

### How do children understand identity – stories and more

Professor Saniya Cheruvallil-Contractor, Dr Alison Halford, Dr Kusha Anand and Dr Mphatso Boti Phiri  
Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University  
[ac0967@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:ac0967@coventry.ac.uk), [ad9639@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:ad9639@coventry.ac.uk)

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### Introductions

Please type your name, role, organisation and something that made you smile this week.



Picture source: Lewrick, M., Link, P., & Lefter, L. (2020). The Design Thinking Toolbox: A Guide to Mastering the Most Popular and Valuable Innovation Methods, published by John Wiley & Sons.



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### Research team

Positionality and Identity

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## Agenda



- Session I Why think about identity?
- Break
- Section II Influx Identities
- Q and A

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## Key Messages



The five key messages of this event are:

1. Gain insights into the various aspects/layers of a child's or young person's identity, identity as oscillating and allowing children and young people to assert how they want to be known.
2. Use of the intersectionality model in the care system to address socio-ethnic-religious factors.
3. Gain valuable insights into the impact of transcultural placements on a child's ethnic identity, as well as how cultural diversity within care settings influences identity development.
4. Develop a nuanced understanding of the complex and dynamic identities of looked-after children and young people from minority backgrounds.
5. Think about identity in the contexts of life-story work, as well as other practical implications.

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## Project background



- 2018: *Among the last ones to leave? Understanding the Journeys of Muslim Children in the Care System in England*

The first in-depth academic research project to examine Muslim children's experiences through the care system in Britain.

- 2022: *Expressions of Self: Race, Religion and Representation of care-experienced children and young people*

Nuffield Funded- aims to listen to minoritised looked-after children and young people's narratives on ethnicity, religion and identity




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# Why talk about identity?

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Why look at Minoritised Children, Religion and Ethnic Identity in care in the UK?

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graph TD; A[Why look at Minoritised Children, Religion and Ethnic Identity in care in the UK?] --> B[Shifts in demographics]; A --> C[Challenges and disparities in placements (including duration)]; A --> D[Disparities in adoption]; A --> E[Adoption trends and challenges in data collection];
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The diagram consists of a central title 'Why look at Minoritised Children, Religion and Ethnic Identity in care in the UK?' at the top. Below the title is a 2x2 grid of blue boxes. The top-left box contains the text 'Shifts in demographics'. The top-right box contains the text 'Challenges and disparities in placements (including duration)'. The bottom-left box contains the text 'Disparities in adoption'. The bottom-right box contains the text 'Adoption trends and challenges in data collection'. In the top right corner of the slide, there is the Coventry University logo, which includes the text 'Coventry University' and a stylized blue flame icon.

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Shifts in demographics

Challenges and disparities in placements (including duration)

Disparities in adoption

Adoption trends and challenges in data collection

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# Methodology: Many Conversations

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Sample


- 26 Black African, Black Caribbean, South Asian and children of mixed heritage 14-19 years old
- Who are in or have experienced adoptive, foster care or institutional care.

Recruitment

- Challenges in recruiting
- Interviews were emotionally fraught for the researchers and for the researched – ‘What was said and what remained unsaid’.

Methods

- Narrative life history interviews used a variety of stimuli – questions or themes, photo elicitation, drawing



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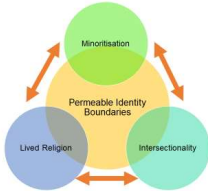
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Theoretical framework



Informed by three conceptual frameworks: *Minoritisation*, *Lived religion* and *Intersectionality*

- Minoritisation: Socially-grounded understanding that particular groups of people are minoritised by others rather than naturally existing as a minority.
- Lived Religion: Studies religion in its social contexts, as experienced and negotiated by people within their identities and communities.
- Intersectionality: The multiple realities and layered identities possible within everyday human existence.



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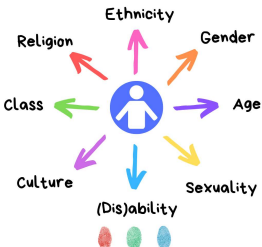
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**Identity** for Children: More than

Any one characteristic we can think of

Children's layered intersectional identities

- Level of commitment to faith
- Race
- Gender
- Age
- Cultural heritage
- Familial and community ties



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**Official religion vs lived religion**


All religions, are experienced differently based on individuals and their context


Religious literacy is to ask the questions that need asking to explore a young person's version of their religion

Reflect on deeply held unconscious biases; Social Hierarchies.

More questions to be addressed and answered:

- What about Black-lives matter?
- What about religion in a secular profession?
- What about the overlap between secular social work and pious readings of religious texts?





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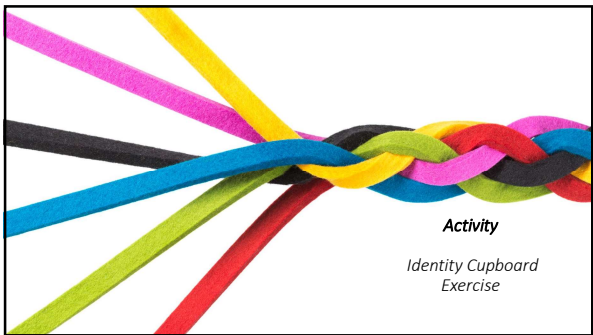
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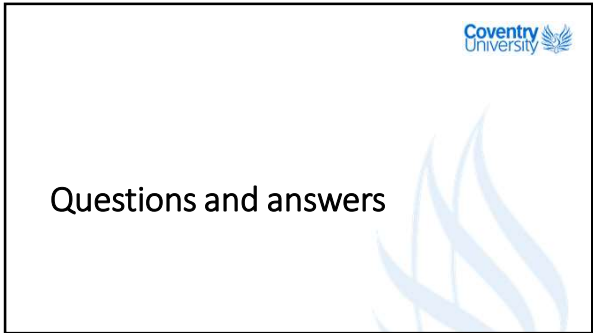
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### Group Exercise



that were important to me,

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Watch the animation (5 minutes)

- Break-out into 3 groups (15 minutes)
- Each group reflects on one of the three children featured in the animation
- Present back in plenary three salient features of the identity-needs of each child and how these were met or not met (10 minutes)

*30 minutes all together*

Link:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rr71N8rKYrA&t=6s>

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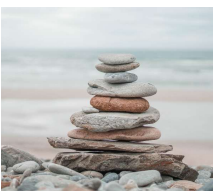
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### Layered Intersectional Identities

Narrative 2: Amir

- Children's layered identities include among other aspects their ethnicity, religion, level of commitment (or not) to their faith, gender, age, family and communities, cultural heritage and disability.



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### Oscillating Identities

Narrative 3: Mark

- Children's identities constantly change
- "I am still finding out who I am".
- Need to move away from rigid framing



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### Amplifying Children and Young People's Voices: Learning from everyday lived experiences

**Narrative 1: Aleena**

- Raised questions around how Muslim heritage children and young people views were acknowledged in decision making
- Emphasises the importance of understanding religion as lived
- Shows the way Islam as lived is an assemblage of diverse local and global interlinkages
- Religious affiliation as a state of flux



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### In-flux Identities



Acts as a theoretical and practice space within which minoritised children and young people's identities can be understood as:

- **Negotiated**
- **Nuanced**
- **Empowering**

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### Why think about identities in your practice?

1. A theoretical and practical space within which children's identities can be determined irrespective of the socio-religious-ethnic contexts of their birth family.
2. Accounts for the significant diversities within various British minoritised communities in relation to religiosity and levels of religious practice.
3. There may be children of a particular heritage who do not themselves self-identify as being of that heritage.  
*Crucially this may change over time*

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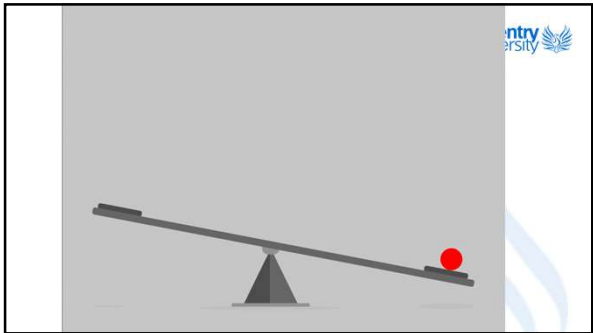
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**Implications - Providing for multiple realities and in-flux identities.**

Encourage	Think	Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Encourage frames of reference that see religious and cultural heritage as a broad spectrum of engagement.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Think about identity in ways that moves away from rigid understandings of religion or ethnicity and towards a more fluid sense of identities in flux</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Practice 'cultural humility' to learn from young people and children about their every day cultural and religious norms</li></ul>

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**Nuffield Foundation**

**Coventry University**

- Multifaith Information event for Faith Leaders
- Training – ResearchinPractice, CoramBAAF, CVAA
- Heritage Lottery Fund project on Black Social Workers Oral Histories
- Barnados Safe Spaces for Black Children
- MyFamilyGroup
- Future things, we are still thinking about

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