

Examining the extent and role of implicit bias within the religious education classroom

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Examining the extent and role of implicit bias within the religious education classroom

Abstract

Implicit biases within education exist amongst both staff and students. The primary reasons for such biases exist due to the postcolonial condition, which has resulted in colonial influence that is systemically embedded amongst institutions such as schools. Within the context of the religious education classroom, using the Harvard Implicit Associations Test (IAT) education practitioners have the ability to measure and reduce the implicit biases demonstrated by staff and students. Students and staff tend to demonstrate implicit biases which demonstrate an automatic preference towards majority races and religions, but using decolonised models of curricula, staff have the potential to reduce such biases.

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1. Introduction

This assignment aims to explore what role implicit biases play within the religious education (RE) classroom. It follows my previous assignment, in which I explored the call to decolonise the RE curriculum at GCSE. Decolonisation within my previous assignment was referred to in the sense of removing the influence left within education by the expansion of the British Empire, and the values it imposed amongst colonised peoples and institutions. My aim within the current research project was to examine the implicit biases amongst students at Key Stage 4 and their teachers to identify the extent to which implicit biases affected equitable outcomes and attitudes amongst all students. This research was a collaborative effort, involving members of my department, and the senior leadership team within my school community to ensure that all students were benefitting from the education that they received, and to create a sense of shared understanding about implicit biases amongst staff, to facilitate students' own understanding of bias and the role it plays.

As a teacher of Religious Education, known in my professional environment 'philosophy and ethics', and Assistant Progress Leader for Sixth Form at Hazelwood Academy (name anonymised), my role involves teaching RE across all key stages, from Years 7 to 13, which has given me experience in understanding the frameworks used to produce schemes of work over these key stages. Within my role as Assistant Progress Leader for Sixth Form, I act as the head of Year for the current cohort of Year 13, having followed them through since they began in Year 12. My personal context within the professional school environment, as a minority ethnic teacher within a multi-ethnic school has motivated me to undertake such a research project. Despite the diverse demographics of Hazelwood Academy, I am the only

teacher within my faculty who identifies as a BAME person and a member of the LGBT+ community. In my experience, it is easy to feel isolated and underrepresented, specifically within Humanities subjects, and within the greater context of the teacher workforce (Cabinet Office, 2018). As a minority ethnic teacher, I have often felt the pressure to be able to discuss issues of race, religion and sexuality, along with all the intersections of my minority identities. This became a driving force behind my desire to carry out the research that is contained within this paper, as I believe that it is imperative for teachers who identify as an ethnic majority to be able to understand the dangers of implicit bias, alongside the ability to discuss and educate students on the negative effects of implicit bias on minority communities.

Within the context of Hazelwood, it is evident that there is a significant concentration of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) pupils among our student body. The term BAME here refers to peoples who identify as Black (including mixed race, African or Caribbean), Asian (including South Asian, East Asian and Middle Eastern) and Minority Ethnic peoples – those who would not necessarily identify as ‘White British’ or Caucasian – including those of Traveller communities, Hispanic, First Nations and Pacific Islander communities. The term has been scrutinised for many reasons as critics argue that it treats race as a monolith, which is a fallacious approach to race as sociocultural and economic experiences of people from different races differ, and their experiences ought not be treated as a homogenous entity (Fakim and Macaulay, *BBC News*, 2020). Despite the criticism of the BAME acronym, it is important to still identify students from racial and ethnic minorities, and for the purposes of the research project, I will use the term to describe students who do not identify as White British or Caucasian in the interest of ease.

Hazelwood Academy is a state school in a unitary authority within the South East of England, which was rated Good by OFSTED in 2015, a grade they maintained following a short inspection in 2018. The academy boasts a total student population of 1580 students between Years 7 – 13, of which ~49% are of a BAME background, amounting to 772 students, in comparison to the 20% within the local area who identify as BAME according to the 2011 Census (ONS, 2011). Part of my rationale behind exploring implicit bias and curriculum decolonisation is due to the diverse student body within Hazelwood, as this will allow students who do identify as an ethnic minorities to feel empowered by their school, but also to feel seen and heard within the curricula of the subjects that they study.

Decolonisation here is a term used to describe the systemic unlearning of colonial influence as left on the subjects of the British Empire (including those from mainland Britain) in public and private institutions, including schools. Recent events, such as the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent Black Lives Matter movement during the summer of 2020 have also highlighted how important it is to look at the correlation between race and bias in education. The Black Lives Matter movement is a crucial part of the BAME student experience, prompting the creation of an Equality Group at Hazelwood, a directive that was led by students and supported by staff to raise awareness of issues of inequality amongst contemporary society. For BAME students, movements such as Black Lives Matter are crucial to their lived experience, showing them a fraction of the harsh realities for people who look like them.

One of the conclusions drawn from my prior assignment was that there seemed to be an element of colonial influence in the curriculum – not solely within RE, but also amongst

other subjects within the scope of 'liberal arts' – history, English and geography. Colonial influence here refers to the impacts from a moral, social, economic and political sense that has been imposed upon nations and peoples who were previously subjects of the British Empire. The colonial influence within exam specifications was largely systemic, and whilst teachers wished to challenge this, they found that they were limited by exam board specifications, thus rendering them unable to promote an anticolonial approach to their subjects. It is difficult to state clearly whether this conforms to existing research, particularly within UK schools, as there is much that has not been reported in detail about British anticolonial methods of teaching in secondary schools. This highlights the importance of such research, as much of it is yet unwritten within the context of secondary education in the UK. I have also chosen in particular to focus on religious biases within education, as this was another conclusion I had drawn in my previous research, notably the fact that the GCSE syllabus being taught at Hazelwood demonstrated noticeably favourable attitudes towards Christianity more so than Islam, especially when considering the roles of both religions in the local communities. For this reason, I am interested in seeing whether this has affected student bias towards specific religions, if at all, and to what extent these biases can be demonstrated. The issue of religious bias is a complex one, as majority of the students who took part in the research project intervention identified as nonreligious or agnostic (Appendix A, table 1 & table 2) – meaning that it would be worth noting if they demonstrated an implicit bias, especially towards Christianity.

Another conclusion drawn from my previous study was the decolonisation as a process was linked inextricably to implicit biases. This relationship is what I will aim to explore within this

paper. I have identified two main research questions that I will hope to explore by the end of this research and development project:

1. Do staff and/or students have implicit biases towards matters of race and religion when studying/teaching the GCSE Religious Education?
2. Can implicit bias amongst students and staff be reduced by curriculum decolonisation?

The rationale behind this study stemmed from the conclusions that I had drawn from my previous study, along with wider societal implications across the UK. The debate behind curriculum decolonisation, and Critical Race Theory (CRT) has been a topic of contention amongst educational institutions, from Early Years and Foundation schools to universities and other Higher Education Institutions. In October 2020, during a debate on Black History Month, the topics of curriculum decolonisation and CRT were debated in Commons, with Kemi Badenoch, the Minister for Equalities, stating that “our curriculum does not need to be decolonised, for the simple reason that it is not colonised.” (Badenoch, in Hansard, Column 1011, 2020), and “any school that teaches those elements of critical race theory as fact...is breaking the law.” (Column 1012). From my perspective as a BAME teacher, given my previous study on the importance of curriculum decolonisation, this demonstrated to me that there was still academic research that needed to be completed on this topic, as the rhetoric demonstrated was proving to be extremely divisive.

My research was hindered at many points due to the unprecedented nature of the year. Predominantly I was unable to finish my intervention due to the multiple lockdowns, which resulted in my inability to complete my intervention in full. Whilst I was able to complete

the pre-intervention testing, and partially complete the intervention, I was unable to complete my post-intervention testing, leaving me with only half of the data that I wished to collect. Nevertheless, I believe that this project was still impactful in the conclusions that I have been able to hypothesise with my findings, and with the staff collaboration – both within the RE department, the wider humanities Faculty, and with the Senior Leaders amongst the multi-academy trust that has occurred at Hazelwood as a result of the study.

2. Literature Review

This chapter aims to critically explore the literature surrounding implicit biases within the classroom. It will aim to explore implicit biases in classrooms from a global perspective, with a significant focus on the UK. The rationale behind this is simply to illustrate that this is a concern for schools across the globe, not something limited to schools in England and Wales alone. I have organised the literature into three sub-questions that I will aim to answer over the course of this chapter. These questions, after an initial consultation with the staff who were involved in the collaborative research, were deemed to be the most important as they benefitted all staff, regardless of subject specialism, but could also be specific towards the religious education classroom. The questions are as follows:

1. Where do implicit biases in education originate from?
2. What is the current understanding of bias in the classroom?
3. How can practitioners measure and reduce implicit bias within the classroom?

I will examine the literature under those headings for the purposes of clarity and cohesion.

Where do implicit biases in education originate from?

In order to understand where implicit biases stem from in education, it is important to understand what is meant by the term 'implicit bias'. Jeanes refers to implicit (or unconscious bias) as bias which is brought into judgement and decision-making without realising we are doing so (Jeanes, 2019). When understanding how one forms her implicit biases, Jeanes explains that factors such as background, culture and experiences can form the basis for implicit bias – which has the potential to result in unfair treatment and discrimination (2019).

Sally Tomlinson attributes the origins of implicit biases in relation to race and religion to have stemmed during the 19th century, at the height of the British Empire. She argues that the views of the time were “not traditional at all, but spread by education and imperial propaganda into popular consciousness” (Tomlinson, 2019, p. 33). It is key here that education, particularly the affluent public school system, served a political purpose - to facilitate and sustain the growth and success of the Empire, thus allowing messages which propagated messages of cultural, intellectual and spiritual superiority among white-British public schoolboys. Verkaik concurs with this, stating that “public schools have helped to write British history. They have been cheerleaders for colonialism and controlled the narrative of Empire,” (Verkaik, 2018, p. 45). Tomlinson argues that the development of the curriculum amongst public schools during the 19th century reflected the attitudes towards the Empire, “influenced by a period of imperial enthusiasm and a final expansion of the British empire” (2019, p. 32). We see these attitudes reflected in contemporary writings during this period. Notably, John Lawson Walton, a MP who wrote in *The Contemporary Review* that “the basis of Imperialism is race”, and “if it [Government] ceases to be

Imperialist, then either the harmony is destroyed, or the character of the race has suffered change” (Walton, 1899). The effect of such widespread propagation of pro-imperialist views trickled down into education systems – as Tomlinson puts it, “the British Empire was run by public school boys and the values imbibed by public school boys eventually influenced all pupils.” (Tomlinson, 2019). Naturally, the result of this was the explicit biases of British public schoolboys, whose views on racial and cultural superiority were exacerbated by the power held on a geopolitical scale due to the influence and reach of the British Empire.

The argument above is particularly relevant to public schoolboys and those with the means to afford a public education, but it raises the question of how such biases were passed *en masse* towards those of a lower socioeconomic status. There was a focus on “ethnocentric education” (Tomlinson, 2019, p. 37) amongst state schools in the early 20th century, which resulted in working class state schools copying their public school “superiors” in promoting imperial ideals and racial superiority (Roberts, 1971, p. 142). Robert Roberts, who was brought up in a Salford Slum during the early 20th century himself, detailed the promotion of the Empire within the curriculum, describing his schools as a “gaunt, blackened building, made exciting by learning that there were five oceans and five continents ... most of which seemed to belong to us” (1971, p. 140). Tomlinson argues that these imperial ideologies fostered an ethnocentric view of the Empire to the working-class students, with the ideologies of imperialism as having a “direct appeal to working-class boys” due to their cultural traditions included fighting, assertion of masculinity and dominance over peers and gang warfare over street territory (2019, p. 37). The curriculum and cultural values that were being disseminated to working class boys alienated the foreign subjects of the Empire, and seemingly empowered a disenchanting class of young people. Instead of holding

frustration towards the upper class, working class students were encouraged to believe in their economic, political, social and racial superiority over the rest of the Empire – even when they may not have had the same benefits of economic, political and social superiority in their own home country. As Tomlinson puts it, “the domestic underclass became the imperial overclass, and all classes could unite in a comforting, national patriotic solidarity” (2019, p. 38). The one uniting factor for British students was the colour of their skin and their racial identity, thus allowing for a shared hegemonic attitude towards the Empire.

Similarly, religious biases were perpetuated alongside the rise of the Empire. One of the integral elements of colonial expansion involved the conversion of non-Christian people towards Christianity. This extends beyond the British Empire – with European colonial powers (France, Spain and Portugal) extending missionary activity across South America, Africa and Asia. The result of this was the rise in Catholicism and Protestant Christianity in favour of local, indigenous religious traditions that existed in these parts of the world.

Protestant missionary work has been described as “hand in hand with the expansion of British Empire”, which illustrates the role that evangelism played in the expansion of the British Empire in the 19th Century (Gearon, Matemba, Du Preez, Koirikivi & Simmonds, 2021). Religious pressure to accept Christianity was a seemingly reasonable decision for indigenous people, with theological concepts such as *sola scriptura* – the notion that God’s Word was critical to salvation, and therefore ought to be accepted. The result of this was the erasure of local, indigenous religion in favour of Christian tradition, which overall created less resistance to imperial control from Western empires – including the British. Accepting religious and colonial control was somewhat lucrative towards indigenous people as it promised the possibility of modernity and progress (Gearon, 2013). Cossa explains that

the mindset in acceptance of these religious paradigms was with the “hopes that we [Africans], too, would be modernized or that we could fool coloniality by decolonizing through a Western-modeled education replete with decolonial jargon framed within coloniality...” (Cossa, 2018, p. 200). What is evident here is that it is difficult to extrapolate simply one reason for the acceptance of Christianity by indigenous peoples. On the one hand the promise of *sola scriptura* and salvation provided a sense of moral obligation in accepting the religion from a theological perspective. However, the reasoning for this acceptance can be considered to have been more nuanced – the promise of advancement and development as framed by colonisers in order to create a sense of civility amongst the subjects of the Empire (Gearon et al, 2021).

On the contrary, Western evangelism was not alone in relation to the cultural reshaping of the world during the 19th Century. Christianity was contending with the spread of Islam, specifically within Asia and Africa. *Da’wah*, the Islamic spiritual imperative of reaching out to spread the word of Allah to non-believers rose within the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly with the foundation of movements such as the Tablighi Jamaat in Southeast Asia (Noor, 2012, p. 28). In parts of the British Empire, such as the Niger Delta, the introduction of ‘Mohammedanism’ from Hausa soldiers in the late 19th century came as a surprise to British missionaries (Uchendu, 2020, p. 62). The effects of Muslim missionary efforts within the Niger Delta resulted in significant cultural shifts for indigenous peoples akin to those changes perpetuated by their Christian counterparts – from architecture and the erection of mosques, Islamic standards of dress and prayer, in addition to the theological message being spread (Uchendu, 2020, p. 62). Such movements of Muslim missionaries continued transnationally over the subsequent decades – Noor explores the movements of the

Tablighi Jamaat across Java in the 20th Century, before moving around Southeast Asia to continue their mission (Noor, 2012, p. 35). Clearly, one can ascertain that the teachings and cultural practices of Christianity were not the only ones being proselytised throughout the globe – Islam was also a mobile religion, intent on spreading its own message to those who were in need. The Tablighi Jamaat's early battles in Jakarta were focussed on gentrifying areas in which Mosques had been built – specifically the Masjid Kampung Jeruk, which had been built in the only area they had been able to – a red light district of significant disrepute (Noor, 2012, p. 37). The effects of their efforts were not simply theological – but also had deep social, moral and cultural impact for the Muslims of those local areas. Such effects were also found in Christian mission – whose role extended beyond the ecclesiastical, but also into the local communities, including education.

The stark difference in comparing the two, however, is the political underpinnings behind the different religions. Where the Catholic and Protestant churches grew were due to the driving force behind these missionaries – the respective Western empires of France, Spain, Portugal and Britain. The spread of Christianity was both a catalyst to and a by-product of imperial expansion. Islam, conversely, had only the Ottoman Empire, which by the 19th and 20th centuries had an “influential community of American Congregationalist and presbyterian missionaries”, as opposed to Muslim missionaries of their own (Gorman, 2019). These clergymen used education as their segue to promote Biblical literacy and engagement with Protestantism to those non-Christians in Ottoman Syria (Gorman, 2019). It is interesting to note here that Muslim missionaries, such as the Hausa people in the Niger Delta, or the Tablighi Jamaat in Southeast Asia were not operating under the political banner of an empire – they were simply spreading the religion due to their belief in the

Muslim teaching of *Da'wah*. Therefore, it does not, at first glance, seem appropriate to treat Christian and Muslim evangelism as alike. Protestant evangelism under the regulation of the British Empire sought specifically to bring uniformity and structure to the Empire – to create on cultural hegemony under the Queen, with the additional moral and theological benefit of *sola scriptura*, whereas Muslim missionaries had no overall governing body or crown.

Despite their difference in terms of political motivations (or lack thereof), Christian and Muslim evangelism has had significant effects on the parts of the world that they influenced. From the rejection of indigenous religious traditions, which were dubbed as heathenism and paganism, to the development from an educational, economic and cultural perspective which fit the Western and Islamic models of those missionaries responsible for evangelism (Uchendu, 2020, p. 281). When considering where religious bias originates from, it is evident from an early stage that Christianity and Islam became religions of dominance, hence allowing them a privilege over other, more indigenous religious traditions.

As we can see, biases here were not implicit, but rather explicitly taught and learnt. Secular British schooling was a melange of colonial propaganda. The curricula and textbooks used explicitly perpetuated the notion of British racial and cultural supremacy, and educational institutions were “influenced by xenophobic geographies and histories and imperialistic propaganda”, with students being taught about “great men” such as Cecil Rhodes and Rudyard Kipling (Tomlinson, 2019, pp. 40-41). The impacts of such men are seen within Oxford University’s Oriel College, Rhodes’ alma mater, and a key site of the ‘Rhodes Must Fall’ campaign (Muldoon, *The Guardian*, 2019). In doing so, the British Empire was synonymous with Britain’s greatness, the result of which was the distortion of the Empire’s reality. The legacy of the Empire was so positive, that effects of this are still held in British

sentiment to date. A YouGov survey found that Britons were proud of their former Empire, more so than France, Italy, Japan and Spain, among other countries (Smith, *YouGov*, 2020). The survey also found that Britons were more likely to believe that their former colonies are better off as a result of being part of the British Empire, with a quarter of Britons still wishing that Britain was still an Empire (Smith, 2020). This illustrates that the dedication from educational institutions had a profound impact on cultural perceptions of the Empire for British people, one which has undoubtedly shaped the picture of implicit bias today. From a religious perspective, the role of British Protestant missionaries resulted in Biblical education amongst the British colonies across Africa and Asia, which propelled the notion that Christianity was seen as the path to moral and spiritual salvation (Gearon et al, 2021). The usage of spiritual concepts such as *sola scriptura* put pressure on indigenous people to accept Christianity in favour of their native religious traditions, which ultimately resulted in what Matemba describes as a “melting pot” of religious tradition in sub-Saharan Africa (2021). From a British perspective, missionary work was considered liberating what was seen as previously uncivilised religious traditions, and therefore was necessary but also morally imperative. Overall, when considering where implicit biases originated from within the education system, the key turning point was the role of the British Empire in perpetuating ideals which promoted a cultural and religious hegemony, which united upper and working class within Britain against the imperial subject. Because these ideals and notions remained within the education system for such an extended period of time, they were embedded into the psyche of Britons across the nation.

What is the current understanding of bias in the classroom?

Whilst the British Empire laid the foundation for implicit biases within classrooms, there has been much progress in terms of addressing the postcolonial condition that was the result of the actions of the Empire. Once the Empire fell, Britons and their former subjects began to feel what is considered the postcolonial condition. Across the globe, the concept of 'decolonisation' from a social, economic, political and educational perspective began to take form. Campaigns such as 'Rhodes Must Fall' affected institutions globally, from the Universities of Cape Town to Oxford (Bhambra, Gebrial & Nişancıoğlu, 2018, p. 1) shone a spotlight on the post-racial concept of systemic racism that has been entrenched in society as a result of British (and other) imperial movements. Remi Joseph-Salisbury described this as a sense of 'white amnesia' – the term 'white' here referring not to Caucasian people in general – but instead focusing on the Western, white-British, imperial mindset which is the norm as a result of what was perpetuated by the empire (Joseph-Salisbury, 2018). Joseph-Salisbury argues that despite living in a 'post-racial' world, where racism is explicitly condemned, anti-racist counter-narratives are subject to criticism by the general public. He uses the example of the condemnation of Winston Churchill from an anti-racist perspective, specifically his celebration on the five-pound note in 2016. Joseph-Salisbury argues that Churchill is defended, despite his views, due to the concept of 'white amnesia' (2018). The argument here is that there is a systemic sense of forgetting the negative and harmful aspects of the empire for minorities. Such processes allow for negative implicit biases to form, which can be seen in the classroom.

When examining implicit bias within the classroom, one must begin with the role of the teacher in acting on her implicit biases amongst her students. There have been many

researchers who have described evidence of biases in teaching which result in a plethora of negative outcomes for BAME students (Bonefeld & Dickhäuser, 2018, Glock & Böhmer, 2018 and Baker et al, 2018). It is extremely important to note here that negative implicit biases are not necessarily malicious (as they may have been during the height of the British Empire as explored in the previous section). Instead, they arise due to stereotypes which have been influenced by colonial thought. For example, the presumption that students with a migrant background may have lower attainment levels than those who do not have a migrant background (Bonefeld & Dickhäuser, 2018). Bonefeld & Dickhäuser suggest that a reason for this is that teachers often activate stereotypical beliefs through stereotype-confirming situations (2018). Similarly, Glock & Böhmer found that teachers demonstrated negative implicit attitudes towards ethnic minority students – which has resulted in not only lower academic attainment, but a disproportionate number of minority students (notably male students) dropping out of education, as well as increased misbehaviour in comparison to their majority peers (Glock & Böhmer, 2018). They concur with Bonefeld & Dickhäuser’s conclusion of stereotype-confirming situations but elaborate in stating that these stereotypes and perceived attitudes that are implicitly present amongst teachers come from socially shared knowledge of specific ethnic minority groups, arguing that “implicit stereotypes are the result of explicit stereotypes that have been consciously changed or rejected” (Glock & Böhmer, 2018). What we can see is that explicit biases that were so commonly perpetuated around Europe still have remnants from an implicit perspective today. It is concerning, from a teaching practitioner’s perspective, that such biases still exist in the classroom.

The past two academic years have seen a shift towards virtual learning, which has resulted in many primary and secondary schools having to adapt their teaching methods to suit an online platform. For post-secondary students, elements of online learning have always existed, with tools such as online discussion boards and forums being a popular method of encouraging student self-efficacy. Baker et al explored the implicit biases within virtual learning paradigms in post-secondary educational institutions, finding that instructors were 94% more likely to respond to forum posts by white male students than their minority counterparts (Baker et al, 2018). This illustrates a picture of bias within the online classroom, alongside the physical classroom, raising the question of social identity dynamics within educational institutions, and casts aspersions on how equitable learning environments are – both physically and online. Interestingly, this particular study did not find any patterns of behaviour which suggested biases amongst peer-to-peer online interactions (Baker et al, 2018). Perhaps this suggests that implicit biases are more prevalent from a staff-to-student perspective as opposed to peer-to-peer implicit biases. Such a claim is difficult to corroborate wholly as it negates the experiences of BAME teachers (Callender, 2020 and Woodson & Bristol, 2020) but is also indicative of a very specific facet of learning – considering that most learning experiences are done in person, so it would be inaccurate to draw full conclusions about peer-to-peer biases based solely on the study conducted by Baker et al (2018). However, previous studies have also argued that implicit attitudes have been projected onto minority ethnic students by teachers resulting in achievement gaps (van den Bergh et al, 2010), which suggests that this is an entrenched issue amongst teachers and educational practitioners which ought to be addressed.

Within the United Kingdom, there are divided perspectives on the extent to which implicit biases affect BAME classrooms. The Runnymede Trust highlighted in their report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) that not only were BAME teachers largely underrepresented amongst English schools, but also that there is “currently no formal requirements within Initial Teacher Education for trainees to conduct work on racial discrimination schools”, and no references to race, racism or ethnicity amongst the Teachers’ Standards (Runnymede Trust, 2021, p. 35). In relation to pupils specifically, the report noted that there were disproportionate rates of exclusion and attainment gaps amongst Gypsy, Roma and Traveller and African Caribbean students. It was also noted that racist bullying had been increased towards BAME students since the 2015/16 academic year, and that despite rising numbers of BAME people in higher education, specific groups such as Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi students are less likely to “attend higher-status, more selective Russell Group universities or to be awarded higher degree classifications (first or 2:1)” (Runnymede Trust, 2021, pp 35 – 39). These issues can be broken down into various categories – some relate to socioemotional development (exclusions, bullying), whilst others are more indicative of scholastic and academic development (attainment gap, higher education). Arguably, this could be encapsulated into the over-arching issue of the implicit bias within the curricula in British schools – in that it is simply not equitable towards students who are BAME. The report noted this, specifically citing Government curriculum reforms in 2014-16 as being “more traditional”, homogenous and inflexible. It is also worth noting that the previous report, the CERD 2016, recommended that the UK Government “ensure that school curricula contain a balanced account of the history of the British Empire and colonialism, including slavery and other grave human rights violations” (Runnymede Trust, 2021, p. 37). What is evident here is that

there seems to be an argument to be made that schools do not provide equitable opportunities for BAME students as opposed to white-British students, and given the literature, this may give way for implicit biases to continue to be embedded into modern classrooms.

On the contrary, one could argue that there has been a significant shift in perspective as to which students are disadvantaged within schools. The Runnymede Trust acknowledges that the number of minority ethnic students attending higher education institutions is rising (2021), which suggests that there is an improvement in how equitable education is towards BAME students. Similarly, the Parliamentary inquiry into white working-class pupils by the Education Committee suggests that in 2018/19, white-British free school meal (FSM) eligible students scored an average of -0.78 at Progress 8, a staggering low in comparison to FSM-eligible students of Black Caribbean and Black African origin, who averaged -0.54 and 0.17, respectively (Education Committee, 2021, p. 19). The only students with lower Progress 8 scores were travellers of Irish heritage and Gypsy/Roma pupils, which suggests that perhaps it is incorrect to solely focus on race and ethnicity when considering implicit bias, when there is clearly a disparity amongst disadvantaged white-British pupils in comparison to their minority ethnic counterparts. It is also worth noting that the Education Committee specifically reference the concept of “white privilege”, arguing that the term is “alienating to disadvantaged white communities, and it may have contributed towards a systemic neglect of white people facing hardship” (2021, p. 15). This is interesting, as it poses a question of whether white-British socioeconomic disadvantage is comparable to the systemic effects racial, religious and cultural discrimination that has been inherited through generations. One could argue the two are equally comparable, as socioeconomic class disadvantages

have also been inherited through generations – even during the zenith of the British Empire, working-class British people were disproportionately disadvantaged in comparison to their wealthy countrymen. It is worth noting, then, that whilst the Education Committee’s report is a stark contrast in comparison to the findings of the Runnymede trust, one ought to remember that such data is far more complex than simply comparing the average Progress 8 scores. It is important to consider a myriad of factors when discussing ‘disadvantage’ amongst students, as the concept is nuanced. For instance, the Education Committee describe disadvantaged or FSM students using measures such as parental income support, Jobseeker’s allowance, working tax and universal credit, etc (2021, p. 11). This approach conflates ‘disadvantaged’ with having a low socioeconomic background, which negates the disadvantages faced by pupils for reasons to do with ethnicity, race and religion (amongst other factors such as sexuality, gender identity, socioemotional needs, disability and special educational needs). To base the concept of disadvantage as purely economic is dangerous as it repudiates other measures of disadvantage that are not measured by wealth. It creates a narrative which results in issues of racial inequity amongst schools and higher education institutions as being taboo, or unspeakable (Bhopal & Pitkin, 2020). The result of this, according to Bhopal and Pitkin is that BAME students often feel that racism and racial inequality is an issue that “had to be constantly proven and justified rather than challenged or addressed” (2020). This illustrates the necessity of addressing and exploring issues of implicit bias from mainstream education from a young age. In order for young people and education professionals to be aware of and able to address their biases in an environment which allows for students to equitably profit from the classroom experiences (Contreras & Carr, 2021).

How can practitioners measure and reduce implicit bias within the classroom?

Addressing implicit biases within the classroom provides challenges for education practitioners. There have been many attempts to address implicit biases within students. One of the most notable was the work of Jane Elliott's Blue Eyes, Brown Eyes (BE/BE) experiment following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Elliott's experiment, where she segregated students based on the colour of their eyes was documented by ABC News, and initially demonstrated positive outcomes in allowing students to develop a sense of empathy and understanding of their biases towards African American people. Elliott argued that discrimination, not prejudice was the underlying issue in people's biases (2016, p. 62). Whilst the experiment was successful in opening pupils' eyes to the issues of discrimination that existed in 20th Century America, there are two main issues in the positionality of Elliott's approach. Her understanding of discrimination as being dominant over prejudice pertains to individual actions as opposed to addressing structural, systemic racism which forms biases. Her argument of students "not knowing any better" (Elliott, 2016, p. 62) is also dangerous as it verges on excusing Caucasian pupils from being racist as it implies that racism is irrational, and not built on a systemic past of subjugation. However, Elliott's work was undoubtedly ground-breaking for its time as it shone a spotlight on the fact that students were easily influenced by messages being taught through educational institutions, and they did harbour implicit biases which became explicit once they were made aware of them. The experiment has been used by many educators in allowing students to confront their own biases and to communicate these within the classroom environment, specifically when discussing privilege and how this is withheld from particular groups of people (Williams & Wright, 2020, p. 322). Williams and Wright argue that the experiment provides contemporary educators to enable students to evoke an introspective and critical approach

towards their own biases and allows them to think about how “implicit bias manifests into social issues and influences their ability to persuade others” (2020, pp. 322 – 323), and therefore is a useful method of measuring the extent of implicit biases, and also reducing implicit biases through dialectic conversation within the classroom.

Another key approach towards understanding implicit bias is the Implicit Associations Test (IAT). Greenwald and Banaji asserted that social behaviour and cognition was not necessarily conscious – that behaviour towards specific groups of people such as stereotypes and attitudes were instead unconscious, or implicit (1995). When considering bias, it would not be straightforward to find out what a subject’s true bias was due to social pressures in terms of how one ought to respond. Therefore, the concept of implicit association was developed to produce a form of testing what implicit associations subjects had with specific groups of people (race, religion, gender, etc). The subject is required to rapidly associate pictures of people (i.e., an African American or White European) with positive or negative words (e.g., pleasant or unpleasant). Greenwald et al hypothesised that when considering social cognition, subjects would be more likely to associate negative and positive attitudes to race and ethnicity more honestly than they would compared to if they were asked explicitly what their attitudes were, due to issues of social desirability (1998). The test has been divisive since it’s conception by Greenwald and Banaji in 1995 but has been used within educational practice to examine social attitudes that may not have been as overt or easily accessible through explicit questioning. Many researchers have used the implicit associations test as part of a dual process experiment in which researchers measure explicit and implicit attitudes to examine deliberate and unconscious attitudes towards a subject (Morris & Ashburn-Nardo, 2010 & Lansu, 2018). The IAT has been lauded from

educational perspectives in that it allows students to report a greater awareness of their own and others' implicit biases (Morris & Ashburn-Nardo, 2010). Morris and Ashburn-Nardo reported that part of the IAT's success comes from the affective response demonstrated by subjects once they achieve their result, which allows for researchers to monitor the explicit affective response from subjects (2010). Similarly, the IAT is praised for its ability to predict students' aggression towards peers and can be used to create preventative interventions by practitioners to foster a sense of community and togetherness (Lansu, 2018). Such results provide researchers and teaching professionals the ability to explore student implicit biases within a controlled environment, without the risk of student demand characteristics affecting their responses.

However, the IAT comes under criticism by many due to the ways in which it falls short of its aims. Yen et al explored many of these, arguing that test-takers have the ability to 'fake' results if practiced enough times (2018). Since the IAT simply measures response time with the association of predetermined positive and negative terms, with enough practice one could become more adept at improving their response latency, thus resulting in less organic data. Similarly, there is an argument to be made about the difference between "implicit bias" and "real prejudice". The IAT only informs participants of perceived preferences towards a particular group, therefore suggesting a measure of bias. But it does not follow that one's bias dictates the level of prejudice they might have against a group of people. When considering the affective reactions of subjects, the IAT results can result in participants responding in "morally and emotionally charged" manners (Yen et al, 2018, p. 514). This is a harmful effect of the IAT, as it could result in participants allowing their implicit biases to define them. Yen et al explores this further, categorising responses from

participants as being largely divided into three categories: confession, exhortation and absolution. Researchers found that participants who responded in a manner of confession expressed some sense of secrecy that had been revealed. One participant who scored with a strong bias in favour of black people reported back by stating that “I almost feel proud of them [her results]”, which suggests some sort of political correctness in terms of having a positive result in favour of ‘the minority’ (Yen et al, 2018, p. 514). When considering exhortation, researchers found that participants responded defensively in relation to their results, feeling that they had to “dig deep into our individual hearts and minds ... to eliminate any undesirable thought and negative attitude towards our fellow human beings”, showing a utopian vision of fair mindedness which Yen et al argued masked a more psychoanalytic discourse of hidden, uncomfortable truths (2018, p. 515). Finally, participants who responded under the category of absolution speaks to the antithesis of the aim of the IAT – to raise awareness of one’s implicit attitudes and make a cognisant aim to reduce this. Those who responded under this category stated that they “do not believe we can ever get rid of racism and sexism from within ourselves.” (Yen et al, 2018, p. 516). What we can see here is that some participants view their biases as inevitable and to a certain extent, unchanging. If the IAT aims to act as a tool with which one wishes to reduce her implicit bias, the above response demonstrates that this is not necessarily a successful method of doing so, as there is a class of participants who will simply “own” their biases and accept them as being absolute.

This raises the question of whether the IAT is indeed a legitimate method of allowing participants to effectively engage with their own biases and work on reducing them.

Additionally, Morris and Ashburn-Nardo argued that, despite the positive outcomes of the

IAT, there were noticeably negative affective reactions to the test when conducting it within a classroom environment, which only further questions how suitable it is for educational practitioners to deploy as a method of engaging students with their own implicit biases (2010). Williams and Wright argue that, despite the limitations of the IAT in terms of the affective reactions as raised by Yen et al and Morris & Ashburn-Nardo, if facilitated effectively, the IAT can still be an extremely valuable tool in terms of increasing classroom dialogue and growth both interpersonally and individually. They argue that after students have been given their results, it is the role of the teacher to ask the correct questions to facilitate student growth and engagement with their results, even if the student demonstrates a negative affective reaction (Williams and Wright, 2020, pp. 321 – 322).

When considering the overall impact of using the IAT as a tool to measure implicit biases, one ought to consider the validity of the test. Greenwald et al argue that whilst the IAT has come under scholarly criticism, it is still valuable in its ability to deliver consequential validity – meaning that it has applied value when considering the social consequences of carrying out the test (Greenwald et al, 2006). Essentially, whilst the test may have statistically small effects, there are larger positive societal effects that can be gleaned from conducting it (Greenwald et al, 2015). They argue that the results were societally significant due to the fact that they “can affect many people simultaneously or because they can repeatedly affect single persons” (Greenwald et al, 2015). This suggests that whilst the test has flaws, there are still wider consequential benefits to using it as a tool for researching implicit bias. An interesting question raised by whether it truly measures ‘implicit biases’ is that of whether the IAT can truly capture an automatic judgement – i.e., any information that is processed without conscious intention. Vianello and Bar-Anan contend that despite the shortcomings

of the test, it remains a “very good candidate for the measurement of automatic judgement”, however they do stipulate that despite this, it ought to be commented that such experiments which demonstrate the consequential validity of the test have not been sufficiently replicated as of yet (2021, p. 419).

When considering the practical use of the IAT with students, Adams et al argue that the greatest strength of the test is that it allows students to raise awareness of their perceived knowledge of implicit biases. Regardless of the issues with the test’s validity, it resulted in students who took the test being able to raise awareness of implicit biases along with motivation to control prejudice (Adams III, et al, 2014, p 206). The study also found that using the data from the tests was an effective way of reducing students’ defensiveness to their own results. They further exacerbated this by showing students a video in which Banaji and Greenwald, the implicit attitude theorists who developed the IAT, describing their shock at their own results, which eased students’ responses, knowing that their results were similar to the psychologists who developed the IAT (Adams III et al, 2014, p. 205). In fact, Adams et al found that student reactions ranged from “acceptance” to “surprise” and “self-reflection” (2014, p. 205), which is akin to Yen et al, who found that respondents fell into categories of confession, exhortation and absolution (2018). Ultimately, the IAT remains a controversial tool when considering strategies for measuring and reducing implicit bias. It is clear that whilst there is much debate about the efficacy of IAT results, there is a growing amount of support for the IAT’s use in a classroom environment due to the fact that it allows for researchers to explore automatic judgements in a controlled environment.

When considering measuring and reducing implicit bias, we must also consider the role of teacher implicit bias alongside student implicit bias. As previously stated, there is a growing concern within educational equity for BAME students (Bonefeld & Dickhäuser, 2018, Glock & Böhmer, 2018 and Baker et al, 2018), which raises the question of whether one ought to focus the IAT towards teachers, rather than the students. The reason for this is that educators' implicit racial biases can result in potentially harmful consequences for students, alongside biased evaluations of students' academic attainment and potential, which can negatively impact BAME students' self-efficacy (Chin et al, 2020, p. 567). Chin et al found that when measuring teacher implicit bias, the results were varied by the race and gender of the teachers taking the test, with ethnic minority teachers having results that demonstrated biases in favour of the 'black'/African American people over the 'white'/European people (2020, p. 566). However, Worrell states that in a similar study on teachers' implicit biases, there was evidence of some ethnic minority teachers who "reported levels of implicit bias that were comparable to the majority group", which challenges the assumption that members of minority ethnic groups as being "immune" from the forces of implicit biases themselves (Worrell, 2021). This highlights two key points that are worth exploring: that the implicit biases of teachers are not homogenous, but are varied, and also that even teachers of racial ethnic minority backgrounds are still capable of being implicitly biased towards majority students. Having a teacher with a favourable implicit bias towards a student with the same ethnic or racial background results in a potentially dangerous classroom with an imbalance of power.

Peterson et al found that students "benefitted most academically when their teachers' implicit biases favoured the ethnic group to which the student belonged" (2016, p. 123). The

potential consequences of this could result in greater self-esteem for those students who are favoured by teachers, which could result in greater engagement within learning and increased attainment. Overall, the IAT demonstrates a viable method of testing, measuring and reducing implicit biases. Despite setbacks such as the disputed validity of the test, there have been multiple studies which demonstrate the effectiveness of the test on subjects, both students and staff (Addams III et al, 2014, Greenwald et al, 2015, Glock et al, 2019, Williams and Wright, 2020 & Vianello and Bar-Anan, 2021). The literature demonstrates that when considering methods to explore implicit biases within schools, it would be most effective to use the IAT on students and staff alike, in order to effectively understand the picture of bias within the classroom.

3. Design of Investigation

This chapter aims to explain and justify the key elements of the research project and the nature of the intervention that I undertook. Firstly, I will reiterate my key research questions in relation to the literature review, giving a broader understanding of the topic that I intended to research in my own practice. Secondly, I will justify the key methods being used to collate the data, along with any strengths and limitations of my methodology. The chapter will also consider the ethical considerations that may be raised whilst carrying out the research, along with the limitations of the investigation, given the global climate over the last academic year.

Research Questions

The sub-questions which I aim to research following my exploration of the literature are an extension of my main research questions, they are as follows:

1. How can educators measure the extent and the role of implicit bias within classrooms?
2. How can implicit bias be reduced in the religious education classroom?
3. What impact does implicit bias have on staff?

The first question builds on the research of the literature review, with a particular focus on implicit racial and religious biases. It will aim to make a case in favour of the IAT as a method of measurement for implicit biases within classrooms, building on the work of Greenwald (1995, 1998, 2006 & 2015), Glock et al, (2018 & 2019) and Vianello & Bar-Anan (2021). This will be expanded within the second question by putting the results of the first into practice within the classroom. My aim will be to explore the method in which biases can be reduced through the usage of curriculum decolonisation and critical race theory within the classroom in order to support this. Finally, the third question will aim to critically examine the role of teachers when considering implicit bias and evaluating the role that they undertake when examining how implicit biases are projected towards students.

Method & Methodology

The design of my intervention was a mixed-methods study which focused on student implicit biases in terms of race and religion. I used two classes in the study, 10C/EP1 and 10C/EP2 as they both had a significant makeup of ethnic and religious diversity, and were also taught simultaneously, which made the study easily manageable. The two classes were

split into a control group (10C/EP1), which was taught by my head of department, and an experimental group (10C/EP2), which was taught by myself. Both groups were to complete a questionnaire that explored their attitudes towards their perceived inclusivity of the subject (philosophy and ethics) – including the curriculum content, teacher, and their views on whether diversity within philosophy and ethics was important or not. The rationale behind this would be to find out the students' explicit views on the topic of inclusivity, and to explore whether there was any discernible evidence which suggested an explicit bias amongst the classes. My prediction was that the students would have demonstrated views that would either be complimentary of the teachers to avoid being seen as overly critical of the subject teachers and the department, but also to maintain social desirability and answer in a way which they felt would be in line with modern, liberal viewpoints. The questions were generally closed, allowing respondents to tick the answer that best suited the extent to which they agreed or disagreed, thus allowing students to answer easily, but also having the option to add comments if they so desired (Cohen et al, 2017, p. 476).

In addition to this, the experimental group (10C/EP2) were to also complete two implicit association tests on race (Black-White) and religion (Christianity-Islam), respectively. The rationale behind this was, firstly, to balance the qualitative responses from the questionnaire with a more scientific method of data collection, which removed the risk of students displaying demand characteristics during the questionnaire. It also allowed me to explore their automatic judgements with regard to race and religion, as this would be the closest representation of the student implicit biases within a classroom context.

The questionnaires and IATs will act as the baseline testing for the study and will be followed by a series of lessons that have been decolonised to promote an antiracist, equitable scheme of work on the AQA GCSE Religious Studies A unit on Religion, Crime and Punishment (2017, pp. 23 - 24). The lessons have been adapted to include BAME viewpoints in relation to crime and punishment, especially with how justice systems have had a greater negative effect on BAME people disproportionately in comparison to their majority counterparts. They also aim to explore more BAME figures and religious viewpoints in lessons. For example, when considering case studies for topics such as protest, students will learn about Hinduism and concepts such as satyagraha and ahimsa, rather than simply focussing on a Christian-centric paradigm of learning. Similarly, when considering the lesson on capital punishment, students will learn case studies of people such as George Stinney, to understand the relationship that legal systems have had on BAME people. The philosophical underpinnings behind the process of decolonising the content being taught come from bell hooks' approach in *Teaching to Transgress*, where she stated that in the classroom, one must always ask, "who speaks? Who listens? And why?" (1994). The rationale behind this is to test whether consciously working towards a decolonised curriculum will result in the reduction of implicit bias amongst students. As a research method, using a critical race theory model of teaching ethical issues such as crime and punishment is justified because it aims to "illuminate and actively challenge racism", which moves beyond the disciplinary boundaries of the GCSE specification (Sung & Coleman in Strunk & Locke, 2019). This was to be tested with the focus and experimental groups taking the questionnaire and IAT once more after the module on crime and punishment has elapsed. This will then demonstrate to what extent, if any, the implicit biases amongst the students have been reduced. I would

hypothesise that there would be a measurable reduction in most students individually, towards a position where no overall preference can be determined by the IAT.

In addition to the students taking the IAT, the philosophy and ethics department, along with the history and geography departments will also be taking the Race IAT in order to examine teacher implicit biases. The literature has suggested that it is not enough for teachers to solely focus on student implicit bias, as teachers often have demonstrated implicit biases (Bonefeld & Dickhäuser, 2018, Glock & Böhmer, 2018 and Baker et al, 2018), which is why it is important for teachers to be able to examine and confront their own implicit biases. The teachers involved (known collectively as the humanities faculty) agreed to take the test and their results to be used for training purposes across the academy. The aim of this is to allow teachers to be cognisant of their own biases when teaching, so to not inadvertently disadvantage BAME students, as this would be dangerous considering the racial and ethnic makeup of the school and wider local authority that we teach in. In doing so, the project is a collaborative effort from the entire humanities faculty to create the most equitable learning environment for all students.

The rationale behind using the IAT, in spite of its criticisms as outlined in the literature review is to be able to capture an automatic psychological attitude that the students may be unable or unwilling to report, thus allowing for the most reliable possible understanding of the respondents' implicit attitudes (Barakji in Allen, 2017). By making students complete the scheme of work which has been decolonised using postcolonial and critical race theories, the intervention will aim to act as a primer for students before retaking the IAT. The comparison points here will be between the experimental group's baseline results and their

post-intervention result, and whether the results are more neutral in showing no overall preference. Similarly, it will be worth comparing the focus group and the experimental group's responses in the questionnaire, to see whether their attitudes towards the subject's perceived inclusivity have changed in any way. Without using the IAT, it is difficult to measure the implicit attitudes of the students, hence it's necessity to the design of the investigation.

The investigation is designed to be collaborative – as I will be working with my head of department to carry out the intervention with both of our classes. We have worked as a department to rewrite lessons and work on decolonising the scheme of work, which has resulted in new knowledge and understanding of issues to do with race and anticolonial movements being shared among the members of the department. The results of the study have also been shared amongst the senior leadership team (SLT) member responsible for curriculum development, who I am working with to support heads of department in ensuring that their curricula are mindful of all students from varied backgrounds. I have also presented my research towards the SLT at Hazelwood and our sister-school in the multi-academy trust that we belong to, so that these issues are made aware amongst a wide-ranging scale of school leaders. In doing so, these concerns can be addressed amongst a greater range of students.

Limitations

The key limitation in my study was the COVID-19 pandemic. We faced a fractured school year which resulted in various school closures and moves to online learning, which resulted in curriculum setbacks. Throughout the year we faced students being sent home from

school to isolate due to bubble closures, which made the study disjointed and slowed the process down exponentially. We faced staffing issues with the pandemic, too. I was personally affected in that I had the virus myself, which hindered my capacity of work during that time, but other members of staff involved in the study were also called to self-isolate at various points throughout the year, having been identified as close contacts. The scheme of work for crime and punishment is usually taught during the summer term, but with all the lost time, we as a department were unable to finish teaching the crime and punishment module. This means that whilst I was able to conduct the baseline intervention questionnaire and IATs, I was unable to finish the intervention as I had not finished teaching the scheme of work. Ultimately, this resulted in the intervention being left unfinished at the end of the academic year. To mitigate this, I have included my expected conclusions under the findings chapter of this paper. The expected conclusions were left to conjecture by analysing the initial baseline assessment results.

Another limitation of the study was the sample size and the content of the lessons that I chose to decolonise. I used non-probability sampling to decide which classes would participate in the study as this was the most logistically convenient way for me to do so. This sample was one of two classes within the entire department that were blocked simultaneously, which meant it was one of two viable options for when it came to controlling the simultaneous teaching of the crime and punishment module. Naturally this meant that my sampling was biased, as I used a convenience sample, which would be difficult to replicate, thus making the generalisability of my sample negligible (Cohen et al, 2017, p. 218). However, since I was using the staff and student sample as a case study, the reproducibility of the study was not of paramount concern, as my aim was simply to explore

the implicit bias of a RE classroom. Similarly, it could be argued that the crime and punishment module that had been selected to decolonise was conveniently chosen due to the fact that it was an ethical theme topic which had more scope to work on for case studies and inclusion of extra religious beliefs – it raises the question of whether I would have had the same level of ease in decolonising my scheme of work if the lessons had been covering Islamic Beliefs, for instance. This decision was made due to the fact that my department felt most comfortable working on an ethical theme as a starting point, and then moving on to other topics, but we also hypothesised that students would have had the largest reduction of bias from both a racial and religious perspective if they were exposed to a more ethical topic, as opposed to a religion topic, where we would have likely seen a reduction of religious bias over the racial implicit bias.

With regards to positionality, I had to consider my role as the primary researcher within the research and development project (Parson, in Strunk & Locke, 2019). As I have previously taught many of the students involved in the study, some since they started at Hazelwood in Year 7, I came from a strong insider perspective. I knew the students personally, and quite well, which arguably put me in a position of researcher bias (Tarp, 2016, p. 4). I had to ensure that my personal views and relationships with the students, especially as someone who identifies as BAME, did not affect the data collection, especially when students were answering the explicit questionnaire, as this could have affected their honesty. Some students may have displayed demand characteristics or social desirability when answering questions, especially those such as *“I feel that my teacher for this subject is inclusive of other races and religions”*. However, if students did display demand characteristics during the explicit attitude questionnaire, this would have been cross referenced by the IAT, and would

have been examined in my conclusion. Using the IAT as a method of data collection for the action research posed its own limitations, as a considerable amount of literature suggested that data from the IAT could be unreliable due to students portraying demand characteristics when completing the test, and that the IAT measured response latency, rather than actual bias (Stieger et al, 2011). However, there is sufficient literature in defence of the IAT and its validity in such research projects (Addams III et al, 2014, Greenwald et al, 2015, Glock et al, 2019, Williams and Wright, 2020 & Vianello and Bar-Anan, 2021).

Ethical Considerations

As per the University of Oxford Department of Education's guidelines for ethical compliance, I followed the guidelines set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018). My research was approved by the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) before conducting the study. Participants and their parents were fully briefed on the study using documentation approved by the University and were given the opportunity to opt-out of the study, with the right to withdraw at any point without any obligation to explain their reasons for doing so. Participants were made fully aware of the nature and purpose of the research before giving their consent and have been anonymised to protect their confidentiality. Permission to conduct the study and use the data for research purposes was confirmed with the school's HR department, and the principal.

Another ethical consideration that I had to take be aware of was the nature of the topic being researched. Issues to do with race and religion are extremely personal towards students, and staff. I had to ensure that I was remaining sensitive towards other students' opinions, beliefs and worldviews, as I had to be aware of students who may have had views

that may have been perceived as offensive, provocative or discriminatory. To combat this, I had to consider my positionality and ensure that none of my views were influencing or priming students throughout the study. I outlined the expectations regarding freedom of speech within the appropriate context of a classroom environment, when completing the explicit attitudes questionnaire. From my position as an insider, not only within the classroom environment, but also as a BAME identifying person, I felt confident in my ability to carry out the study, whilst also keeping in mind the experiences of the students, which I felt was important to the fruitfulness of the assignment (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

I had to ensure that my own views were not being forced upon the students, so to avoid any risk of cultural and political bias. Similarly, I had to consider the automatic responses of students and staff when receiving the results of their IATs. Some reports have demonstrated that completing the IAT can lead to respondents, especially those of a young age, reacting negatively towards their results (Adams III et al, 2014 & Yen et al, 2018). In order to mitigate responses from students who may express distress at their results, I ensured to preface the test by reminding students clearly that there is a distinction between one's implicit biases and one's explicit political views and prejudices. I also ensured that all students were extremely aware of the fact that one's bias is not the same as one's prejudice and took care to ensure that students are able to feel comfortable with their result.

4. Findings and Discussion

I have presented my findings and considered them in light of the literature surrounding the debates on implicit bias, as referenced in the critical review of the literature. I have made

reference to the results of the study which can be found in greater detail within the appendices. As previously stated, due to the time constraints as a result of the pandemic, I was only able to complete the preliminary baseline assessment, so will analyse these in depth and hypothesise the conclusions to the best of my ability in the next chapter.

In terms of racial and ethnic backgrounds of both 10C/EP1 (control group) and 10C/EP2 (experimental group), I found that both classes had a significant split between white British identifying students, against those identifying as BAME, with sixteen students (equivalent to ~50%) in both classes identifying as the prior (fig. 19, fig 20, fig 21). Religious backgrounds, on the other hand were far more diverse. A plurality of students amongst both groups identified as 'agnostic', with a fair amount identifying as Atheist, Christian and Muslim, with fewer still identifying as Hindu or Jain (fig. 22, fig. 23, fig. 24). It was important to have this plurality of racial-ethnic and religious backgrounds to examine whether this would have any effect in terms of questionnaire responses.

Responses from explicit attitudes questionnaires

In general, students agreed with the statement that the content studied in philosophy and ethics is inclusive of other races and religions. Over 75% in 10C/EP1 (fig. 1) and 50% in 10C/EP2 (fig. 2). Interestingly, students from both groups noted explicitly that the content was not inclusive of other religions or races, with more neither agreeing nor disagreeing (fig. 3). Some of the reasons given by students who scored a 2 or 3 for this particular question included a base understanding of the lack of representation, such as "only two religions in the GCSE curriculum which doesn't represent other religions and races" (10C/EP2 student, black East African, Muslim) or "we only study main/most popular religions" (10C/EP2

student, Indian, Jain). Clearly, students here are cognisant of other religions, particularly those not included within the GCSE specification. Similarly, comments for students who agreed with the statement even admitted that “there are a few teachings about a variety [sic] of religions but overall I don’t think there are a lot of race [sic] included” (10C/EP2 student, Asian Tamil, Christian). Interestingly, much of the commentary which suggested that the subject was not inclusive came from a predominantly BAME audience. However, students who identified as white British did also criticise the lack of inclusion amongst the subject, “we do talk about other races but not as much as we should be, especially with Christianity” (10C/EP1 student, white British, agnostic). It is worth noting that with this specific response, the student explicitly demonstrated an imperative that students ought to learn about other races, specifically within Christianity. This suggests an awareness amongst students that the curriculum remains imbalanced in that it only focusses on a marginal group of religious perspectives, as opposed to a plurality of views.

When considering the teachers of the subject, students within both classes remained strongly positive. No students disagreed with the statement “I feel that my teacher for this subject is inclusive of other races and religions” (fig. 4, fig. 5, fig. 6), which suggests that students, regardless of background, felt comfortable enough with the teachers in terms of delivering a balanced curriculum amongst students of varying racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Students recognised that teachers made an effort to ensure they were unbiased in their teaching, which reflected the diverse make-up of the classes, “he is considerate about all races and religions where he isn’t biased. This is because our class is diverse” (10C/EP1 student, Indian, Muslim). Clearly, students understood the importance of understanding diverse perspectives as they believed this affected them directly within their

classroom contexts. BAME students particularly felt strongly about this, as their responses reflected the importance of the teacher making efforts to be inclusive. Interestingly, students also felt that there was a positive correlation between being a BAME teacher and understanding inclusivity.

As someone who identified as Indian, the students from my class (10C/EP2) correlated my ethnic and racial background with my ability to effectively explore inclusive models of teaching in my classroom. Students' responses were reflective of this: "my teacher is Asian so he would understand other races" (10C/EP2 student, mixed Turkish and black, Muslim), "yes – he is the same race as me, and I think he teaches fair [sic] to every different race" (10C/EP2 student, Indian, Hindu). It is fascinating to see those certain students of minority ethnic origin found a sense of reliability amongst members of staff who also identify as BAME, creating a sense of trust in the teacher's lack of bias. Naturally, it is fallacious to assume that one is without bias solely by virtue of their minority ethnic and racial status, but from a student perspective, there seems to be a sense of shared understanding between the minority ethnic student and the minority ethnic teacher. Studies have suggested that the impact of "same-race" teachers have longstanding impacts on students from young ages (Gershenson et al, 2018), so for BAME students to feel safe and comfortable within a classroom environment with a BAME teacher demonstrates the additional value in the representation of BAME peoples within educational institutions.

Similarly, students felt that their teacher being inclusive of other races and religions enhanced their own understanding of the subject. One student reported that "when my teacher is covering the religions he gives contrasting opinions on them, using other religions

to give us a broader perspective on other views” (10C/EP2, white other, Agnostic). We can see that students correlate learning new viewpoints with broadening their own perspective, another student wrote that “when learning about views of beliefs he [teacher] contrasts them with other religions, helping widen our knowledge” (10C/EP2, white British, agnostic) – suggesting that students found value in learning other perspectives as it helped them to broaden their own viewpoints, emphasising the importance of having a diverse set of worldviews to facilitate this. Despite this, students were still aware of constraints within the curriculum due to GCSE Specifications, with one student stating that “my teacher does mention other races however we do stick to the curriculum as we need it for our tests” (10C/EP1, white British, agnostic). It is interesting that some students were able to identify the positive aspect of exploring other perspectives, but prioritised the specification content due to exam pressures, which raises the question of whether summative assessment prevents students from broadening their understanding of different viewpoints within religious studies.

Students were asked to consider both the curriculum content along with their particular teacher to make a judgement on whether they felt that the subject was ‘overall’ inclusive of all races and religions. Students were divided on this, with approximately 15% in 10C/EP1 and 24% in 10C/EP2 not agreeing with the statement “I feel that, overall, this subject is inclusive of all races and religions” (fig.7, fig. 8, fig. 9). One student who disagreed with the statement explained by saying “the religions we mostly learn about are Christianity and Islam. I personally would like to learn about other religions” (10C/EP2, white British, atheist), which questions the current scheme of work amongst examination boards to study two religions only. Some students were more specific with which elements of the

specification were more inclusive than others, “in Islam it’s more inclusive than Christianity [sic] as you don’t hear a lot about black or Asian churches” (10C/EP1 student, white British). This comment was particularly interesting, given the fact that Christianity, specifically the Church of England was widely seen as a missionary religion, and at the zeitgeist of the British Empire had established Church communities across Africa and Asia, leaving no shortage of black and Asian churches that students could be learning about (Gearon et al, 2021). Given the racial and ethnic makeup of the two classes, it seems a shame to forego the experiences and cultural-religious practices of predominantly BAME Church communities, something that is noticeably missing from the AQA scheme of work (AQA, 2017).

None of the students over both classes disagreed with the statement “I think that it is important for this subject to include diverse perspectives on religion and ethics”, which prompted a variety of responses. Interestingly, a number of students commented on how the subject ought to include diverse perspectives because it was the *raison d’être* of the subject. They noted “the whole point of this subject is to open your mind to all religions and races” (10C/EP1 student, white British, Christian) and “this subject is about learning diversity and differences and morals and it’s hard to have a good perspective if we don’t know more diverse cultures [sic]” (10C/EP1 student, white British, atheist). It is interesting that students identified an aim of religious studies as being to understand and empathise with diverse viewpoints, which is in line with the curriculum framework for Religious Education in England, as published by the Religious Education Council (REC) of England and Wales in 2013, stating that a key curriculum aim for RE is to ensure that students are “recognising the diversity which exists within and between communities and amongst individuals” (REC,

2013, p. 11). One student interestingly also identified the diverse nature of the subject as “the reason why I chose the subject” (10C/EP1 student, white British, atheist), which demonstrates the necessity for staff to be aware of implicit biases and engage specifically with the curriculum to ensure it is an equitable learning environment for all students. Students also generally understood the importance of diversity from a ‘global’ perspective. One student commented, “we need to learn about different religions and races in order to understand our world and other people’s beliefs or practices”, which suggested a sense of responsibility amongst RE teachers to ensure that diverse perspectives are embedded into the curriculum, not only for the sake of diversity, but to enrich the content and curriculum being delivered to students.

When questioned whether they thought that the subject was “doing enough” to make sure the curriculum is diverse and inclusive, a quarter of the students in 10C/EP1 either disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement (fig. 13, fig. 15), and just under half of students in 10C/EP2 (fig. 14, fig. 15) were unable to agree with the statement. Some students reported that “this subject is the best subject to understand and accept diversity” (10C/EP2 student, mixed Turkish and black, Muslim) which was complimentary, especially as it came from minority ethnic students, as it suggested that they felt secure and comfortable within their RE lessons. However, others did not explicitly agree with the statement, arguing that more could be done to ensure the curriculum is diverse and inclusive, but also understanding that teachers were restricted to the constraints of the exam boards. They acknowledged that “It [RE] can do more in Year 7/8 but not in GCSE as we can’t learn about every religion” (10C/EP2 student, white British, agnostic), and “you could always try harder

and I get that it's hard to fit so many cultures in but it's still mainly Christianity and Islam” (10C/EP1 student, white British, Agnostic).

Part of the grievances felt by students was that the exam content felt restrictive in favour of larger religions. One student reported that “we only study main religions/most common.

The subject is excluding some less popular [religions].” (10C/EP2 student, Indian, Jain).

Interestingly, this student identified as Jain, which is a religious group that is never taught at Hazelwood. Whilst it does have overlaps with Hinduism, which we do teach in year 8 and apply some principles of Hinduism to ethical themes such as War and Peace and Religion and Life, we do not explicitly mention Jainism at any point during the curriculum across any key stages. This was a particularly salient point as it exemplified just how necessary it is to think about world-religions beyond the ‘big six’ of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. Across both classes, we see that students clearly want to learn more than just the prescribed number of religions from the exam board, with some reservations about timings and the amount of additional knowledge at GCSE. Students also made it clear that whilst they felt the subject was not doing enough to be inclusive, this did not apply to the teachers – one student who agreed with the statement commented that they did so under the caveat that “the school EP [ethics and philosophy] department yes [are doing enough], the exam content is restrictive though” (10C/EP2 student, white British, agnostic).

Interestingly, students were far more receptive and aware of the exam board restrictions than I originally anticipated, which resulted in them being kinder to the teachers’ approach towards the subject’s inclusivity. Where students argued enough was not being done, they attributed this to the curriculum design, and many acknowledged that it was difficult from a teacher’s perspective.

The final question within the questionnaire asked students to reflect on whether studying RE at GCSE had helped them to be more inclusive of other races and religions. The rationale behind including this question was to examine whether or not students would attribute any credit towards RE in helping them explicitly have a better awareness of issues of diversity and inclusivity. Furthermore, I wanted to examine whether students would respond defensively, and stipulate that they were already inclusive and aware of issues to do with diversity, as this would be interesting to compare when students took the IAT. A considerable amount of students did respond with a sense of defensiveness, stating that “It [this subject] helped me gain more knowledge but I think I was already inclusive before taking the subject” (10C/EP2, white British, agnostic), “I already was, but it helped me understand more” (10C/EP2 student, Asian Pakistani, Muslim), and “I mostly already treated [sic] other races & religions with respect” (10C/EP2 student, Indian, Hindu). Interestingly, we can see that students almost felt the need to justify the fact that they previously were inclusive of others, as though it was something that they ought to declare to avoid being considered socially undesirable. These responses felt as though the students were displaying demand characteristics, by prefacing their answer with their prior awareness, they may have felt that this would have been impressive in the wider scheme of the study, when in reality it was simply asking students whether studying the subject had increased their (pre-existing) levels of inclusivity. Interestingly, the responses to this question became an indicator of students’ perceived sense of bias, without being so overt that students would realise this. I was able to consider the responses of students in comparison with their IAT results to see how aligned both were.

Overall, the results from the pre-intervention questionnaires demonstrated no major surprises in responses. Students generally responded favourably to questions about their teachers, along with positive responses with regards to how the subject has been able to support students with their own inclusivity. A large proportion of students argued that there was still work to be done with relation to ensuring inclusivity towards all, but many of these also acknowledged the constraints from the exam board which was preventing the inclusion of other religious perspectives to a certain extent. What is worth noting here is that students seemed very aware of issues to do with inclusivity and engaged well with this concept. Many spoke of personal experiences, but also made an effort to consider the viewpoints of people who were of different ethnic and religious origins to themselves when responding to the questions being asked of them. The next step within the study would be to examine the results from the IAT and compare these critically with the responses given in the explicit questionnaire.

Student responses from Implicit Attitude Tests (IATs)

The students completed two implicit attitude tests before the intervention which formed my baseline assessment of what the current picture of implicit bias was in 10C/EP2. Students used the Race IAT and the Religion IAT from the Harvard Project Implicit website, after which I coded the results on a 1-7 gradient (see Appendix B, Table 3). My hypothesis was that students would have scores which displayed automatic preferences in favour of “white people over black people” (Project Implicit), which would contradict some of the comments made by students regarding their perceived sense of inclusivity. In terms of headline figures, no students displayed a strong automatic preference towards black people over white people, nor did any display a strong automatic preference towards Islam over

Christianity (table 3). In terms of averages, the mean score for the Race IAT was 5.6 – somewhere between a slight to moderate preference towards white people over black people, and for the Religion IAT it was 4.8 – approximately between no automatic preference and a slight preference towards Christianity over Islam. Interestingly, the Religions IAT had a lower average of results in comparison to the Race IAT, suggesting that students generally displayed greater implicit bias in terms of race rather than religion, as seen in fig. 25.

In terms of the Race IAT, 30% of the students' results demonstrated a 'strong automatic preference towards white people over black people' (fig. 26). This amounted to 8 students, with a further 35% (9 students) displaying a moderate automatic preference towards white people. In total, approximately 81% of student responses (21 students) demonstrated an automatic preference towards white people over black people, with 3 students (12%) showing no automatic preferences. Only two students demonstrated an automatic preference in favour of black people over white people, one of which was slight whilst the other was moderate (fig. 26). If one was to explore these results further, the breakdown between white-identifying students (White British, White Italian, White Other) against BAME students demonstrated an interesting trend. Amongst white students, the majority result was decisively a strong automatic preference towards white people over black people, with 8 students (44%) achieving this result (fig. 28). Interestingly, one white-identifying student demonstrated a slight automatic preference towards black people over white people, which was unexpected, given the majority response rate, but also because the Project Implicit website stated that around 7% of web respondents achieved the same score (Project Implicit, n.d.). BAME identifying pupils only made up 8 students of the class, but

also demonstrated an interesting breakdown. (75% of the BAME pupils demonstrated a preference towards white people, with one student even demonstrating a strong automatic preference towards white people (fig. 29).

The results from the BAME students were broadly in line with the results of their white counterparts. I had hypothesised that BAME students may have generally achieved results which demonstrated a preference towards BAME people, which was not the case.

Interestingly, this raised the question of whether this was due to the fact that all these students shared the same schooling, thus began to think homogenously as a result of doing so. The key anomaly within these results would be that one student achieved a result which demonstrated a moderate preference towards black people over white people. The student's automatic response to this result was pride – he felt that he his result was a 'good result', especially as he identified as black. This response is interesting, as if the same response came from a white student for getting a result demonstrating a strong or moderate automatic preference towards white people, the initial response to that would be concern, due to growing concerns of white nationalism and white pride. Overall, the Race IAT demonstrated an interesting trend of responses which favoured white people over black people, as I had predicted. This solidified my resolve to ensure that minority races were at the forefront of our GCSE curriculum, so that students were able to get the exposure towards people of colour that they previously did not get, in doing so, reducing the levels of implicit bias towards BAME people.

The Religions IAT demonstrated fewer obvious trends. Much like the Race IAT, no student demonstrated a strong preference towards Islam over Christianity, but there were

significant numbers demonstrating every other result (fig. 27). The most popular result was a strong automatic preference towards Christianity over Islam, with 6 students achieving this, however it was followed by 5 students achieving no automatic preference, as well as another 5 students achieving a slight preference towards Islam over Christianity. What is interesting here is that the results seem to be distributed more widely in comparison to the Race IAT. Perhaps this is an indication of the teaching of religion amongst the department – in that teachers have taken care to plan and teach lessons which do not demonstrate a bias towards one particular religion over another. As with the Race IAT, I was curious to see if pre-existing religious affiliations made any impact on the implicit attitude results, as these were the religions that children would have been brought up with. Amongst the 18 atheist, agnostic and spiritual students, 5 students demonstrated a slight automatic preference towards Islam over Christianity (fig. 30).

A further 4 students demonstrated no automatic preference, which totalled 50% of the group achieving a result which did not favour Christianity, the ‘majority’ religion, or as referred to by AQA, the ‘main religious tradition of Great Britain (AQA, 2017). Amongst Christian students, one student demonstrated a strong preference towards Christianity, which was to be expected, but the other two achieved no automatic preference (fig. 31). This is perhaps an indication of the fact that, through careful planning and teaching, students are able to reduce their own implicit biases when considering religions other than their own. However, this was not necessarily the case amongst the Muslim students. Two students demonstrated a moderate automatic preference towards Islam, which was again, to be expected, but one student’s result was a strong automatic preference towards Christianity over Islam (fig. 32). This felt unexpected, as I had not anticipated Muslim

students to have such strong preferences towards Christians over Muslims, given that they self-identified as practicing Muslims.

Interestingly, this raised the question of whether our teaching within the department was equitable between Christianity and Islam, or whether there were parts of the curriculum that presented Christianity in a more 'marketable' light than Islam. As a department, we considered the fact that the Christian Practices unit of the exam delves into Christian work within the community – foodbanks, street pastors, responses to persecution, etc. When compared to Islamic Practices, there seems to be no focus on Muslim contributions towards the local communities, making Christianity more marketable and appealing towards an ever-growing community of non-Christian people. Interestingly, amongst the two Hindu and Jain students, both achieved a result which was either a moderate or slight automatic preference towards Christianity over Islam (fig. 33). This supports the idea that students perhaps see Christianity as the 'main' whilst Islam becomes the 'other' – a concept which Gearon examined in detail, in defence of the necessity of decolonising and reconsidering the way in which RE teachers frame the religions that they do teach (Gearon, 2001). However, the distribution of results was interesting, despite the fact that 14 out of 26 students demonstrated a preference towards Christianity, which suggested that we needed to consider how we framed Islam in comparison to Christianity, 19% (5 students) demonstrated no automatic preference either way (fig. 27), which was a greater number of students in comparison to the Race IAT (fig. 26). Similarly, religious affiliation did not have as strong an impact on the results as I had anticipated, with some surprises amongst Muslim students, and a fair number of Christian students with no automatic preference at all.

Overall, the IATs demonstrated that students did harbour some implicit biases which had not been identified in the explicit attitude questionnaire. There was a noticeable trend of automatic preferences in favour of white people over black people amongst students, which raised an interesting debate on the nature of diversity that students were exposed to within their RE lessons. This was interesting, as students had consciously identified in the explicit attitude questionnaires that they had not learnt about Black or Asian Churches and felt that there was a sense of homogeneity within the way religions, specifically Christianity, is taught. Similar arguments could even be made of the exam specification's treatment of Islam, which lacks cultural capital in that it does not consider the various makeup of ethnoreligious Muslim groups within the religion. One could counter by questioning whether it is the place of the GCSE to consider these viewpoints, and whether there ought to be a separation between religious tradition and cultural tradition. This remains a question that is perhaps out of the scope of the research being conducted within this assignment, but it does raise an interesting enquiry on the nature of cultural-religious experiences and how these are presented in such a way that students are able to address and reduce biases by learning about them. The Religions IAT demonstrated a greater degree of variance amongst results, however there was still a clear plurality of results which demonstrated an automatic preference towards Christianity over Islam. It is clear that the next step in the process would be to implement the decolonised curriculum and see whether the biases would reduce.

The crux of the intervention involved a decolonised model of lessons on the topic of Religion, Crime and Punishment. As a department, we focussed on creating a scheme of work which included diverse perspectives from both an ethno-racial and religious perspective. This included a consideration of the disproportionate number of BAME people

negatively affected by the legal system, which was referential of the Lammy Review (2017) and the Runnymede Trust CERD (2021) in order to remain unbiased when discussing issues such as the disproportionality of BAME peoples within the prisons system and the Crown Prosecution Service. Similarly, case studies were specifically added into the content to reflect the impact that the justice system globally has had on BAME people – including unjust rulings such as the case of George Stinney (1944) and the Central Park jogger case (1989). From a British perspective, students learnt about the shooting and death of Mark Duggan (2011), to avoid a curriculum that was solely focussed on the United States, allowing learners to understand the links between race, crime and punishment within the UK. Students responded well to the embedding of BAME perspectives within the wider topic of crime and punishment, with many of them stating that they had never previously considered the ways in which BAME people were disproportionately affected by punitive measures, both in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Similarly, when considering religious applications towards ethical issues to do with crime and punishment, greater efforts were taken to include a wider range of religions to enrich students' understanding of the multicultural and multireligious society in which they live in. Inclusion of religious responses from Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism were introduced to the curriculum, to balance out the Western, Judeo-Christian teachings which remained consistent amongst Christians and Muslims. Students were introduced to concepts such as Karma, Ahimsa and Satyagraha as responses to crime, allowing students to understand, from an Eastern perspective, how different religious traditions view crime and how it ought to be dealt with. The department also worked on challenging students' perceptions of Sharia Law – which were found to be outdated and heavily influenced by mainstream media

outlets. When discussing Sharia, students were given a basic understanding of how it has been interpreted and passed down, along with a critical analysis of the difference between fundamentalist and liberal interpretations of Sharia. Many learners commented on their lack of understanding of Sharia before the module, which suggested a lack of sufficient education on the principles behind Sharia law, and its harmful representation in the media. Students were also given an understanding of Muslim charities which supported prisoner rehabilitation into society – such as the Prisoners Rehabilitation Project by Muslim Aid and the Tayba Foundation and its work on providing education and support for incarcerated Muslims. Similarly, students were quick to comment on the fact that they had not considered the role of Muslims within the wider community, specifically with regards to prison reform and the reformation of incarcerated people. This demonstrated a greater level of understanding and empathy amongst students, all of which extended beyond the scope of the exam specification. It is therefore a shame that the intervention was unable to be fully completed as the preliminary effects on the students were that they demonstrated a greater awareness of social issues in relation to race and religion within the scope of crime and punishment, and it would have been extremely valuable to re-test the students on their implicit biases to see to what extent, if at all, they had been reduced.

Staff responses from Implicit Attitude Test (IAT)

A key element of the study was to explore the responses from staff within the Humanities faculty (i.e., History, Geography and Philosophy & Ethics). The literature demonstrated an alarming number of reports of teachers displaying bias towards BAME students (Bonefeld & Dickhäuser, 2018, Glock & Böhmer, 2018 and Baker et al, 2018), which suggests a need to consider the way in which schools tackle the issue of staff-to-student interactions with

regards to bias. I used a sample of the humanities teachers, with three teachers from philosophy, geography and history respectively. Amongst the nine members of staff were the heads of department for each subject, along with two heads of year across KS4 and KS5 (the latter being myself). The sample demonstrated the majority of the faculty, and included all middle leaders (heads of department and year) within the faculty. I chose to take part in the study for a few reasons, firstly to balance the amount of philosophy teachers with the history and geography counterparts, but also because I am the only non-white identifying member of staff in the faculty, and felt it was necessary to include my result into the analysis for comparative purposes.

Table 4 (appendix C) demonstrates the breakdown of results amongst the staff members involved. It also outlines the roles and ethnic origins of the members of the staff for clarity. In terms of headline data, this set of results demonstrated the only “strong automatic preference towards black people over white people”, which was my result (fig. 34). Interestingly, the most popular response amongst staff was that there was no automatic preference, a result shared by all three heads of department (table 4, fig 34). This was an interesting outcome as those three members of staff had worked with me in the last academic to work on decolonising our respective curricula as part of my previous project. When discussing with all three heads of department, each of their automatic responses involved a sense of relief, along with an acknowledgement towards their curriculum development as being in some way responsible for allowing them to understand and reduce their own implicit biases. This suggests that working on curriculum decolonisation and making an effort to actively adapt one’s curriculum could potentially allow for practitioners to reduce their implicit biases.

Five members of staff achieved results which demonstrated an automatic preference towards white people over black people, to varying degrees from slight to strong (fig. 34). Interestingly, the collective automatic responses of the five teachers with these results were very negative. Respondents stated disappointment with their results and felt the need to justify their results. One teacher who achieved a moderate automatic preference towards white people stated that he felt his age and the time during which he grew up in had likely contributed to his own implicit biases. This was an interesting response, as I did not feel that he was deflecting his result, but rather he was trying to understand where his biases were coming from. This links into the notion of respondents going through a process of 'confession' (Yen et al, 2018).

Other members of the faculty described their disappointment with the test, with one protesting that the test was not an accurate measure of bias, but rather a test of response timing. This response felt more defensive and did not seem to engage with the implicit bias, but instead fixated on the method in which the result was achieved. Interestingly, when discussing the ethical considerations of this research and development project, I had not considered staff automatic responses to results to be so severe. My initial hypothesis was that students would have reacted far more emotively than staff, but from my experience of examining both student and staff automatic responses to the IAT, I found that adults demonstrated more pronounced emotive responses to their results in comparison to students, who generally were more inquisitive than they were disappointed in their result. This illustrates the need to empower teachers to understand their own biases and adopt strategies to reflect and reduce them as necessary. In terms of the implications of this from

a school perspective, it is evident that training during in-service training (INSET) days to support teachers in acknowledging and understanding their biases is necessary, something that I have worked alongside my senior leadership team with to deliver in the forthcoming academic year.

Following the staff IAT results, I met with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) link for Curriculum to work with heads of department on supporting them in their own endeavours to decolonise their curricula and ensure that students are able to find equitable learning outcomes regardless of their ethno-racial backgrounds. The impact of this project has resulted in Hazelwood Academy including diversity and equality of curriculum into their Academy Improvement Plan (AIP), which has become embedded into the fabric of Hazelwood and its future development. This is an incredibly important milestone for the academy, as it is the first step in ensuring that teachers are given the support they need to understand their own implicit biases. However, it is important in that it provides teachers the ability to understand that in order for education to be truly equitable for all students, they must be willing to adapt their curricula to best suit the needs of the underrepresented, not only for their minority students, but also for the majority to be able to experience and understand the importance of a broad spectrum of viewpoints when learning.

5. Conclusions and implications

This research and development project aimed to answer three questions:

1. How can educators measure the extent and the role of implicit bias within classrooms?

2. How can implicit bias be reduced in the religious education classroom? and
3. What impact does implicit bias have on staff?

I will aim to explore the conclusions and implications to each of these in depth. As previously stated, I was unable to finish the intervention, and was unable to test the students a second time (post-intervention) due to the nature of the lockdown, and with the Year 10 bubble being sent home during the final stretch of the investigation, I have included, where appropriate, my expected conclusions with the relevant justification.

My method of measuring the extent and role of implicit bias within the classroom was through heavy use of the implicit attitudes test (IAT) as a tool to measure implicit bias. Much of the literature demonstrated a variety of shortcomings from the IAT as a tool to measure bias, with arguments suggesting that it resulted in emotionally charged automatic responses, or that it was simply a tool to measure response latency as opposed to actual bias. Despite this, the IAT proved to be a useful and manageable tool to measure the biases of students within the classroom. The results, when compared to explicit attitude questionnaires, demonstrated a clear picture of bias towards white people over black people, and in general towards Christianity over Islam. From my perspective as a teacher of Religious Studies, the results of the IAT demonstrated that in order for my teaching to have the most impact that it possibly could on my students, I needed to work with my department in order to address the results of the IAT by modifying the curriculum. The challenge for educational practitioners here is not to remove from their curricula, but rather to enrich it by adding to it.

It is, therefore, important to consider that whilst the IAT is a useful tool for gauging the implicit biases of a group of students, one ought not to treat the IAT results as fixed measures. Whilst I was unable to complete the second round of IAT testing on the experimental group of 10C/EP2, I hypothesised that students would have reduced their biases due to the efforts of the decolonised scheme of learning for the Religion, Crime and Punishment topic that they studied. Teachers can model facilitate self-reflection and awareness towards implicit biases by expanding their curricula to include the voices of BAME and other diverse viewpoints. Within RE, I was able to do this by working in tandem with my head of department to restructure the scheme of work as a collaborative process, in doing so educating ourselves, to ensure an equitable curriculum which enriched and broadened the minds of students of all backgrounds. Within the religious education classroom specifically, I found that the key to reducing implicit bias came from an understanding of colonial influence – and the impact it still has to date. When the religious education teacher understands the context of how imperial influence has affected the spread of religious and moral teaching, she is able to then explore viewpoints from Eastern religious tradition, along with voices of those racial and ethnic groups to result in an anticolonial perspective. This has had ramifications on my personal practice, as I am now in the process of working with my department to critically evaluate our current scheme of work across all key stages, focussing on where the opportunities to include diverse perspectives can be included, and re-plan lessons to reflect those voices that have previously been unheard.

Finally, when considering the impact of implicit bias staff in schools, one ought to consider the positionality of staff in comparison to their students. It is not enough to simply be aware

of one's own biases in relation to issues of race and religion when teaching religious education. From a wider school perspective, this issue is not mutually exclusive to racial or religious bias – it can be expanded and stretched to cover issues of bias towards women, sexuality, gender identity, social class and disability. Quality training on awareness of implicit bias is something that is lacking in educational institutions currently, which is only preventing truly equitable education. Truly, one must conclude that if schools wish to achieve an equitable model of religious education, which benefits students of all races and religions, schemes of work and exam boards must evaluate the scope within their course content in order to include the voices of BAME and religious minority people in tandem with those of the majority.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PRE-INTERVENTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Raw data from pre-intervention questionnaire. Students were asked, for questions 1-7 to rank their response using the following key:

- 1 – Strongly Disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 – Agree
- 5 – Strongly Agree

Question 8 asked students how they would identify their racial and ethnic origin, whilst question 9 asked students how they would identify their religious background.

Table 1: Raw data from pre-intervention questionnaire [10C/EP1], control group:

ID	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9
1	4	5	5	4	5	2	4	Asian Afghani	Muslim
2	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	White British	Agnostic
3	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	White British	Atheist
4	5	5	5	3	4	5	5	White British	Christian
5	4	3	4	4	5	2	4	White British	Agnostic
6	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	Christian
7	4	3	5	4	5	5	5	White British	Agnostic
8	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	Asian Tamil	Hindu
9	5	4	5	4	5	3	5	Indian	Muslim
10	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	Refused	Refused
11	5	3	5	2	5	2	4	Mixed White and Arab	Muslim
12	4	3	5	3	5	2	4	White British	Roman Catholic
13	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	White British	Atheist
14	4	2	4	3	5	2	3	White British	Agnostic
15	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	White British	Refused
16	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	White British	Atheist
17	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	Asian Pakistani	Muslim
18	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	White British	Atheist
19	5	4	4	3	5	4	5	Black African	Muslim
20	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	White British	Christian
21	4	4	3	4	5	4	3	White British	Agnostic
22	4	4	4	3	5	4	4	White British	Atheist
23	3	4	5	4	5	4	5	White British	Atheist
24	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	White British	Agnostic

Table 2: Raw data from pre-intervention questionnaire [10C/EP2], experimental group:

ID	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9
1	5	3	5	3	5	3	4	White British	Agnostic
2	5	3	5	3	5	3	5	White Other	Agnostic
3	5	3	5	3	5	3	3	Black East African	Muslim
4	4	3	4	4	5	4	4	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	Agnostic
5	4	3	4	4	5	3	4	White British	Atheist
6	4	5	4	4	5	5	3	White British	Agnostic
7	5	3	4	2	5	4	3	White Italian	Roman Catholic
8	5	5	4	3	5	5	4	Indian	Hindu
9	5	5	3	2	5	3	3	White British	Atheist
10	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	Mixed Turkish and Black	Muslim
11	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	White British	Atheist
12	3	3	4	3	5	3	3	White British	Atheist
13	5	2	5	4	5	3	4	White British	Atheist
14	5	5	5	5	3	5	4	White British	Atheist
15	5	5	3	2	5	3	4	White British	Agnostic
16	4	2	4	5	3	3	3	White British	Agnostic
17	5	4	4	2	4	4	4	White British	Atheist
18	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	White British	Agnostic
19	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	White British	Spiritual
20	4	3	5	4	5	4	5	Asian Pakistani	Muslim
21	4	2	5	4	5	3	4	Indian	Jain
22	4	4	5	4	5	3	4	Asian Tamil	Christian
23	5	3	4	4	4	4	5	Black Ghanaian	Christian
24	4	5	5	5	3	4	4	White British	Agnostic
25	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	White Italian	Agnostic
26	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	White British	Agnostic

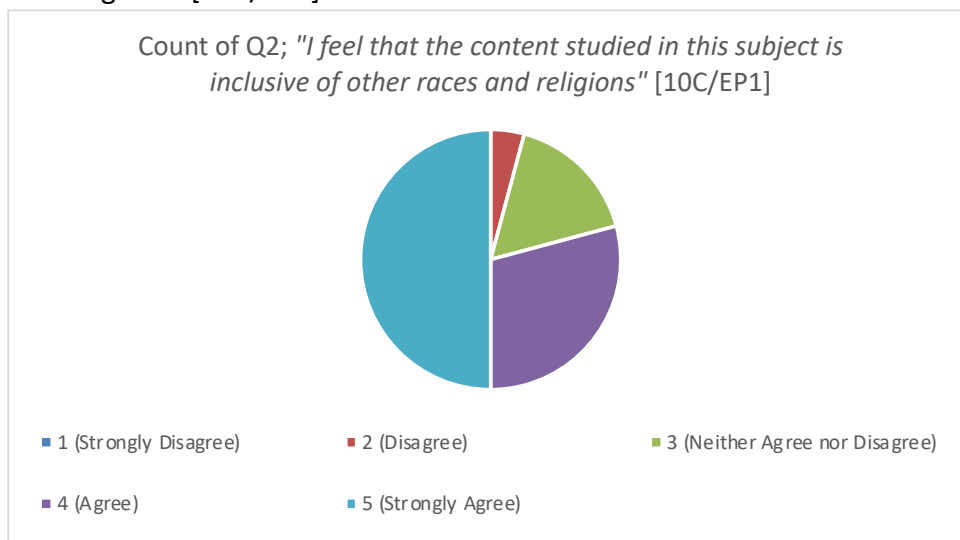
Fig. 1: Count of Q2: "I feel that the content studied in this subject is inclusive of other races and religions" [10C/EP1]:

Fig. 2: Count of Q2: "I feel that the content studied in this subject is inclusive of other races and religions" [10C/EP2]:

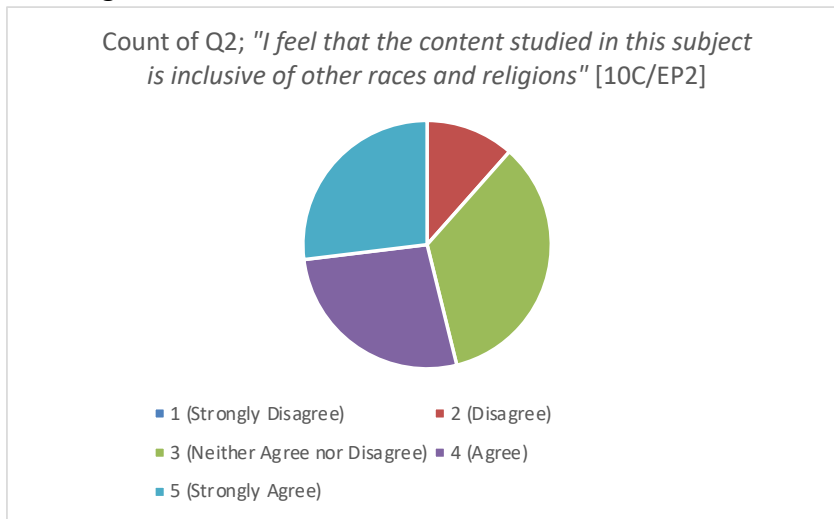


Fig. 3: Comparison of responses for Q2 from both groups [10C/EP1 & 10C/EP2]:

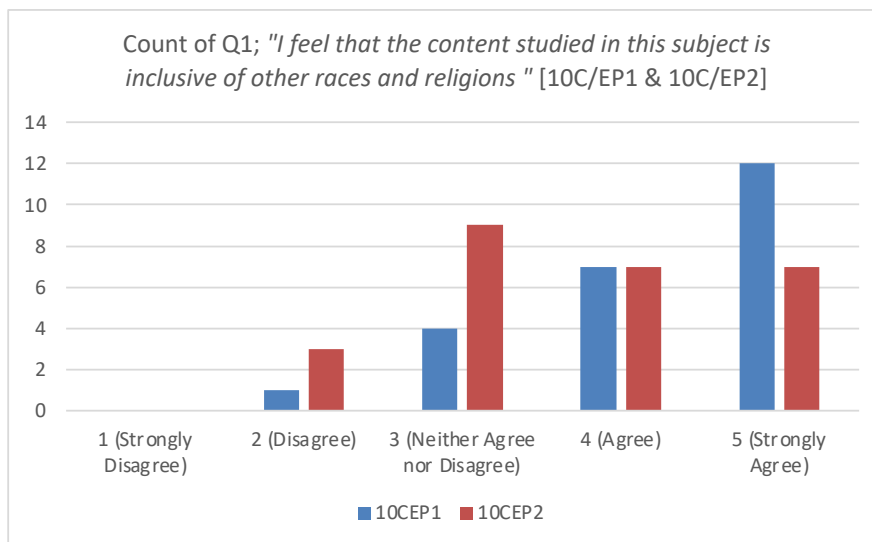


Fig. 4: Count of Q3: "I feel that my teacher for this subject is inclusive of other races and religions" [10C/EP1]:

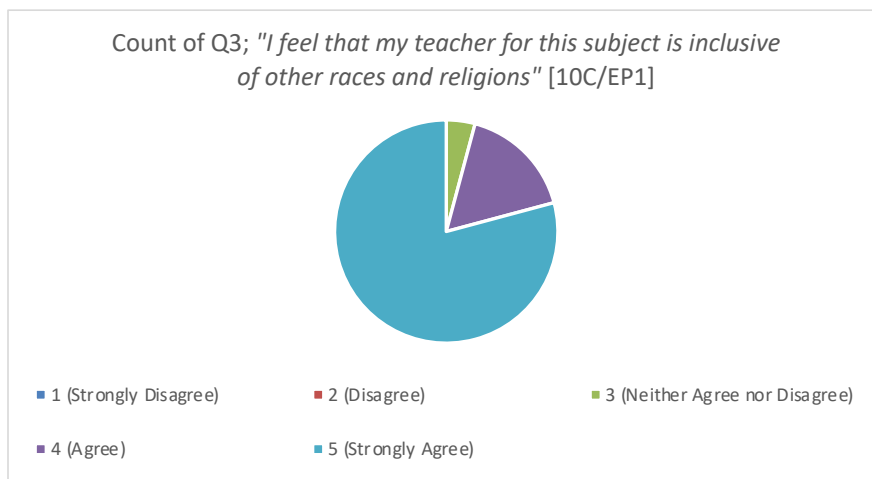


Fig. 5: Count of Q3: "I feel that my teacher for this subject is inclusive of other races and religions" [10C/EP2]

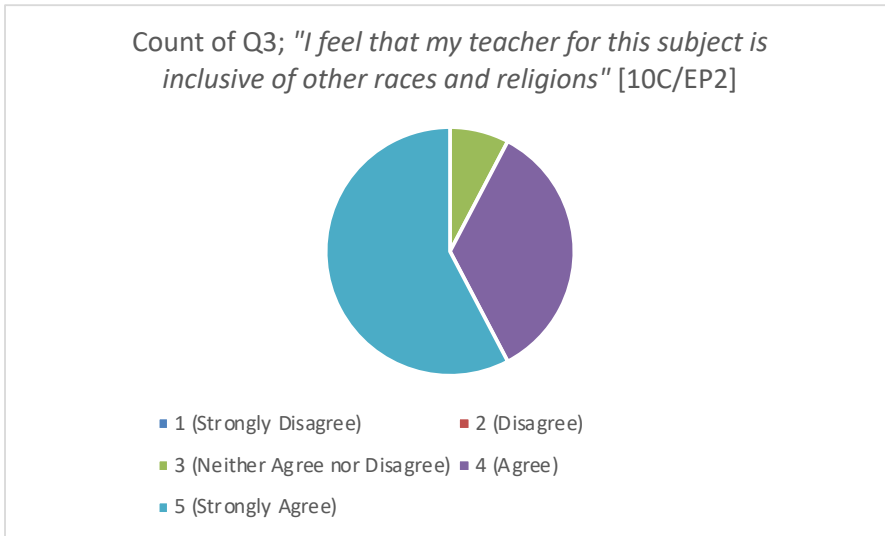


Fig. 6: Comparison of responses for Q3 from both groups [10C/EP1 & 10C/EP2]:

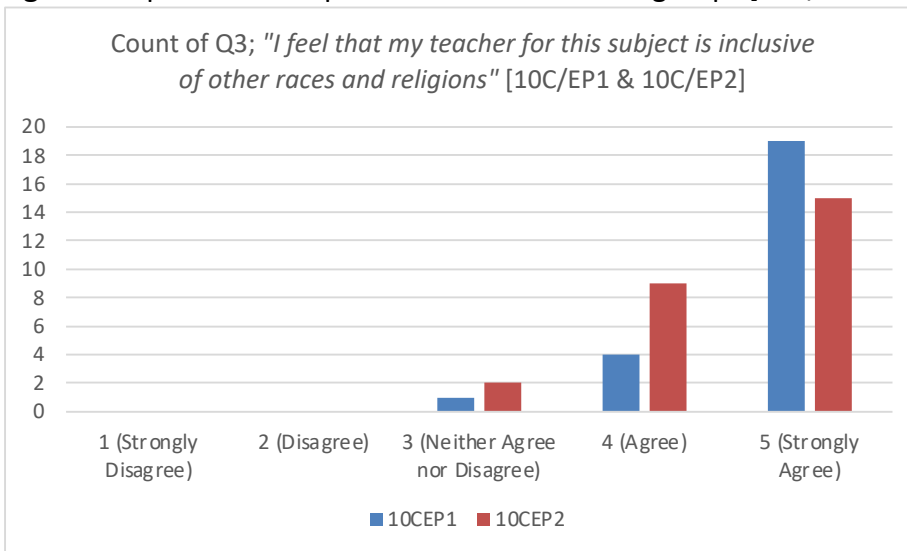


Fig. 7: Count of Q4: "I feel that, overall, this subject is inclusive of all races and religions" [10C/EP1]:

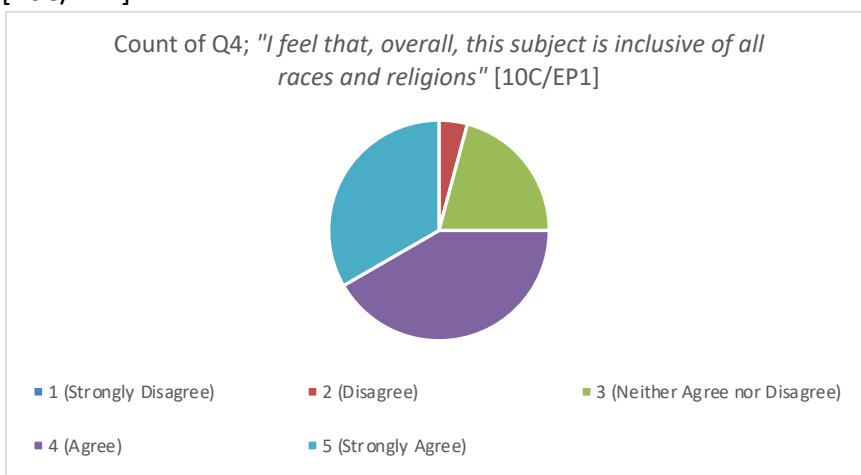


Fig. 8: Count of Q4: “I feel that, overall, this subject is inclusive of all races and religions” [10C/EP2]:

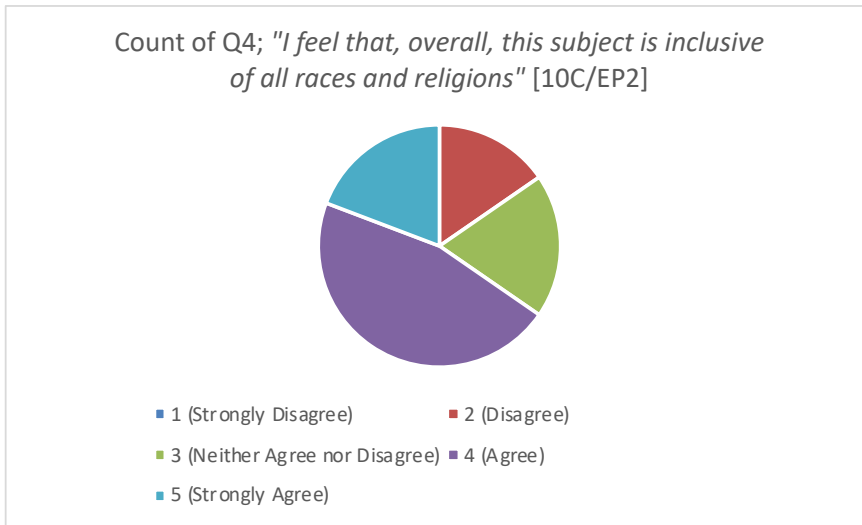


Fig. 9: Comparison of responses for Q4 from both groups [10C/EP1 & 10C/EP2]:

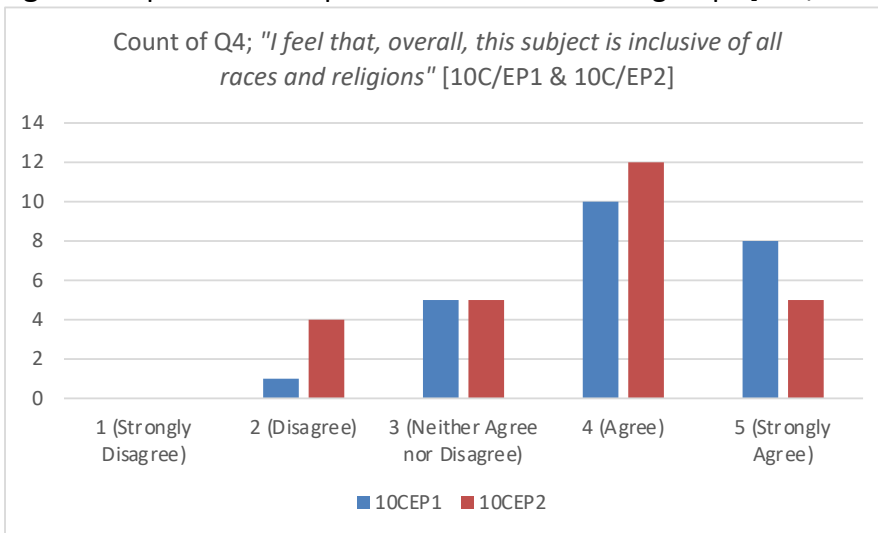


Fig. 10: Count of Q5: “I think that it is important for this subject to include diverse perspectives on religion and ethics” [10C/EP1]:

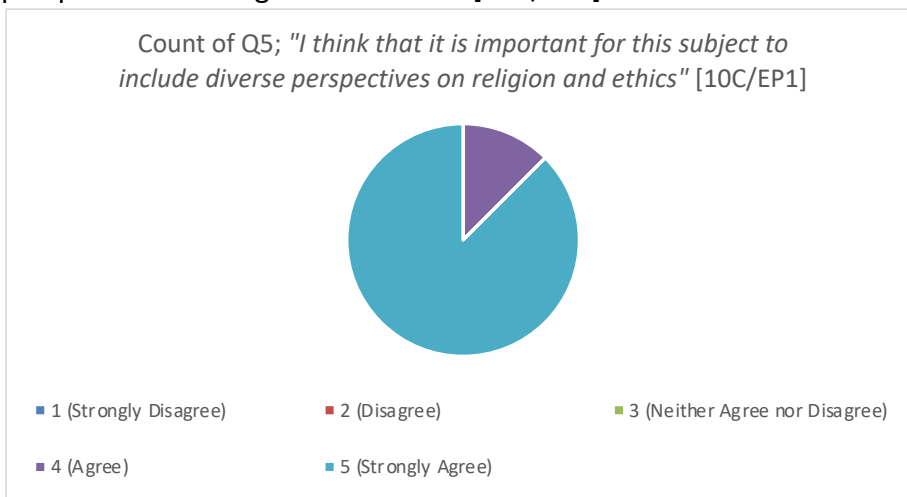


Fig. 11: Count of Q5: "I think that it is important for this subject to include diverse perspectives on religion and ethics" [10C/EP2]:

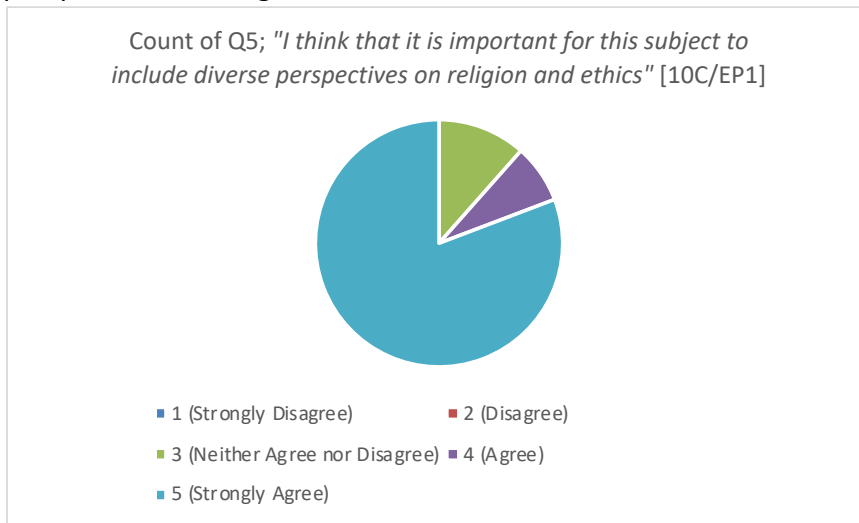


Fig. 12: Comparison of responses for Q5 from both groups [10C/EP1 & 10C/EP2]:

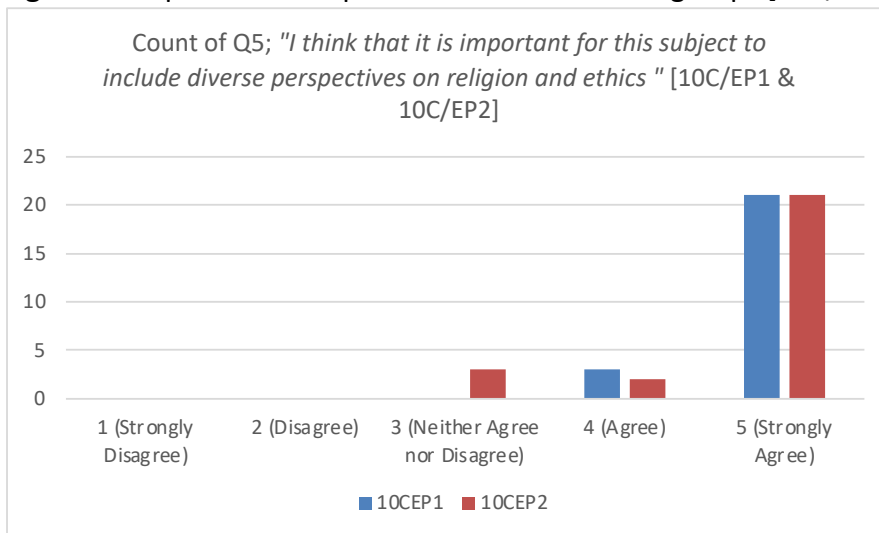


Fig. 13: Count of Q6: "I think that this subject is doing enough to make sure the curriculum is diverse and inclusive" [10C/EP1]:

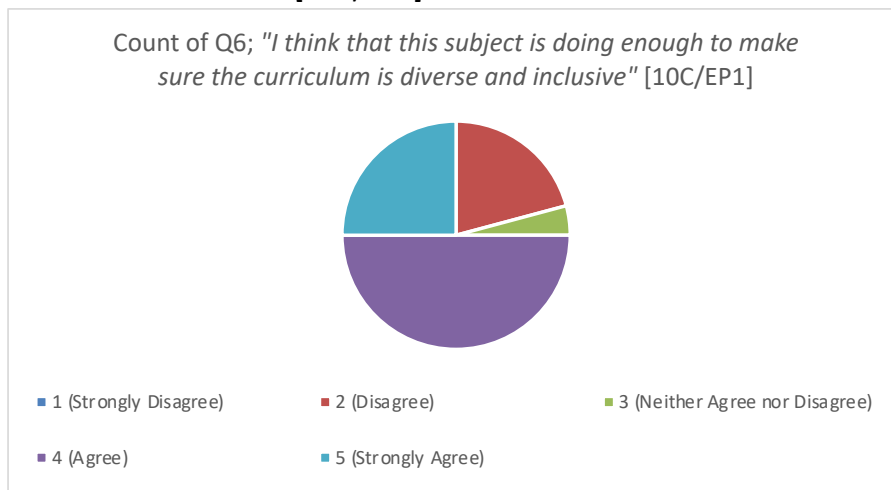


Fig. 14: Count of Q6: "I think that this subject is doing enough to make sure the curriculum is diverse and inclusive" [10C/EP2]:

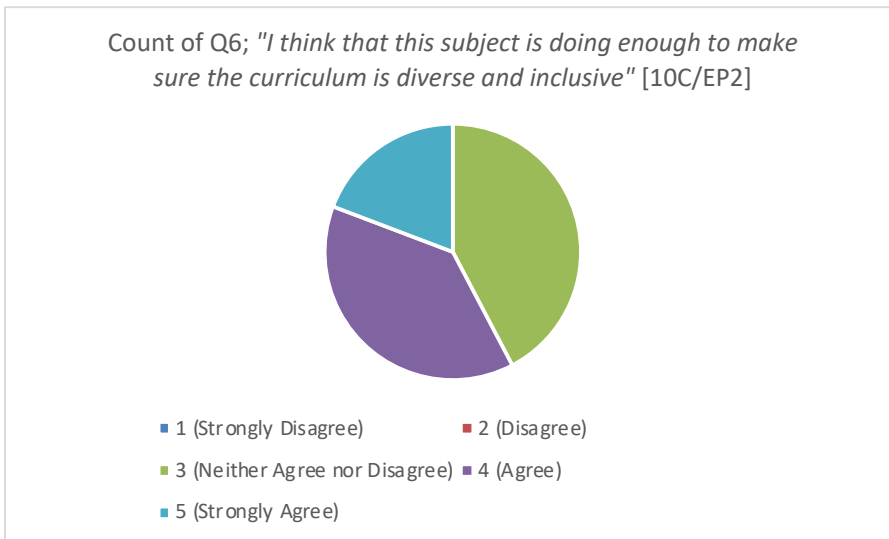


Fig. 15: Comparison of responses for Q6 from both groups [10C/EP1 & 10C/EP2]:

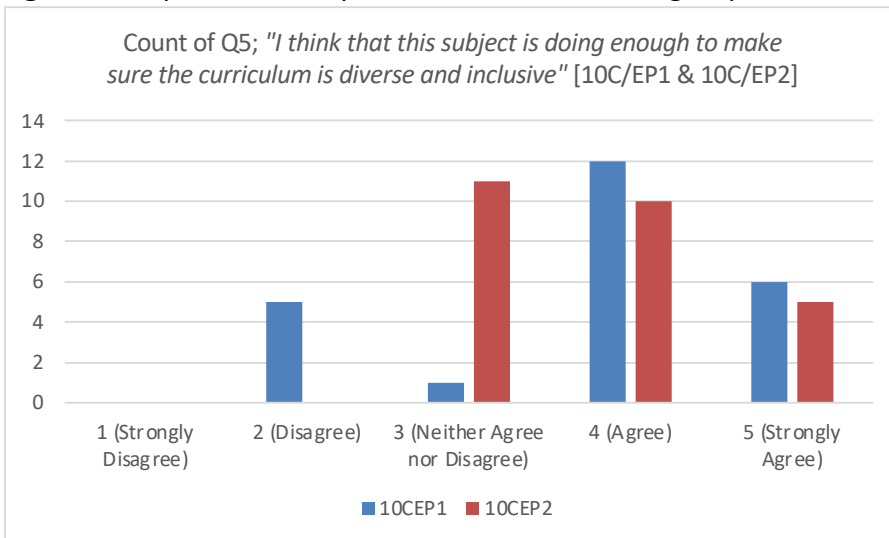


Fig. 16: Count of Q7: "This subject has helped me to be more inclusive of other races and religions" [10C/EP1]:

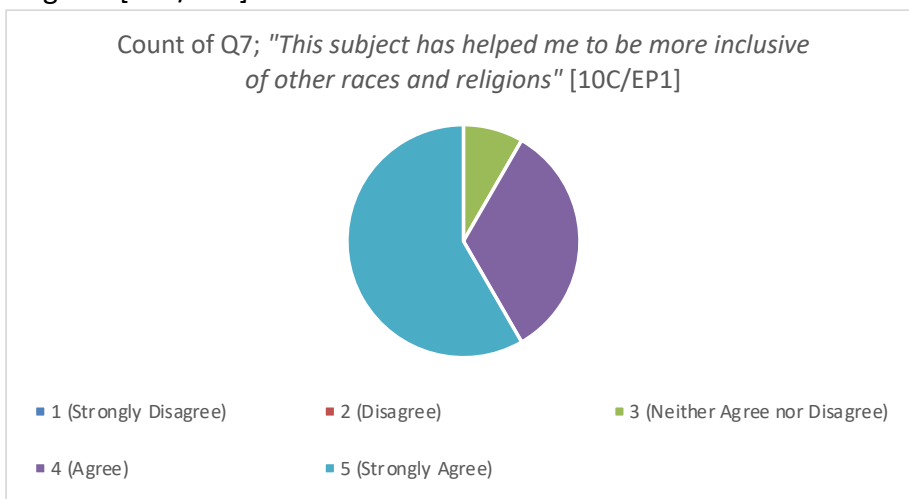


Fig. 17: Count of Q7: “This subject has helped me to be more inclusive of other races and religions [10C/EP2]:

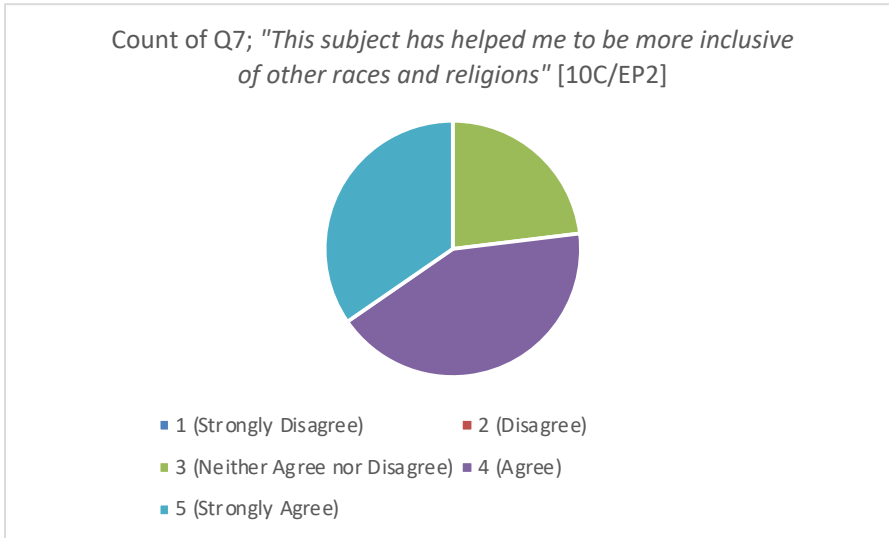


Fig. 18: Comparison of responses for Q7 from both groups [10C/EP1 & 10C/EP2]:

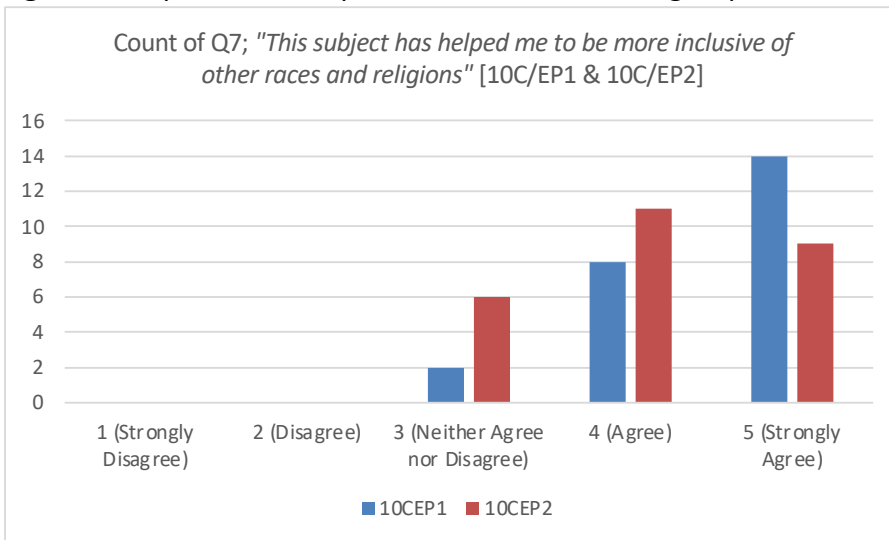


Fig. 19: Count of Q8: “How would you describe your race and ethnic origin?” [10C/EP1]:

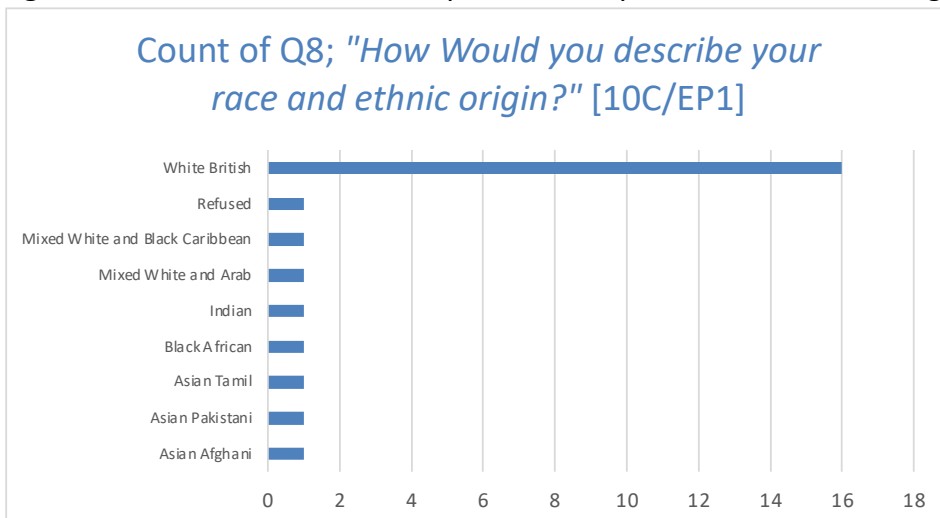


Fig. 20: Count of Q8: “How would you describe your race and ethnic origin?” [10C/EP2]:

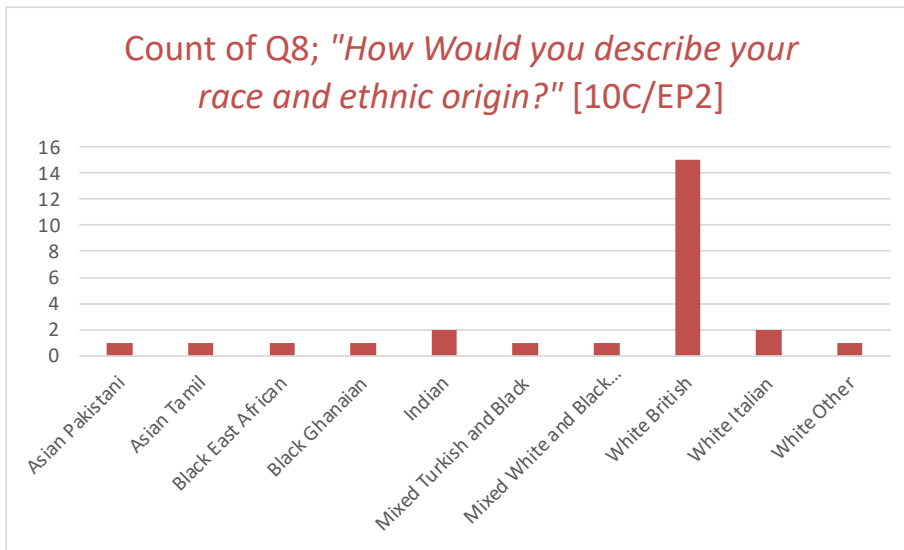


Fig. 21: Comparison of responses for Q8 from both groups [10C/EP1 & 10C/EP2]:

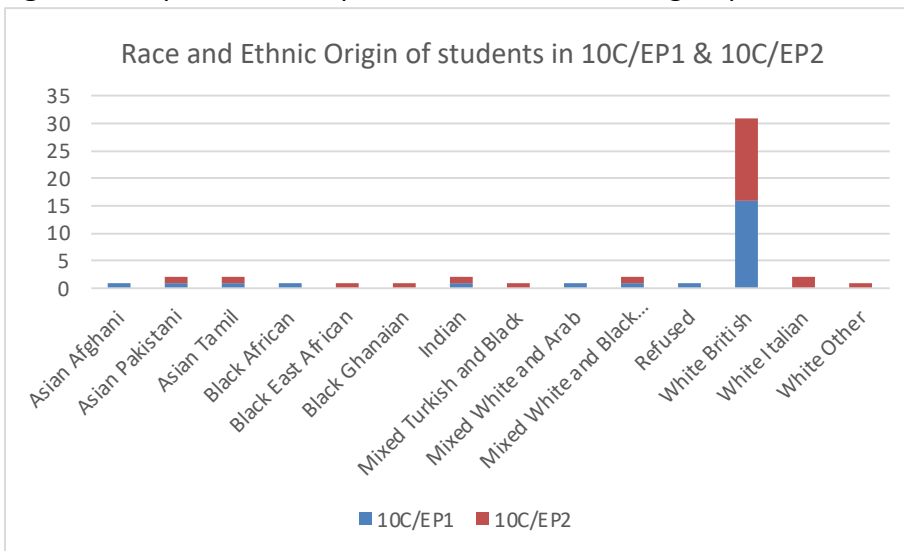


Fig. 22: Count of Q9: “How would you describe your religious background?” [10C/EP1]:

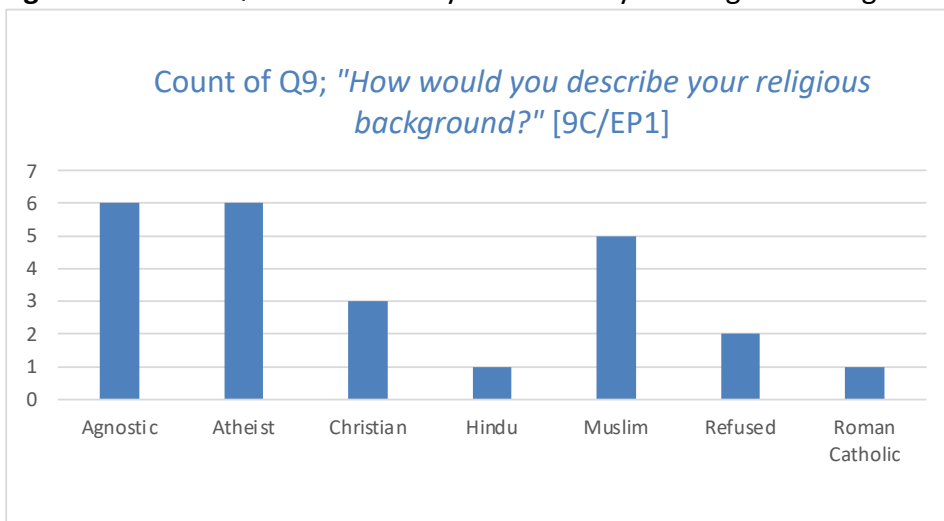
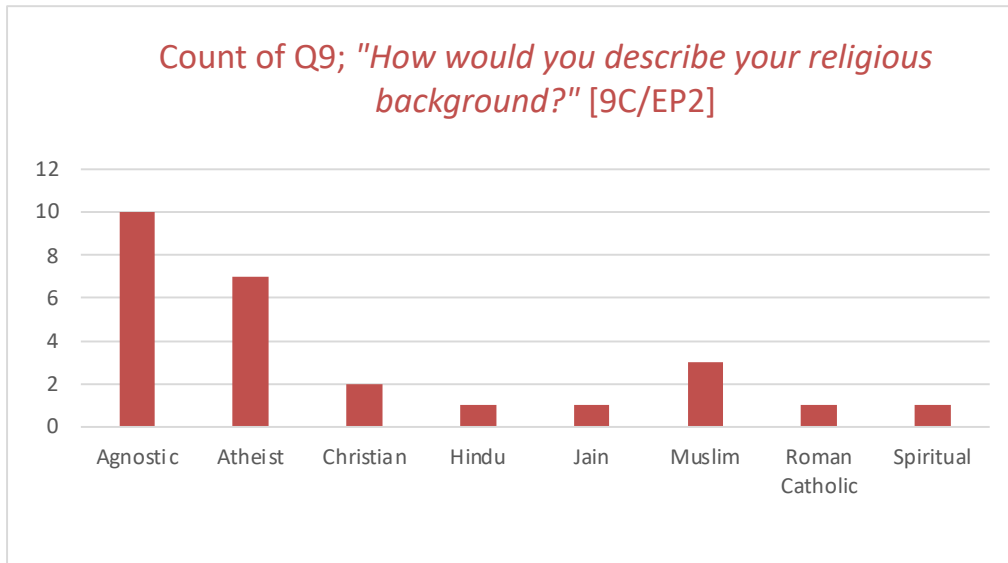
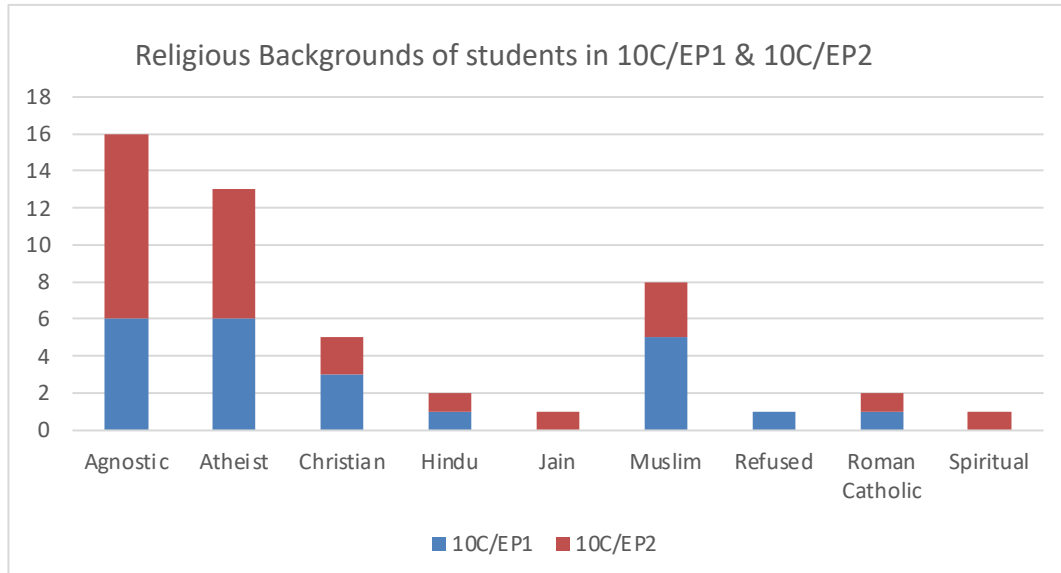


Fig. 23: Count of Q9: "How would you describe your religious background?" [10C/EP2]:**Fig. 24:** Comparison of responses for Q9 from both groups [10C/EP1 & 10C/EP2]:

APPENDIX B: PRE-INTERVENTION IMPLICIT ATTITUDE TEST [IAT] RESULTS

Below are the results and analysis of the race and Religion IATs completed by 10C/EP2 and the staff members from the Humanities faculty. To ensure ease of access when presenting the data, I have used the numbers 1-7 to represent the 7 attainable results. See legend below for values as taken from Project Implicit website.

Table 3: 10C/EP2 pre-intervention results from the implicit attitude test.

ID	RACE IAT	Religion IAT
1	7	6
2	5	2
3	4	6
4	7	5
5	6	6
6	7	7
7	6	4
8	7	4
9	6	3
10	4	4
11	5	3
12	7	4
13	7	7
14	3	5
15	5	6
16	6	3
17	7	7
18	2	7
19	6	7
20	4	3
21	6	2
22	5	5
23	7	7
24	6	3
25	6	4
26	6	5

1	Strong Automatic Preference for Black People
2	Moderate Automatic Preference for Black People
3	Slight Automatic Preference for Black People
4	No Automatic Preference
5	Slight Automatic Preference for White People
6	Moderate Automatic Preference for White People
7	Strong Automatic Preference for White People

1	Strong automatic preference for Islam
2	Moderate Automatic Preference for Islam
3	Slight Automatic Preference for Islam
4	No Automatic Preference
5	Slight Automatic Preference for Christianity
6	Moderate Automatic Preference for Christianity
7	Strong Automatic Preference for Christianity

Fig. 25: Graphs comparing race & religion IAT results from 10C/EP2 (pre-intervention):

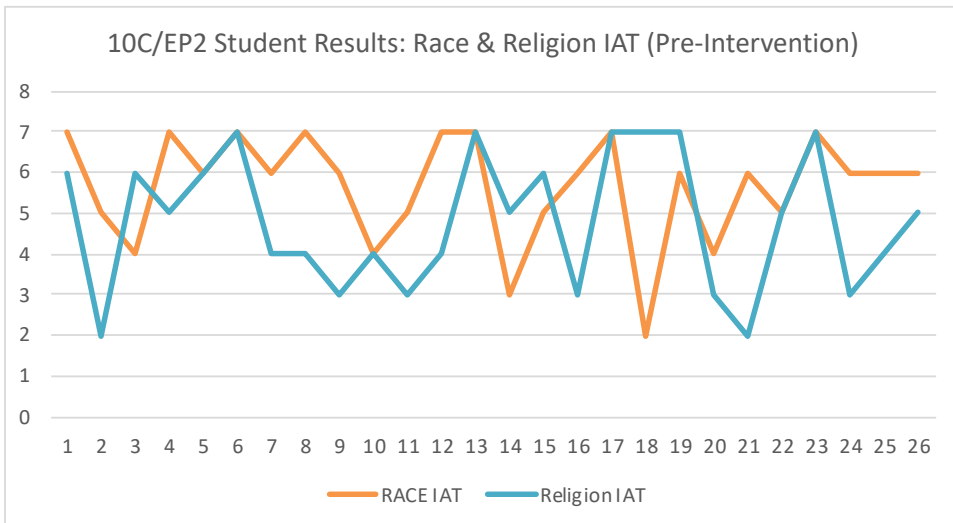
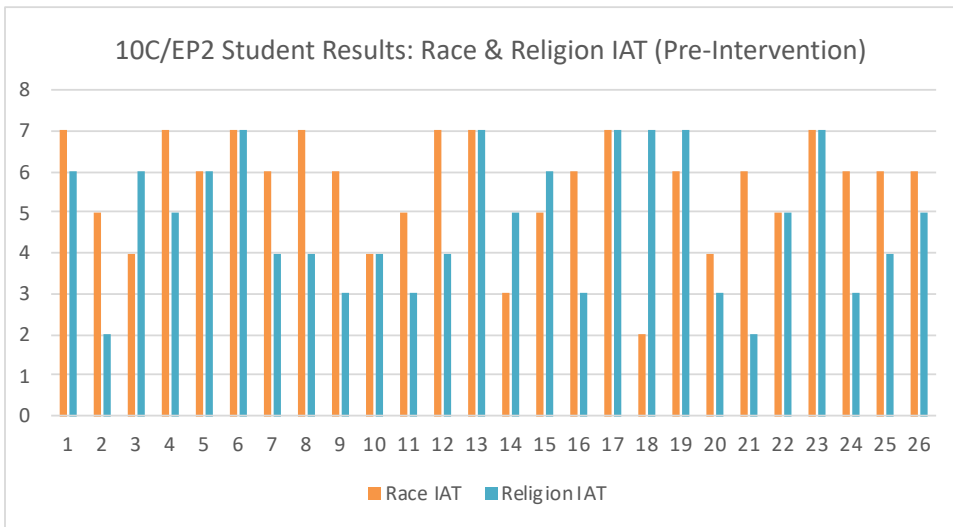


Fig. 26: Count of Race IAT results

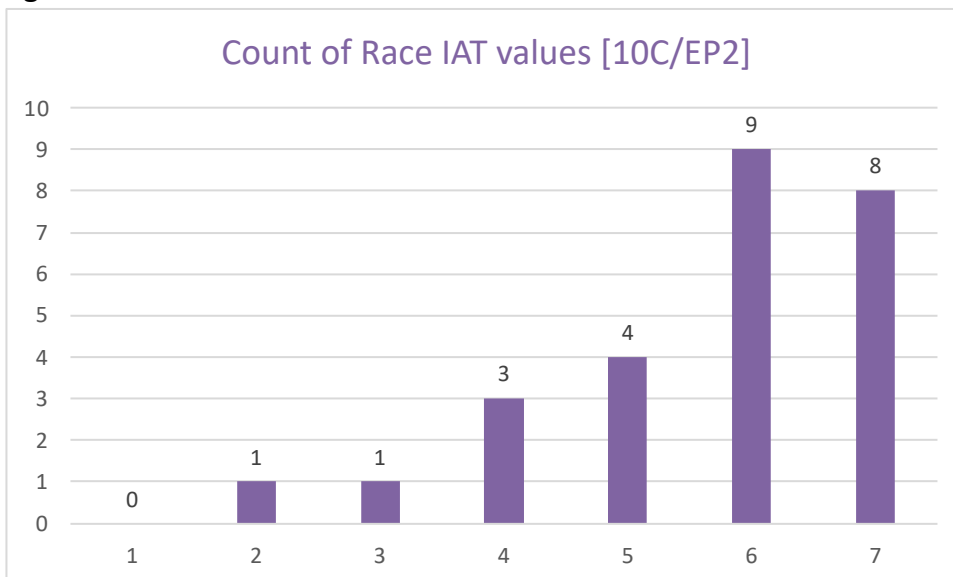


Fig. 27: Count of Religion IAT results

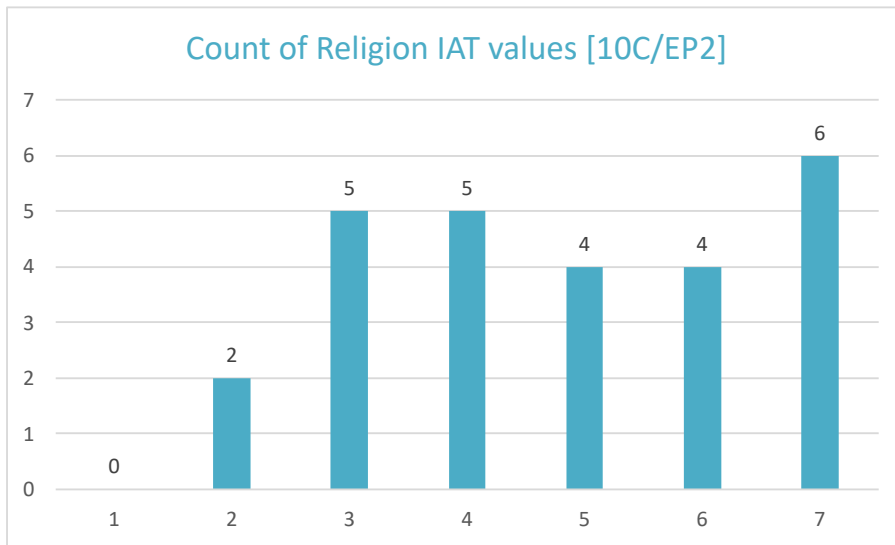


Fig. 28: Race IAT results from White-identifying Pupils

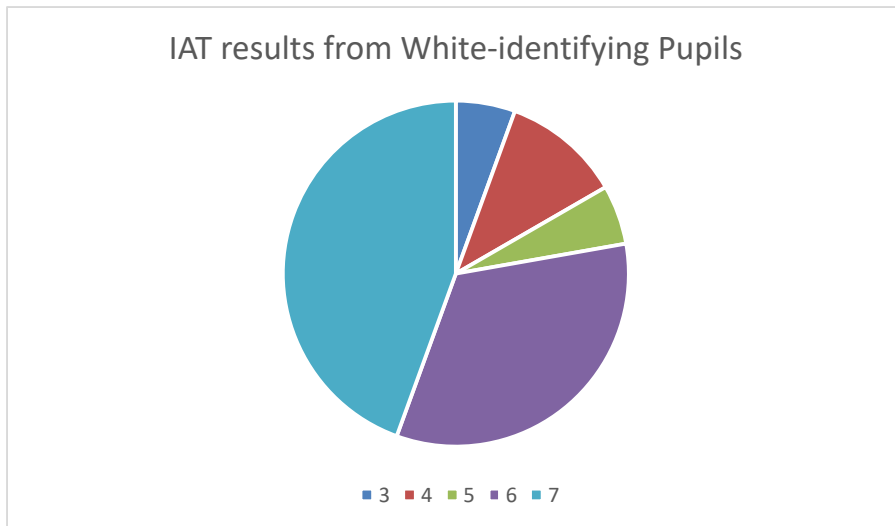


Fig. 29: Race IAT results from BAME-identifying pupils

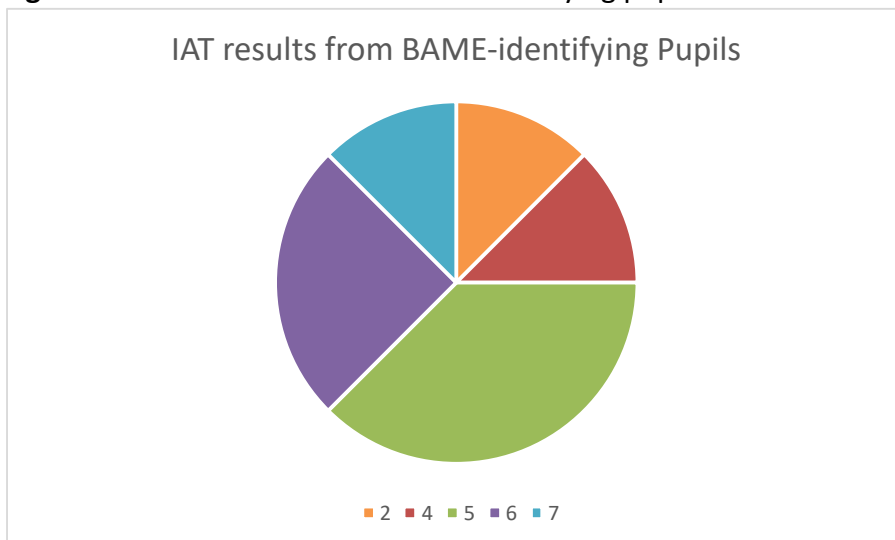


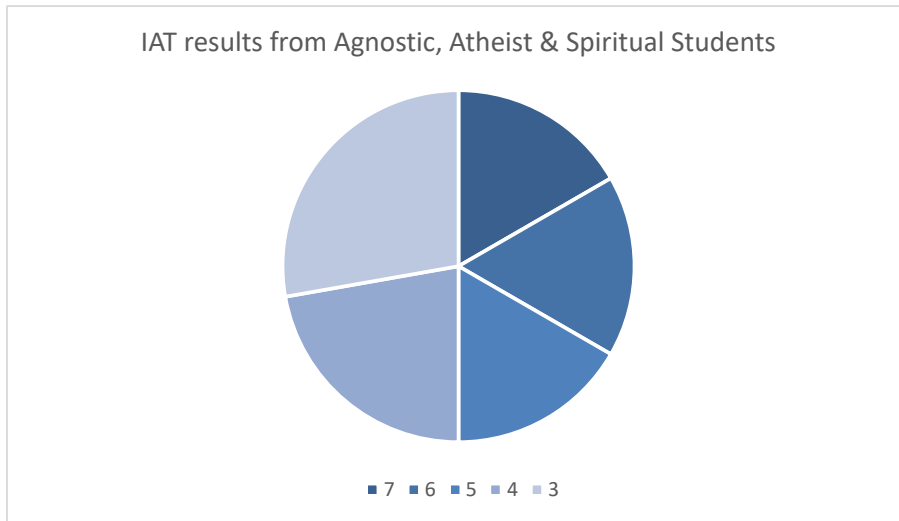
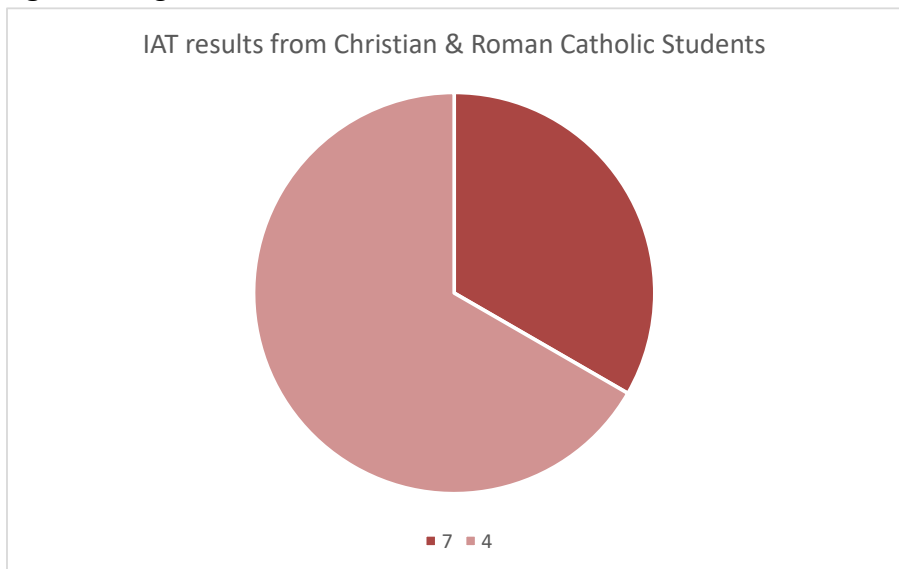
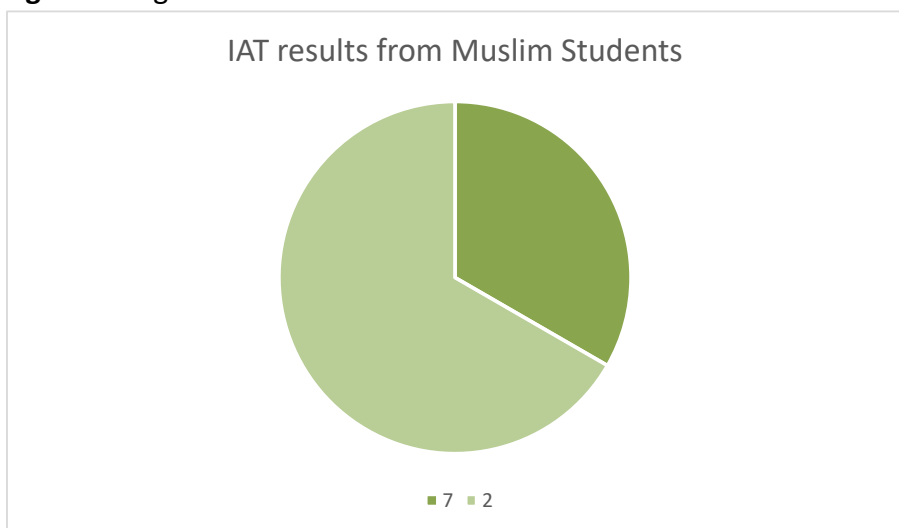
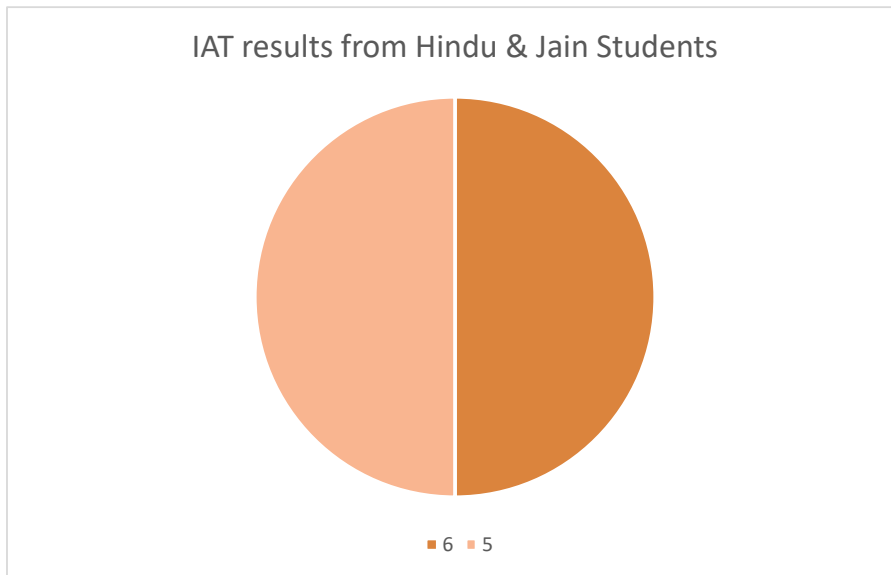
Fig. 30: Religion IAT results from agnostic, atheist & spiritual students**Fig. 31:** Religion IAT results from Christian & Roman Catholic students**Fig. 32:** Religion IAT results from Muslim students

Fig. 33: Religion IAT results from Hindu & Jain students



APPENDIX C: STAFF IMPLICIT ATTITUDE TEST [IAT] RESULTS

Table 4: Race IAT results from Humanities faculty, results coded using Table 3 legend

ID	Race IAT	Role	Ethnic Origin
HSD	1	Primary Researcher, Teacher of Philosophy & Politics, Head of Y13	Indian
HMB	4	Head of Philosophy & Politics, teacher of 10C/EP1	White British
HGA	4	Head of Geography	White Other
HAL	4	Head of History	White British
HCR	6	Teacher of Geography, Head of Y9	White British
HNW	5	Teacher of Geography	White British
HJF	7	Teacher of History	White British
HMM	6	Teacher of History	White British
HAG	7	Teacher of Philosophy	White British

Fig. 34: Race IAT results from Humanities Faculty teachers

