Religious influence***

The set of items concerned with religious influence explored the students' perceptions of the extent to which their views about religion have been influenced by their parents and by their friends. Among Muslim students the influence of parents was strong with almost two thirds saying that their mother had influenced their views about religion (64%) or that their father had influenced their views about religion (62%). Among Muslim students the influence of friends was less strong than the influence of parents, but nonetheless far from unimportant, with almost two fifths saying that their friends had influenced their views on religion (38%). Among the religiously unaffiliated students up to one fifth agreed that their views on religion have been influenced by mother (19%), by father (19%) and by friends (15%). These data suggest that male Muslim students are conscious of the influence of family and friends on their religious development.

- insert table 5 about here -

### ***Studying religion at school***

The set of items concerned with studying religion at school explored the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of religious education. The responses of the religiously unaffiliated students indicated a high level of appreciation for religious education, with around three in every five agreeing that studying religion at school had helped them to understand people from other religions (64%) and to understand people from different racial backgrounds (59%). Around two in every five religiously unaffiliated students agreed that studying religion at school had shaped their views on religion (41%). A lower proportion of the religiously unaffiliated students agreed that learning about different religions at school was interesting (28%). The Muslim students were significantly more positive than the religiously unaffiliated students in their responses to each of these questions. Among Muslim students studying religion at school had helped 81% to understand people from other

religions and 72% to understand people from different racial backgrounds. At the same time, 69% of Muslim students found learning about different religions in school interesting, and 57% found studying religion at school had shaped their views about religion. These data demonstrate that male Muslim students are supportive of religious education in school.

- insert table 6 about here -

### ***Religious beliefs***

The set of items concerned with religious beliefs explored the students' beliefs in God, in heaven, and in hell. The majority of Muslim students signed up to all three core beliefs, with 90% affirming that they believed in God, 90% affirming that they believed in heaven, and 88% affirming that they believed in hell. Unsurprisingly a very different picture appertained among the religiously unaffiliated students, with 9% affirming that they believed in God, 18% affirming that they believed in heaven, and 18% affirming that they believed in hell. These data demonstrate that male Muslim students have maintained a high level of religious belief.

- insert table 7 about here -

### ***God images***

The set of items concerned with God images explored the students' perceptions of God as loving and forgiving or as strict and disapproving. The majority of Muslim students signed up to the positive God images as loving (83% and as forgiving 83%), with 47% also seeing God as strict and 26% seeing God as disapproving. For the majority of the religiously unaffiliated students these categories seemed largely irrelevant. These data demonstrate that male Muslim students conceive of God as forgiving, but for many also as strict.

- insert table 8 about here -

### **Theme 3: Social values profile**



The survey contained a range of attitudinal items, rated on a five-point scale, that accessed six themes relevant to illustrating the students' profile of social values. The six themes have been styled as follows: personal wellbeing, social wellbeing, attitudes toward religious plurality, living with religious plurality, living with cultural diversity, and living with religious difference.

### ***Personal wellbeing***

The set of items concerned with personal wellbeing explored the two themes of positive affect and negative affect. The data demonstrate that, compared with the religiously unaffiliated students, Muslim students displayed a significantly higher level of positive affect. While 62% of the religiously unaffiliated students found life really worth living, the proportion rose to 79% among Muslim students. Even more starkly, while 39% of the religiously unaffiliated students felt that life has a sense of purpose, the proportion rose to 85% among Muslim students. The same sharp contrast did not, however, emerge between the two groups in terms of negative affect. Thus, 22% of the religiously unaffiliated students often felt depressed and so did 20% of Muslim students; 15% of the religiously unaffiliated students had sometimes considered taking their own lives, and so had 13% of Muslim students. These data suggest that religious faith may be more effective in promoting positive affect than in suppressing negative affect among male Muslim students.

- insert table 9 about here -

### ***Social wellbeing***

The set of items concerned with social wellbeing explored the extent to which students experienced victimisation as a consequence of their distinctive religious, racial, linguistic or cultural background. A very small proportion of the religiously unaffiliated students reported being bullied because of their religion (3%), language (3%), race and colour (4%), or their country of origin (5%). The proportions, however, were significantly higher

among Muslim students. Among Muslim students up to one in four reported being bullied because of their religion (23%) or because of their race or colour (23%); 17% reported being bullied because of their country of origin and 10% reported being bullied because of their language. These data suggest that male Muslim students experience a higher level of vulnerability.

- insert table 10 about here -

### ***Attitudes toward religious plurality***

The set of items concerned with attitudes toward religious plurality explored two themes: views on religious equality and views on religious conflict. The data demonstrate that the majority of Muslim students supported the views that we must respect all religions (87%) and that all religious groups in Britain should have equal rights (84%). The religiously unaffiliated students took a less generous view on both issues (52% and 54% respectively). At the same time, a number of Muslim students showed awareness of the problems that religions may bring to the world: 34% agreed that religion brought more conflict than peace, and 19% agreed that religious people were often intolerant of others. The religiously unaffiliated students took a less generous view on both issues (54% and 38% respectively). These data suggest that male Muslim students hold a tolerant attitude toward religious plurality.

- insert table 11 about here -

### ***Living with religious plurality***

The set of items concerned with living with religious plurality explored the experience of living in multi-ethnic and multi-faith communities. The data demonstrate that Muslim students have much more positive experience than the religiously unaffiliated students of living with plurality. Thus, 68% of Muslim students felt that where they live people who come from different countries get on well together, compared with 44% of the religiously

unaffiliated students; 68% of Muslim students felt that where they live people from different religious backgrounds get on well together, compared with 39% of the religiously unaffiliated students; 61% of Muslim students felt that where they live people respect religious difference, compared with 38% of the religiously unaffiliated students. These data suggest that male Muslim students have, overall, a positive experience of religious plurality.

- insert table 12 about here -

### ***Living with cultural diversity***

The set of items concerned with living with cultural diversity explored the students' attitudes toward diversity (rather than experience of diversity). The data demonstrate that Muslim students have a much more positive attitude than the religiously unaffiliated students toward cultural diversity. Thus, 78% of Muslim students agreed that having people from different religious backgrounds made their school an interesting place, compared with 35% of the religiously unaffiliated students; 65% of Muslim students agreed that people who come from different countries made their school an interesting place, compared with 34% of the religiously unaffiliated students; 60% of Muslim students agreed that people from different religious backgrounds made where they live an interesting place, compared with 29% of the religiously unaffiliated students; and 60% of Muslim students agreed that people who come from different countries made where they live an interesting place, compared with 33% of the religiously unaffiliated students. These data suggest that male Muslim students have, overall a positive attitude toward cultural diversity.

- insert table 13 about here -

### ***Living with religious differences***

The set of items concerned with living with religious differences explored the students' attitudes toward wearing distinctive religious clothing or symbols in school. Across the symbols from five religious traditions included in the question Muslim students showed a

higher level of acceptance than shown by the religiously unaffiliated students. These traditions are presented in alphabetical order: Christian crosses (72% and 49%), Hindu Bindi (69% and 44%), Jewish Kippah/Yamulke (59% and 43%), Muslim headscarf (80% and 45%) and Sikh Turban (76% and 46%). These data suggest that male Muslim students have a broad acceptance of the public display of religious difference.

- insert table 14 about here -

### **Conclusion**

This study employed data generated by the Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity project to address three specific research aims regarding the nature of religious identity and the religious and social correlates of Muslim identity among 13- to 15-year-old male Muslims in the UK. These three research questions were addressed by examining the profile and responses of the 158 male Muslim participants in the project and by giving their responses perspective alongside the responses of the 1,932 male participants in the project who self-identified as religiously unaffiliated.

The first research aim focused on the demographic profile of young male Muslims to examine both the diversity within their backgrounds and the extent to which their religious identity is important to them. The data have highlighted diversity in terms of ethnic origin and in terms of length of residency within the UK. Yet within this diversity, the majority have spent their whole lives within the UK (69%) and have grown up with English as the main language spoken at home (64%). The majority of them, however, do not see being British as their main identity, but rather their identity is defined as being Muslim (86%). The majority are living in homes with Muslim mothers (92%) and Muslim fathers (93%) and have received religious instruction through the Madrasah (82%). Their religion is part of the fabric of their lives with 59% praying every day and 58% reading the Qur'an at least once a week; 35%

claimed at least weekly attendance at the Mosque for themselves and 49% for their father.

According to these data, for young male Muslims, to be Muslim is also to be religious.

The second research aim focused on the religious profile of young male Muslims and did so by exploring eight themes: religious identity, religious importance, religious self-assessment, religious conversation, religious influence, studying religion at school, religious beliefs, and God images. The data supported the importance of religious identity in the lives and in the homes of at least 80% of young male Muslims. Many male Muslim students were surrounded by people for whom religion is important, including parents (90%), grandparents (83%) and friends (54%). Most male Muslim students see themselves as religious people (77%) whose life has been shaped by their religious faith (71%). At least 60% of male Muslim students are supported by conversations about religion at home. At least 60% of male Muslim students felt that their parents had influenced their views about religion. Around 80% of male Muslim students have found studying religion at school has helped them to understand people from other religions. Around 90% of male Muslim students believe in God and for most of these the God in whom they believe is both loving and forgiving (83%). According to these data, for young male Muslims, to be Muslim is to be living in a world that takes religion seriously.

The third research aim focused on the values profile of young male Muslims, and did so by exploring the following six themes: personal wellbeing, social wellbeing, attitudes toward religious plurality, living with religious plurality, living with cultural diversity, and living with religious difference. The data supported the view that Muslim identity is associated with higher levels of positive wellbeing (85% felt their life had a sense of purpose), but also with lower levels of social wellbeing (23% were bullied because of their religion). Muslim students have a high regard for religious plurality (87% agreed that we must respect all religions), have a positive experience of living in a multi-faith environment

(68% felt that where they live people from different religious backgrounds get on well together), endorse the value of living in a multi-faith environment (78% agreed that having people from different religious backgrounds made their school an interesting place), and support the rights of students from other religious traditions to wear distinctive clothing in schools (76% agreed that Sikhs should be allowed to wear the Turban in school).

The strengths of drawing data from the Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project is that it drew together a large sample of 13- to 15-year-old students attending state-maintained schools (both with a religious character and without a religious foundation) from across the four nations of the UK and from London, and that it included a good range of items relating to aspects of religious diversity. In some ways, however, these strengths are also weaknesses in terms of generating a thorough account of the religious and social correlates of Muslim identity. Further research is now needed to build on the present analysis in three ways. First, a survey instrument is required that includes a wider and richer range of personal and social values in order to provide a fuller account of the personal and social correlates of Muslim identity. Second, the sampling of students undertaken by the present study needs to be enriched in two ways: by identifying schools within the state-maintained sector with high proportions of Muslim students and by including independent Islamic schools. Third, the survey needs to include a question concerning Muslim denominations in order to explore internal diversity among Muslims.

#### **Note**

Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project (AHRC Reference: AH/G014035/1) was a large-scale mixed methods research project investigating the attitudes of 13- to 16-year-old students across the United Kingdom. Students from a variety of socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds from different parts of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, with the addition of London as a special case, took part in the study.

Professor Robert Jackson was principal investigator and Professor Leslie J. Francis was co-investigator. Together they led a team of qualitative and quantitative researchers based in the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, within the Centre for Education Studies at the University of Warwick. The project was part of the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme and ran from 2009-2012.

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Table 1

*Religious identity*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	$p <$
My religious identity is important to me	9	88	723.7	.001
My father's religious identity is important to him	8	80	642.0	.001
My mother's religious identity is important to her	12	86	543.8	.001

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students

Table 2

*Religious importance*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	$p <$
Most of my friends think religion is important	11	54	229.7	.001
My parents think religion is important	10	90	668.9	.001
My grandparents think religion is important	24	83	247.6	.001

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students

Table 3

*Religious self-assessment*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	$p <$
I am a religious person	3	77	1046.4	.001
I am a spiritual person	9	34	95.9	.001
My life has been shaped by my religious faith	5	71	691.1	.001
When making important decisions in my life, my religion plays a major role	5	73	705.9	.001

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students

Table 4

*Religious conversation*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	$p <$
I often talk about religion with my mother	9	65	363.0	.001
I often talk about religion with my father	9	60	334.0	.001
I often talk about religion with my grandparents	8	43	186.0	.001
I often talk about religion with my friends	14	49	129.3	.001

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students

Table 5

*Religious influences*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	$p <$
My mother has influenced my views about religion	19	64	167.4	.001
My father has influenced my views about religion	19	62	152.7	.001
My friends have influenced my views about religion	15	38	54.3	.001

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students

Table 6

*Studying religion at school*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	$p <$
Studying religion at school has shaped my views about religion	41	57	15.5	.001
Studying religion at school has helped me understand people from other religions	64	81	18.4	.001
Studying religion at school has helped me understand people from different racial backgrounds	59	72	11.1	.001
Learning about different religions in school is interesting	28	69	111.1	.001

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students



Table 7

*Religious beliefs*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	$p <$
I believe in God	9	90	729.1	.001
I believe in heaven	18	90	425.2	.001
I believe in hell	18	88	402.3	.001

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students

Table 8

*God images*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	$p <$
I think of God as strict	10	47	180.7	.001
I think of God as loving	10	83	591.5	.001
I think of God as disapproving	8	26	57.0	.001
I think of God as forgiving	10	83	551.8	.001

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students

Table 9

*Personal wellbeing*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i> <
I feel my life has a sense of purpose	39	85	121.0	.001
I find life really worth living	62	79	18.7	.001
I often feel depressed	22	20	0.2	NS
I have sometimes considered taking my own life	15	13	0.4	NS

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students

Table 10

*Social wellbeing*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	$p <$
I am bullied because of my religion	3	23	132.1	.001
I am bullied because of my race or colour	4	23	95.1	.001
I am bullied because of my language	3	10	18.1	.001
I am bullied because my family comes from another country	5	17	40.5	.001

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students

Table 11

*Attitudes toward religious plurality*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	$p <$
We must respect all religions	52	87	72.1	.001
All religious groups in Britain should have equal rights	54	84	53.6	.001
Religion brings more conflict than peace	54	34	22.7	.001
Religious people are often intolerant of others	38	19	23.6	.001

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students

Table 12

*Living with religious plurality*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	$p <$
Where I live, people who come from different countries get on well together	44	68	34.7	.001
Where I live, people from different religious backgrounds get on well together	39	68	47.6	.001
Where I live, people respect religious differences	38	61	33.7	.001

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students

Table 13

*Living with cultural diversity*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	$p <$
Having people from different religious backgrounds makes my school/college an interesting place	35	78	112.0	.001
People who come from different countries make my school/college an interesting place	34	65	57.6	.001
People from different religious backgrounds make where I live an interesting place.	29	60	63.6	.001
People who come from different countries make where I live an interesting place	33	60	46.0	.001

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students

Table 14

*Living with religious differences*

	None %	Musl %	$\chi^2$	$p <$
Christians should be allowed to wear crosses in school	49	72	29.4	.001
Hindus should be allowed to wear the Bindi in school	44	69	35.1	.001
Jews should be allowed to wear the Kippah/Yamulke in school	43	59	13.5	.001
Muslims should be allowed to wear the headscarf in school	45	80	69.5	.001
Sikhs should be allowed to wear the Turban in school	46	76	52.5	.001

Note: None = religiously unaffiliated male students

Musl = Muslim male students