

**Teachers' conceptions of Orthodox Jewish education in relation to religious
nurture in a liberal society**

Nissan Wilson

**UCL Institute of Education
Award of Doctor of Philosophy
2022**

I, Nissan Wilson confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

The indoctrination charge has been levelled at religious studies teachers who teach controversial propositions as fact (see for example Snook, 1972; Hand, 2004). On this view, indoctrination takes place when the process which brings children to believe controversial propositions bypasses their rational autonomy.

Taking into account the above argument and the proposed responses, my study goes beyond the arena of normative philosophy and looks at teachers' conceptions of their role, asking whether they experience tensions between their mission as religious studies teachers and the values of the Western, liberal polity in which they live.

I focus on a unique subset of Orthodox Jewish schools, where the schools' religious ethos appears to be at odds with many of the parent body who are not religiously observant, and I ask to what extent religious studies teachers take parental wishes into account in choosing what and how to teach their subject.

Using grounded theory methods in a critical realist paradigm, field work takes the form of in-depth interviews with religious studies teachers in the above group of schools. Working from initial codes to higher levels of theoretical abstraction led to clear findings on teachers' conceptions of their role and their response to the indoctrination charge.

For the purposes of their role at least, religious studies teachers describe religion using the language of the market and getting pupils to "buy-into the product" rather than necessarily to believe its propositions as true. As a corollary to this, participants see autonomy as having to do with choice, rather than with rationality, suggesting that while scholars, in their critique of religious nurture view a rationalist conception of autonomy based on Kant as the dominant paradigm, in the real world (of my research field at least) a more existentialist Millian conception sets the terms of the discourse.

IMPACT STATEMENT

By bringing Religious Education teachers in faith schools and their understanding of the conflict between their religious mission and liberal values into the frame, my research allows for a reopening of the debates on religious nurture in faith education. By providing researchers in philosophy of education with an account of how teachers in the field conceive of the philosophical issues under consideration and opening up teachers in the field to philosophical debates in the literature, my study can lead to philosophy with more normative impact and praxis that is more reflexive.

Education policy makers need also to give due consideration to both philosophical debates and the experiences and conceptions of teachers in the field. In my professional capacity as Executive Principal of an Orthodox Jewish Secondary school, it is my intention to seek opportunities to share my findings with policy makers at the Department for Education responsible for faith schools and help ensure that policy is founded on a healthy dialogue with each of the above and is the result of a dialectic between the two.

In this study I employed an original methodological approach, combining Critical Realism with Grounded Theory methods and Critical Discourse Analysis to produce initial grounded theory type findings, which by later use of Critical Discourse Analysis enabled a critical realist explanatory critique. Under the right circumstances, I believe that this methodological approach can be used to good effect to study participants' conceptions. Furthermore, explanatory critique itself has potentially far reaching impact in identifying where structures may need to change to address 'cognitive ills' (viz. false ideologies) or 'non-cognitive ills', such as poverty, poor health or war (see Bhaskar, 2016, p. 99).

My argument that market discourse has been responsible for the writing out of a Kantian based rationalist paradigm of autonomy in favour of a Millian based existential paradigm has potential impact in terms of both cognitive and non-cognitive ills. The cognitive ill of writing out rationalist autonomy from educational or healthcare discourses has a potentially serious consequence on each of those fields. In healthcare, for example, where autonomy and the right to self-determination is one of the 'pillars' or principles of medical ethics, the resolution to a number of real ethical dilemmas depends on which paradigm of autonomy is assumed (see

Savulescu, 2008). It follows that writing one of the two paradigms out of the discourse may well make for poor healthcare choices and genuine non-cognitive ills.

By using critical discourse analysis literature to show how market discourse has affected professionals' conceptions of autonomy, I have begun a process, which if backed up by further research, has the potential to protect normative philosophical inquiry from the shifting sands of social discourse and help ensure that academic research and public policy is founded on the full breadth of philosophical positions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude and I hope that recording my appreciation in print goes some way toward settling that debt.

First to my supervisors, Dr Joanne Fraser-Pearce, Dr Farid Panjwani and Professor Jacek Brant. Thank you all for sharing your vast knowledge and experience and for somehow gently keeping me on track while always allowing me the freedom to think and explore.

To Jo, my principal supervisor, for seeing the potential in my early proposal and for steering me through these years of study with such wisdom and grace.

To the sadly late, and much missed, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, whose interest in my professional development and support for this project provided important early encouragement. To Rabbi Dr Harvey Belovski for convincing me that a busy public role need not be a barrier to intensive academic study.

Completing a thesis while engaged in full time employment required the support of a number of key people in each of the two roles I held during my period of study. To all the good people of Clayhall and Redbridge United Synagogue, thank you for your encouragement and good cheer. To my good friend Avrom Topperman and to governors and colleagues at Beis Yaakov Jewish High School Academy, thank you for placing such high value on professional development. To Yosl and Emily Mann, thank you for your friendship and hospitality.

To my parents, my parents in-law, my wife Edna and our children, thank you for making this project and so many others possible.

Finally, to the participants, the men and women who go to work to make a positive difference to their pupils' lives. Thank you for welcoming me into your world. I hope that this thesis does your work justice and that it will in some way make a positive contribution to your cause.

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Chapter 1: Introduction – A Discrete Field

1.1 Statement

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Background and context: faith schools

1.4 The field: Jewish schools

1.5 The research field: US/OCR secondary schools

1.1 STATEMENT

I am not a Jewish Studies teacher in one of the six schools studied in this thesis and am therefore by definition not part of the research field.

I am though a member of the community that I am researching.

As rabbi of a United Synagogue constituent community, I was part of the United Synagogue in the earlier stages of my research and the questions I put to participants are questions that in one form or another I had myself grappled with. I identified with the tensions they experience and with their efforts to resolve these tensions.

In addition, a number of the participants of this study would be best described as my peers, including in a small number of cases people whom I knew socially or professionally a number of years prior to commencing research.

I declare therefore a degree of self-identification with participants and internal member status of the community to which they belong (Hayano, 1979, p. 100).

I will give consideration in my methodology chapter to the ethical and methodological concerns such status entails. At this point it seems sufficient to state the following:

While I have been careful throughout to avoid making empirical claims based solely on my anecdotal knowledge or personal experience, I am comfortable with drawing on the above from the outset in the two ways. The first is to 'illuminate nuances of cultural experience' (Leavy, Ellis and Adams, 2014, p. 10), using my knowledge of the cultural milieu and the religious heritage which will have informed participants' views in order to explicate topics that participants allude to, in some cases almost in cipher. The second, which is related to the first, is to further use this knowledge to identify emerging themes – what grounded theorists refer to as 'theoretical hunches' – in earlier stages of the research to direct lines of enquiry in the later stages.

As is often the case in social research, I drew on my own experiences and followed my hunches in the earlier stages of this study. That my research findings did not confirm all my hunches is I hope indication that my research was methodologically sound.

Either way, the place where the insiders' hunch and the participants' narrative diverge, seems to be the point at which, perhaps correct assumptions about the community in which participants are situated ends and participants' own stories begin.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

The themes explored in this thesis began to pique my interest some years prior to my beginning PhD research. During those years, I held the position of congregational rabbi in a suburban London community and in this capacity had also been appointed the 'rabbinic governor' of a local Orthodox Jewish secondary school. As the representative of The United Synagogue (the foundation body) on the governing board, my role was to work in partnership with the school's senior leadership to help ensure that in its provision of religious studies and its general *modus operandi* the school reflected the religious ethos of the foundation body.

Throughout that period, I also held the voluntary position of Vice Chair of The Rabbinic Council of The United Synagogue, a role which involved, amongst other things, supporting rabbinic colleagues representing the United Synagogue in its schools.

Tensions between religious and secular perspectives seemed to me to be endemic to The United Synagogue. An umbrella organisation of 62 communities under the religious authority of The Chief Rabbi, The United Synagogue pledges on the one hand fidelity to the 'unbroken chain of Jewish tradition built upon a commitment to Orthodox halacha (Jewish Law)' and on the other hand 'maximal inclusion of every Jew irrespective of their level of observance' (*About The US and our Values | United Synagogue*, no date). In the whimsical words of its Chief Executive, The United Synagogue is a 'broad church' (*Broad churches | United Synagogue*, no date).

These natural tensions were familiar to me and my colleagues, but in standing alongside school teachers and listening to their stories, I sensed tensions that, if not qualitatively different from the ones I experienced in my own professional work, seemed to cut deeper. At the time, perhaps based on my conversations with school staff, I put this down to the strength of passion that some teachers had for their

religious mission and their feeling of being constrained by the structures of the school community. The majority of students were from homes that were not religiously observant and teachers who were passionate about religiously inspiring their students had to contend with students and parents who were in some cases actually antagonistic towards the school's religious ethos and teachers' religious message.

I was affected at the time by two conversations with Jewish Studies teachers, each from a different school. One teacher had just participated in a Jewish Studies led weekend away for one of the year groups and although the heads of the department had considered the weekend a success, this teacher lamented numerous missed opportunities, which in her view could have provided further religious inspiration for the students.

The other conversation was with a senior Jewish Studies teacher, who was quite scathing of his school's approach to teaching Jewish Studies, which he felt put undue focus on religious experience at the expense of teaching students the wisdom contained in the texts. This particular teacher would eventually leave the school to take up a similar role in another school.

Perhaps, I surmised, there were some common intra and inter-departmental tensions at play, with teachers in the department having conflicting views and departmental heads being answerable to the senior leadership. Perhaps the senior leadership were concerned about a backlash from parents of the kind that I knew had taken place a couple of years earlier in one of the United Synagogue schools (*The Jewish Chronicle*, 2007).

These thoughts percolated for a period of three years or so, providing occasional fodder for water-cooler moments at rabbinic conferences.

I believed though that the issues I had identified deserved more than casual conversation and I drafted a research proposal. I remain indebted to my supervisors, for seeing beyond the obvious weaknesses in the first iteration of my research proposal and recognising that the issues I had brought to light were deserving of a PhD thesis.

Through writing and refining the research proposal, it became apparent that the true point of departure was not so much the intra and inter-departmental tensions, but the tensions experienced by each individual. What was it that so exercised teachers on either side of the argument? What internal tensions were they each grappling with and what, if any, resolutions did they find?

I also sensed that it might be a mistake to fixate on a few examples of conflict and overlook the significant consensus amongst teachers. It is often the way that when people disagree on a small number of issues one neglects to notice on how many issues they agree and how well they work together and, as my research would show, the widespread consensus and similarity of approach amongst teachers was as significant as the disagreements between them.

I knew from the literature (and from water cooler conversations) that religious education is inherently controversial, that there is wide ranging debate around issues of religious nurture and indoctrination. Were Jewish Studies teachers troubled by these questions too? Or were they perhaps clear on their religious mission as Jewish Studies teachers, but nervous that being charged with indoctrination by parents or other stakeholders could ultimately undermine their mission?

As a heuristic, I will refer to this postulate as the tensions between 'religious values and liberal values', broadly defining 'religious values' as any religious mission rooted in religious belief and 'liberal values' as any philosophical argument or position that would challenge that mission on the grounds of it not being consonant with the values of a Western liberal polity.

The questions that I needed to ask were: how do Jewish Studies teachers in United Synagogue secondary schools conceive of their role, do they experience tensions between liberal values and religious values and, if so, how do they respond to or negotiate these tensions?

My thesis would be about Jewish Studies teachers' conceptions of their role, a role which is inherently controversial and requires a negotiation of the tensions between religious values and liberal values. I believed that, by offering a deeper analysis of teachers' conceptions, my thesis could provide the tools for mediating between those with conflicting views; produce exemplars of successful resolution of conflicting

religious and liberal values; and point up any conceptions that are not entirely congruent and may be worthy of further critique.

A change in my professional life just over halfway through working on this thesis meant that in the latter stages of my research I was to view the research field from a slightly different perspective. I left my rabbinic post in the United Synagogue to take up the role of Executive Principal of an Orthodox school in Manchester. Unlike the schools in the research field, in the school which I now lead all parents are religiously observant and to a great extent it is the parent body that drives the religious ethos of the school. My move to the headship of an Orthodox Jewish school meant that I was no longer personally or professionally involved with the challenges participants in this study were facing, but I was nonetheless close to matters of Orthodox Jewish education.

An interesting twist came in the later interviews, when I asked participants to compare aspects of the religious education in the schools where they work and schools like the one in which I work. Based on my knowledge of the school choices participants had made for their own children, I knew that they would be entirely familiar with schools like mine and that such a comparison would provide food for thought.

My participants knew well that there is not simply a single category named 'Orthodox Jewish schools', but rather a range of approaches based on either the foundation body's religious ethos, parental wishes or some combination of the two and I will show in this chapter where the schools in my study fit among the range of faith schools and Orthodox Jewish schools'.

1.3 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT: FAITH SCHOOLS

In this section I explain why I chose the six secondary schools under the aegis of the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth and why I see them as a discrete research field.

A major premise of my research will be that these schools are unique among Orthodox Jewish schools in that their student bodies include large numbers of

children from homes that are not religiously observant on the one hand, while on the other hand the religious ethos and 'mission' of these schools remains strictly Orthodox. Later, in my literature review I will attempt to show how these unique factors impact on the philosophical issues and create a special circumstance of a clash of liberal values and religious values. In this chapter, though, I want to situate this group of schools in the context of Orthodox Jewish schools in England and show how these six schools form a discrete research field.

By way of introduction, it seems that three factors together constitute the unique nature of the group of six schools in my research field: admissions arrangements; parental wishes; the school's religious ethos and mission.

While each of three factors will be a significant area of discussion in my theoretical framework, I will show in this chapter that the first alone is sufficient to demonstrate that these six schools are unique among the much wider group of Orthodox Jewish schools in the country and constitute a discrete research field.

The United Synagogue website lists two of the six schools in my proposed research field as having the United Synagogue as their foundation body and all six as being under the 'religious authority of the Office of the Chief Rabbi'. (United Synagogue, no date)

These 6 secondary schools are part of a wider group of 24 schools (18 primary and 6 secondary) which have either the United Synagogue as their foundation body, are 'supported by' the United Synagogue and/or are under the religious authority of the Office of the Chief Rabbi. I will refer to these 24 schools as US/OCR (United Synagogue/Office of the Chief Rabbi) schools and to the group of 6 schools in my research field as OCR (Office of the Chief Rabbi) schools.

The group of six schools is best understood in the context of Orthodox Jewish schools, which are in turn best understood in the context of Jewish schools and more generally faith schools in England, so when describing these fields, I will start with the general and work towards the particular.

Faith schools, Jewish Schools and OCR schools

Broadly speaking, it is quite possible that tensions between liberal values and religious values are not merely the preserve of OCR schools, but may to an extent be part of the experience of religious education (RE) teachers in other Jewish schools and in faith schools of other religious denominations. To explain why I chose to look at OCR schools as distinct from these other groups, I want to show where OCR schools stand in the broader context of faith schools nationally.

England or the UK as the context of this study

Education in the United Kingdom is devolved to the separate government of each of the four regions. Each country has its own national curriculum and different categories and structures of schools. Comparing different systems and structures is methodologically challenging and the need to use different datasets provided by each devolved government will mean that some comparisons will not be able to be made at all. (On the methodological challenges of comparing across the home countries see *Devolution and geographies of education: the use of the Millennium Cohort Study for 'home international' comparisons across the UK* (Taylor et al., 2013))

In setting the context to the 6 OCR schools in my research field, I considered whether that context should be schools in the UK or schools in England. In comparing Jewish Schools across the UK, it should be noted that 138 out of 139 Jewish schools are in England; the remaining school is a small primary in Scotland representing about 0.24% of all Jewish children enrolled in Jewish schools in the UK. All OCR schools (primary and secondary) are in England and, as I will explain later in this chapter, the schools in my research field are all secondary schools.

For the reasons above, all comparisons and national data in this chapter refer to England only, unless otherwise stated.

A note on datasets on faith schools

In comparing faith schools across the country and, in particular, in looking at numbers of different types of schools and pupils, I have had access to two datasets. The first is the government published data, titled: *Schools, pupils and their*

characteristics: January 2019, which covers all state-funded schools in England (*Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2015*, n.d.). The second is a 2016 paper published by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), titled: *The rise and rise of Jewish schools in the United Kingdom: Numbers, trends and policy issues* (Staetsky and Boyd, 2016). The latter is based on the January 2015 School Census and the JPR's own research conducted concurrently.

Comparing datasets compiled a number of years apart will likely lead to some inaccuracies, especially bearing in mind the trend of growth in Jewish schools in the independent sector in recent years (Staetsky and Boyd, 2016). I have for this reason used the government published data from 2015, although, with regard to state-funded schools at least, more recent data may be available. Unless stated otherwise, in this chapter all data on schools in England is based on 2015 datasets.

Types of Schools in England

The Department for Education lists a number of different types of schools, each type with its own arrangements.

The general category of state funded or 'state schools' includes local authority maintained schools, which receive funding through their local authority; academies and free schools, which receive funding directly from the government; foundation and voluntary schools, which are funded by the local authority; and grammar schools, which can be run by the local authority, a foundation body or an academy trust and are unique among state schools in selecting their pupils based on academic ability. (*Types of school*, no date)

Another group of schools is private or 'independent schools', which charge fees to attend, rather than being funded by the government. In 2015 independent schools accounted for 2,357 out of a total of 22,504 primary and secondary schools in England. (*Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2015*, no date)

My research focusses on 'faith schools', specifically schools whose faith designation is Jewish. Faith schools may be either state funded or independent. State-funded faith schools will be either foundation or voluntary schools, receiving their funding through the local authority, or academies, receiving funding directly from the

government. Unlike state-funded schools, where annual census data is published by the government, data on independent schools are limited to research projects of special interest groups such as the JPR.

It is possible, for example, to compare the number of Jewish schools in the state sector to the number of schools of other faith designations within the state sector using up-to-date census data, but, to my knowledge, not possible to accurately compare the numbers of schools of different faith designations in the private sector.

I have used all the data available to produce the figures below, which seem to me to be adequate to provide context for my research field.

In January 2015, out of a total of 20,147 state-funded primary and secondary schools in England, 13,303 were categorised as having 'no religious character'. From a total of 6,844 state funded faith schools, 4,602 were designated Church of England; 1,977 Roman Catholic; 26 Methodist; 155 'Other Christian Faith'; 48 Jewish; 21 Muslim; 10 Sikh; and 5 'Other'.

The 48 state-funded Jewish schools comprised 36 primary schools and 12 secondary schools and had on roll a total of 19,094 pupils, with 10,842 in primary schools and 8,252 in secondary schools. According to the JPR paper *The rise and rise of Jewish schools in the United Kingdom*, there was a total of 139 Jewish schools in operation across the UK (all except one being located in England), with a total of 30,900 pupils on roll (Staetsky and Boyd, 2016).

Based on the above datasets, there would have been 91 Jewish independent schools, accounting for 11,806 pupils out of 30,900 in Jewish schools. For the purposes of my research, the distinction between state-funded schools and independent schools is an important one. It is significant that out of 24 US/OCR schools (18 primary and 6 secondary), only 3 are independent (2 primary and 1 secondary) and I will show in my theoretical framework chapter that this is not coincidental, but may have to do with one of the drivers of parental choice in schools in this group.

What is a faith school?

The gov.uk website gives the following summary of state-funded faith schools:

Faith schools have to follow the national curriculum, but they can choose what they teach in religious studies.

Faith schools may have different admissions criteria and staffing policies to state schools, although anyone can apply for a place.

Faith academies do not have to teach the national curriculum and have their own admissions processes.

(Types of school, no date)

The two key differences between schools with a faith designation and schools with no faith designation then are 1) their religious studies curriculum, and 2) their admissions criteria and staffing policies.

Although academies are responsible for their own admissions arrangements and are not required to teach the national curriculum, broadly speaking the same two key points apply more-or-less equally to faith academies and other types of faith school (foundation or voluntary schools). Academies are expected to offer all pupils a broad curriculum that should be 'similar in breadth and ambition' to the national curriculum ("School inspection handbook," 2019, p. 42). Like other types of faith school, academies are 'required by their funding agreements to comply with the Code and the law relating to admissions' (Department for Education, 2014, p. 4). For the purposes of this study, I will consider all types of state-funded faith schools as one group and, unless stated otherwise, the term 'state-funded faith schools' may refer to any or all of the following: academies, foundation schools, voluntary schools, free schools.

Returning to the two key characteristics of faith schools, I will start with admissions criteria and staffing policies, which will shed light on the rationale behind faith schools' religious studies curricula.

Admissions criteria of faith schools

The Schools Admissions Code (p, 34) refers to the requirement in legislation for schools to follow the Equality Act 2010 with regard to its admissions arrangements and outlines the exceptions allowed to faith schools:

This Act contains limited exceptions to the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion or belief and sex. Schools designated by the Secretary of State as having a religious character are exempt from some aspects of the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief and this means they can make a decision about whether or not to admit a child as a pupil on the basis of religion or belief. Single-sex schools are lawfully permitted to discriminate on the grounds of sex in their admission arrangements.

A similar provision is made in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (Section 60), which allows faith schools to take into account religious considerations in employment matters. This provision is also, in essence, an exception to the Equality Act 2010 (see Long and Danechi, 2020, p. 8).

Although there are some minor variances in the application of this provision to different types of faith schools, broadly speaking, faith schools are able to give preference with regard to ‘the appointment, remuneration and promotion of teachers at the school, to persons:

whose religious opinions are in accordance with the tenets of the school’s religion;

who attend religious worship in accordance with those tenets; or

who give, or are willing to give, religious education at the school in accordance with those tenets.’

(‘Staffing and employment advice for schools’, no date, p. 27)

Similar considerations may be taken in account with regard to termination of employment of a teacher due to conduct ‘which is incompatible with the precepts of, or with the upholding of the tenets of the school’s religion’ (ibid).

That the above legislation allows all faiths schools the same exception to the Equality Act 2010 in determining their admissions arrangements does not mean that all faith schools are the same. The legislation itself allows significant autonomy to faith schools in determining their admissions criteria. According to the School Admissions Code, faith schools can set their religious criteria in any way they see fit as long as they ‘have regard to any guidance from the body or person representing

the religion or religious denomination' and consult with the religious body or its representative when deciding 'how membership or practice of the faith is to be demonstrated' (Section 1.38). As with admissions arrangements for all schools (see Introduction, para. 14), faith schools "**must** ensure that parents can easily understand how any faith-based criteria will be reasonably satisfied." (Section 1.37)

There is, then, considerable latitude, even for schools of the same religion or religious denomination, to choose whether, for example, to base their admissions criteria on loose religious affiliation, regular religious practice or strict adherence to religious law.

State-funded schools are required to publish their admissions arrangements on their school website (Section 1.47) and this makes schools' admissions arrangements a readily available source of primary data. I scanned admissions arrangements of a number of Church of England (CE) schools and Catholic schools and found variation within each of those denominations. For example, in different CE schools, there were admissions arrangements requiring variously, both baptism and regular attendance at church, attendance at church but not requiring baptism, baptism but not requiring attendance at church.

Whatever the particular area of research into faith schools, it is important that faith schools are not considered as one group, but are examined carefully for their unique characteristics with a view to, where appropriate, grouping schools together into discrete research fields. Admissions arrangements can serve as an important indicator to a school's religious values or "mission" and I will show in my theoretical framework chapter that the admissions arrangements of the OCR schools are indicative of their deeper values and mission, making them a *sui generis* case even amongst Orthodox Jewish schools.

The other key characteristic of a faith school is its religious studies curriculum and I will outline the relevant legislation and consider how a school's religious studies curriculum may be used as an indicator of its values and mission.

Religious studies curriculum in faith schools

With the exception of foundation and voluntary controlled schools with a religious character, where a locally agreed syllabus is followed, RE in a school with a religious character must be provided:

(a) in accordance with any provisions of the trust deed relating to the school,
or

(b) where provision for that purpose is not made by such a deed, in accordance with the tenets of the religion or religious denomination specified in relation to the school under section 69(4)

(Schedule 19, School Standards and Framework Act 1998, n.d.)

The government allows faith schools autonomy with regard to their RE curriculum, requiring that it is set in line with the school's trust deed, which itself will have been set by founding governors.

The 2005 Education act requires that RE in schools with a religious character is regularly inspected, but the RE curriculum, its delivery and the school's collective worship, rather than being inspected by OFSTED are inspected by individuals or groups designated by the religious authority for inspecting schools of that particular religion or religious denomination. This inspection is commonly referred to as a 'Section 48' inspection as it takes place under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 (Parliament: House of Commons, 2005).

Section 48 inspections, conducted by individuals or groups under the aegis of a school's religious authority, may reduce individual schools' autonomy somewhat, as schools of the same religious denomination work to common goals in the design and delivery of their RE curriculum and their collective worship. Crucially, though, this provision allows faith schools the flexibility, should they wish, to place greater focus on their RE curriculum instilling religious values than, for example, on the particular areas of weak teaching highlighted by OFSTED in its 2013 report *Religious education: realising the potential* (OFSTED, 2013).

Teaching contentious topics

As with all schools, faith schools are required to teach age-appropriate 'relationships education' in primary schools and age-appropriate 'relationships and sex education' in secondary schools. Faith schools are required to teach these subjects, in line with statutory guidance. However,

21. All schools may teach about faith perspectives. In particular, schools with a religious character may teach the distinctive faith perspective on relationships, and balanced debate may take place about issues that are seen as contentious. For example, the school may wish to reflect on faith teachings about certain topics as well as how their faith institutions may support people in matters of relationships and sex.

(Department for Education, 2019, pp. 12-13)

With regard to teaching about same sex marriage, guidance by The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014, p. 2-3) states that schools and their teachers are not required to endorse marriage of same sex couples and schools with a religious character can 'continue to teach about marriage according to their religious doctrines or ethos'. A House of Commons Library briefing paper on faith schools published in 2019 quotes a response by the then schools minister, Lord Nash, to a written Parliamentary Question, in which the minister stated that according to the government's position, 'a teacher who, for instance, disagrees with same-sex marriage because of their Christian faith will not be prevented from expressing that view' (Parliament. House of Commons Library, 2019, section 2.10).

With regard to teaching creationism, the House of Commons Library briefing paper on faith schools 2019 cites the government's position, as stated in parliament in June 2014. The then schools minister, Edward Timpson, stated that state-funded schools should 'not teach creationism as an evidence-based scientific theory', although 'outside of science lessons it is permissible for schools to cover creationism as part of religious education lessons, providing that this does not undermine the teaching of established scientific theory' (ibid., 2.6).

The above examples are exceptions to the general principle of autonomy given to most faith schools with regard to their RE curriculum. These exceptions point up some areas of conflict between liberal values and religious values in RE, but they do not undermine the unique characteristics of faith schools or preclude them from delivering a faith based RE curriculum.

Unlike admissions arrangements, schools' religious studies curricula are not always publicly available. Where schools do publish information about their religious studies curricula on their website, such information may be incomplete, out of date, or (perhaps deliberately) vague.

A school's religious studies curriculum may be helpful in understanding its ethos and mission, a topic that I will return to examine in my theoretical framework. I will show later in this chapter how admissions criteria can be used as a means for distinguishing between different Jewish schools and thereby determining my research field. I want first to look at some existing research on Jewish schools, which will show the complexity of this large and diverse group and bring to light some key factors that can be used in breaking the nominal 'Jewish Schools' down into various constituent parts.

1.4 THE FIELD: JEWISH SCHOOLS

Jewish schools

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) is a UK based independent institute researching contemporary Jewish communities in the UK and elsewhere in Europe (*Institute for Jewish Policy Research: About us*, no date). In November 2016, the JPR published a report titled *The Rise and Rise of Jewish Schools in the United Kingdom* authored by Daniel Staetsky and Jonathan Boyd (Staetsky and Boyd, 2016), which looked at what it described as the "dramatic growth" of the Jewish school sector (p 3).

The report found a 500% increase in the number of Jewish pupils in Jewish schools from the mid-1950s when records began to the academic year 2014/2015. The most

recent two decades, 1995-2005 and 2005-2015, have seen increases of 47% and 25% respectively (p. 6-7).

Significantly, the report notes, the increase in numbers from around 5,000 in the mid-1950s to 31,000 in 2015 has taken place “against the backdrop of a declining Jewish population for much of this period – from approximately 410,000 in the 1950s to an estimated 300,000 today” (p. 3).

Staetsky and Boyd assert that there are only ‘two proximate factors’ that influence the number of Jewish pupils attending Jewish schools: the number of Jewish children in a population and the degree of preference for Jewish schools (p. 8).

In setting out their conceptual framework for understanding the increase in the number of Jewish pupils attending Jewish schools, Staetsky and Boyd argue that Jewish schools comprise two groups or two ‘sectors’ of Jewish schools, representing two parts of the Jewish population and they label these two sectors as the ‘mainstream’ and the ‘strictly Orthodox’.

Although labels such as these may be misleading (for example, the terms mainstream and strictly Orthodox paint the mainstream as a significant majority and the strictly Orthodox as a fringe group, where in fact the strictly Orthodox represent 57% of Jewish pupils in Jewish schools), I shall use these terms throughout this chapter for ease of referencing and for the purpose of comparing my own categorisation with that of the JPR report.

I will analyse these designations in more detail and the methodological challenges with identifying these groups later in this chapter, but in Staetsky and Boyd’s analysis, the key difference between these two groups is that in the strictly Orthodox community the uptake of Jewish schooling is ‘universal’, with all children from that population attending Jewish schools (p. 3, 25). In the strictly Orthodox community, then, uptake has been a constant throughout the past few decades, with the increase in numbers of pupils in Jewish schools accounted for by an increase in the number of births in that community.

In the mainstream community, while, according to Staetsky and Boyd’s figures, there had been a decline of around 12% in the total number of children aged 4-17 in that population between the years 1995 and 2015, a rise in uptake to around 49% (rising

to 53% in secondary schools) was responsible for an increase of 45% in the total number of Jewish children aged 4-17 in mainstream Jewish schools (figures calculated based on data on pages 17 and 20).

Between the increase in population of the strictly Orthodox community and the increase in uptake in the mainstream community, the rise in the number of Jewish children in Jewish schools is accounted for.

1.5 THE RESEARCH FIELD: US/OCR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The JPR report does not address in any detail the possible causes of increased uptake in the mainstream community, the reasons that more and more parents have been choosing to send their children to Jewish schools. These reasons have implications in my research and, as I will show in Chapter 2, they lead into the philosophical issues around parental choice and religious nurture in faith schools. At this point, though, I want to give some thought to the two sectors of schools identified by Staetsky and Boyd, question whether this categorisation holds true across all Jewish schools and consider whether such a categorisation will be helpful for setting the field in my research.

Staetsky and Boyd do not explain what methodology was used to determine which schools are mainstream and which strictly Orthodox, but it seems the categories were inherited from a 2007 paper by Hart, Schmool and Cohen produced under the auspices of the now defunct Community research Unit at the Board of Deputies of British Jews (Staetsky and Boyd, 2016, p. 33).

Hart, Schmool and Cohen state that they have categorised schools according to '(a) the character of the school in terms of educational ethos and policies, and (b) the communities they serve' and note that these are not 'uniform categories' or 'hermetically sealed' groups (Hart et al., 2007, p. 139).

There is a methodological problem in choosing non-essential criteria to construct groups and then going on to compare data in each of those groups, but these particular distinctions nonetheless seem useful and Staetsky and Boyd's conceptual framework does account for the ostensibly contradictory data and is quite compelling. What Staetsky and Boyd are trying to capture is a distinction between a community in which there has always been, and it is expected always will be, 100%

uptake of Jewish schools for its children and a community where uptake may be on the rise, but cannot be assumed.

The above distinction is difficult to ascertain empirically, though, for the schools here are defined by the communities they serve and the communities are defined by their choice of schools, making the definition a circular one. Researchers will have had to rely on anecdotal knowledge and will have made their own judgement calls with regard to a number of the schools listed.

I want to show that the JPR classification of mainstream schools more-or-less tallies with my identification of the 6 OCR secondary schools in my research field and explain the discrepancy between the 9 mainstream secondary schools listed by the above group of researchers and the 6 mainstream secondary schools that constitute the research field for my project.

The JPR report lists 42 mainstream schools (33 primary and 9 secondary) and 24 of these schools (18 primary and 6 secondary) are US/OCR schools. For the purposes of my research, affiliation with the United Synagogue or the Office of the Chief Rabbi is not itself an essential characteristic of the field, but it is indicative of a type of school with certain characteristics that define the field. It is therefore possible that mainstream schools outside of the US/OCR could sit within my research field if they were to share the same germane characteristics as the US/OCR schools.

My research field is limited to secondary schools, as there are significant differences between primary and secondary schools in terms of parental choice, collective worship and curriculum and delivery of RE. As I will explain in my theoretical framework chapter, these differences are such that studies of mainstream primary schools and mainstream secondary schools require different research questions and would in essence be different projects.

The 9 mainstream secondary schools listed in the JPR report include, in addition to the 6 OCR schools, a school in London with a Jewish pluralist ethos, a school in Leeds established in 2013 and a school in London, which diverges from the mainstream secondary schools in ways that, I will argue, exclude it from my research field.

With regard to the school in London with a Jewish pluralist ethos, while it may seem that its non-Orthodox status alone (see JCoSS, n.d.) places it, *prima facie*, in a different group, I have worked to define my research field based on characteristics that relate to my research questions and allow for the possibility of comparing across the field in looking to answer these questions. I will, for this reason, explain in detail in Chapter 2 how the Orthodox ethos impacts on the theoretical issues around the conflict between liberal values and religious values that my research questions address.

The school in Leeds established in 2013, although not associated with the US or the OCR does seem to share the characteristics of the 6 OCR schools I identified for my research field. When I began my research in 2013 this school had not yet opened and in 2015 it had only 12 pupils (see Leeds Jewish Free School, n.d. and Staetsky and Boyd, 2016, p. 39). I was simply not aware of the school's existence in the early stages of my research or when I was conducting interviews in the field. Had I been aware of the school at the time it is conceivable that I would have included it in the field and certainly any future research into mainstream Orthodox Jewish secondary schools should consider whether this school should be included in its purview.

The remaining secondary school in London that the JPR report categorises as "mainstream" seems actually to share more characteristics with the strictly Orthodox schools than it does with the mainstream, schools. As I noted above, Staetsky and Boyd's definition of strictly Orthodox schools as those serving a community where there is 100% uptake of Jewish schools is a circular definition, unless a community can somehow be identified independently of the school.

With regard to the school in question, I can see no possible method for identifying a specific community that feeds this particular school when the school's admissions arrangements' supplementary form lists 100 synagogues that its admissions authority considers to be Orthodox and states that this list is not exhaustive (Hasmonean High School for Boys, no date). For the purpose of categorising schools and in turn defining my research field, possible sources of information are schools' admissions arrangements, ethos or mission statements and Jewish studies curricula.

As I noted above, state-funded schools are required to publish their admissions arrangements on their website, whereas for independent schools there is no such requirement and many independent schools in the strictly Orthodox sector do not even have a website. In the case of the 9 secondary schools under consideration here, all but one are state-funded and the one independent school has an extensive website, which publishes its admissions arrangements in full.

Schools admissions criteria are central to my understanding of the philosophical issues around the schools in my research field and I want to show how by means of its admissions criteria alone, it is possible to make a clear distinction between the school in question here and the other mainstream secondary schools.

Admissions criteria in the 6 OCR schools

At the time of writing, the most recent admissions arrangements available are those for entry in September 2021. These were adjusted for that year in some schools to take into account synagogue closures during the 2020 lockdowns, which may have made synagogue attendance more challenging.

I will briefly outline the admissions criteria for the 6 OCR schools and then compare them to the seventh 'mainstream' school to support my argument for not including this seventh school as part of my research field.

Five out of the six OCR schools operate a points-based system for gaining the 'Certificate of Religious Practice' required for applicants to be considered as Jewish for the purpose of admissions priority. In all of these schools points are awarded based on three criteria: synagogue attendance, including online pre Shabbat service; participation in a voluntary capacity in a Jewish communal, charitable or welfare activity; and formal Jewish education, whether attending a Jewish primary school, a synagogue run 'Cheder'¹ or a private tutor. (see Immanuel College, n.d.; JFS School, n.d.; King David High School - Admissions Information," n.d.; Admissions to

¹ Literally 'room'. Usually refers to after school or Sunday school Hebrew studies which take place in a designated classroom at a local synagogue. Note, throughout this thesis, in order not to interrupt the flow of the chapter I have translated all Hebrew or Yiddish terms in footnotes. To aid the reader in understanding the meaning of the text, particularly when translating from excerpts of participants' transcripts, I have focused on the meaning of the word or phrase in context and what appears to be the intent of the author or speaker, rather than the etymology or strict dictionary definition.

Year 7 in September 2021,” n.d. “Year 7 Admissions 2021,” n.d. “Year 7 Admissions 2021,” n.d.)

There is some minor variance between the schools in terms of the relative weighting of each of the criteria, or the number of occasions or length of time participation is required. Nonetheless, for each of the schools it is possible to garner enough points to qualify for a Certificate of Religious Practice by satisfying two out of the three criteria. This means that one could qualify without, for example, ever attending synagogue.

The other school in the group of six takes a different approach and requires that the child’s ‘parent / parents or guardian / guardians attend an Orthodox Synagogue’. No minimum number of attendances or frequency is given, but the policy states that preference will be given to ‘parents of applicants who show a higher level of attendance at their respective synagogue’ between 1st September and 31st August in the year preceding their application (The King David High School, no date).

A further distinction between the group of five schools and the sixth school is that with regard to synagogue attendance and participation in formal Jewish education, the five schools do not require that the synagogue or the Jewish education must necessarily be of an Orthodox denomination. The sixth school however prioritises Orthodox synagogues by placing applicants who have attended only non-Orthodox synagogues one level down in its oversubscription criteria from those who have attended Orthodox synagogues.

Although, the sixth school has chosen not to use the same points-based system as the other five schools, its criteria appear no more or less inclusive than those of the other five schools. A key feature of this group of six schools, and one which I will develop further in subsequent chapters, is that, relative to the strictly Orthodox Jewish schools, they operate “inclusive” admissions criteria.

Admissions criteria in seventh ‘mainstream’ school

In the seventh mainstream school, children are prioritised for admission based on evidence that the child and at least one parent or guardian are ‘Orthodox Jewish’ (‘HASMONEAN HIGH SCHOOL’, no date). Parents applying must submit a

supplementary form in which part 1 is the parents' or guardians' declaration and part 2 is signed by an Orthodox rabbi.

The supplementary form asks 10 questions and operates on a points-based system, whereby 13 out of a possible 14 points are required to be considered as Orthodox Jewish. Six of the questions each score one point and the remaining four of the questions are double weighted, meaning that it is impossible to qualify without an affirmative answer to those four questions, thereby making them into essential criteria. The four double-weighted questions are: Do you and your child observe the laws of Kashrus² at home? Do you and your child eat away from home only in establishments certified as kosher by a recognised kashrut authority³? Do you and your child observe the Jewish Sabbath? Do you and your child actively participate in the laws and customs associated with the Jewish festivals of Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Succot, Simchat Torah, Chanuka and Purim?

The other six questions relate to, regular Torah study; attendance at Torah lecture classes; regular communal and/or individual prayer; seeking rabbinic guidance on questions of Jewish Law; participation in Orthodox Jewish youth organisations; accepting the binding nature of Jewish Law as codified in the Shulchan Aruch⁴.

Part 2 of the form must be signed by an 'Orthodox Ordained Rabbi'. For the applicant to qualify as Orthodox Jewish, the rabbi is required to answer affirmatively the question: Does the parent of the applicant seek Halachic⁵ guidance from you about how to follow an Orthodox Jewish lifestyle?

Unlike the 6 OCR schools, this seventh school requires strict adherence to Orthodox Jewish law and practice. Relative to each other, at least, the 6 OCR schools follow *inclusive* admissions criteria, while the seventh school follows *exclusive* admissions criteria.

I will explain later how inclusive admissions criteria impact directly on the theoretical issues which are the focus of my research. At this stage, though, it seems that the clear differences between the admissions criteria of the 6 OCR schools and the

² Eating only food that has been sourced and prepared according to Jewish law.

³ A supervisory body, which certifies restaurants, butchers, bakeries and caterers as being Kosher.

⁴ The Code of Jewish Law, written in the mid sixteenth century. The reference here refers more broadly to the general corpus of Jewish legal material based on or related to the Code of Jewish Law.

⁵ Jewish legal.

seventh mainstream school justifies excluding the seventh school from my research field.

Whether for the purposes of the JPR report this school belongs in the mainstream sector or the strictly Orthodox sector is largely moot. Either way, it is clear to me that in a number of key aspects it diverges significantly from the other mainstream secondary schools and therefore does not belong in my research field.

The Research Field: Summary

I mentioned earlier in this chapter that the six schools in this group seemed to me to share three key characteristics which I saw as potentially leading to RE teachers experiencing tensions between religious values and liberal values: admissions arrangements; parental wishes; the school's religious ethos and mission.

In the next chapter I will also explore the latter two characteristics and show that it is the confluence of all three of these three factors which together create a particular milieu where the tensions I have described may arise.

While these characteristics will require recourse to the literature and a more theoretical framework to understand their bearing, I have in this opening chapter looked to situate the six OCR schools in the context of faith schools and of Orthodox Jewish Schools in the UK and to show, by means of their admissions criteria alone, that the six OCR schools are unique among Jewish secondary schools in the UK and therefore constitute a discrete research field for my project.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework – Liberal values and religious education

2.1 Literature review or theoretical framework

2.2 Common charges against faith schools

2.3 Responses to the indoctrination charge

2.4 Parental wishes and admissions criteria

2.5 The Orthodox Jewish Conception

2.6 Research Questions

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW OR THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As the object of my study is teachers' experiences and their conceptions of the tensions between religious values and liberal values in religious education, a conventional literature review would look at existing research on teachers' conceptions of religious education. In so far as I have been able to tell in my literature search, there seems to be no research around teachers' conceptions of religious education germane to my study.

Although there is some literature on divergent conceptions of education amongst teachers in other subjects (see, for example, Lam and Kember, 2006; (Yung *et al.*, 2013), as well as some research on how teachers of religious education negotiate intra and inter-religious tensions (Rissanen, 2012), teachers' conceptions of their role appears to me to be an under researched area.

With regard to the theoretical aspect of the conflict, however, there is a significant body of academic literature relating to the question of indoctrination and whether religious nurture can be reconciled with liberal values and my purpose in examining this literature is twofold. First, the philosophical arguments put forward in the literature can provide a possible theoretical framework for understanding the tensions that teachers are negotiating.

Second, assuming that teachers are aware of some of the charges raised against confessional religious education, it seems possible that these charges would impact on their conceptions of religious education and their conceptions or praxis may be, in part, formed in response to the literature. Put differently, commonly held positions and repeated tropes may form the social structure in which teachers operate.

Either way, the purpose of this chapter is to review the academic literature relating to the charges aimed at religious education, with the aim of constructing a theoretical framework for empirical research involving teacher interviews. The literature in this area, for the most part, draws broad brush strokes across different faiths and types of faith schools, so I will begin this chapter with this generic literature and later on in

the chapter show which elements may apply to the schools in my research field with the unique characteristics I described in the previous chapter.

Much of the literature on the question of religious nurture in a liberal society focuses on issues relating to the child's autonomy and the question of indoctrination. As I will show, this issue is debated with regard to teaching controversial religious propositions, irrespective of whether they entail illiberal doctrines or precepts.

For example, teaching about the miraculous splitting of the Red Sea or of the Second Advent of Christ constitutes teaching controversial propositions – propositions which are contested or not universally held – but need not entail teaching illiberal precepts. In contrast, some religious views on homosexuality may lead to homophobic attitudes and behaviours and teaching them may be considered as teaching of illiberal precepts

I will focus in this chapter on religious nurture in relation to controversial propositions rather than illiberal precepts and leave the latter to perhaps be considered at some later stage as a special case of the former.

As my aim is to describe theoretical problems that might inform or impact upon teachers' conceptions, I have, as a rule, sought out the theoretical problems which appear to be most oft discussed in historical and contemporary literature. I do not assume that teachers will necessarily be familiar with the academic literature that I will review, but I think it is reasonable to induce that the ubiquity of the questions and the related literature on both sides of the argument point up common problems whose reach may extend beyond the domain of academe.

2.2 COMMON CHARGES AGAINST FAITH SCHOOLS

Three common charges against faith schools

Pring (2005: 54) outlines three arguments against faith schools:

1) Faith schools are divisive. They teach doctrines inimical to the state; they divide communities from each other, giving rise to hostilities.

2) Nurturing of faith is not an educational task. Education should be concerned with 'the development of the mind and thus the rational life and individual autonomy'.⁶

3) They are often exclusive. When a publicly funded faith school selects children based on their parents' religion, local children whose families do not meet the school's criteria are excluded from neighbourhood schools and then 'bussed to a distant and unfamiliar part of the city'.

As the purpose of this study is to consider the factors that may inform or underpin teachers' conceptions of religious education I will leave 3) for now as it seems likely that 1) and 2) will have a more direct bearing on teachers' conceptions of their own role in nurturing faith. Teachers who feel that the school system in which they teach is inherently inequitable may indeed question whether they should be teaching within such a system, but it seems unlikely that this will significantly affect the way they conceive of their role as RE teachers within that school system⁷.

I will examine first the normative argument 2) against faith schools as, unlike 1), it presents a challenge not just to specific areas of a RE curriculum, but a prima facie challenge to all religious nurture in faith schools.

Nurturing faith - an educational task?

I shall start by examining the charge that faith schools (or confessional faith education) are not educational before considering the possible responses to this charge.

⁶ Although Pring presents 1) as an argument against faith schools in general and 2) and 3) as arguments against state funding, it should be noted though that at least some aspects of 2) should equally be presented as arguments against faith schools in general.

⁷ A possible analogue is to a case of a teacher in private schools who is troubled by the inequity of the private school system. Such a teacher being deeply uncomfortable may actively seek employment in the state system, but any moral argument against private schools does not entail a changed conception of the role of a teacher employed in a private school or her responsibility to her students therein. (See Swift (2004), who argues that it is not hypocritical to argue against private schools and still send one's children to the school that seems to provide the best education.)

There are longstanding debates on the definition of 'education' or the 'educated person'. Barrow (Barrow, 1981), for example, mentions the influence of Peters' characterisation of education as transmission of knowledge that is 'worth-while to those who become committed to it' through a process that involves 'understanding and some kind of cognitive perspective' and voluntariness on the part of the learner (Peters, 1966). Barrow maintains, however, that many things could justifiably take place in school whether or not they can fit within a tightly defined conception of 'education', and he argues that a 'philosophy of schooling' is needed rather than a philosophy of education.

There are of course more nuanced definitions of 'education' that could more easily accommodate teaching things such as values and morals, citizenship, religion, sport (Davies, 2002) and anything else that facilitates 'personal development and human flourishing' (Pring, 2005). On Barrow's account, though it is not necessary for us to be able to define these things as 'educational' in order to justify their presence in schools.

Justification for the role of religious nurture in faith schools then, need not necessarily take the form of argumentation that religious education is 'educational' - although some arguments may indeed be of this nature. It is necessary only to argue that religious education is not inherently 'anti-educational'⁸. Barrow, for example, holds that schools should play a role in 'moral training' (as opposed to 'moral education'; cf. p. 172), yet rejects religious education on the grounds that the basic propositions of religion are 'unprovable' and any attempts to evoke commitment to them are necessarily indoctrinatory (p. 150).

To justify state funding of faith schools, it would also be necessary to go a step further and argue that religious education provides some benefit that fits with the state's broader 'philosophy of schooling'. If there were widespread acceptance that

⁸ While it could be argued that in taking up valuable teaching time RE impacts on the school's academic curriculum, the same point could be made regarding sport and anything else which facilitates 'personal development and human flourishing'. This does not constitute an argument that RE is inherently anti-educational. Furthermore, it might be possible, as is indeed the case in a number of faith schools, to extend the school day to allow ample time for both RE and the academic curriculum.

schools should be providing values education or training in schools, the first question would be whether religious education can be said to be doing this job in a way that is broadly consonant with public values.

The extent to which faith schools have succeeded in using religious education as a vehicle for values education and producing good citizens requires further research, such as analysis of curricula and empirical investigations into the outcomes. (For examples of attempts to achieve this with a Jewish Studies curriculum see Lyndy Levin, *Through the looking glass: religion, identity and citizenship in a plural culture* (Levin, 2005) and David Resnick, *A case study in Jewish moral education: (non-)rape of the beautiful captive* (Resnick, 2004).)

The question of whether religious education can be shown to be 'educational' and justify its position in a crowded school curriculum is secondary to the argument that confessional religious education is 'anti-educational' and causes actual harm to students. It is to this argument and some of the possible responses that I shall now turn.

Religious education and the question of harm

The claim that religious education is anti-educational tends to be equated with the claim that religious education is 'indoctrinatory'. This argument, says Pring, is part of a 'philosophical position about liberal education which both reflects the non-philosophical position of many critics and the influential philosophical position of the long tradition of liberal individualism.' (Pring, 2005)

I noted above that some of the philosophical positions discussed in this chapter, may, in addition to developing a theoretical framework, give an indication as to the social structure in which research participants are operating. Pring's observation that the claim that religious education is indoctrinatory is a 'non-philosophical position of many critics' is worthy of note, as if this is correct, it is likely that the problem of indoctrination will trouble even those teachers who are not familiar with the academic literature and may well inform their conceptions of their role.

Either way, the claim that religious education is indoctrinatory has been put forward by a number of scholars. Ivan Snook's *Indoctrination and Education*, first published in 1972, is perhaps the earliest systematic approach at finding a definition of indoctrination.

Although he seeks a definition that is equally able to take in indoctrination of political and social philosophies, the major focus of Snook's work is religious education. He considers the four criteria of method, content, consequence and intention, and ultimately settles on the following definition:

A person indoctrinates P (a proposition or a set of propositions) if he teaches with the intention that the pupil or pupils believe P regardless of the evidence.
(Snook, 1972a)

Snook is particularly concerned about students coming to hold beliefs regardless of their evidence, or more specifically, about forms of ideological thinking where the beliefs are more important than the evidence (pp. 54, 56-57). His concern is thus only with 'propositional knowledge' but not with moral training or inculcation of habits, and he argues that it is only when moral training is founded on propositions such as, 'because it is your duty' or 'because God wills it' does it become a matter of belief (p.55).

Michael Hand appears to follow a similar definition of indoctrination in his two papers *A Philosophical Objection to Faith Schools* (Hand, 2003) and *The Problem with Faith Schools: A reply to my critics* (Hand, 2004), where he argues for the abolition of faith schools on the basis that they are by definition indoctrinatory.

Hand follows a loose definition of a 'faith school' as one which teaches with the 'aim of nurturing religious faith in pupils' (Hand, 2003). He argues that faith schools are indoctrinatory on the grounds that they seek to impart belief in religious propositions, and no religious propositions are known to be true (Hand, 2003). Teaching for belief in such propositions, argues Hand, is indoctrinatory. Thus, faith schools are indoctrinatory.

Hand does concede that where a belief has been imparted by a 'perceived intellectual authority' it may still be said to be rationally held. He suggests that 'only the minority of our beliefs are held on the basis of evidence we have seen with our own eyes. The rest are held on good authority, on the basis of evidence vouched for by appropriately qualified others' (Hand, 2003: 97). If a child perceives her teacher as an expert authority on a subject, the child is placed under a 'rational obligation' to accept her teacher's assertions, and imparting beliefs in this way does not constitute indoctrination.

To accommodate this point, he revises the premise that 'teaching for belief in controversial propositions is indoctrinatory' to allow for a perceived intellectual authority to teach not-known-to-be-true propositions without being subject to the charge of indoctrination. He argues though, that in practice this exception does not undermine the general argument as he believes that pupils do not normally regard their teachers as intellectual authorities on religious claims.

Hand makes a further amendment in response to a paper by Harvey Siegel (Siegel, 2004), revising the premise 'No religious proposition is known to be true' to state 'No religious proposition is supported by rationally decisive evidence'.

Thus, following the original syllogistic form and incorporating this amendment the argument is stated as follows:

- 1) Faith schools teach for belief in religious propositions.
- 2) No religious proposition is supported by rationally decisive evidence.
- 3) a. Teaching for belief in propositions not supported by rationally decisive evidence is, when successful, indoctrinatory, except where teachers are perceived to be intellectual authorities on those propositions.
- 3) b. Teachers in faith schools are not perceived to be intellectual authorities on religious propositions.

Therefore,

4) Faith schools are, when successful, indoctrinatory. (Hand, 2004)

Hand explains the evil of indoctrination as follows:

'Indoctrination is considered a serious evil because of the difficulty of shifting beliefs one has come to hold non-rationally. Insofar as one holds one's beliefs on the basis of evidence, they are open to revision and correction. One is prepared to modify or relinquish them in the light of fresh evidence (or fresh appraisals of old evidence). Insofar as one's beliefs are held non-evidentially, on the other hand, they are highly resistant to rational reassessment. Because they are not founded on evidence, the discovery of counter-evidence has little or no effect on them. (p. 95)

Although this argument seems similar to Snooks's formulation and might be understood as a concern that the summative effect of teaching a child that a proposition P is true will be that she may forever have difficulty in shifting her belief that P is true, Hand makes it clear that the concern is more about the formative aspect of indoctrinatory methods. Quoting John Wilson, who states that indoctrination may 'put to sleep a central part of the child's personality – his ability to think rationally in a certain area', Hand summarises his own position as follows:

The power of this argument is evident. Since one cannot impart controversial beliefs to a person by *appealing to* her reason, one can only do so by *bypassing* her reason, which is to indoctrinate her. I think this goes to the heart of what is wrong with faith schools.

Hand's syllogistic formulation then is really no more than a rule of thumb, suggesting that where controversial propositions are being imparted, indoctrinatory methods are unavoidable. For it to be useful as a rule of thumb it would need to be obvious which propositions are founded on rationally-decisive-evidence and which are not. We might, for example, accept the liberal position that 'no one set of religious beliefs can be *shown* to be objectively true' (McLaughlin, 1984) with regard to competing

comprehensive religious belief systems, but still reject the premise that 'no religious proposition is supported by rationally decisive evidence'. Hand's argument assumes that there is some sort of general agreement on what constitutes 'rationally decisive evidence' and that accordingly rationally based propositions are easily identified.

In practice though, the definition of 'rationally decisive evidence' is itself controversial, and Hand's formulation leaves too much work to do to be able consistently to identify indoctrination on a content criterion.

By conceding the perceived-intellectual-authority argument Hand is forced to accept that his position cannot be sustained without recourse to a methods criterion, although he attempts to sidestep this by making the unsubstantiated empirical claim that students do not view their teachers as intellectual authorities. Whether or not this is the case is perhaps at present unknown, but without a clearer understanding of what constitutes indoctrinatory practice, it is unclear what means of manipulation a teacher would have at her disposal aside from the advantage of being perceived as an intellectual authority.

Following this argument, a teacher who is perceived as an intellectual authority has the means to indoctrinate, whereas a teacher who is not perceived as such will be unable to indoctrinate and is therefore not a threat. Of course, this reasoning is unacceptable for if taken to its logical conclusion it would allow a teacher to tell children whatever she wishes as long as they trust her and will readily believe her.

I have attempted to show that confessional religious education cannot be excluded on the basis of the controversiality of its propositions without considering and clearly defining a methods criterion. Furthermore, it is perhaps not a simple question of the status of the proposition or the method employed, but rather of the appropriate balance between the two. To what extent are the propositions being taught controversial and what are the appropriate methods for teaching controversial propositions?

2.3 RESPONSES TO THE INDOCTRINATION CHARGE

Responses to the indoctrination charge

From the literature it appears that there a number of forms of response to the indoctrination charge, with different responses addressing different elements or understandings of the charge. One point that has been well made by for example E.J. Thiessen and R.T. Allen is that in education in general indoctrination is unavoidable or 'inevitable' (cf. Thiessen, 1985; (Allen, 1976).

With regard to religious education, Allen makes the point that 'non-religious people do not *lack* something, but rather have a 'Cosmology and thence a Way which explicitly or implicitly has no room for the divine' (Allen, 1976: 15). Education can never be entirely free from, at the very least, implicit suggestions about cosmology or the broader narrative, for not only is a positively atheistic education a comment on Cosmology and Way, but even a non-theistic education by omitting theistic themes from certain subjects, teaches that subject from a specific perspective, and will thus influence children's beliefs about Cosmology and Way.

Whilst this argument is worthy of further investigation as it may go some way towards justifying raising children in a strong religious culture, it does not address the problem of teaching for belief in controversial propositions or make recommendations as to how such propositions may be taught. For this reason, I will turn now to the question of criticality in religious education.

Criticality in religious education

Some responses to the indoctrination charge take the form of reconfiguring confessional RE to be more critical and convey uncertainty about its own truth claims. This response has been put forward in different forms by for example Snook (Snook, 1972a) and developed perhaps most extensively by Andrew Wright in his argument for a 'critical religious education' (Wright, 2004, 2007)

I am not suggesting that religious education ... can offer answers...The subject has no right to pre-package the finished product, only to insist that students, whatever belief they adopt, do so in an informed and intelligent way.(Wright, 1993, p. 64)

In considering more critical forms of RE, it is worth noting that there may be degrees of criticality, from that of an open dialogue with no summative goals, to an approach which aims for belief in religious propositions by arguing in support of them whilst still making it clear that, ultimately, they are not founded on rationally decisive evidence.

Such critical approaches in RE, though well argued in academic literature, are not necessarily representative of how faith schools are conceived of by their supporters or of what actually takes place in such schools. Wright's thesis is of course a normative argument for a particular approach to religious education and it makes no claim to represent what actually takes place in schools. As such, it cannot be used as a response to the charge of indoctrination in faith schools without empirical investigation into the practices therein. If, for example, some schools do teach for belief in religious propositions, and offer little or no criticality in their pedagogies, further thought would be required to examine whether such practices can be defended on their own terms.

Wright's 'Critical Religious Education' by putting the focus on finding the pedagogy appropriate for learning about a religion's truth claims, suggests that children can justifiably attend a faith school and be raised in a strong religious culture. Raising a child in a strong religious culture it could be argued is also religious nurture and is indoctrinatory. This argument has in part been addressed by Thiessen and Allen, but is given greater attention by Terrence McLaughlin in what has been dubbed the 'Initiation Thesis'.

In the following section I will present McLaughlin's argument for parental rights in religious upbringing and it will be apparent that his reasoning can be extended to faith schools and the role of the RE teacher therein, as long as there are sufficient grounds for assuming that parents have chosen a particular school because they desire for their children the type of religious education that that school offers. This

assumption of course needs to be questioned and examined empirically, and I will later show where it may break down with regard to Orthodox Jewish education in particular.

The 'Initiation Thesis'

In a 1984 paper *Parental Rights and the Religious Upbringing of Children*, Terrence McLaughlin argued that a non-indoctrinatory religious upbringing is possible and that parents have a right to give their child such a religious upbringing. Eamonn Callan in a response to McLaughlin dubbed McLaughlin's argument the '*initiation thesis*' and I will use this term to refer to a position that is given different interpretations first by Callan himself and later by Hanan Alexander.

McLaughlin draws on Bruce Ackerman, who argues that children require a stable and coherent 'primary culture' as a 'precondition of the child's subsequent development into an autonomous liberal citizen'. Ackerman argues that having a stable framework from which to view the world enables children to gradually develop the 'dialogic competence' necessary for an autonomous evaluation of religions and a religious way of life.

Accordingly, argues McLaughlin, parents who prioritise the child's developing autonomy and who responsibly work towards this outcome will be able to provide their child with a religious upbringing without causing harm to their development as liberal citizens. Any liberal society which supports religious pluralism will therefore recognize that parents have a right to raise their children in the chosen path of their parents as long as they encourage children to ask questions, encourage toleration of other viewpoints and make their children aware at the appropriate stage in their development that 'religion is a matter of faith rather than universally publicly agreed belief' (McLaughlin, 1984, p. 81).

The premise that religious initiation, by providing a stable and coherent primary culture, actually enhances a child's ability to make autonomous choices about leading a religious life, and the premise that parents have certain rights with regard to their children's education may each be open to challenge (Callan, 2009).

McLaughlin's argument, though, is constructed on the confluence of the two premises and as such is difficult to challenge on the basis of shortcomings of the individual premises.

If for now we accept McLaughlin's argument it is worthwhile to consider how useful it is as a defence of confessional religious education. Callan (2009, p.19) contends that the *initiation thesis* will satisfy neither the 'believer' nor the 'unbeliever'. The terms 'believer' and 'unbeliever' in this context refer respectively to advocates and opponents of confessional religious education.

The 'unbeliever's' objection is well-rehearsed and refers to the concern that the *initiation thesis* does not fully take into account the potential harm involved in the process and its effects on the rational autonomy of the child. The 'believer's objection', though, is that the thesis does not even adequately represent many parents' approach to the religious education of their children at home or in school. Confessional religious education is based, in part at least, on an understanding of religion as founded on propositional truth and it thus entails bringing children to view those propositions as true.

In response to Callan's argument, Alexander suggests that central to the initiation thesis is the notion that religious education focuses more on a relationship of trust and loyalty than a cognitive state of affirmation of particular propositions. Drawing on Buber's (1951) distinction between two types of faith which Buber characterised as '*belief that*' and '*belief in*', Alexander points to Jewish sources, for example, which appear to support the primacy of *belief in* (a relationship of trust and loyalty) over *belief that*, (cognitive affirmation of propositions).

The putative dualism of *belief that* and *belief in* is a controversial notion amongst both philosophers and theologians and is worthy of a fuller analysis. Even if the dualism is accepted, it could further be questioned, with regard to any particular religious tradition, on which of the two the emphasis is to be placed (See, for example, Menachem Kellner's *Must a Jew Believe Anything?* (Kellner, 2006), where he references the philosophical debate about the dualism and addresses the issue of the role of propositional belief in Jewish theology).

It could further be argued that even where a religion appears to be characterised by *belief in*, in the form of a relationship with the divine for example, this itself presupposes a number of religious propositions and thus by definition entails *belief that*. If this is the case, it seems that whether confessional religious education takes the form of catechisms and overt teaching of propositions or the form of nurture in religious practice, it could be argued that it always entails imparting belief in religious propositions.

It is also clear that even if we do accept this dualism, Alexander's argument is helpful only in those cases where actual practices of parents and teachers can be shown to be clearly restricted to *belief in*. In those faith schools where catechisms of one form or another are accepted practice and religious narratives of disputed historicity are taught as uncontroversial facts, Alexander's argument that religious education is more about *belief in* than *belief that* would be moot and Callan's objections would certainly stand (cf. Hand 2009).

McLaughlin's project is of course normative and its inability to satisfy all groups or account for all religious pedagogies does not constitute evidence of faulty philosophy or a weakness as such. His thesis offers an important argument for parental choice in religious education, whilst recognising the responsibility upon parents to protect and foster the child's capacity for rational autonomy. In making the argument contingent upon parents and teachers demonstrating openness to other religions and a degree of criticality it is clearly far from a blanket justification for confessional religious education at large.

Notwithstanding the difficulty with applying McLaughlin's argument for parental rights to teaching which aims at propositional belief, his thesis is useful at least as an argument for parents' rights to choose for their children one particular lifestyle or culture over another. It follows that to whatever extent parents are justified in religious initiation, the thesis can be extended to justify teachers carrying out such religious initiation on their behalf and according to their wishes (cf. McLaughlin, 1984, pp. 75, 82). On this argument, though, the role of a school and its teachers in religious initiation or nurture ought not to extend beyond that prescribed by parental

choice, and should schools nurture counter to parental desire the argument would be void.

2.4 PARENTAL WISHES AND ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

Parental Wishes in Confessional Religious Education in Faith Schools

In the context of the above argument I want to consider the extent to which confessional religious education in faith schools is indeed in line with parental wishes. There may be significant variance from one group of schools to another and from school to school within any particular group, and each school could be examined empirically with regard to this question. As my research will focus on Orthodox Jewish schools, I want to show, as a point of entry to this group of schools, that their admissions criteria alone gives an indication of a systemic dichotomy between parental desires and the school's ethos.

Returning to the first of the three arguments against faith schools put forward by Pring, that faith schools are divisive, it has been suggested that faith schools which admit students from diverse backgrounds are not subject to this charge (cf. Halstead & McLaughlin 2005; Humanist Philosophers' Group, 2001). Church of England schools are cited as an example of a group that is less open to this charge, as their breadth of intake indicates a clear openness to those of other faiths and in some cases to those of none. Geoffrey Short in a paper defending faith-based schools from the charge of divisiveness makes the following point:

For the purpose of this article, the charge of social divisiveness relates only to those faith schools that admit children from the founding religious community (for example, those under Catholic, Muslim or Jewish auspices). I am not concerned with Anglican schools set up to serve the broader community irrespective of religious commitment. (Short, 2002)

Not all CoE schools however fall in this category as there is considerable variance in schools' admissions policies (Archbishops' Council, 2011), allowing for some voluntary aided schools to allocate a significant percentage of their intake on

foundation places (Pennell, West and Hind, 2007). It could also be argued that prioritising children from religious backgrounds, albeit from a variety of faiths, still imposes a dichotomy between those of faith and those of no faith⁹. Nonetheless, this relative openness to children of other faiths is instructive in creating a context for the admissions criteria of Orthodox Jewish schools.

Broadening the intake

Over the last fifteen years or so, the suggestion has appeared in various iterations that forcing faith schools to broaden their intake to children from different faiths or no faith would solve or alleviate the problem of divisiveness. In a White Paper published in September 2001, the government set out plans to encourage new schools to be more inclusive (Short, 2002). In an article in the Guardian in 2002, Frank Dobson proposed that all faith schools should be obliged to offer 25% of their places to children from families of other faiths or no faith (Dobson, 2002).

A government proposal was put forward in October 2006 for an amendment to the Education and Inspections Bill, which would ensure that 25% of places in new faith schools would be open to children from families of other faiths or no faith. Although the proposal was withdrawn 8 days later, a voluntary agreement was made along these lines for new Catholic schools (Pennell, West and Hind, 2007).

Plans for a multifaith secondary school in Westminster were put forward in 2002 by a committee with Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh representatives, although this project never got off the ground (Halstead and McLaughlin, 2005).

Admissions criteria in Orthodox Jewish education

Against this backdrop of increasing openness in admissions criteria, the historic resistance amongst Orthodox Jewish schools to broadening the intake is instructive. Even in 2007 a study by LSE found that in CoE secondary schools 71.2% of pupils

⁹ It is worth noting that in welcoming children of other faiths or of no faith, faith schools do not necessarily absolve themselves from the charge of indoctrination, but may be inadvertently bolstering the charge by teaching children religious beliefs and traditions that are not in line with those of their parents.

were found to be Christian, in Roman Catholic secondary schools 95.9% were Christian, and in the three Jewish schools studied all pupils were found to be Jewish (Pennell, West and Hind, 2007).

Until what came to be known as the 'JFS ruling' in 2009, Jewish schools had always allocated all their places to Jewish children, based solely on a descent criterion. In 2006, the Jewish Free School (JFS) in Brent, being oversubscribed, refused to prioritise the application of a child whose mother, they argued, had undergone a non-Orthodox conversion. According to Jewish law, a Jew is defined as either the child of a Jewish mother, a convert to Judaism or the child of a female convert. Although the family were 'practicing Jews', the Orthodox Beth Din (Court) under the auspices of the Chief Rabbi did not recognise the conversion as valid in Jewish law, and ruled that the mother and hence the child was not considered Jewish.

The father prosecuted the school on the grounds of discrimination, but the High Court judge ruled in favour of the school. Eventually the case ended up in the Supreme Court, where in December 2009 a majority of five to four judges ruled in favour of the father.

The judgment reported that the JFS admissions criteria for the year 2007/2008 began as follows:

It is JFS ("the School") policy to admit up to the standard admissions number children who are recognised as being Jewish by the Office of the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation of the Commonwealth (OCR) or who have already enrolled upon or who have undertaken, with the consent of their parents, to follow any course of conversion to Judaism under the approval of the OCR. (Supreme Court, 2009).

In practice, the ruling led to a change in entry criteria to comply with the law, with schools using the points-based system I described in the previous chapter, which I showed had been designed by each of the six schools to maintain as inclusive admissions criteria as possible.

As the points-based system was mandated by the JFS ruling, the admissions criteria that the schools operated prior to the ruling should be viewed as being more representative of their and the United Synagogue's (the school's foundation body) conception of Orthodox Jewish faith schools. They do not share the Church's mission of encouraging those of other faiths or challenging those of no faith, but were set up to be Jewish schools for Jewish children. Suggestions to alter the admissions criteria for Orthodox schools were therefore viewed as a radical departure from the schools' founding principles.¹⁰

Understanding the principles behind the Orthodox Jewish community's objection to a more inclusive intake will shed light on its conception of faith schools and religious education and give further insight into the unique position of the schools in my research field.

2.5 THE ORTHODOX JEWISH CONCEPTION

Understanding the Orthodox Jewish conception of religious education

One possible explanation for the aim of an all-Jewish intake is the particularistic nature of Judaism. This expresses itself both in the unique history (viz. Bible stories are about 'us' rather than about 'the Hebrews') and in the overwhelming majority of the commandments and laws that apply only to Jews. Teaching Judaism to a class made up of Jewish and non-Jewish students would present an obvious pedagogical challenge. There is no linguistic mechanism for a teacher to express Judaism as personal and immanent without risking that non-Jewish students will come to feel excluded.

Yet, perhaps the most significant feature of United Synagogue schools and other schools under the aegis of the Chief Rabbi is that many of the Jewish students on

¹⁰ Local demographics have forced at least two Orthodox secondary schools to admit significant numbers of children from other faiths or no faith. See, for example, the websites of King David High School, Liverpool (KDHS, no date) and King Solomon High School, Barkingside (KSHS, no date). While the scenario of an Orthodox Jewish school with mixed intake may provide grounds for an interesting study, equally significant is the extent to which Orthodox schools have gone to resist just such a scenario.

role are not from 'observant' or 'religious' families. The difficulty in defining religious observance, commitment or even Jewish identity is alluded to in the JFS judgement and the following excerpt from the JFS website, which is quoted in the judgement further supports this point:

“Whilst two thirds or more of our students have attended Jewish primary schools, a significant number of our year 7 intake has not attended Jewish schools and some enter the school with little or no Jewish education. Many come from families who are totally committed to Judaism and Israel; others are unaware of Jewish belief and practice...”

(Supreme Court, 2009)

There seems to be a paternalism on the part of the foundation body, which has set up schools to religiously educate Jewish children (as defined by a descent criterion) beyond the level of their parents. Understanding the Orthodox Jewish view on this involves grasping a Jewish theological concept that I would term *metaphysical covenantal obligation*.

Emeritus Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in *Crisis and Covenant* notes that Judaism's concept of morality is radically different from a Kantian one as Judaism's is based on 'divine law' and 'revealed morality in the form of *halakah*¹¹' (Sacks, 1992a). For Judaism morality lies in 'covenant, the agreement on the part of humanity to be bound by certain laws', and Jews have a covenantal obligation to abide by the Torah and the codified laws of *halakah*.

This it seems becomes a metaphysical concept when considered as being based solely on the criteria of descent indicated in a biblical precept: the covenant is made, not just with those who were present and willingly entered into it, but 'also with him that is not here with us this day' (Deuteronomy 29:13-15). According to the Talmud, a born Jew is 'already foresworn at Sinai' (Sacks, 1992a).

¹¹ The system of Jewish Law and practice.

The JFS case may have been an extreme example of this conception of Orthodox Jewish education, but far from misrepresenting the Orthodox Jewish conception of faith schools, it highlights the metaphysical belief that underpins it: Every Jew – defined by matrilineal descent – is bound by a covenant to observe the Torah's commandments. Jewish faith schools were established to provide a chance for every child to come to know, understand and even live up to that obligation.

If the above illustrates that Orthodox Jewish schools were set up to include children considered Jewish by descent criteria from families practising little or no Judaism, the issue of parental wishes can now be investigated as a related question. Do non-practising parents send their children to Orthodox Jewish schools in order to provide them with a religious education and in the hope that they will develop belief in and adherence to the Jewish religion? What percentage of families fall into the 'non-practising' category and what are their expectations of the school with regard to religious nurture?

Whilst there is not sufficient empirical data available to fully answer each of these questions, a research project commissioned by the UJIA and Pears Foundation to 'explore the changing lives of Jewish Secondary school students and their families' provides responses from 1000 Jewish families on their reasons for choosing (or not choosing) to send their children to Jewish schools (Miller and Pomson, 2014).

Researchers considered three types of broad considerations that parents have in mind when choosing a secondary school: 'Jewish educational concerns; general educational concerns; and instrumental or practical concerns.' Although there was slight variance between families of different Jewish denominations, every group including Orthodox rated as the highest priority 'providing your child with a stepping stone to higher education.'

On a five-level Likert-type scale Orthodox parents' responses to more detailed questions were combined to suggest the following ratings: 'giving your child an intensive Jewish education' 3.88; 'promoting friendships between your child and other Jewish children' 4.61; 'providing your child with a stepping stone to higher education' 4.85.

Although at a first glance it appears that an 'intensive Jewish education' is still a strong priority amongst parents, it should be noted though that none of the category headings represents anything that one would necessarily define as confessional religious education or religious nurture - teaching for either belief in a religion's propositions ('faith') or adherence to its laws and customs ('praxis').

The specific questions relating to Jewish education were: giving your child a foundation of Jewish knowledge; giving your child an intensive Jewish education; encouraging your children to date only Jewish people; assuring that your child feels attached to Israel; enabling your child to achieve high competence in Hebrew; assuring that your child feels proud to be Jewish.

A question on religious nurture as I have defined it could have added an important dimension to this research as it potentially would have added a category where, beyond a hierarchy of priorities, a particular practice in a school may actually be counter to parents' wishes. As I noted in the previous chapter, religious 'outreach' in these schools has in the past been found to be a source of tension in the Jewish community (see *Outreach groups 'target JFS pupils'* (thejc.com, no date))

There are, then, grounds to suggest at least that some Orthodox Jewish schools' mission of 'Jewish education for Jewish children' may be not entirely consonant with what parents want from the school or expect the school to provide when they enrol their children. If religious studies teachers see their role as involving nurturing children to religious belief or observance, such a role may in many cases run counter to parental wishes.

It could be argued in response that parents make informed choices and in sending their children to Orthodox Jewish schools they exhibit implicit acquiescence to the school's mission and its activities. For the notion of implicit acquiescence to be applicable in this case though, it needs to be established empirically that the school is open about its mission and open about its practices. The extent to which it is the responsibility of the parents to enquire and the responsibility of a school to explicitly inform would then be matters worthy of further consideration.

Liberal Values and Orthodox Jewish Education

In this chapter, I have explained that the indoctrination charge is levelled when controversial propositions are taught as facts and have shown that any response to this charge will need to take a view as to a) which propositions should be considered controversial (content criterion) and b) what level of criticality is appropriate for teaching such propositions (method criterion).

To start to examine religious studies teachers' conceptions of their role and the moral probity of religious education, empirical work would be required to find out what propositions religious studies teachers are teaching and whether they view these propositions as incontrovertible or founded on 'rationally decisive evidence'; and what methods they are using to teach them and whether they view these as sufficiently critical to protect the developing autonomy of the child.

Having set out the unique context of the research field and considered, for example, McLaughlin's 'Initiation Thesis' which holds that parental rights can to an extent justify confessional religious education if it is delivered appropriately, it seemed that empirical work would be needed also to examine teachers' conceptions of their school's mission and of parental wishes in their school community and how each of these influence teachers' approaches to teaching religious studies.

The literature I have reviewed in this chapter provided therefore a theoretical framework for examining teachers' conceptions of their role, any tensions they may experience and how they negotiate those tensions. My next step would be to look to establish, by means of research interviews, whether teachers are familiar with the indoctrination charge and the related arguments discussed in this chapter and the extent to which these arguments may have already influenced their conceptions and/or their practice.

2.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Having established that there is, in theoretical terms at least, a point of conflict between religious nurture in Orthodox Jewish education and those liberal values

relating to the autonomy of the child it seemed that interviewing teachers about their conceptions of religious education in the context of this conflict may reveal that teachers are experiencing tensions in their role and are developing strategies to negotiate those tensions.

In consideration of the theoretical issues I have outlined above, the following research questions emerged:

- 1) How do Jewish Studies teachers in an Orthodox Jewish school conceive of confessional religious education and the role of the RE teacher?
- 2) How does this conception relate to religious nurture in a liberal society?
- 3) Where teachers experience conflicts between their conception of Orthodox Jewish Education and that of liberal values how do they negotiate these conflicts?

The aim would be to discover in what practices teachers in Orthodox Jewish schools are engaging and how they conceive of these practices; and to understand teachers' conceptions of these practices in relation to the charges that are commonly levelled at confessional religious education.

I knew that to seek to answer these research questions, I would need initially to carry out interviews of teachers in the research field about their conceptions and then later conduct a philosophical analysis to examine how these different conceptions relate to liberal values, religious values or the conflicts between them and to evaluate the extent to which teachers' conceptions or practices offer solutions for negotiating these conflicts.

In summation, the literature I reviewed in this chapter provided a theoretical framework for empirical work, suggesting possible areas of conflict that participants might be dealing with, but none of the literature I found dealt with the question of what Jewish Studies in Orthodox Jewish schools might be experiencing or grappling with. Having reviewed some of the literature around religious nurture, autonomy of the child and the moral probity of faith education and examined divergent

perspectives, my project from thereon was not to develop philosophical arguments about how religious education *ought* to look, but to investigate empirically how it *does* look in Orthodox Jewish schools, through the eyes of religious studies teachers and to examine philosophically these empirically established conceptions.

Chapter 3: Research Paradigm and Methodology – Critical Realism and Grounded Theory Methods

3.1 From theoretical framework to empirical research

3.1.1 Introduction to grounded theory

3.1.2 Two research paradigms and their assumptions

3.1.3 Critical realism

3.1.4 Critical realism and grounded theory

3.1.5 Critical realism and 'explanatory critique'

3.1.6 Overview of critical discourse analysis

3.1.7 Critical discourse analysis and critical realist discourse analysis

3.2 Grounded theory methods

3.2.1 Research population

3.2.2 Sampling

3.2.3 Towards a sampling strategy

3.2.4 Data sources - why interviews?

3.2.5 Two rounds of interviews

3.2.6 Ethical considerations

3.2.7 Interview guide

3.2.8 School and participant engagement

3.1 FROM THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Having set out my research questions and established that my project has to do with understanding teachers' conceptions, I now turn to the question of how to conduct empirical investigation and the subsequent philosophical analysis.

Before conducting social research, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed. The first is what methodological approach is best suited to collecting and analysing the data which I am seeking. The second is the question of the limits and possibilities of social research: what is the actual object of study? what is it possible to know and what is it possible to say about the social world? This second question involved considering different 'epistemological paradigms' and identifying a philosophically sound framework which would give me the confidence to conduct social research.

The above questions could be addressed in any order, but I will begin here with the methodological question, as this will highlight the need to consider the philosophical questions about the research paradigm.

In the previous chapter, I argued that while the literature around religious education can provide a 'theoretical framework' with which to approach research into teachers' conceptions, a lack of empirical research into teachers' conceptions, particularly in the area I wish to investigate, means that I approach my empirical research without reference to a pre-existing theory. This is a key factor in deciding which research methodology to utilise for my research. The need for a qualitative research methodology, not requiring recourse to a pre-existing theory and with the explanatory power to consider philosophical matters likely to be raised in participants' responses led me to consider Grounded Theory.

3.1.1 INTRODUCTION TO GROUNDED THEORY

Grounded Theory was first developed by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss in the 1960s. Glaser and Strauss "advocated *developing* theories from research grounded in qualitative data rather than *deducing* testable hypotheses from existing theories" (Charmaz, 2014 p. 6). Throughout the course of their study they developed

methods and strategies for collecting and analysing data, which subsequent work in Grounded Theory has expanded with scholars proposing methods and techniques for the interrelated processes of collection and analysis of data.

It is worth noting at this stage that although grounded theory approaches the data with a minimalist theoretical background, any study will necessarily begin with some background knowledge, however tenuous, of either previous empirical research and/or theoretical literature. A researcher is not a tabula rasa and will come to the data with certain ideas and putative theories. The aim of grounded theory is to follow a process that minimises the impact of such background knowledge on the research and its outcomes, and I will discuss this point in more detail later on in this paper.

Grounded theory offers not only an overarching research framework, but also a number of useful strategies and techniques for the collection and analysis of rich data. I will explore some of these techniques later in this chapter, and shall begin by attempting to delineate the primary goals and the central premises of Grounded Theory.

A theory grounded in data

Grounded Theory then is a method for generating theory that is grounded in data. What though is meant by 'theory' and what types of data might be suitable for generating such theory?

Although it may turn out that the answers to these questions will to some extent depend on the particular study and the specific research questions, grounded theorists have grappled with these issues over the last five decades as wider debates in social science have impacted on researchers' approaches to data and understanding of theory. An overview of these debates within grounded theory appears to offer a good starting point for understanding how grounded theory might be applied within different epistemological paradigms.

Kathy Charmaz in *Constructing Grounded Theory* (cf. Charmaz, 2014: 11-13) charts grounded theory's journey from its early positivist days to its 1990s 'constructivist turn' and beyond. In the 1960s the prevailing paradigm was a positivist one and social science was dominated by statistical and quantitative methods. In this context, it is understandable that Glaser and Strauss, in justifying their use of qualitative

methods, wanted to show that their approach nonetheless sat within a positivist paradigm:

Through developing this method, Glaser and Strauss aimed to provide a clear basis for systematic *qualitative* research, although Glaser has always argued the method applies equally to quantitative inquiry. They intended to show how such research projects could produce outcomes of equal significance to those produced by the predominant statistical-quantitative, primarily mass survey methods of the day. What they also achieved was a redirection of positivist-oriented concern among qualitative researchers seeking reliability and validity in response to criticisms from quantitative methodologists.

(Bryant and Charmaz, 2007: 33)

Grounded theory set out to achieve this reliability by approaching qualitative data as containing the facts to be discovered. According to Charmaz the key 'grounded theory question' is simply "What's happening here", which itself breaks down into asking what is happening at either of two levels: "What are the basic social processes? What are the basic social psychological processes?" (Charmaz, 2014).

Thus, grounded theory methods allow for a positivist view of an objective external reality which can be captured by a neutral researcher standing detached from her object of study. Yet, Charmaz argues, the core strategies of grounded theory can also be applied within an interpretivist paradigm, which sees research in general as 'constructed' rather than 'discovered', and 'Constructivist grounded theory' has now become a widely used framework (Charmaz, 2014).

These objectivist and constructivist approaches within grounded theory rest on the two epistemological paradigms of positivism and interpretivism respectively. As such they would appear to be open to the challenges that have been levelled at each of those paradigms and it is worth exploring whether they might be similarly open to revision or replacement by frameworks that have sought to supplant those paradigms.

3.1.2 TWO RESEARCH PARADIGMS AND THEIR ASSUMPTIONS

The positivist and interpretivist paradigms each make both ontological and epistemological assumptions about the social world and social research. Although there may be different formulations of each of these paradigms, for explicatory purposes, I will draw a strong dichotomy and consider the paradigmatic forms at opposite epistemological extremes.

On a positivist view, the social world is a real, external reality, which exists independent of the researcher's study or knowledge of it. Accordingly, the positivist argues, it is possible for the researcher to capture that objective reality in her research.

The corollary of this view of the social world as an objective reality is that the positivist tends to seek only data which is not value-dependent, which can be independently verified and which can be captured and stated objectively by the researcher. The positivist ontology accepts the social world as an external reality, whilst its epistemology places significant limits on what can be known of that reality.

On an interpretivist view, reality is constructed by social actors, whether individuals or groups. Every construction is value-dependent – there being no such thing as a 'fact' that is not itself constructed – and there are thus 'multiple realities'. The researcher looks to identify and explicate these constructed realities, but in so doing must recognise that her own research and its outcomes represent just another construction.

On this view it is not possible to stand outside of the social world or any part of it and make claim to describe it 'as it is'. As a researcher, the outcome of my research is an interpretive or 'hermeneutic' exposition of the respondent's value-dependent, constructed reality mediated by my own value-dependent, constructed reality. Research is useful to the extent that it finds resonance with and 'negotiated consensus' amongst other members of the research community (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

The poverty of this view is twofold. First, it reduces the social world to social actors' perspectives, without allowing for any account of social structures as ontologically real objects of study. A study of the experiences of learning support assistants in a

small, private primary school, for example, must be able to give adequate consideration of the school itself as an ontologically real structure that is not reducible to learning support assistants' subjective constructions.

Second, it places all knowledge about the social world on a weak footing. If knowledge of the real world is a construction which is never to be thought of as objectively true, there can be no basis for grounding action in the real world and no possibility of change.

Any response to these challenges, to avoid falling back into the positivist paradigm, must do two things:

- 1) Give an adequate account of the structure of the social world, explaining the relationship between structure and agency such that structures and agents are not reducible to each other, but rather together constitute the object of study.
- 2) Provide an adequate solution to the epistemological problems of studying the social world. If we are to accept the hermeneutic insight, what claim can be made for the researcher's outcomes as being objectively true?

Although by no means the only philosophical framework to address these questions, the philosophy of critical realism seems to provide an adequate and compelling response, and I will briefly outline how it can provide a way out of the positivist/interpretivist trap, a viable approach to social research and a possible framework for applying grounded theory methods.

3.1.3 CRITICAL REALISM

'Critical realism' refers generally to the movement in the philosophy of science and social science first developed by Roy Bhaskar in *A realist Theory of Science* in 1975 and *The Possibility of Naturalism* in 1979. In subsequent works Bhaskar went on first to dialecticise his original philosophy of critical realism and then to develop a theory of meta-reality. As such, scholars refer to the first phase as either 'original' critical realism, 'basic' critical realism, or just critical realism (CR), with the subsequent phases referred to as dialectical critical realism (DCR) and the philosophy of meta-reality (PMR) (Hartwig, 2007).

For the purposes of this study I shall refer specifically to original critical realism (CR), and explain how it can provide a viable framework for social research. Although DCR and PMR might provide insights that would be helpful for a research project, to embrace either one of them *qua* philosophy would require substantial theoretical research that seems difficult to justify for the purpose of my project.

The term 'critical realism' evolved in the UK in the 1980s as a combination of the scientific *realism* and *critical* naturalism developed by Bhaskar in, respectively, *A realist Theory of Science* and *The Possibility of Naturalism* (Hartwig, 2007)

Bhaskar's realist theory of science was in essence a 'revindication of ontology, of the theory of being, as distinct from epistemology, the theory of knowledge' (Bhaskar and Lawson, 1998, p. 5). This led into his theory of social science, which similarly insisted that the social world be seen as being ontologically real, whilst giving an account of the epistemology that would frame research of a social world thus conceived.

The fundamental tenets of critical realism are sometimes referred to as the 'holy trinity' of, 1) ontological realism, 2) epistemic relativity, and 3) judgmental rationality (Hartwig, 2007).

The critical realist epistemology is characterised as *epistemic relativity* mediated by judgemental rationality. Bhaskar describes it as follows:

I attach considerable importance to the distinction between (α) the principle of *epistemic relativity*, viz that all beliefs are socially produced, so that knowledge is transient and neither truth-values nor criteria of rationality exist outside historical time and (β) the doctrine of *judgmental relativism*, which maintains that all beliefs are equally valid in the sense that there are no rational grounds for preferring one to another. I accept (α), so disavowing any form of epistemic absolutism, but reject (β), so upholding judgmental rationality against a- (and/ or ir-) rationalism. It will be seen that epistemic relativism is as necessary for judgmental rationality as ontological realism is for epistemic relativity. Relativists have mistakenly inferred (β) from (α), while anti-relativists have wrongly taken the unacceptability of (β) as a reductio of (α).

(Bhaskar, 2009; cf. Bhaskar, 1998, pp. 57-59)

Bhaskar's point is that accepting that beliefs are socially produced and that knowledge is transient does not mean that all beliefs are equally valid. Although a researcher's knowledge of the social world is itself socially produced, the social world is nonetheless ontologically real and her knowledge is seen as capturing that reality. By utilising judgmental rationality, research communities can assess whether their beliefs legitimately make claim to capture the particular aspects of the social world that are the object of study.

Thus far, I have considered how critical realism responds to the epistemological problems associated with knowledge of the social world. What account does critical realism give of the relationship between structure and agency and what impact does this have on real world research?

The Structure of the social world

Critical realism argues that social science 'starts with the hermeneutic insight that action is meaning-dependent, but to say so is not to concede that the analysis of meaning is exhaustive of its subject matter' (Norrie, 2010). People do not create society, for 'it always pre-exists them and is a necessary condition for their activity'. Intentional human agency is therefore shaped by the structures of the social world, without which human agency, as we know it, would not be possible. Yet human agency also reproduces and transforms those structures in an ongoing two-way relationship. Bhaskar captures this relationship between structure and agency with a model which he terms the Transformational Model of Social Activity (TMSA) (Bhaskar, 1998).

Bhaskar argues that intentional human behaviour is 'caused' (Bhaskar, 1998) by reasons. This view of reasons-as-causes allows for intentional human behaviour to be studied within the TMSA as the value-dependent activity of individual human actors that can be equally linked back to social structures (Norrie, 2010).

For CR, the object of knowledge is always the generative mechanisms of the social world, that are causally efficacious in, under certain circumstances, producing the behaviours that are observed. Bhaskar's 'vindication of ontology' is a response to what he terms the 'flat ontology' of positivism and interpretivism in social science and

their antecedents in natural science, classical empiricism and neo-Kantian transcendental idealism (Roy Bhaskar, 2008, p. 15).

The epistemological positions of each of the above paradigms, Bhasker argues, 'secrete' a flat, undifferentiated ontology (c.f. RTS p.67, p.261). That is to say that, for different reasons, neither of the two paradigms allows for a study of the structures and generative mechanisms of the real world, but rather limit their empirical work to the study of observable events.

The social world, though, is not reducible to observable events or the activities of social actors. The social world is made up of differentiated levels and multiple elements; its structure includes many "discursive and non-discursive practices", such as science, politics, technology and economics (Bhaskar, 1998, p34). The actions or narratives of research participants are unlikely to adequately describe or exhaust the possible knowledge of the social structure in which they operate and which may, consciously or otherwise, be causally efficacious in forming those participants' beliefs and shaping their actions.

CR would thus allow and indeed require both an analysis of the actors' mental worlds, as a hermeneutic study of meaning, and a study of the structured ontology of the social world. It would advocate an approach to data that would take both of these into account - a combination, for example, of interviewing actors and observing the discursive and non-discursive elements of the social structures in which they operate.

It should be pointed out that critical realism is not the only philosophy that describes structure and agency in two-way, relational terms. Bhaskar's TMSA has been compared with Giddens's structuration theory, for example, with critical realist scholars highlighting temporality as a key component of Bhaskar's model (cf. Archer, 1998; Hartwig, 2007: 469). Although this involves a complex analysis of the models of each of these two scholars, the key point is that according to Bhaskar social structures can always be seen as predating, and thus constraining and enabling social action. Hartwig concludes his summary of the TMSA with the oft quoted passage from Marx, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past".

For the purposes of social research, the above passage serves to highlight the deficiencies of research paradigms that do not give adequate consideration to the social structures that predate, constrain and enable participants' actions.

Having outlined some of the essential features of the critical realist ontology, I want to return briefly to the critical realist epistemology and how it shapes a researcher's approach to social research in practice.

Critical realist research – epistemic relativity and judgmental rationality

While positivism and critical realism both have a realist ontology, the key difference is in their approach to epistemology – to what can and cannot be known and what criteria are to be used for designating something as knowledge.

The positivist desire for certainty in knowledge led in the social sciences to what Bhaskar terms the 'epistemic fallacy' – the reduction of ontology to epistemology. By accepting only what can be known with certainty as worthwhile knowledge, 'what is' becomes essentially reduced to 'what can be known'.

This is not to say that adherents of positivism are all guilty of the epistemic fallacy, but rather that a positivist epistemology leads in practice to a flat ontology, where what is not verifiable is ruled out as an object of study. Bhaskar calls this the 'implicit ontology' of positivism, as it is the result in practice of the positivist epistemology, rather than a firm ontological position.

The solution to the above problem lies in learning to live with 'epistemic relativity' – the understanding that all beliefs are socially produced and that the risk of coming to hold false beliefs (or being wrong) can never be entirely eliminated. Epistemic relativity gives the researcher permission to study even those areas where absolute certainty is not possible, but to avoid flights of fantasy it must be balanced with judgmental rationality – clear criteria for accepting one explanation over another.

Critical realist research then is marked by the following characteristics:

- i) an openness to exploring even what cannot be directly observed or absolutely verified empirically.

- ii) the understanding that the object of study in social science is the structure of the social world and that this is made up of many different elements, such as biological, material, psychological and discursive.
- iii) the understanding that while many of the elements of the social world may be observable, the social structure has to do with the relations between these many elements and many of these relations will not be directly observable.
- iv) a commitment to employing judgemental rationality to mediate the epistemic relativity of i) above to produce research that has great explanatory power while being grounded in evidence.

It is worth noting here that critical realist scholars acknowledge that judgemental rationality is underdeveloped and that determining between different accounts of reality is fraught with philosophical and methodological complexity (Quraishi *et al.*, 2022, p. 26). Bhaskar himself speaks about the need on the part of the researcher for “meta-epistemic reflexivity and ethical (moral, social and political) responsibility” (Bhaskar, 2009, p. 17).

In view of the above, I will need to consider in a later chapter whether I am satisfied that the criteria I have used to determine the account of reality I am presenting are adequate. Bearing in mind the possible consequences (moral, social and political) of presenting such an account, do the meta-epistemic principles I have followed provide justification for my doing so.

While I have explained broadly what some of the characteristics of critical realist research generally are, ultimately critical realism is a research paradigm and CR researchers will choose research methods that they feel best enable them to carry out their project. Although sometimes misunderstood, there is, say Ackroyd and Karlsson, method behind the apparent madness:

So fixated are some observers on the proposition that particular approaches to research should each have their own preferred kind of method, that they do not accept or take on board the eclecticism of CR research practice. Accordingly CR researchers are sometimes seen as failing to do quantitative and qualitative research properly. The fact is, however, they do not conceive

of research in Orthodox ways. Realists may be fairly described as having a 'beg, borrow, and steal' approach to research techniques.

(Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014, p3)

There must then be reasons that a CR researcher chooses one group of methods over another and I would note here that, like Quraishi et al. in their research in prisons, "the nature of the object of research" has helped to determine my research methods and not vice versa (Quraishi *et al.*, 2022, p29).

Having established, in critical realist terms, that the object of study is the social structure in which research participants are situated, I want to address the question of how grounded theorists view the social structure and how grounded theory methods might align with a critical realist paradigm.

3.1.4 CRITICAL REALISM AND GROUNDED THEORY

The brief history of grounded theory and its approaches that I outlined above shows that grounded theory methods are adaptable enough to be used within either a positivist or interpretivist paradigm as objectivist or constructivist grounded theory respectively and it seems reasonable to expect that they would be able to function equally well within a critical realist framework (Robson, 2011).

There are numerous studies which combine a critical realist framework with grounded theory methods (see for example Bunt, 2018; Oliver, 2012; Hoddy, 2019). In part, it may be that the flexibility of both critical realism (described as 'a philosophy in search of a method' (Yeung, 1997)) and grounded theory (now described by grounded theorists as 'an umbrella covering several different variants, emphases, and directions and ways to think about data' (Kathy Charmaz, 2009, p. 128)) allow them to be used together in any form that suits the researcher's needs, but there are also some specific features that make them particularly good bedfellows.

Hoddy (2019, p. 114) argues that 'grounded theory's movement from empirical data towards abstract theory resonates with the CR requirement to move from the 'concrete' towards a causal explanation by means of 'abstraction and careful conceptualization'. The method of retroduction, is a key feature of theory building in critical realist research (see for example the DREI(C) model of scientific discovery

and development in *Enlightened Common Sense: The Philosophy of Critical Realism* (Bhaskar, 2016, p.30).)

Retroduction is the process of looking at patterns of events or phenomena and asking what possible mechanisms would account for the phenomena or pattern in question. With grounded theory having long moved out of its “empiricist and inductive caricature” (c.f. Hoddy, p. 114), its iterative approach to data analysis and its movement between data and theory resonate with the critical realist commitment to finding the ‘real’ structures that are the generative mechanisms of the actual or empirically observable events.

What Constitutes a 'Theory'?

As the intended outcome of grounded theory is a 'theory' it is important to know what is meant by 'theory'. Charmaz states that the aim is to develop the type of theory that will be able to answer analytic 'why' questions, those 'dimensions of social life that inspire transcending situated action'. Most qualitative research, she suggests, involves 'what?' and 'how?' questions and sticks to immediate action (Charmaz, 2014, p. 228). By 'transcending situated action', Charmaz, means that although a theory might not be 'generalisable' on a big scale, it can at least help make sense of a particular observable social phenomenon.

'Theory' may take on a different meaning, depending on whether one is following a positivist or interpretivist tradition. As Bryant and Charmaz point out, the title of Glaser and Strauss's original methods manual, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* suggests an objective reality that can be discovered (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007, p. 34). 'Theory', then, will with sufficient analysis emerge from the data as a conceptualisation of that objective reality.

For the interpretivist, 'theory' would be about making sense of the studied phenomenon and providing a conceptualisation that enables it to be understood in abstract terms, and in this respect it needs to be 'constructed' (Charmaz, 2014).

What would 'theory' mean in a critical realism framework? It must capture the situated actor and his meaning dependent action in the context of an ontologically real social structure. Such a theory would look for causal mechanisms, addressing

the 'why?' question, but without reducing it to actors' subjective understandings of their own or others' actions. Addressing the 'why?' question requires that actors' reasons for acting be seen as 'causes', with structures being taken into account as being the constraining and enabling factors which provide the conditions of the reasons.

An important outcome of this approach is that in contrast to an interpretive approach it allows for the possibility of a critical analysis of agentive action, and I will explain how critical realism approaches such a critique.

3.1.5 CRITICAL REALISM AND 'EXPLANATORY CRITIQUE'

In outlining the interpretivist approach to theory, Charmaz compares constructivist grounded theory to the position put forward in the following quote from Alasuutari:

One takes a one-step distance from the members' perspective, not by arguing that it is narrower or incorrect, but *by studying how it works* in constituting social realities. Theories are thus deconstructions of the way in which we construct realities and social conditions and ourselves as subjects in those realities. They cannot compete with lay thinking, because their very objective is to make sense of it in its various forms and in different instances. (1996, p. 382, emphasis added)

According to Alasuutari, lay persons and researchers each hold 'different interpretive frames' and the role of the researcher is to 'make sense of lay persons' ideas and actions' (Charmaz, 2014). By contrast, a critical realist approach allows for a critical analysis of the value-dependent perspectives of both lay persons and researchers.

The need for reflexivity is well understood by critical realism, being implicit in the critical realist understanding of epistemic relativity. The researcher must know that her knowledge is socially produced, value dependent and always open to revision. Judgmental rationality, though, mediates this relativism, by accepting that there are good reasons for accepting some beliefs over others.

What follows on from this is the possibility of what is termed in critical realism 'explanatory critique'. This is a form of critique whose aim is to understand why a

false belief is held. By identifying what social structures are prevailing factors in sustaining a particular belief, it is possible to go beyond a philosophical critique of a belief and consider where structures might need to change (cf. Hartwig, 2007, pp. 196-200).

Conducting an explanatory critique will tend to require interdisciplinary work on, for example, the historicity of supposed 'facts' on which beliefs are based, or the veracity of philosophical or quasi-philosophical arguments on which beliefs may rest. This interdisciplinary analysis of beliefs may follow on from a descriptive sociological theory, but the sociological theory should stand on its own as a theory about the *causes* of action and interaction in the social world.

In this respect, critical realism differs from any of the various forms of critical theory. As Bhaskar puts it, a critical realist explanatory critique "implies, rather than presupposes, a commitment to emancipation" (Bhaskar, 2016, p. 101). Critical realist research need not begin by assuming that there are master-slave power relations at play; rather it can look to identify and give an account of the generative mechanisms that are influencing (though not necessarily strictly determining) agentic action.

In the context of my research, the 'religious' and liberal' discourses that I referred to in the previous chapter are part of the ontology of the social world and the relations between 'discursive objects' and social actors will likely mean that the religious and liberal discourses, framed as 'reasons' for agentic actions, are, if not determining, influencing participants' conceptions and, by extension, their actions.

In thinking about discourses and their influence on agentic actions as the focus of my study, I was drawn to some of the literature around Critical Discourse Analysis, which looks at how discourses hold subtle but strong power over individuals. Critical Discourse Analysis developed in the 1980s through scholars such as Teun Van Dijk, Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak and emerged as a network in the early 1990s (Betzels 2013, p. 11; Wodak & Meyer 2009, p. 3). It includes a number of different approaches or 'schools' of CDA, with scholars identifying variously as many as six or eight different schools or 'research strategies' (Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

It has been shown to be very much at home with Critical Realism, with Critical Discourse Analysis scholar Norman Fairclough, for example, authoring the entry into the Dictionary of Critical Realism on Critical Discourse Analysis (Hartwig, 2007).

For reasons I will explain, I rejected the idea of using Critical Discourse Analysis as a research methodology, but some of its key insights resonated and as I will refer back to these insights in the latter stages of this study, I want to outline here a) what Critical Discourse Analysis is and why my study is not a Critical Discourse Analysis, and b) how some of the key insights of Critical Discourse Analysis may inform parts of the higher level analysis of my data.

3.1.6 OVERVIEW OF CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The shared perspective of the various schools of CDA is the 'critical' aspect of its programme as distinct from the more 'descriptive' Discourse Analysis (DA) (Fairclough 2010, p. 31). This critical aspect has its roots in the 'Critical Theory' of the Frankfurt School and the work of Jurgen Habermas, where social theory is seen as having a role not just in understanding society but in seeking to change it (Wodak & Meyer 2009, p. 6).

In CDA, Language is seen as often embodying ideologies, which exert power over subjects by either concealing or mystifying certain social events or by forming frameworks in which particular behaviours are demanded or expected. The social researcher can analyse a language or a 'discourse' with a view to uncovering the power relations that it entails. Where these ideologies and power relations have been concealed, such analysis of the discourse becomes 'critical' simply by virtue of bringing them to light.

In this respect, CDA is said to be 'problem oriented' and it openly declares its 'emancipatory interests' (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997) in viewing its critique of a discourse as having the potential to emancipate those whom that discourse oppresses. As Wodak and Meyer stress, this does not mean that CDA must be used to look only at 'exceptionally serious social or political experiences or events' (Wodak & Meyer 2009, p. 2). Whilst CDA is often used to critique manifest social wrongs and 'serious' forms of oppression such as racism and antisemitism (cf. Reisigl & Wodak 2001), it has also been applied to issues such as marketisation of discourse in higher education (Fairclough 2010: Chapter 4), medical interviews and exhibition narratives in museums (cf. Thao, Quynh, and Short 2009: Chapters 17-18).

Ideologies in Critical Discourse Analysis

In a 1995 paper *Critical and Descriptive Goals in Discourse Analysis* (see Fairclough 2010: Chapter 1), Fairclough develops the idea of ideology in discourse or 'ideological-discursive formations' (IDF). Ideology here denotes:

...a particular representation of some aspect of the world (natural or social; what is, what can be, what ought to be) which might be (and may be) alternatively represented, and where any given representation can be associated with some particular 'social base'.

(Fairclough 2010: 34)

Ideologies are thus propositions that have become 'naturalised' in social structures or institutions. Fairclough suggests that we consider a scale of naturalisation, where the 'most naturalised' (theoretical) terminal point would be represented by a proposition which was taken as commonsensically given by all members of some community, and seen as vouched for by some generally accepted rationalisation (which referred it, for instance, to 'human nature') (ibid).

The goal of CDA then is to uncover and 'denaturalise' these ideologies (Fairclough 2010, p. 38). In a critique of the non-critical, descriptive forms of discourse analysis Fairclough writes:

The autonomous subject effect is a particular manifestation of the general tendency towards opacity which I have taken to be inherent to ideology: ideology produces subjects which appear not to have been 'subjected' or produced, but to be 'free, homogeneous and responsible for (their) actions' (Coward and Ellis 1977:77). That is, metaphorically speaking, ideology endeavours to cover its own traces.'

(Fairclough 2010: 46)

Although Fairclough moves to a greater emphasis on agency in his later papers (see Fairclough 2010, p. 27), this theme of ideology and its effects on subjects remains prominent in his works. Naturalised ideologies are by definition propositions or value judgments that are taken for granted in society or in particular social contexts, and to discover them is to discover an aspect of structure which is influencing the thoughts and actions of subjects. Following Fairclough's definition above of ideologies as 'a

particular representation of some aspect of the world which might be (and may be) alternatively represented', it follows that by identifying a naturalised ideology the researcher is in essence also de-naturalising it and creating space for 'alternative representations'.

3.1.7 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL REALIST DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Critical Realism itself recognises the possibility of false or inadequate conceptions being causally efficacious in the social world. According to Bhaskar, though, the term 'ideology' is appropriate only where in addition to showing that the beliefs concerned are false or superficial, it can be shown *why* the beliefs are held (Bhaskar, 1998, p. 53). Bhaskar's point is that false beliefs which have been intentionally chosen over other beliefs or representations will require a process of 'social criticism and change'. That process is Bhaskar's Explanatory Critique, which asks 'what structures might need to change?'

The above distinction is important, because without it any superficial or inadequate conception would be labelled as an 'ideology' and all learning labelled as emancipation. While the notion of equating knowledge with freedom may hold a certain charm, such imprecise terminology obfuscates the role of the social scientist. As a researcher, I need to have the vocabulary to distinguish between on the one hand the causally efficacious social structure which influences agents' conceptions and actions and on the other hand master-slave power relations and deliberately naturalised ideologies which would require changes to the structure for individuals to be emancipated.

Furthermore, with the above distinction made clear, it is possible to conduct a genuinely descriptive study, rather than an inherently critical study. Baskar defines the difference between critical theory and the critical realist interest in emancipation:

A stark contrast with critical theory now heaves into view. For critical realism explanatory theory implies, rather than (as in Horkheimer and Habermas) presupposes, a commitment to emancipation. Thus, we need not preface our search for explanatory mechanisms with our interest in emancipation; on the contrary, our interest in emancipation can flow from the search.

(Bhaskar, 2016)

A critical realist study begins by looking for 'explanatory mechanisms', identifying the relations in the social structure that influence human behaviour and agentic action that reproduces or transforms society. It is only once this is complete that a critical realist researcher may begin to consider an explanatory critique, asking the question of 'what structures might need to change?'

For Critical Discourse Analysis, however, the research really begins with explanatory critique. Fairclough (2010: 235) describes the four stages of his methodology as a variant of Bhaskar's Critical Realist explanatory critique.

Stage 1: Focus upon a social wrong, in its semiotic aspect.

Stage 2: Identify obstacles to addressing the social wrong.

Stage 3: Consider whether the social order 'needs' the social wrong.

Stage 4: Identify possible ways past the obstacles.

Stage 1 assumes that there are social wrongs at play. According to Bhaskar, social wrongs may include 'cognitive ills, such as falsity' or 'non-cognitive and noncommunicative ills, such as poverty and ill health' (cf. Bhaskar, 2016, p. 99).

I made no assumptions about the existence of cognitive or non-cognitive ills before going into the field and conducted my research by looking for explanatory mechanisms only. Working in a critical realist framework, I was aware throughout that my research may open up the possibility of an explanatory critique, but neither assumed this to be necessarily the case nor gave deliberate thought to the question of whether or how any 'structures might need to change'.

For my research, there would have been two problems, one methodological and one ethical, with adopting a critical approach such as Critical Discourse Analysis or beginning a Critical Realist study with the aim of producing an explanatory critique. Each of these problems apply to a greater or lesser degree with either of the above approaches.

The methodological problem is in assuming what you are seeking to prove – in this case the assumption of a social wrong, whether a cognitive or non-cognitive ill. The

ethical problem came into view when I thought about the work I would conduct with participants; it seemed unethical to interview participants with a view to showing that they are in a state of false consciousness or in the grip of a sinister ideology.

It is unlikely that all participants would have signed up to a study which looked to cast them as being held in the grip of master-slave relations or acting based on naturalised ideology and there was certainly nothing in the wording of my written approaches to participants or the consent forms they signed to suggest they had signed up for a study with such aims.

From an ethical perspective, I knew I would find it difficult on two counts if my findings had suggested problems with the moral probity, intelligence or intellectual honesty of my participants. The first count is that of the ethical responsibility all researchers have to their participants, the explicit and implicit terms for which they have contracted. (Critical studies are often able to get around this problem by using pre-existing texts as their data sources.)

The second is my sense of responsibility and fidelity to my own community, which would make it difficult for me to highlight and publicise a 'social wrong' were I to find one. I will say more about this and the requirement for a researcher to balance the ethic of respect for participants with the ethic of respect for knowledge and the quality of research in a section on ethical considerations below. My point here, though, is to explain that my decision to keep to descriptive, or 'explanatory', research was made on both methodological and ethical grounds.

As I will show in my Findings and Discussion chapters, because the elements of the social structure under consideration are discursive ones, my approach to higher level analysis would be a sort of Critical Realist Discourse Analysis and would call on some of the insights of Critical Discourse Analysis.

My methodology, though, is not that of a Critical Discourse Analysis because it is not necessarily critical – that is, it does not assume the presence of a social wrong or naturalised ideology. Nor does it assume that the descriptive research will necessarily lead to an explanatory critique, although it leaves open the possibility. I will pose the question of whether explanatory critique is called for in my Discussion chapters and after completing the analysis of the descriptive element.

Summary of critical realist approach to grounded theory

In summation, a critical realist approach to grounded theory would 1) inform the collection of data (of both actors' meaning-dependent perspectives and social structures); 2) guide the definition of theory (where both actors' constructions of meaning and social structures are seen as causal mechanisms); 3) Allow for the possibility of a subsequent critical analysis (which beliefs, if any, could be said to be false and why have those beliefs come to be held).

I shall turn now to the question of what methods constitute grounded theory before explaining how I used them my research.

3.2 GROUNDED THEORY METHODS

The key insight of grounded theory was that theories could be *developed* from 'research grounded in qualitative data rather than *deducing* testable hypotheses from existing theories' (Charmaz, 2014, p. 6). The researcher is to go out into the chosen research field and, using any method of data collection, gather data which by means of ongoing analysis will engender a 'theory'.

In contrast to other methods of research where data is first collected and then later analysed, in grounded theory a researcher will 'gather data and conduct research in parallel throughout the entire project' (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014, p. 155). Observations made even in the earliest stages of research may guide the subsequent stage. The researcher might pick up on emerging themes at the start of an interview which will suggest that previously unthought-of questions be asked further on in the same interview. Early interviews or field observations may suggest which people or groups of people should be next interviewed and what questions should be posed.

The researcher must be alert and open-minded throughout the process. Once initial interviews have been completed early analysis will suggest where to look for further pertinent data. And even as theoretical categories develop from the analysis, further data can be sought to develop and elucidate those categories in a process termed *theoretical sampling* (Charmaz, 2014, p. Chapter 8).

Background and literature review

Although the aim of grounded theory is to start with the data rather than an existing theory, there will inevitably be some background information and knowledge that informs any grounded theory study, if one is not simply to go out into the street and ask random questions of the first person that happens to pass by (see Robson, 2011, p 148). Although the literature on grounded theory that I have seen seems not to fully resolve the question of what literature review or theoretical research might precede going out into the field to gather data, this is an important and contentious topic that has been the subject of longstanding debates amongst grounded theorists.

Melanie Birks and Jane Mills in their *Grounded Theory: a practical guide*, quote Glaser's dicta on the use of literature:

Grounded theory's very strong dicta are (a) do not do a literature review in the substantive area and related areas where the research is to be done, and (b) when the grounded theory is nearly completed during sorting and writing up, then the literature search in the substantive area can be accomplished and woven into the theory as more data for constant comparison.

The concerns are that a literature review may either prejudice the researcher's analysis of the data or simply throw her completely off course. Glaser does encourage the researcher to engage with literature from the beginning, but to avoid any literature that relates directly to the substantive area of study (Birks and Mills, 2011, pp. 22-23).

An early literature review can 'enhance theoretical sensitivity', making the researcher more attuned to emerging categories. The dilemma here is that whilst grounded theory's power lies in the researcher approaching data without preconceived ideas about what a theory might look like, the researcher must have the background knowledge and sensitivity necessary to recognize a theory when she sees one. Birks and Mills suggest that the strategy for overcoming this trap is for the researcher to acknowledge her assumptions and existing knowledge at the outset, which can help mitigate the effects of that knowledge on the ensuing research.

Analysis and coding

Data analysis in grounded theory involves using sets of coding, with different schools of grounded theory using different sets and different terminologies. Kathy Charmaz in *Constructing Grounded Theory* discusses four levels of coding (Charmaz, 2014).

Charmaz uses the following series of coding sets: *initial*, *focused*, *axial* and *theoretical*.

Initial coding sticks closely to the data and its aim is 'to see actions in each segment of the data' by using 'words which reflect action' and avoiding 'applying pre-existing categories' to the data. Sticking to this rigid form of coding helps force the researcher get to know what is happening in the data without making premature leaps into theory development.

Focused coding involves deciding which of the initial codes seems most significant. It might involve coding the initial codes by using categories that are more conceptual than the initial codes. This is achieved by comparing the many initial codes that were developed across large amounts of data.

Axial coding looks to bring the pieces of data back together into a coherent whole, by 'building a dense texture of relationships around the "axis" of a category'. Strauss and Corbin advocated axial coding, but it is considered by many to be problematic. With axial coding the researcher will attempt to organise the data by grouping participants' statements together into strong categories. Strauss and Corbin offer 'organizing schemes' for doing this, each with specific components. One such scheme, for example, includes: '*conditions*, the circumstances or situations that form the structure of the studied phenomena ; *actions/ interactions*, participants' routine or strategic responses to issues, events or problems; and *consequences*, outcomes of actions/ interactions'

Charmaz sums up the dilemma of whether to use axial coding as follows:

At best, axial coding helps to clarify and to extend the analytic power of your emerging ideas. At worst, it casts a technological overlay on the data - and perhaps on your final analysis. Although intended to obtain a more complete grasp of the studied phenomena, axial coding can make grounded theory cumbersome.(Charmaz, 2014)

Theoretical coding involves developing the initial and focussed coding categories into groups of 'families' of categories with a higher level of theoretical abstraction. Charmaz portrays theoretical codes as ideally being emergent from the previous levels, but recognises that the process will to some extent involve applying analytic schemes. It is at this stage in the research that some prior knowledge or existing literature may be useful in fostering the theoretical sensitivity that can help with theoretical abstraction.

Memo writing is used throughout the process to help develop the categories and to suggest possible theoretical direction based on ongoing observations.

As theoretical categories emerge, 'theoretical sampling' is used, going back to the field to conduct further empirical work by looking for data that supports or further develops the putative categories. Data is collected and analysed until the point of *theoretical saturation* - when new data appear no longer to yield any new categories or concepts that have not been found in previous data.

When the researcher believes that theoretical saturation has been reached and the categories have been developed to a high level of theoretical abstraction that remains grounded in the data, the final stage is the writing. The aim is to produce a compelling account of the theory, with clear explanatory power.

Using Grounded Theory in My Research

I have explained above that grounded theory is flexible enough to be applied to a variety of research questions in many different fields. In what research contexts would grounded theory be indicated as being particularly appropriate?

Birks and Mills suggest the following guidelines:

Because of the unique nature of grounded theory methods, we can identify the type of instances where its use is appropriate. Grounded theory is indicated when:

- Little is known about the area of study.
- The generation of theory with explanatory power is a desired outcome.
- An inherent process is imbedded in the research situation that is likely to be explicated by grounded theory methods. (Birks and Mills, 2011)

It seems to me that all three obtain with regard to my research. With regard to the first point in particular, I maintain that little is known about the area of study, as, notwithstanding a huge amount of literature about the philosophical underpinnings of questions relating to religious nurture, I have found relatively few studies on teachers' conceptions and no studies relating to teachers' conceptions of religious nurture in Orthodox Jewish schools.

In consideration of the theoretical issues I outlined in my literature review, I suggested the following research questions:

- 1) How do Jewish Studies teachers in Orthodox Jewish schools conceive of confessional religious education and the role of the RE teacher?
- 2) How does this conception relate to religious nurture in a liberal society?
- 3) Do teachers experience conflicts between their conception of Orthodox Jewish Education and that of liberal values? If so how do they negotiate these conflicts?

These are real world questions about which there appears currently to be no empirical research available to inform the development of theory. The desired outcome is certainly, as Birks and Mills suggest, to generate a theory with explanatory power – a theory that can identify the causal mechanisms of studied phenomena. Further, the research situation (a teacher-in a department-in a faith school-in a foundation body-in a community-in a society, seems to be home to many imbedded processes which are likely to be explicated by the iterative methods of grounded theory.

Although my research questions are 'how' questions a good 'theorised' response would be able to answer the 'how' in 'why' terms. For example, a question such as, 'How do children from low income families make decisions about what to have for breakfast on school days?' would look at the factors that are causally efficacious in children's decisions. This might take into account some of the following factors: their conceptions of food choices - their understanding of the relative merits of different foods, such as their perceptions of what is nutritious, filling, or what is in vogue; biological factors, such as whether some children pathologically are drawn to sweet flavours; material factors, such as what is available in the house in plentiful supply at a particular time, is easy to prepare or stored on a shelf that is in reach.

I propose addressing my research questions using grounded theory methods, with the aim being to produce a sociological theory of teachers' conceptions. Following the critical realist approach that I suggested above, I would argue that conceptions, just like actions, exist in a context and if they are to be fully explicated empirical work must take place that will enable an adequate account of the structures that constrain and enable these conceptions.

A combination of interviews, observations and study of any documents that shed light on the organisational structures should provide the data that will get a grounded theory study of the ground.

Having, in the first half of this chapter, explained my choice of research paradigm and methodology, I will in the second half of this chapter, outline the research methods I followed and different steps of preparation leading up to going out into the field.

3.2.1 RESEARCH POPULATION

In Chapter 1, I argued that the six Orthodox Jewish high schools under the aegis of the Office of the Chief Rabbi ('OCR' schools) constitute a discrete research field. It follows that for a study into the conceptions of Jewish Studies teachers in these schools, the research population would be all of the Jewish Studies teachers in those six schools.

The exact number of Jewish Studies teachers in these schools is not publicly available information, although three of the schools in the group do publish some information about teaching staff in the various faculties. On the basis of this information, I estimated that there were likely around sixty teachers in the research population. Schools' websites also bring to light the number of different subjects taught by and, by implication, roles occupied by teachers broadly termed RE (Religious Education) and JS (Jewish Studies) teachers. These include, using the schools' own terms: Formal Jewish Studies, Informal Jewish Studies, Religious Education studies, Biblical Hebrew; Modern Hebrew (as a modern foreign language).

Modern Hebrew, for example, although taught as a modern foreign language at one school, is at another school part of a department called "Ivrit and Israel Education" which is part of the school's "Jewish Education framework". Whether Modern Hebrew teachers should be included in this study as part of the research population would depend on what the school's intent is for this subject's curriculum and what the role, if any, its teachers play in religious nurture.

Whilst it is perhaps not necessary to determine the exact boundaries of a research population before beginning empirical work, thinking about some of the different groups or categories amongst the potential research population is, as I will explain, important with regards to sampling.

3.2.2 SAMPLING

Before beginning field work, it was difficult to know how many participants it would be possible to engage with. It was reasonable for me to expect that there would be barriers to accessing some of the schools, whether reluctance or scepticism on the part of headteachers or heads of department, or logistical challenges. Likewise, I expected that a number of teachers may not wish to be interviewed and those who would be willing in principle may in practice not be able to make themselves available during the time of my visit to their school.

Time commitment on the part of the researcher is also a factor in deciding how many participants to interview. Prior to the question of how many participants it is possible to interview, comes the question of how many participants it is *necessary* to interview. This is where sampling comes in. Can relatively small samples ever make serious claims to generalisability? Is the researcher even looking for generalisability?

Giampietro Gobo suggests that qualitative researchers often deliberately avoided sampling, claiming that the most significant and important studies were based on "opportunistic samples" (Gobo 2006, p. 405). Sampling may mean different things to survey researchers and to qualitative field researchers, with the approach to sampling depending largely on the approach to the question of generalisation. Gobo writes of a 'conciliatory offer' that has taken place between field and survey researchers, where survey researchers are seen as making generalisations about a

population and the distribution among that population, while qualitative field researchers look to make generalisations about 'the nature of a process' (Gobo 2006, p. 405).

Rather than basing a generalisation on statistical logic, in field research generalisations tend to be based on the notion of 'theoretical sampling' developed by Glaser and Strauss in their early work on grounded theory. Theoretical sampling involves choosing the sample based on the categories germane to the emerging theory. The researcher makes decisions as to who will provide the most 'information-rich source of data' for the developing analysis (Birks & Mills 2011, p. 11), as opposed to necessarily looking to sample a group that represents a cross-section of the population.

This theoretical sampling together with the grounded theory notion of 'theoretical saturation' (the point at which new data seem to offer no new theoretical insight not found in earlier data collection) helps the researcher to know that sufficient data has been collected. The aim is not to be able to make statements about the percentage of the research population who act in a certain way or hold certain beliefs, but rather to develop clearly defined theories about significant processes amongst the group.

Gobo cites scholars who have suggested calling the kind of generalisation engendered by such methods: 'transferability'; 'analytical generalisation'; 'extrapolation'; 'moderate generalisation' (Gobo 2006, p. 406).

Of the above, I consider the term 'transferability' to be the most helpful as it points up a theory that might well go beyond not only the specifics of time and place relating to the original participants, but also beyond the original research field. To the extent that a theory is able to say something about human behaviour and cognition, it can say something about the factors that might influence people in other comparable situations. The notion of transferability does not imply that the theory can make predictions or claim generalisability about either its own research population or others, but rather that a good theory can usually at least shed some light on populations beyond its own. (See Glaser on how the core category of a substantive grounded theory can become a springboard for formal grounded theory (Glaser 2007).)

Gobo (2006, p. 423) rightly explains generalisability in qualitative research as relating to 'general structures' rather than 'single social practices', and illustrates this point with the following quote from Peräkylä:

The results were not generalizable as descriptions of what other counselors or other professionals do with their clients; but they were generalizable as descriptions of what any counselor or other professional can do, given that he or she has the same array of interactional competencies as the participants of the AIDS counseling session have. [sic]

(Peräkylä, 1997, p. 216, quoted in Silverman, 2000, p. 109)

By these lights, the guiding principle in sampling is that, whatever the size of the sample that is taken, it must be able to make claim to have taken account of any relevant variance in the research population (Gobo 2006, p. 414). In my study, for example, we might describe the research population - a group of Jewish Studies teachers in modern Orthodox schools in the UK - as being a homogeneous group. The sample, therefore, must reflect the diversity within that homogeneity (see Olsen 2011, p. 25) and there are various approaches that can be used to decide on what the initial and later sampling should look like.

Purposive Sampling and Theoretical Sampling

I have described theoretical sampling above as sampling that is based on the emerging categories in a grounded theory study. Theoretical sampling, by definition can only take place once data has already been collected (c.f. Birks & Mills 2011, p. 70, who, contra Charmaz, advocate using a form of theoretical sampling from the first interview.). Much of the grounded theory literature seems, perhaps deliberately, to pay scant attention to what decisions can be made about sampling before entering the field.

The strategy for sampling made at this first stage is referred to, in more general literature on qualitative research, as 'purposive sampling' (see Stake 2005, p. 451; Gobo 2006, p. 418) or, in grounded theory literature, as 'purposeful sampling' (see Morse 2010, p. 237; Birks & Mills 2011, p. 71). The idea is to give some initial thought to which potential participants might provide a variety of responses. Although a grounded theory approach may wish to avoid pre-empting in this way, it seems to

me that it is not always possible to take one interview at a time, especially as there can often be issues of access or time limitations.

Further, as data is often best understood by comparison, it may sometimes be worthwhile observing two or more cases before breaking from data collection for analysis (see Gobo 2006, p. 419). Purposive sampling, therefore, can be used to help gather rich data from the beginning of the research.

Convenience Sampling and Snowball Sampling

Often the researcher does not have the luxury of choosing participants based on criteria of variance and diversity and will have to be content with interviewing at least initially on the basis of accessibility, a method referred to by Richards and Morse as 'convenience sampling' (Morse 2010, p. 235). Convenience sampling makes no claim to show variance, but it still requires planning and forethought to make sure that the participants chosen can potentially provide excellent data. The researcher must first 'scope the phenomenon, to determine the dimensions and boundaries, as well as the trajectory of the project' (Morse 2010, p. 235).

Initial sampling leads to a snowball effect, whereby early participants lead the researcher either to other groups of important potential participants, or to particular individuals who may be mentioned by name in the course of an interview. Such an effect, apparently common in qualitative research, is known as "snowball sampling" (see Olsen 2011, p. 26; Morse 2010, p. 236; Gobo 2006, p. 419).

3.2.3 TOWARDS A SAMPLING STRATEGY

In view of the above, I planned to begin my field work with a first round of interviews, with two participants in each of the schools in the field. As I did not expect a long list of willing participants, whichever two teachers in a school would come forward to engage in the research would constitute my initial sample. This was a convenience sample of sorts, with the possibility of snowballing onto other nominated participants, whilst at the same time allowing for some degree of variance across the six schools – the sample as a whole. Interviewing two teachers in each school, whilst not

necessarily providing variance within each school, would at least allow for each of the two interviews to be analysed by comparison with the other.

A sample of twelve participants may provide its own natural diversity, but it seemed nonetheless worthwhile thinking about what would be considered variation amongst the participants, both within each school and across the group of the schools. In the absence of well-developed categories about the research population, the researcher may use a certain amount of intuition and guess work, as long as she does so tentatively:

Initially, *purposeful samples* are selected to maximize the variation of meaning, thus determining the scope of phenomena or concepts. If nothing is known about the phenomenon, sociological categories may be tentatively used to guide the purposeful selection of participants: grouping by age, gender, socio-economic class, employment and so forth.

(Morse 2010, p. 236)

Even in using intuition and guesswork, it is important to bear in mind that the aim is to work towards covering variant respondent positions in relation to one's research questions, where age, gender or socio-economic class for example, will not always be relevant. My research questions emerged from a review of literature showing different philosophical positions with regard to religious nurture. As such it seemed that sampling should look to cover, as much as possible, participants from divergent philosophical or theological backgrounds (where divergent is a relative term amongst a relatively homogeneous group).

The sample would therefore ideally include: participants who have been educated in different religious colleges or seminaries; participants with varying levels of secular/ university education; participants integrated into different religious or synagogue communities.

Such information about participants may not be available in advance, and may come to light later through the snowball effect, but it seems that to some extent the categories of age and gender could also help guide towards this analytical variance. Gender variation, for example, would almost guarantee that teachers have not all studied in the same religious college as there are no co-ed religious colleges in the

Orthodox world. Significant age variation will also point towards participants having been taught by different religious instructors and influenced by different discourses.

It may turn out that this tentative attempt at variance would not capture much of the variance that is relevant analytically, but it seemed that paying attention to variance at an early stage in the research might be worthwhile, if only to discover what further effort might be required in this area in subsequent stages of the research.

3.2.4 DATA SOURCES - WHY INTERVIEWS?

There are many possible sources of data in a grounded theory study: interviews, observations, focus groups, videos, documents, drawings, diaries, memoirs, newspapers, biographies, historical documents, autobiographies, questionnaires, surveys, music, artefacts, architecture (see Corbin & Strauss 1990, p. 27; Birks & Mills 2011, p. 66). Not all of these are germane to every study, and some will present themselves as being more obvious choices than others. It is possible that following grounded theory methods may lead the researcher to looking at data sources that she had not considered at the outset, and there is no need to rule out possible data sources. Thought should though be given as to which data sources seem most likely to provide rich data to get the study going.

My research questions all pertain to teachers' conceptions of their role, what they might be grappling with and what might be causing them tension. It followed that interviewing teachers was the most obvious point of departure, and unless initial interview data and analysis were to lead me elsewhere, interviews should constitute the main source of data in my study.

I proposed to do some observations in addition to interviews for a number of reasons. First, I thought that a familiarity with the classroom setting in the Jewish Studies department of each of the schools as well as a level of familiarity with the more general culture of the school may help me make sense of the interviews in simply understanding to what teachers are referring and in being able to analyse their interviews with some sense of context.

Observations may also provide some useful data, which could be fed back to participants in later interviews, to challenge their earlier responses or to probe for further reflections and thoughts.

Further, classroom observations may provide a triangulation of sorts (see Denzin 2009, pp. 307-310 on methodological triangulation), if episodes observed in the classroom support or enrich (Denzin 2009, p. 297; see Flick 2014, p. 390) the theory emerging from interviews. (see Corbin & Strauss 1990, p. 30 on combining interviews and observations.)

In grounded theory, observations are recorded in the form of fieldnotes, which can then be treated as data to be coded as part of the ongoing analysis. Charmaz recommends comparing incident with incident rather than word-by-word or line-by-line as one would do with interview transcripts (Charmaz 2014, pp. 136, 128). Whilst these incidents may initially be coded and analysed for the categories they might suggest, as the project develops they would increasingly be coded by their relationship to the interview transcripts and developing categories.

Semi-structured Grounded Theory Interviews

In many ways interviewing in grounded theory is similar to interviewing in other studies, but with greater attention given to generating theory (Birks & Mills 2011, p. 74). This means that grounded theory interviews will usually be more open and exploratory than interviews that are looking to answer a more binary question.

The less structured the interview is the more it allows the researcher to follow the flow of conversation. The interviewer acts as 'coordinator of the conversation with an aim of generating fodder for the developing theory.' (Birks & Mills 2011, pp. 75; see Corbin & Strauss 1990, p. 27)

I planned to begin the interview with open questions such as "tell me about your experience of being a Jewish Studies teacher?" or "how do you see the role of a Jewish Studies teacher in a school like this one?" As my research questions relate to teachers' conceptions of their role and to their understanding of some of the philosophical issues which underpin those conceptions, I expected that I may need to steer participants towards reflecting on these questions. In order to do this, I would

need a set of questions and points which I could put to them to gently challenge the views expressed and probe for a deeper understanding.

Conducting the interview with less structure than would still require significant preparation, as, by allowing the conversation to go wherever the respondent takes it, I would need to prepare for a number of eventualities. The initial open questions and the follow up questions must all be prepared in advance and would together constitute my 'interview guide' (Charmaz 2014, pp. 62-67).

Interview length

There is no standard duration for semi-structured interviews in qualitative research. Some participants may want more time to be heard, whereas others may be less forthcoming and will want to be brief. Charmaz recommends not imposing arbitrary time limits on an interview, but rather allowing it to take its course (Charmaz 2014, pp. 86, 72).

While in principle, a researcher should be open to some interviews running on and should allow enough time in between interviews for none to be unnecessarily curtailed, it is generally helpful to let participants know in advance how long an interview is likely to last. I estimated that an average length of twenty-five minutes would be sufficient. (see Flick 2014, pp. 139-140 on the importance of considering limitations on resources, such as the researcher's limited time in transcribing and analysing interviews)

Audio recording

Although it is worth noting that Glaser has written against audio-recording interviews (c.f. Birks & Mills 2011, p. 76), it seems that most grounded theory researchers advocate taping interviews in most research contexts. There are a number of obvious advantages in having a recording and a full typed transcript to work with. The first is that when it comes to coding the interview for analysis it is possible to code based on the actual words of the participants and to continually return to the data. Another benefit to taping an interview is that doing so allows the researcher 'to give full attention to the research participant, with steady eye contact, and to obtain detailed data' (Charmaz 2014, p. 68).

Experienced researchers caution against indiscriminate use of video recording, which can be difficult to get informed consent for and is often a distraction for participants (Olsen 2011, p. 76; Birks & Mills 2011, p. 76). Although audio recording can also be intrusive and the cause of participants' reticence, I believe that for the purpose of my study the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. Corbin & Strauss make the point that occasionally participants will make a number of salient points once the recorder has been switched off. In such cases, the researcher should ask their permission to record their comments in the fieldnotes. Participants will usually consent as their main fear was related to the audio recording (Corbin & Strauss 1990, pp. 28-29).

Fieldnotes should always be updated immediately on completion of interview where possible to record non-verbal cues or any points relevant to the setting or the participant that would not be picked up in the recording (Birks & Mills 2011, p. 78).

3.2.5 TWO ROUNDS OF INTERVIEWS

As I noted earlier, Grounded Theory studies call for ongoing analysis throughout the period of data collection. This analysis allows for adaptations to be made to the sample selection, using snowball sampling to follow initial leads or hunches and assessing whether the sample contains sufficient variation, as I explained above.

It seemed that beginning with an initial round of interviews, involving, if possible, two participants from each school would provide a sample that I could then assess for variation before moving to a second round of interviews.

I wanted to know whether the line of questioning was generating data that helped answer my research questions and I felt that this would need a more rigorous analysis of early interviews than the process of ongoing memo writing would provide. To know what questions to pose that would engender responses that would help answer to my research questions I would have to start by hearing participants' stories in their own words.

The interview schedule for the first round then would be explorative and would enable participants to talk fairly broadly about their experiences as Jewish Studies teachers, the challenges they faced, their conception of their role and any tensions

they felt in the role. Early analysis of this first round of interviews would be needed to find emerging themes and tentative lines of enquiry for a second round of interviews.

3.2.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Preparation for going into the research field included, first, consideration of ethical issues and application for ethics approval and, second, clear communication with schools and participants to agree terms of engagement.

In preparing communications to potential participants, I worked to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) 2011 guidelines (British Educational Research Association, 2011), ensuring that participants fully understood what the research involved and gave voluntary informed consent to all aspects. I made it clear that participants would be able to decline to answer particular questions or fully withdraw from the process at any stage of the research. Further, I explained that all data would be anonymised, making it extremely difficult for a reader to identify an individual participant. Schools would also be anonymised, and while contextual information may in some cases mean that it would be possible to identify a school, I would ensure that I did not publish any information that could reflect negatively or cause any harm to a school or individual. Furthermore, the data would not be presented in a way that could be used to compare the performance of one school against another.

I prepared letters for the schools to send requesting consent from parents and guardians of children who would be present in lessons that I would observe. The letters gave information about the research project, explaining that I was focusing on teachers rather than students and that the children were not being marked or tested. I would not hold any identifying information, such as the names of the pupils, even for my own records.

Harm arising from participation in research

I had to give thought to potential harm that could arise from my engagement with participants. The 2011 BERA Guidelines state that:

The Association considers that all educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for: The Person; Knowledge; Democratic Values; The Quality of Educational Research; Academic Freedom
(British Educational Research Association, 2011, p4)

I had a particular concern with regard to the ethic of respect for 'The Person'. While I was using Grounded Theory methods to enable participants to tell their stories, I would be subsequently conducting a philosophical analysis, which would look to find the meaning in participants' stories. Such analysis may find themes that participants had not themselves fully considered and a critical realist approach in particular, by looking at societal structures as generative mechanisms may be seen as suggesting that participants' conceptions are not a function of their own independent, rational thinking.

Furthermore, any analysis of a philosophical position is prone to finding weaknesses in that position. If my research would in any way conclude that that participants' conceptions are not logically coherent or fully rational, it would potentially be harmful to participants.

As I declared in my introduction to this project, although I am not part of the research field, I am a member of the community that I am studying. In addition to an ethic of respect for participants, I had also to consider fidelity to my own community and respect for myself as a 'person' as well as a researcher. The 2011 BERA Guidelines have since been supplanted by the 2018 guidelines, which state:

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) believes that educational researchers should operate within an ethic of respect for any persons – including themselves – involved in or touched by the research they are undertaking. Individuals should be treated fairly, sensitively, and with dignity and freedom from prejudice, in recognition of both their rights and of differences arising from age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, nationality, cultural identity, partnership status, faith, disability, political belief or any other significant characteristic.

(Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fourth edition (2018), p6)

Responsibility for Knowledge and quality educational research must be balanced against the risk of harm to participants and the community of educational researchers. BERA guidelines recognise that tensions cannot always be resolved and that, if research is to be possible, some compromise is required. Any compromises should be 'justifiable' and 'where possible, explicitly accounted for' (*Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fourth edition (2018)*, p8).

The above considerations informed my initial line of questions and I would reflect throughout the process as to whether the questions or any aspect of the process was making participants feel uncomfortable. I would also need to reflect on my findings and conclusions and ask whether these struck the right balance between the ethic of respect to participants and the responsibility to produce and disseminate educational research.

3.2.7 INTERVIEW GUIDE

For the round of interviews, my aim was to ask a small number of questions and allow participants to respond at length and largely guide the direction of the interview.

I prepared an interview guide, with a number of open questions loosely pertaining to each of my three research questions and I also prepared subsidiary questions in case participants were not forthcoming with their initial responses.

Below is the interview guide for my initial round of interviews:

Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. I will be happy to share with you in time some of the findings, which I hope will be of interest and value to Jewish Studies teachers and heads of department in different schools.

Thank you also for agreeing to my audio recording this interview.

I hope this will be a relaxed discussion, where we can explore the issues together, but

if you feel uncomfortable with this process you are of course free to stop the interview. Similarly, if you are uncomfortable with any particular questions, please do not feel obliged to respond.

<p>1) How do Jewish Studies teachers in Orthodox Jewish schools conceive of religious education and the role of the RE teacher?</p>	<p>"Tell me about your experience of being a Jewish Studies teacher?"</p> <p>"How do you see the role of a Jewish Studies teacher in a school like this one?"</p> <p>"Have you found that different people have different ideas about what the goals of Jewish Studies are?"</p> <p>"Can you tell me a little about the different views that you have encountered?"</p> <p>"What are your personal views on this?"</p> <p>"I have chosen to focus in my study on US schools – or schools under the aegis of the OCR – because these are Orthodox schools with a number of students from less religious backgrounds."</p> <p>"Does this present any challenges to a JS teacher?"</p>
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<p>2) How does this conception relate to religious nurture in a liberal society?</p>	<p>"Are there any particular topics that you feel it is difficult to teach in a school like this?"</p> <p>"Are there any topics that for example you might need to present differently here than you would in a school with students from more observant backgrounds?"</p> <p>"Do you feel that there is any, say, moral issue with teaching a religious view to non-religious students?"</p> <p>"Or is it perhaps more of a practical concern?"</p> <p>"In some of the literature I have reviewed as part of my</p>
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	research, there are debates around religious nurture in a liberal society. What are your thoughts on how this applies in the context of your school?”
3) Do teachers experience conflicts between their conception of Orthodox Jewish Education and that of liberal values? If so how do they negotiate these conflicts?	<p>“You’ve told me a little bit about the challenges that you face as a Jewish Studies in a school like this”</p> <p>“Could you elaborate on how you negotiate these challenges?”</p>

3.2.8 SCHOOL AND PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT

I reached out to all six schools in the field, contacting either the head of Jewish Studies or the headteacher directly. I received responses from all six schools, who were all willing to engage in principle and I would eventually succeed in interviewing teachers in five of the schools. Although the sixth school never actually refused to participate, my repeated attempts to set up interviews never bore fruit. The contacts that I spoke to in this school were supportive in principle, and it is quite possible that the only reason I did not succeed in gaining access is due to the heads of department and the relevant contacts being too busy to prioritise supporting a PhD research project with no obvious immediate impact for their school.

Once I had the support of the headteacher and the head of Jewish Studies in a school, I reached out to all Jewish Studies teachers in the department. This process took longer than expected and rather than conducting an initial round of interviews with two teachers in each school, I found that months on, I had interviewed just four teachers – two teachers in each of two schools.

I was surprised at the amount of data that I already had, the richness of that data and the ideas that were being generated from these interviews. It made sense to reflect on this data, look for emerging themes and give thought as to how best to conduct subsequent interviews.

In the next chapter, I will present my findings, beginning with the first round of data collection and early analysis and going all the way through the complete process of data collection and increasingly higher levels of coding and theoretical abstraction.

Chapter 4: Findings: Teachers' conceptions of autonomy and religion

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4.13 Research questions and the headline theory

4.1 Early reflection

I had conducted initial interviews with a total of four teachers across two different schools and had a forced break as I waited for participants in other schools to agree dates for interviews. I wanted at this point to reflect on how effective my interviews had been in gaining quality data and in addressing my research questions.

Of course, in grounded theory a researcher will 'gather data and conduct research in parallel throughout the entire project' (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014, p. 155), but the need to reflect at this point seemed even more fundamental. I only had one shot at these interviews and had to ensure that each interview was as effective as possible.

To do this, I had to consider some of the very early emerging themes and make some quick decisions about what questions I wanted to ask in subsequent interviews. I had to, on the one hand, follow where the participants' narratives seemed to be leading and, on the other hand, rein in any lines of questioning that seemed unlikely to bring answers to my research questions.

4.2 Quality of the data

The notion of 'quality' interview data is difficult to define and is best considered in the context of the research and the research questions. As my research was looking at teachers' conceptions, quality interview data would primarily be data that give insight into teachers' own conceptions of their role.

A good interview therefore would be one in which the participant has been able to share their own views about conceptions of their role. It may not be immediately apparent whether the participant's responses will help answer the research questions and some early analysis of the data would be required to sense the direction of the narrative.

With the above in mind I reflected on the quality of my initial interview data.

I interviewed two teachers in each of two schools. I will refer to the first school I visited as School 1 (S1) and the second as School 2 (S2), with the remaining

schools also being numbered accordingly. To protect the anonymity of the eleven participants, I have avoided assigning them to a particular school and have numbered them Teacher 1 (T1) to Teacher 11 (T11), following the order in which they were interviewed.

Where it is relevant to the understanding of the data and it is possible to do so without compromising anonymity or sharing sensitive information, I will indicate which teachers work in the same school.

I found that, with the exception of T1, all the interviews flowed. I asked short questions and received lengthy responses. Participants appeared engaged throughout and often quite animated. They seemed happy to talk about the topic at hand.

There may be a number of reasons for participants agreeing to and subsequently engaging with research interviews, such as a genuine interest in the issues, a need to talk and 'offload', feeling important or honoured to be invited to speak on important issues or an altruistic desire to contribute to the community (see Sarantakos, 2005, p. 276). It is possible that any number of the above were factors in these participants' willingness to engage and their apparent openness in the interview.

I tried to make participants feel at ease by opening with an explanation of my research, giving some background about how I had come to be researching this topic in this way and why I was interviewing teachers. Although I tried to speak very little during the interview, I found that the relatively lengthy introduction was beneficial in allowing the participants to settle and affording me the opportunity to communicate that this was a genuinely open investigation where I was open to hearing whatever they had to say. I could sense that, as I delivered my introductory comments, participants were gathering their thoughts and getting ready to speak; as soon as I stopped speaking, they were generally ready to respond, in some cases at length.

I found that a question that treats the subject matter as anything other than the participant would draw out better responses. For example, rather than opening with a question such as "what do you think is the role of the JS teacher in this school," I

asked “how do different people within the school understand the role of the JS teacher?” From here I was able to probe further with subsidiary questions.

I accept that a participant’s flowing narrative may sometimes be mistaken for candour, where in reality it is practised eloquence. As a researcher it is difficult to know the extent to which a participant is telling me what she thinks I want to hear. Sarantakos (2005, p. 278) suggests that a similarity between researcher and respondent can make for good data and that an attempt at similarity has become a widely accepted practice in social research. It is likely that some of the participants will have naturally viewed me as a peer, being of the same age and stage and with similar religious and educational background, whereas others may have seen me as something of a rabbinic or authority figure. I had worked to mitigate this by presenting myself as a peer, rather than an expert scholar or a ‘rabbi’, using my first name and adopting a down-to-earth manner in my email communications and conversations.

I know, however, that I am not an anonymous researcher and it is natural for people to want to make a good impression or protect their reputation. My sense was though that the responses given in T2 and T3 in particular were open and flowing, and they did not seem contrived or rehearsed.

The interview with T1 – my first interview – felt a little pedestrian at times, but the participant seemed happy to engage and had a fair amount to say. Reflecting afterwards and comparing to other interviews, I would still describe the interview with T1 as stilted.

Reflecting on interview with T1, there seemed to be a number of possible reasons this interview did not flow like the others: this was my first interview and it is possible that I was not entirely in the groove; the participant is a head of department and may have been keen to portray the department in a good light; as a religious female, the participant may have been slightly uncomfortable engaging in one to one conversation with an unfamiliar male rabbi; the participant did not entirely grasp the purpose of my research and was puzzled as to the aims of the conversation; unlike other participants, T1 does not experience tensions with the issues we were discussing and therefore genuinely had far less to say.

It was difficult to know which, if any, of these were relevant and all I could do was take note and look to see whether I would have similar experience in any of the subsequent interviews. If the last reason in my list above is the salient one, this would match well with my initial sense of the substantive content of the interview and would mean that, far from being a poor interview or a 'damp squib' this interview provides significant insight.

T3 was also somewhat different from T2 and T4 in that his communication style felt more like a lecture than a conversation, as if there was something he was determined to communicate. His responses were delivered with conviction and did not seem like an act, but just appeared to be less spontaneous. Such an interview gave me a sense that we were talking about issues that are constantly on this teacher's mind.

I tried as much as possible throughout each of the interviews to ask fact finding questions that would help me build a picture of the structure of the department and its position in the school. On occasion I felt reluctant to interrupt as I thought that if I let the respondent speak I might discover some nugget. On reflection, I realised that it would be helpful in subsequent interviews to ask some more questions that focus on fact finding.

On the basis of the above, I could see that my interviewing technique had been evolving throughout the first four interviews and that my skills were being honed. I felt confident that in subsequent interviews I would be able to strike the balance between allowing the participant to tell her story and asking probing questions that more directly addressed my research questions.

4.3 Relevance of the data

I created the interview schedule for this first round of interviews by looking at my research questions and developing interview questions as subsidiaries of those research questions (see Steinar Kvale, 2007: 59). Did participants' responses in the initial interviews relate to my research questions?

- 1) How do Jewish Studies teachers in Modern Orthodox Jewish schools conceive of religious education and the role of the RE teacher?
- 2) How does this conception relate to religious nurture in a liberal society?
- 3) Do teachers experience conflicts between their conception of Orthodox Jewish Education and that of liberal values? If so how do they negotiate these conflicts?

All participants spoke about how they viewed their role. From my interviews in School 2, I could see some variance in the way T3 and T4 conceived of their role, as the two participants referred to each other throughout the interview. Although respectful of each other, their different responses suggested divergent views on the role of the Jewish Studies teacher. The differences may in practice be quite subtle, but they were clearly important to the two participants and the way they conceived of their role in relational terms.

I realised that by using open questioning and placing the focus on allowing participants to tell their stories, I had not used the time in the interview to challenge the participants on questions of religious nurture and the autonomy of the child.

Participants had told me that they do experience conflict and they had shared how they adapt their teaching to negotiate the conflict, but it remained unclear the extent to which they felt an internal, moral conflict or a conflict between what is expected by others and what they believed their role to be.

My sense as I conducted the interviews was the data was broadly germane to my research questions, but my questioning was not getting to the nub of the questions around autonomy and religious nurture.

4.4 Initial coding

Before considering amending my interview questions and returning to the field for a further round of interviews, I fully transcribed all four interviews and completed 'initial coding' on the transcripts. Initial coding, as its name implies, is the first round of coding. During this stage, the researcher sticks closely to the data, using words that reflect the actions taking place in each segment of the data (Charmaz, 2014,

Chapters 5, 6, 8). The resultant codes will typically look like a layman's summary of the data, devoid of arcane or theoretical terms that are not present in the transcript itself.

Below are examples of a number of codes which recurred throughout the early interviews and illustrate how participants viewed their role and their mission. (In this chapter and in subsequent chapters, I shall reference codes by capitalising the entire word or phrase.)

SOWING SEEDS; ROLE MODELING; BEING RELEVANT; BUILDING A CONNECTION; EMPOWERING; ENGAGING MATERIAL; OPENNESS; DISCUSSION; FACILITATING; GETTING THEIR VALUES FROM JEWISH STUDIES; OWING THEIR SUCCESS TO JEWISH STUDIES; WANTING OUTCOMES.

I placed these initial codes alongside each of the research questions to see the extent to which the emerging themes were leading towards answers.

Regarding Research Question 1, as I noted above, it seemed that the semi-structured interview allowed teachers to talk in some detail about how they conceive of religious education and the role of the RE teacher.

With regard to Research Question 2, to consider the question of how a teacher's conception relates to religious nurture in a liberal society requires a certain degree of theorising of the data. The issue of religious nurture in a liberal society is to some extent implicit in some of these codes. For example, some of the teachers may be talking about SOWING SEEDS or ROLE MODELLING because they believe that they have limited options to directly religiously inspire the students, with any sort of confessionalism being off limits for students from non-observant homes.

It was unclear whether they adopt approaches such as OPENNESS and DISCUSSION for moral reasons, such as responsibility to parents and concern for the developing autonomy of the child, or for the more pragmatic reason of insulating themselves against the charge of indoctrination. Nonetheless, the data indicates that all of the teachers interviewed were aware of the issue of religious nurture in a liberal society.

Research Question 3: 'Do teachers experience conflicts between their conception of Orthodox Jewish Education and that of liberal values? If so how do they negotiate these conflicts?'

Reflecting on the data, this question needed unpacking. I suggested above that teachers seem to see their role as being about finding a way to impact or inspire the students religiously while avoiding the charge of indoctrination. To some extent, then, data relating to Q1) will include the beginnings of the answers to the second part of Q3) ('how do they negotiate these conflicts?'), with teachers in the group of schools in the research field being involved in a constant negotiation.

More difficult to answer, however, is whether teachers *experience conflicts* between their conception of Orthodox Jewish Education and that of liberal values.

What does it mean to 'experience conflicts'? One teacher, for example, was not at all exercised about any of the issues I raised and did not seem to experience conflict or tension in the role. My hunch was this teacher was simply pragmatic about what could be achieved with the cohort of students and was extremely experienced at negotiating any attendant challenges and therefore did not experience conflict in the way that other participants appeared to.

What are the indicators of experiencing conflict and how can we know what is the root of that conflict? I decided, as a rule of thumb, to first look for signs of tension experienced by Jewish Studies teachers in their roles. Any occurrence of tension could then be examined to establish whether they may perhaps relate to conflict between their conception of Orthodox Jewish Education and that of liberal values.

4.5 Reflecting on the Research Questions

The three research questions followed a logical sequence, requiring incrementally deeper levels of analysis:

The first question 1) How do Jewish Studies teachers in Modern Orthodox Jewish schools conceive of religious education and the role of the RE teacher?

The answer to this question may include: teachers' descriptions of the goals of RE; the strategies and teaching methods they use to achieve those goals; the context in which they operate, such as the cohort of students and their parents, the liberal society in general and government and OFSTED requirements in particular; the way teachers negotiate any challenges related to the context in which they operate.

2) How does this conception relate to religious nurture in a liberal society?

To answer this question, I needed to relate the findings of Q1 back to the theoretical issues outlined in my literature review. Q2 is really asking how teachers' conceptions relate to the theoretical issues that we already know about from the extensive literature. The response to Q2 will also involve some level of analysis of the extent to which the methods and approaches chosen by teachers are secure from the charges levelled against religious education in the literature.

3) Do teachers experience conflicts between their conception of Orthodox Jewish Education and that of liberal values? If so how do they negotiate these conflicts?

This question requires a deeper analysis of teachers' conceptions. To what extent do teachers' conceptions of their role relate to the theoretical issues developed in Q2?

Where Q1 looks at teachers' conceptions of their role and Q2 develops theories which relate this conception to the issues in the theoretical literature, Q3 asks how teachers' conceptions of their role relate to the theories developed in Q2.

Second Round of Interviews

With the above reflection on my research questions and initial interviews, it seemed that I had already collected a significant amount of data on Q1, with further data likely to emerge through any subsequent interviews. The focus in the next round of interviews would need to be on collecting data relating to questions 2 and 3.

Although the three research questions follow a logical sequence, I was aware that answering them would not necessarily be an entirely linear process. While the full analysis of data would take place during and after the second round of interviews, for example, a quick refresh on the theoretical literature at this intermediate point was required to enable me to prepare a suitable schedule of interview questions to probe further for answers to questions 2 and 3.

Questions in the next round of interviews would need to directly pose to teachers some of the challenges and issues raised in the theoretical literature. I had seen from the first round of interviews that teachers appeared to be engaged in a sort of constant negotiation and the next step was to understand exactly which issues they are negotiating and to what extent they are negotiating an internal moral tension or a pragmatic concern about external criticism.

I returned briefly to the literature to identify some key points of conflict between religious values and liberal values which could possibly be a cause of tension among practitioners.

4.6 Theoretical Issues

Reflecting back on my early review of literature, I identified the theoretical issues that seemed to relate most directly to what my participants had been sharing.

1) The indoctrination charge

In seeking to define indoctrination, Snook in *Indoctrination and Education* considers the four criteria of method, content, consequence and intention (Snook, 1972b) and it seemed to me that interview questions should examine each of these criteria.

Content – How do teachers feel about teaching propositions not supported by rationally decisive evidence? What are their thoughts on epistemology of religion and whether its truth claims can or should be proved?

Consequence – How do teachers feel about teaching in order to nurture belief and teaching for adherence to religious law and practice?

Intention – How do teachers describe the deeper intentions behind their pedagogies? For example, to what extent are OPENNESS and DISCUSSION being used as a STRATEGY to get students to eventually accept and believe?

Methods – To what extent do teachers feel that using methods such as OPENNESS and DISCUSSION can justify teaching for belief in religious propositions? Can any methods be considered appropriate if the intention or goal is for students to believe propositions not supported by rationally decisive evidence?

2) Parental wishes

In a 1984 paper *Parental Rights and the Religious Upbringing of Children*, Terrence McLaughlin argued that a non-indoctrinatory religious upbringing is possible and that parents have a right to give their child such a religious upbringing.

To protect the developing autonomy of the child, McLaughlin laid down a number of methods-related conditions, but his argument, sometimes referred to as the *Initiation Thesis*, was predicated on parental rights. In the schools in my research field parental wishes are more obscure. As I showed in chapters 1 and 2, a majority of parents are not strictly religiously observant and there is evidence that at least some of them do not wish their children to become strictly observant.

It seems important therefore to investigate teachers' understanding of the issues around parental wishes in the following two aspects:

What do parents want? – What do teachers know or assume parental wishes to be? If parental attitudes vary, how do teachers assess the relative percentages of supportive and unsupportive parents?

Are parental wishes a sufficient criterion? – To what extent do teachers feel obliged to take parental wishes into account? Do they believe that once parents have chosen to send their children to a particular school they must accept that school's ethos?

3) Balancing fiduciary responsibilities

In deciding what outcomes to aim for and what pedagogies are appropriate in the classroom the Jewish Studies teacher must consider her fiduciary responsibilities. Ethical dilemmas arise when there are multiple, apparently incompatible fiduciaries to consider. Interview questions should be designed to assess how teachers weigh the following competing fiduciaries:

Responsibility to parents; responsibility for students' educational needs; responsibility to the employer (the "school" or foundation body); fidelity to their own religion (or religious responsibility to G-d); responsibility to the community, to society and any other competing responsibilities.

4.7 PROBING QUESTIONS

In view of the above, I decided to add a number of questions that would probe the key issues around the conflict between religious values and liberal values. I also determined to keep a closer eye on the clock during the interview to ensure that the allotted time did not run out before I had a chance to ask these key questions.

For the remainder of my interviews, I used the questions below as a basis for questioning and lines of enquiry, adapting within each interview to the participant's responses.

1) I have spoken to teachers in this school and/or other similar schools and a number of them have described their approach to teaching Jewish Studies, with uncontentious topics as well as the more controversial topics, as being along the lines of open discussion and facilitated conversation with students.

To what extent is this your approach?

By comparison, if you were teaching in the, shall we say, 'frummer'¹² schools, where all the students are from observant families, what sort of approach would you take to teaching Jewish Studies?"

2) So, parental wishes seems to be a significant factor in how you approach teaching.

In your role, are you always thinking about what parents want, how they may react?

Do you feel that morally, so-to-speak, parents have a right to choose what they want for their children and Jewish Studies teachers are to some extent obliged to consider parental wishes?

3) A point that is often raised in the academic literature is the question of the child's autonomy. I suppose it would be interesting to consider this from a Torah perspective as well, but the argument in the academic literature is that the child should be able to choose for herself what to accept based on considering rational arguments and weighing the evidence.

Is this something that you think about?

How, if at all, does the notion of autonomy impact on the way you approach teaching Jewish studies?

How would you describe your intentions with regards to pupil's beliefs? What outcome are you trying to achieve?"

Is a teacher's working towards a particular outcome or belief any contradiction to the child having autonomy with regards to that belief?

4) Part of the debate around autonomy relates to the subject matter. For example, for things based on clear evidence, and universally accepted as true, it is argued that there is no need to allow the student the space to make an autonomous choice – you simply teach it as incontrovertible fact.

¹² The word 'frum' literally means religious or pious. The connotation of the word varies, depend on who is using it and the context in which it is being used. Here, I expect participants to understand the word in the way that I define it in the second half of the sentence – as referring to schools where the parent body and students are almost all religiously observant.

With things that are not based on rationally decisive evidence, the argument goes, a teacher should allow the students to weigh the arguments and make their own choices.

In this context, how do you view the subject matter of the Jewish Studies curriculum?

To what extent would this affect the way that you might teach parts of the Jewish Studies curriculum?

4.8 TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS

I want in the next part of this chapter to capture the iterative process of the grounded theory-based methods I adopted and share the account of teachers' conceptions as it unfolded to me as a researcher

Earlier in this chapter, I shared my initial reflections on the first round of pilot interviews and the rationale behind my decision to amend the interview questions. I want now to relate the whole process of data collection and early analysis.

Narratives usually follow some sort of sequence, whether chronological or thematic. When it comes to grounded theory studies, the gradual emergence of higher levels of abstraction is not linear and is not necessarily concurrent with the chronology of the data collection. The order in which interviews took place in my study was, by necessity, mostly opportunistic and therefore arbitrary and its chronology did not, as such, tell a story.

My understanding, though, developed throughout the process and this led to subtle changes in the way I approached each subsequent interview. In this respect, my growing understanding through the iterative process of data collection and analysis itself gives some sequence to the narrative. I want to capture this process as I relate my grounded theory study and I believe the best way to do so is to relay as best I can, what participants said and what I understood at the time, while signposting to what I would come to understand in the later stages of data collection and analysis.

I have broken the data down into a number of recurring themes. All of these themes appeared in the responses of a number of the participants – in many cases being replicated across almost all participants. Numerous recurrences of both initial codes and, later, focused codes showed that these themes were central to the story of my research field.

Similarities and differences

While I will reference throughout some apparent differences between participants, I will show that the main findings were the similarities and this seems to be the most fruitful area for data analysis. It makes sense at least initially to understand the similarities, with divergent views being a possible subject for further study. As I will show later in this chapter, some of the instances that suggested divergence, were not consistent across the data and seemed to be limited to a small number of participants and to be too context specific to analyse.

Themes

For the purpose of showing themes that run across the data, I have grouped excerpts from the interviews into the following headings: The goal and role of the Jewish Studies teacher; parental wishes; religious propositions and autonomy; topics that are “difficult” to teach; divergent approaches.

4.8.1 THE GOAL AND ROLE OF THE JEWISH STUDIES TEACHER

In all interviews, I asked the open question, “How do you see the role of a Jewish Studies teacher in a school like this?” Below are excerpts from a number of participants, which between them cover the main themes that arose in response to this question.

A GOOD ROLE MODEL

T1: A good role model, somebody who's inspiring, somebody who's educated, somebody who's open to what's going on in the outside world, very aware of what is going on and the changes that are happening, you know to the Jewish

people, to the community, local community and to the wider community, things going on in Israel, () to be well-read, somebody who's approachable and a good role model.

T1: I think whatever's goes on in the lesson it just gives you an opportunity to discuss things that, perhaps obviously, it's not terribly er... appropriate, in other subject lessons, so therefore in Tanach¹³ things might come up, something that's happened ... in Shul or at home. The Talmud is very good, Jewish history, there's also an opportunity for kids to talk about sort of their family, where they come from, what they do... so then we'd obviously talk about different things there and sort of how does it impact on them as a Jew in 2016... so, yes it depends...

It is noteworthy that this Teacher 1's initial response is phrased in terms of being a ROLE MODEL, without reference to the educational goals in terms of what she was hoping to achieve. While, she follows up by talking about how Jewish Studies lessons give pupils an opportunity to talk about their life experiences, being a 'role model' seems to be key to the role.

DISCUSSION appears to be an important part of the role, although there is not always enough time to discuss all the topics that pupils might raise:

R: So, sometimes in lessons you can have quite free flowing discussions...

T1: Can do, but then obviously we have to be very mindful. We do have the curriculum that we need to follow, but so obviously sometimes we'll say well I'll answer a couple of these questions today and then we'll answer some of those next week. And I myself write them down and then will come back to them when time allows. () I don't want children to ever think, oh there's never time to discuss these things, because I do make time.

Teacher 1 wants her students to know that she cares about them and makes time to answer their questions. Indeed, later in the interview, she says, 'we're here to educate, we're here to inspire... to be good role models, to have a door forever

¹³ Scripture or The Hebrew Bible. Tanach is an acronym referring to the three sections of the Written Law: The Pentateuch, The Prophets and Hagiographa.

open'. She wants her pupils to see that Judaism has the answers to life's questions and that their Jewish Studies teacher is the address to go to for those answers.

POSITIVE FEEL FOR JUDAISM

Teacher 2, below, expresses the goal in terms of the outcome at the end of high school:

T2: OK, so I think that it should be at least the role of a Jewish Studies teacher, should be that you're giving students no matter what their background erm the ability and appreciation of Torah Judaism, that when they leave school, they want to be connected to it. I think that should be the goal. Cause there's no point of teaching Jewish Studies without the goal of them having it () future in their lives. That should be the goal.

T2: I think, sort of in the beginning, I think that we're giving, hopefully my role is I'm giving them, I'm not necessarily making them want to be religious, I'm giving them an appreciation of Judaism so that they're open to the values and they have a positive feel for Judaism.

For T2, the goal is clear: to give pupils 'an appreciation of Torah Judaism' so that when they leave school they 'want to be connected to it' are 'open to the values' and 'have a positive feel for Judaism'.

T2 did not speak about being a role model, but did speak at length about the need for Jewish Studies lessons to be positive and how the need for behaviour management in the classroom, for example, could be an impediment to that.

T2: In that, I don't know the benefit of, I'm debating in my head of whether it's worthwhile teaching Jewish Studies formally or is it better to be taught a bit more informally. For these sort of students who come here, they're taught Jewish Studies like every other subject, English, Maths, Science, they're taught, you give them detentions if they misbehave and is that giving them a sort of appreciation of Torah Judaism which they should be getting? Or perhaps in a more informal way, then they get to express themselves more. It's less, OK we're doing work now, more, we talk about life more, do you

know what I mean? () On the other hand, if it's always informal, then perhaps the behaviour will go out the window more, because it's not so serious.

By his own admission, as an NQT, new to teaching Jewish Studies at high school level, he was still working things out. His last words to me before the end of the interview were, 'I'll remind you by the way that I've only been teaching here for, as a Jewish studies teacher in high school for, since September. So it's my initial thoughts. It could change.'

POSITIVE WORD ASSOCIATION

T3 described the role as creating a POSITIVE WORD ASSOCIATION with the Jewish Studies teacher, who is representative of Judaism. As an ordained rabbi, this Jewish Studies teacher expects that in the eyes of the students the association between the teacher and the Torah may be even closer than with teachers who are not ordained rabbis.

T3: So, I show that, you know that when they think of Rabbi they've got positive word association, and when they think of what we teach sounds reasonable and it's dignified...

The first positive association is with the material that the rabbi is teaching. If the material sounds reasonable and is 'dignified', students will feel positive about the person who is teaching it.

Additionally, T3 puts real emphasis on the positive association with a teacher who is caring and non-judgemental, who 'validates them as a person' and shows 'love and respect':

T3: Whether or not they're going to marry Jewish is not, () I can't deal with that, those who come from mixed marriages you for sure can't even touch that subject, way too sensitive to go into that. They're not to blame, their dad's a Christian - they never asked for their father to be Christian. Erm, but if I can give them a sense of, when they're making life decisions, and thinking of oh what would Rabbi say, I remember that, we did that... they know that I care about them. A kid who has a birthday they wear these huge badges... I'll

stop them and say HAPPY BIRTHDAY, and it's so Chashuv¹⁴ that humane approach to me validating their existence, as a normal person and not judging anything about them. This is very, very, this is the whole approach that I take, that they say that there's no guilt, it's just love and respect, and that comes from the rabbi, and that hopefully will build other positive associations.

In a similar vein to the excerpt above focusing on the material being 'reasonable and dignified', T3 describes being relevant and useful and having a broader impact on a young person's life as being a way to build positive associations:

T3- ...I want to see myself as having a broader impact on a young person's life. And I think I want them to see me not just as the rabbi that may or may not be someone relevant in their life or in their family's life, but as a teacher. And if I'm relevant in a broader sense then I become more useful to them... I don't want them to have that... see me only relevant in my little classroom...

Taking this a step further, T3 suggests that if he is highly regarded by everyone, including non-Jewish staff for example, pupils will understand that he is worth listening to and in this way, he becomes a good representative for Torah Judaism. In the excerpt below he uses the Yiddish phrase 'Geshmacke guy' to describe how he would like to be viewed. It is difficult to pin down his exact intention in using this phrase. While the word 'geshmack' literally means tasty, in the vernacular it can also be used to represent adjectives such as 'pleasurable' or 'fun'. As it is not possible to know the respondent's exact intended meaning, I would suggest viewing it as being either somewhere in between, or a combination of, 'good bloke' and 'cool guy'.

T3: And that's in my thinking part of my role, to represent Torah in its fullest capacity so the kids hear the non-Jews saying, oh the Rabbi's a Geshmacke guy and all of a sudden it's worth listening to him. Because it's someone who I think is important, the maths teacher and English teacher's important in their secular way of thinking, and now the rabbi's important. They all think that (), I'm very conscious of trying to plant those seeds.

T3 uses the term PLANT SEEDS, a phrase common to a number of participants (either 'plant' or 'sow'). The idea of planting seeds is perhaps best understood in the

¹⁴ Hebrew word meaning 'important' or 'valuable'.

context of the paragraph below, where T3 explains that he is pragmatic in terms of outcomes. Planting seeds by making positive associations may one day lead the students to explore their Judaism and become religiously observant, which would be an 'even greater success'. In reality, though, he knows that the vast majority of students will not become religiously observant and his success criteria are around how many pupils leave school feeling positive about Judaism and their Jewish Studies teachers.

T3: You know obviously if they became Frum¹⁵ that would be an even greater Hatzlacha¹⁶. But I think in the world in which we're living today, we cannot assume anything. And just, you know, the fact that they want to walk around and say that we're Jewish, that's also a great thing. Where these kids have come from, you know...

MAKING IT RELEVANT

While there are references in the above excerpts to showing that Judaism is relevant, other participants spelled this out and described this as the primary goal of the Jewish Studies teacher. I will show later that the majority of the themes were mentioned or at least implied by almost all of the participants, but below are some excerpts showing a clear focus on the material being relevant to the pupils' lives.

T7: ...relevant, enjoyable and to help them to understand, whether we are successful or not, that this is part of their lives and you know, if it is then they should do something about it, they should experience it in a way they have never considered before, and say oh so that is how Judaism is, I never knew Judaism said this, I never knew Judaism said that, to make it relevant in this sense. That is what is important

T11: ...we are moving to more of a textual focus... but it is very much about the values... It's not so much the stories themselves but the values...

R: So what's the goal of that?

¹⁵ Religiously observant.

¹⁶ Success.

T11: That they will be able to apply it and see that there is something real that they can apply to their lives. So for example bullying, we will apply that into a situation of school, or, erm, in this week's Sedra¹⁷, nature versus nurture, to what extent are you the person you are because of how you are brought up or how much can you work on yourself. So it's really practical, how to apply those values to their lives

R: So is the goal to focus on giving them the tools to apply those values, or are you saying that the metamessage is that what the Torah has to say is relevant and is meaningful to your lives?

T11: Yes but that's very much behind the scenes, if it can come across in a subliminal way, that's very much behind, yes, surely they must see that if they have learnt something in primary school and can learn it again and see different messages that are relevant to them now... So you can see that Torah is relevant to your life, but we don't really imbue that again and again, it's just the fact that they can apply those lessons... it's a very subliminal message.

Recurring Themes

The excerpts above highlight themes that were common to most of the interviews. Even in my initial coding of the transcripts, there were a number of recurrent in vivo codes. In vivo codes refer to participants' special terms (see Saldaña 2013, p. 91) and this enabled me to group data even before analysing to higher levels of abstraction.

In line with above excerpts, some of the recurring codes were: SOWING SEEDS; ROLE MODELING; BEING RELEVANT; BUILDING A CONNECTION; ENGAGING MATERIAL; GETTING THEIR VALUES FROM JEWISH STUDIES; OWING THEIR SUCCESS TO JEWISH STUDIES.

Research Question 1

Answers were emerging with regard to Research Question 1: How do Jewish Studies teachers in Modern Orthodox Jewish schools conceive of religious education and the role of the RE teacher?

¹⁷ Weekly Torah portion, read in synagogue on Saturday morning.

Jewish Studies teachers in my research field conceive of religious education as having to do with – in the words of T2 – giving pupils ‘an appreciation of Torah Judaism’ so that when they leave school they ‘want to be connected to it’ are ‘open to the values’ of and ‘have a positive feel for Judaism’.

In response to my open questions on the role of the Jewish Studies teacher, there was little or no discussion around the challenges of teaching for belief in propositions or adherence to religious practice or the moral probity of religious nurture in general. Teachers’ detailed expositions on these questions came mostly in response to the probing questions I put to them as the interview progressed.

With regard to teaching for belief in propositions or adherence to religious practice, teachers all seemed to recognise that, if for pragmatic reasons alone, their approach had to be about sowing seeds and providing positive experiences in the hope that pupils would be inspired to explore Judaism further after leaving school.

A picture was emerging about ‘what was happening’ and the data showed significant commonality in the approach to teaching Jewish Studies in teachers across the schools in the field. While different teachers emphasised different aspects and there was variance in the nuances of the words and phrases they used, as I got further into data collection and analysis, I became more and more struck by many of the similarities between teachers’ conceptions.

The same was true with regard to teachers’ conceptions of parental wishes, religious propositions and autonomy and other areas of teachers’ conceptions. As with the excerpts above relating to the role of the Jewish studies teacher the excerpts in each of these topics below illustrate the number of themes that run across the data.

4.8.2 PARENTAL WISHES

Participants’ reflections on parental wishes provided one of the bigger surprises of my research. I had taken great pains to define my research field on the basis of the dichotomy between parents’ religious observance and the school’s ethos and fully expected that this would be a live issue for Jewish Studies teachers in these schools.

I expected teachers to be grappling with the question of parental wishes, to be feeling the tension between theirs and the school's mission and the parents' religious observance. The teachers, though, did not oblige. When asked about parental wishes, they engaged with question and provided meaningful answers, but their lived experience could not justifiably be described as being of 'tension' or 'grappling'.

As I will explain later, a lack of tension may in some cases be due to teachers having already grappled with a question and resolved it. If tensions have been negotiated and a new praxis has become second nature, the experience of tensions may no longer be part of daily life. It is difficult to establish whether or not this is the case. A longitudinal study may perhaps succeed in tracking the developing thoughts and changing experiences of the Jewish Studies teacher. My interviews, though, provide a snapshot and it is generally difficult to divine the past from the present. It is sufficient to say at this point that an apparent lack of the experience of tensions may be due to tensions that were experienced previously being long resolved.

Leaving the above imponderables aside, teachers' responses in general, were well summed up by the respondent who on the one hand had a well-honed view on what parents do and do not want and what their concerns might be and, on the other hand said, 'I don't really go around my daily job worrying about what parents believe'.

The excerpts below suggest that teachers understand what they need to do to ensure there is no conflict with parents. Most teachers feel that they have gained strong parental support and that parents are happy with the work of the Jewish Studies department in their school.

Parents are happy as long as there is no 'conflict with their practice at home'

T9: Erm, again there's a split between different parents, there are Jewish parents that just don't care at all, they don't care how much how their kids are being taught, so long as we don't make them religious. I'd say that's true for a very, very large percentage. They're happy for us to teach them about Judaism as long as its theoretical... They're happy for us to teach their kids all about Jewish practice so long as their kids aren't going to come home and change things around. So I used to teach kashrus¹⁸... So as long as the kids

¹⁸ Eating only food that has been sourced and prepared according to Jewish law.

understood, and it didn't conflict, we would tell kids that there's certain things that it's problematic to eat and this is why, this is why you can't just buy er any food in Tesco, because it's going to break these laws. When kids would come home and say 'you say we keep kosher at home and this isn't kosher', that's when it would create question marks, and parents would start raising their eyebrow. But parents aren't really bothered what goes on in the Jewish Studies classroom unless it conflicts with their practice at home.

The above excerpt, and the one below, hint at a point that emerged across the data, and which I will explore later in the chapter, with regard to concerns about religious nurture seeming to be more about practice than belief in propositions.

According to T9, parents are not 'bothered' about what is taught in the classroom, even if that includes religious propositions, as long as what their children learn does not impact on their practice. T9's exact wording, which refers to conflict with the 'practice at home', suggests that some parents may be less concerned about their children being nurtured into religious observance, and more concerned about their children interfering with parents' food shopping choices.

In the excerpt below the focus is on teachers potentially making statements which conflict with parents' liberal values. As T9 explains, parents may be equally exercised by Jewish Studies teachers – or "rabbis" – making statements which they perceive as being too "left wing" or liberal. In short, Jewish Studies teachers understand the need to avoid topics that are 'controversial' in the common meaning of the word. Teaching propositions that are controversial in the sense of being debatable, however, is seen as not being contra parental wishes.

Parents are happy as long as there is no conflict with their 'liberal values'

T9: Erm, you have other parents that, we don't teach enough, ... because they have their preconceived notions about what should go on in the Jewish Studies classroom, because of what they and their parents learnt in Cheder¹⁹... And parents may ask, can't you teach my kids how to daven²⁰.

¹⁹ After school or Sunday school Hebrew studies which take place in a designated classroom at a local synagogue.

²⁰ Pray.

You're the JS teacher, you're the rabbis you should be teaching them how to leyen²¹. Why aren't you teaching my kids how to put on teffillin²². So there's parents who want more of the practice, they expect their kids to know, but don't want anything that's going to conflict with what they are doing... it can't be anything that conflicts with their scientific beliefs, world beliefs or political beliefs. Some of them are very very right wing Jewish and if you teach anything about liberal values, that will conflict, how can a rabbi say that. And it's the opposite as well, if you've got right wing beliefs, what about the poor Palestinians, when we teach about Zionism. When we teach about sexual ideas, we've got to be very very careful that we don't say anything... nothing conflicts with their typically very liberal values.

R: that's not so much parental wishes as general liberal values of society

T9: Absolutely, but I think modern Jewish parents are most in tune with modern liberal values.

Parents are happy as long as their child gets a 'decent GCSE' grade

In the excerpts below, T9 expresses the view that parents are happy with what the Jewish Studies department is providing – in T9's case a good GSCE result. T9 believes that parents do not think too deeply about the content of the Jewish Studies curriculum and T9 sees them as not really having a view on what they want their children to be taught.

R: Do you ever think, if I teach them this or if they believe this that the parents might not want them to believe this, to be nurtured into a particular belief or practice?

T9: Not really, I think most parents are pretty clueless, and don't really see religion, they don't really think about it. I don't really go around my daily job worrying about what parents believe... a history teacher for example who I'm close with, and he tells me the parents aren't particularly interested in what's on the curriculum for history either. As long as they get a decent GCSE, we

²¹ Leading the part of the synagogue service that involves reading from a Torah Scroll with the cantillation of the Masoretic notes.

²² Phylacteries. Black leather boxes with small scrolls inside, worn by men from the age of thirteen during the weekday morning service.

trust the teacher to do it. Again, as long as they're not rocking the boat, so long as we're not going to teach them something that will cause major conflict, so long as we're not going to change the children round that they're suddenly going to demand kosher standards at home, erm, which isn't a common problem.

Parents are happy as long as their children are being “encouraged to think”

In the excerpts below, T7 suggests that parents are happy that the Jewish Studies department is providing engaging and enjoyable lessons. While T7's response could be understood as meaning that the school is not in conflict with parental wishes as the school is not teaching for belief in religious propositions, but simply opening up discussion and debate, a closer reading shows that T7's point is that parents are generally onside and supportive of the department because they appreciate that their children are engaged in the material and are being 'encouraged to think'.

R. Do you think that is because most parents know what they are sending their kids to, they know what the school is about and they realise that it is their choice and they understand that it is an Orthodox school with a particular ethos...? Do you think it is that, or do you think it is more about the sensitivity with which you teach the subject?

T7: I think it is more a case of the fact that they understand that through the Jewish Studies lessons especially in the later years when we are encouraging students to think about things and to consider other people's opinions... and I think they really appreciate the fact that actually we are trying also to help their kids become thinkers and to not take everything as the truth, but to question everything, which we teach in Judaism anyway, we don't say this is what it is and not encourage them to question.

I personally have parents who say "I think that is fantastic. They really enjoy Jewish studies" and they seem genuine about it, because they like the discussion. I get a lot of that positive feedback.

So I think they know the sort of school they are sending to.

I don't think they think too deeply about what is going on in Jewish Studies, but their reaction to the Jewish Studies lessons is you know, we read some of the homework we give, and they say it is really creative, fantastic, very good and really gets them to think. They say "I enjoy helping them and I also start thinking myself".

So we get that which is really nice, and we are encouraging them to think and not doing things in the classroom where we teach them by rote.

Parents know what they are signing up for

In view of all of the above excerpts showing that teachers believe that they are in general not acting contra parental wishes, the excerpts below suggest an implicit contingency for when this breaks down.

The following excerpts are representative of almost all participants (including those above) in showing teachers' belief that when parents send their children to an Orthodox Jewish school they 'KNOW WHAT THEY ARE SIGNING UP FOR'.

T1: ...when children come in here parents are fully aware that there's a very large spectrum of children who come here and they know they're coming to an Orthodox school, so most of the parents are very, very supportive of that and there isn't normally a, a conflict at all. they know what they're signing up for. Its, that's how we are. We're an Orthodox, we're a mixed school, and we've got a (), of frum²³ children and then obviously the rest of () different () some belong to united synagogues, some of Masorti²⁴, some are Reform, some... will go to a, you know either a Federation²⁵ or a Frum shul. So we've got the whole spectrum, but it's never been a conflict, there's nothing I've been aware of... that has ever, ever come out from that

²³ Religiously observant. In this context, the teacher is referring to children from religiously observant families.

²⁴ Members of Masorti Judaism. There are differences in beliefs between Orthodox and Masorti Judaism, particularly with regarding to understanding of the Divine origin of the Torah (*What is Masorti Judaism?*, n.d.). In this context the teacher is talking about the variety of students from religiously observant to non-Orthodox, a category to which she implies Masorti belongs.

²⁵ Federation of Synagogues. A synagogue body representing 33 Orthodox communities, mostly in London ('Communities – The Federation of Synagogues', n.d.). In presenting the variety of religious backgrounds of her students, this teacher seems to see those who belong to a Federation Synagogue as being more aligned with 'frummer' – more religiously observant end of the spectrum.

In discussion with T10, the question arose as to whether all schools had stated their religious values clearly enough. T10 felt that schools should state their values and ethos more openly to ease the way for Jewish Studies teachers to deliver their material unapologetically. It seemed that T10 felt that teachers were, either way, within their rights to follow the school's mission, as by choosing to send their children to the school, parents had to accept the religious values of school. Stating the values more openly would ease the path, but, in the spirit of caveat emptor, the responsibility still remained on parents to know what they are signing up for.

T10: ...this is an Orthodox school under the Chief Rabbi, a US school, we shouldn't shy away from any values that that represents and parents should know that if they are sending their kids to this school it is an Orthodox school under the auspices of the United Synagogue and therefore it is, questions about things which conflict with Judaism, well it might be your kashrut²⁶ we should say no, no, this is what we believe in this school because we are an Orthodox school under the Chief Rabbi.. right, and I think a lot of the parents maybe, just I don't know if they care, to which extent they get their Jewish education, so it could be they are just sending because it is a Jewish school, without any desire for them to get a Jewish education, just an environment which is Jewish, but they don't really care to the extent that they are educated Jewishly...

R: Do you think that the school and other similar schools, could do a better job of saying this is what we stand for?

T10: Absolutely, without a doubt. For some reason in primary school they are not shying away. Under US, this is what we do kosher food etc. Somehow comes to secondary school, got to be more understanding and more accepting and if you come from this background. No! make your stand this is the way it is. If you don't like it send to another school. other schools not under US, liberal and reform focussed and accepting of different backgrounds, fine go to another school.

R: Is the school now oversubscribed?

²⁶ Observance of the laws of sourcing and preparation of Kosher food

T10: Yeh taking on another 30 places

R: So don't need to worry about filling places?

T10: All the more so, and I said tell parents who are coming to the school this is what we stand for. This is it you don't like it too bad. In class I'll give an answer and someone will say but I'm reform and I'm allowed to do this. And I'll say ok, you're reform, doesn't define you as a person, it's your family background, but this school is an Orthodox Jewish school, that's the way it should be, say it the way it is.

Parental wishes - recurring themes

A picture had begun to emerge with regard to teachers' conceptions of parental wishes. As a researcher, I was excited to discover that it was not quite the picture I had expected. Far from grappling with tensions around parental wishes, teachers had much to say on why parental wishes were not of concern to them or something they spent much time worrying about. In short: their praxis is not contra parental wishes and if ever it were to be, parents have to accept the ethos of the school that they have signed up for.

As with the data on teachers' conceptions of the role of the Jewish Studies teacher, while the variance between participants could provide impetus for further research, the similarity and the recurring themes across the data, representing all participants seems to me to be the bigger story and certainly the starting point for deeper analysis.

Codes from across the data capture the recurring themes: PARENTS DON'T REALLY HAVE A STRONG VIEW/ PARENTS ARE NOT BOTHERED/ PARENTS LIKE WHAT WE DO AND ARE SUPPORTIVE/ I DON'T WORRY ABOUT PARENTAL WISHES VERY MUCH/ RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE WOULD ROCK THE BOAT WITH PARENTS/ PARENTS KNOW WHAT THEY ARE SIGNING UP FOR/ THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO A BETTER JOB OF STATING WHAT IT STANDS FOR.

Parents' wishes and pupils wishes

There was, though, one additional thought that came to mind as I discovered that teachers did not seem to be experiencing much tension around parental wishes. Had I perhaps ascribed more agency to parents than to their children? I had thought of the parents as adults with agency and well-developed views and wishes regarding their children's education. I had viewed the pupils as being less intellectually developed and generally more malleable and open to being nurtured for belief in propositions or adherence to practice.

However, the pupils here, ranging in age from 11-18, had agency too and it was possible that I had overestimated the role of parents relative to their children. The children were not in any way 'ripe for the picking' if only parents would acquiesce; the children were of the same culture as the parents, had a similar range of views on life and religion and would take as much convincing as the parents to embrace Judaism's teachings.

If this hunch was right, in the eyes of teachers at least, the question of parental wishes became a non-issue – not because it did not matter, but because it was inseparably bound with the question of what methods to use to engage the children.

Furthermore, my carefully drawn research field was still a discrete field, not specifically because of parents' observance or parental wishes, but because the cultural and religious background of the students and parents together was the unique milieu in which its schools functioned.

4.8.3 RELIGIOUS PROPOSITIONS AND AUTONOMY

As I noted earlier in this chapter, subsequent to a first round of pilot interviews, I amended my interview schedule to focus more on the theoretical issues from the literature relating to indoctrination and the autonomy of the child. I asked teachers directly about questions of autonomy, whether they felt that their religion's propositions and truth claims were based on rationally decisive evidence and, accordingly, how these propositions should be taught.

It was apparent from teachers' eloquent responses that they understood the problem and could make an argument for why their practice was not indoctrinatory. There

are in essence two interdependent parts to the question. The first part relates to whether the truth claims and propositions under consideration can be said to be founded on rationally decisive evidence and I expressed this question as follows:

R: Part of the debate around autonomy relates to the subject matter, so if you are teaching things, the argument goes, based on rationally decisive evidence, you can teach them as fact... So with that in mind how would you evaluate the truth claims, propositions of the Torah and of the tenets of Jewish belief, how would you evaluate that?

The second part to the question addresses whether there can ever be an appropriate method for teaching propositions that are not based on rationally decisive evidence, as the goal of teaching for belief in propositions will mean that the process is by definition indoctrinatory.

R: If your intended outcome is belief in the propositions and your method is through facilitated conversation, does the fact that your goal is belief interfere with or contradict the autonomy of the child?

The second part to the question may be rendered moot if the propositions are deemed to be founded on rationally decisive evidence, in the same way as it argued that most of the content of science or geography in high school is taught as fact.

Later reflecting on this line of questioning, though, I realised that framing a question as binary does not mean that the answers are binary. There is nuance in the question of rationally decisive evidence, even aside from the real-world question of who determines what qualifies as rationally decisive evidence. Equally, there is nuance in the question of teaching methods, such as the extent of criticality and genuine enquiry in the context of Jewish Studies lessons in teachers' classrooms in our field.

I became increasingly aware of this nuance as my binary questions elicited multifaceted responses. Throughout the interviews I felt slightly frustrated at participants' apparent refusal to give straight answers, but as I continued my analysis this gave way to a reflection as to whether I had in fact been asking straight questions. As it happened, I believe that my complicated questions gave rise to

really rich data. Once I accepted that the questions I had posed were complex I was able to reset my expectations with regard to teachers' responses.

Presenting the case and giving them the choice

In response to the question related to methods and facilitated conversation (the second part to the question above), teachers' responses suggested that pragmatic concerns rendered the question academic, as one cannot successfully force someone to believe. At best, there might be some minimal success, but their belief will be stronger if they reach it themselves and have OWNERSHIP OF THEIR LEARNING. The teacher, then, can only put forward the evidence and PRESENT THE CASE, and then the pupil can make a CHOICE.

R: Why do you want them to get there themselves?

T7: Because then they have ownership of their learning and of the goal that they've reached. You've explored it

R: That's almost because it won't work if you make it because of your own authority.

T7: No you have a choice, do you buy that or not buy that. No one wants to be told what to choose, so I say you have a duty to find out for yourself. Take the inspiration if you want. But not here this is what it is, you take that read it 20 times. And if people can make their own way to becoming maaminim²⁷ surely that's much stronger. Unless sometimes you say the right thing, a personal story that inspires or pushes the right buttons, there's nothing wrong with that.

In the excerpt below, T7 argues that as long as it is clear that it is their choice, the fact that the teacher's ideal goal is that the student comes to believe, does not interfere with the child's autonomy.

²⁷ Literally 'believers'. The term is usually used to refer to belief in all of Judaism's principles of faith, principally belief in G-d as Creator, divine providence and divine origin of the Torah.

R: If your intended outcome is belief in the propositions and your method is through facilitated conversation, does the fact that your goal is belief interfere with or contradict the autonomy of the child?

T7: No because as we tell them, the choice is with them. The autonomy is that they have a choice, I can't force someone to make a decision, you can say under duress, but we certainly aren't doing that. At the end of the day the buck ends with you. You make this choice or that choice do you believe it or not.

T11, below, states that they 'don't debate the fundamentals'. She would not encourage a debate in class about whether G-d exists, as this is fundamental to the school's ethos, but nor would she force that belief on the students. In response to my suggestion, she agrees that she is PRESENTING A CASE to the pupils.

T11: I think we present it and it's their job they do what they want with it, but there's nothing forced on them at all

R: So you're presenting a case to them

T11: We're presenting a case and... we do have debate. We won't debate if it's true or not, but we'll say, Torah shebichsav²⁸, she ba'l peh²⁹, what's the importance of them, let's weigh up, why do they need each other. But we would never say let's debate if there is a G-d, we sort of take that for granted that's what we present to them and move on from there, but there's nothing forced and it's their choice of what they do with that

The notion of presenting a case was expressed in different terms by T10 below, who said he wants them to at least be aware that the world view of Judaism is there as 'another alternative'. By teachers' own admission, only a small percentage of pupils leave school with a meaningful connection to their faith. On the basis of these numbers, most pupils do not see Judaism, its propositions, its laws and lifestyle as a

²⁸ The Written Law of Hebrew Bible.

²⁹ Literally the 'Oral Law'. Refers to the Talmud and wider body of rabbinic law and wisdom. The Oral Law is so called in contradistinction to the Written Law, which was scribed from the time it was given. The body of knowledge that forms the Oral Law was mostly transmitted orally until the Mishna was redacted in the third century.

realistic option for them. Far from indoctrinating, argues T10, Jewish Studies teachers are simply PRESENTING THE CASE:

R: The point is though that you do have a goal, however unrealistic, you would like them to come out believing that the things you are putting forward are true.

T10: At the very least, to be open to considering that it could be true, so just to at least be questioning and thinking that there is another alternative. Not that they do believe but they are aware that there are other alternatives to seeing the way the world functions. It's not that they are going to come out believing but that they will be open to understanding and questioning and looking at things in a different way. Certainly, before the actual belief that they will be able to question.

While it was striking how strongly T4 below would argue the case for Judaism and its propositions, he would still work to ensure that debates and disagreements were NOT PERSONAL. He wanted to communicate how passionately he believes in Judaism's propositions, while still making it clear that pupils are entitled to their view:

T4: Erm... I would, never, I hope I would never turn round in a class and say my opinion is, and the reason being that then that makes it personal between them and me... I would say that Judaism therefore, Torah would therefore teach us on that particular matter as opposed to my particular opinion. So therefore when the child would challenge, which they do regularly, would challenge, and obviously it has to be within reason and respect etc. rather than them just trying to be difficult, but if I gauge on the majority of occasions when they challenge, I would explain that you're not challenging me personally, you are challenging what I've just explained to you. And then I would... on behalf of Judaism and the Torah, I would then respond back to them... If I still feel they are not happy, or they're not convinced or whatever, I would say you are entitled to your opinion, I would perhaps give them the feeling that they have their own view, and therefore as a result I have shared with them what the Torah says, Ok, on what is the correct path... But if they are still adamant, passionate that they oppose that I would say if that's how you feel, you are entitled to your opinion, but I am just telling you and

informing you and educating you of what the Torah the Jewish path will be on such a matter.

T3 below argues that they don't teach for beliefs as such. Nonetheless, he made it clear that they do teach religious propositions as facts. As with T11 above, the fundamentals are presented as axiomatic to the school's ethos and even the teacher's faith, and the teacher is essentially saying that while this is his perspective, there is no expectation that pupils accept those propositions as true.

T3: Yes, if you want, that's your aim of teaching, yes. If you're suggesting that you want them to have certain beliefs that are important to you then yes you are doing that. Here we are not doing that at all, we have no desire for any beliefs.

R: What do you mean by that?

T3: We don't teach beliefs. We don't teach anything serious, we'll say things about Hashem and Moshe Rabbenu³⁰ as matter of facts, but we don't teach it as in you have to believe in these facts. For example, I'll give you an example. In the notes here we're beginning to work on Islam. So I wrote down here, we have to train ourselves to say according to Muslims, Muslims believe, Islam says, Islam teaches. As opposed to Moshe came down from Har Sinai.

T3 sums up his own view on the question of indoctrination and autonomy with the largely unsolicited lengthy statement below:

T3: ...You know you can define a school as under the auspices of the Chief Rabbi, but what if the parents don't understand what that means? Would they then have a right to complain? And you say well you sent your kid to the school, you've signed up for this. So, er, another potential worry for us is a kid who... goes to a reform shul... If we would come down on a side that would make them feel uncomfortable, we would lose that kid... And I think that's part of our success, that we've bridged this void between our lifestyle and the kids who are so secular and so not connected in any obvious way to the practice of Judaism, and I think that some of these other areas might be correct on a

³⁰ Moses our Teacher.

hashkofo³¹ level of making kids more religious, but I think we could lose kids. Knowing that kids like what we do and see us as worthwhile and come to us and know that we're there for them means that we know that we've planted a rabbi in the life of that child.

.... two years ago in this room, last day of Year 13 one of the students said to me, I'm not religious, she says, but the Judaism that you have shown us is very, very beautiful and I think Judaism is beautiful because of it... And that to me was a tremendous success. The girl had no intention to be frum, but at some point in her life she'll look back and make a choice and who knows whether a marriage partner or something, and we've put that, to me that was tremendous hatzlacha³² that she left thinking positively when she had so many reasons to just see it as a necessary evil of what she had to endure to get a good education with her friends in a Jewish high school . And that to me was a beautiful moment of what we do here. And I wish that we could give that gift to everybody.

The moral question with regard to nurturing for belief in propositions, according to T3, is a sideshow. T3 is satisfied that any number of approaches could be justified morally, but they are put into the shade by the pragmatic concerns. For example, if parents were to complain about any element of the Jewish Studies department's provision, even if they do not have a moral right to complain, damage is still done to the relationship and the possibility of impacting the child. Pragmatic reasons alone would be enough to avoid any practice that might be seen as indoctrinatory and instead a focus on demonstrating the beauty and relevance (see also excerpts from T3 above) of Judaism, rather than on forcing the issue of its truth claims, will be more likely to bear fruit and achieve the goals of the department.

Pupils know what the teacher believes

With all the talk about open discussion and debate and teachers not making it personal, participants understood that pupils certainly know what their teachers believe. They know their teachers are religiously observant Orthodox Jews – obvious

³¹ Jewish philosophy and outlook. This teacher seems to be suggesting that there is a difference between what is true philosophically and what will pragmatically help him achieve his mission.

³² Success.

in many cases from the way they dress – and in some cases ordained rabbis. When Jewish Studies teachers are engaging their pupils in open debate and asking “well what do you believe”, it seems reasonable to assume that the pupils know what the teachers believe and understand that they are facilitating debate or playing ‘devil’s advocate’.

These teachers see no issue with their pupils knowing what they believe and they might argue that this approach is more honest than a pretence of criticality. It is better that pupils know which propositions are non-negotiable in the teacher’s eyes than that they engage in a sham joint investigation into the existence of a creator, for example. While there is arguably still a concern that children who are in thrall to a charismatic teacher may seek to be like that teacher and come to believe what the teacher believes, this does not seem to be sufficient reason for Jewish Studies teachers in an Orthodox Jewish school to be evasive about what their beliefs are.

R: I want these students to come out with emuna³³ in Hashem³⁴ and Torah min hashamyim³⁵. Is that the end goal?

T7: Definitely, that would be an ideal, but we’re very careful not to force feed or to say this is what I think. We always say, well never mind what I believe, what do you think about the ten plagues. Obviously they can guess what I think. I try to play the role of neutral facilitator. We want them to get there themselves. Have a look at this text from a very prominent rabbi for example, what do you think

R: Right. But it will be clear that that’s what you believe?

T4: Pardon? It is in my opinion very obvious to all the students that that’s what I believe by what I’m wearing and what I represent. But by not saying my opinion I’ve not made it personal. For example, when you do get to the very controversial topics, like you mentioned earlier, whether you’re talking about today, homosexuality, whether you’re talking about transgender, which we have... these controversial topics that come up in the classroom, where I must not say what my opinion is, because I will be quoted, ok, and it will come

³³ Belief.

³⁴ Literally ‘The Name’. Hashem is the term most commonly used in Orthodox circles to refer to G-d.

³⁵ Divine origin of the Torah. Lit. Torah from heaven.

back to try and haunt me. It will come back, a parent could put in a complaint... So if one keeps it quite... neutral and shares only what the Torah, or Judaism, will say, Orthodox Judaism, would say on such topics, it keeps it much more at bay.

Rationally decisive evidence for religious propositions

The excerpts below show that there is some variance among teachers with regard to the question of whether Judaism's propositions are founded on rationally decisive evidence. As I noted above, the binary nature of the question coupled with the complexity of the issue may have led to participants' answers being intricate and not always unequivocal.

Some teachers were clear that Judaism's propositions are founded on rationally decisive evidence and could quote sources that deal with this question and support this above position. Even the one teacher (T3) who was critical of the above view for its lack of criticality, still conceded that Judaism's truth claims are 'compelling' and certainly more compelling than those of other faiths.

R: ...How do you view the truth claims of Judaism? The basic tennets, Torah min hashamayim³⁶. Are they based on rationally decisive evidence, and do you teach them as fact? Or does it not hit the same bar as science?

T7: Well teaching as fact, is this is fact and take it as it is. However, we do need to present it as the yesod³⁷ foundation of the jewish people, so present it as that, but it should be also em. Science, here's a fact no discussion. Whereas here its here's a fact what are your thoughts. We are always going to make it clear that this is the Jewish belief and it's your choice. What we are presenting is watertight, but you decide. We are talking about the cosmological argument, teleological argument in our year 11 lesson today and erm, it really is your decision, but you owe it to yourself to explore. If you really

³⁶ Divine origin of the Torah.

³⁷ Literally 'foundation'. This teacher uses the Hebrew word and then repeats it in English, possibly for emphasis.

want to ask then you need to (otherwise you're just asking to be facetious), if you really want to ask then take what we tell you and explore it.

T11: So I often use the idea that 2-3 million people witnessed something and one person can make up a story and pass it along, but can't do that with 3 million people and everyone have the same and passed on from generation to generation, that is the evidence so to speak. But if someone disputes that, the point is that ok we have evidence but at the end of the day, you have choice. But we do, that is our evidence.

R-Part of the debate around autonomy, relates to the subject matter, so if you are teaching things, argument goes, based on rationally decisive evidence, can teach as fact... So with that in mind how would you evaluate the truth claims, propositions of the Torah and of the tenets of Jewish belief, how would you evaluate that?

T4: If I understood you correctly, I would, as I said before, I would go through the rational explanations and arguments presented predominantly by whether it's Rabbi Kelemen and other numerous teachers that have focused in those particular categories and gone through the rational arguments so that those students therefore make their own decisions and understanding of what I am therefore presenting to them. So just to simply focus as I mentioned to you on why Judaism and the Torah is correct and authentic, that's one part, but to also analyse about how other religions started, and present that to them for them to recognise the flaws and the complications that arise as a result of the other religions, which would therefore provide them with a strengthened belief in their own religion.

While none of T7 nor T11 or T4 engaged with the term rationally decisive evidence which I had used in my question to them, their responses suggest that they do view Judaism's truth claims as fulfilling this criterion.

T3 below openly questioned whether Judaism meets the bar of rationally decisive evidence and is critical of those who uncritically assume that it does. If Judaism does not meet the bar of rationally decisive evidence, what basis does he have for his beliefs? Although he does not appear to fully resolve this question, he is open to

consider my suggestion that his belief may be based on the fact that he finds Judaism's claims to have a reasonable evidence base, which is presumably more compelling than that of other religions.

T3: So we like to claim about ourselves that what we believe is factually rational, whereas everybody else is irrational beliefs. However we have our kiruv³⁸ websites and so do the other religions have their kiruv websites, and I've read a few and it's quite freaky... Could be an interesting study, compare Islam's Aish versus our Aish³⁹, see whatever, and compare the methods, could be quite dangerous, probably a theology degree. I think, because I know that, if I didn't know that I would naively say to you well we've got v'yadata hayom vehashevoso⁴⁰, the Keleman book⁴¹, teach it all, we can claim in a court of law this is fact bla bla bla. But when you're aware that other traditions have very similar, in their opinion, rational basis to what they say, then I don't know, what you're really suggesting is a clash between the religions, the theologians, and is it possible to convince others of, that we have some superior rational claim in our tradition to the supposed rational claim of the other traditions? And that's huge, that would need a high court judge to weigh up the evidence.

R: To weigh up the evidence and say, is it legitimate to say that Judaism is based on rationally decisive evidence and other faiths are not. If we are using this bar of rationally decisive evidence. But from the point of view of the Jewish Studies teacher who is himself a ma'amin⁴². You are a ma'amin, I assume that your staff are ma'aminin⁴³, which means they believe that Moshe kibel Torah Misinai⁴⁴ versus Islam says. So you believe that on the basis, whether or not you use the term rationally decisive evidence, but that the

³⁸ Literally 'draw near', the term kiruv refers to Jewish outreach and Jewish outreach organisations. The term is occasionally used pejoratively to indicate a hard-sell approach

³⁹ Aish HaTorah, worldwide Jewish outreach organisation (See <https://about.aish.com/> n.d.).

⁴⁰ A quote from Deuteronomy 4:39 understood to be instructing the Hebrews to remember the Revelation at Sinai 'Know therefore this day and keep in mind that the Lord alone is G-d in heaven above and on earth below'.

⁴¹ *Permission to Receive* by Rabbi Lawrence Keleman (Kelemen, 1996) , a well-known text in Orthodox circles, which sets out four arguments for rational belief in the divine origin of the Torah.

⁴² Believer.

⁴³ Believers (plural of Ma'amin).

⁴⁴ The opening words from the Mishnaic tractate *Ethics of the Fathers*, 'Moses received the Torah from Sinai'.

evidence for Judaism is more compelling or is stronger at least than the other main, other two Abrahamic faiths.

T3: If we establish that as a starting point, then we'd have as much legitimacy as science teaching certain things as fact and as geography and it wouldn't be a contradiction to the autonomy of the child.

R: ...Would you go for that one?

T: (pause) I think that could work... Yes that could work. Again we don't deal with the topic, just because emotionally it's a disconnect for the kids in what we're finding, We have discussed over the years, to maybe run a discovery seminar of that type of concept... might be interesting to run something along those lines with a year group and see how they respond as a pilot scheme then explore further...

This teacher, after being pushed, agreed that teaching for belief in propositions may compromise the autonomy of the child, but insisted that his school is not involved in such a morally questionable practice: 'Here we are not doing that at all, we have no desire for any beliefs'.

He goes on to explain the pragmatic reasons for his department's approach to Jewish studies, which focusses on showing the relevance and 'beauty' of Judaism. He and his colleagues had considered running a 'Discovery style' seminar, which focusses on logical proofs for Judaism (see JewishColumbus, 2019), but he is concerned that it may be divisive and may lead to teachers losing their connection or 'access' to the less religiously involved students.

On the one hand, this teacher demonstrated sensitivity to the moral issues relating to the autonomy of the child, and was keen to make the claim that his department's methods did not fall foul of these moral issues. However, analysis of his responses to other questions and other views he expressed throughout the interview suggest that the main driver in developing his approach to teaching Jewish Studies was the instrumental concern related to maintaining a CONNECTION and positive relationship with the students and showing the BEAUTY AND RELEVANCE of Judaism so that students would REMAIN OPEN to embracing their religion at some point after they have left school.

Religious propositions and autonomy – recurring themes

It seemed to me that teachers' views with regard to religious propositions and autonomy could be summarised as follows: Judaism's truth claims could be said to be based on rationally decisive evidence (or at the very least, on compelling evidence) and could probably be taught as fact, but anyway we are not teaching as fact or teaching for belief in propositions.

This argument could be flipped to state: We are not teaching for belief in propositions, but as it could be argued that these propositions are based on rationally decisive evidence (or at the very least, on compelling evidence) they could probably be taught as fact.

As with the above contingency with regard to parental wishes, a two-pronged argument of this nature is difficult to disprove. As I argued in Chapter 2 a moral argument based on a confluence of factors as opposed to a deductive argument based on a single premise is difficult to disprove or even to comprehensively evaluate.

Either way, the teachers' argument is that they are presenting a case. The pupils know what the teachers believe, hear the arguments they put forward in support of their beliefs, and they are entitled and encouraged to make their own choices.

This facilitated conversation, debate and enquiry that teachers describe is not the same as the critical religious education that Andrew Wright argues for, for example. Here, there is never any question as to what teachers believe – and by implication what they would ideally like everyone to come to believe. There is just, according to the teachers, an atmosphere of respect for those who do not share those beliefs.

4.8.4 TOPICS THAT ARE 'DIFFICULT TO TEACH'

I noticed that teachers' responses to the question "are there any topics that you find particularly difficult to teach" seemed not to tend towards issues that are sensitive, such as gender and sexuality, but towards topics that students do not find interesting or relevant. Although T4 did answer immediately by referencing the challenges of

teaching about homosexuality, other teachers, such as T2, mentioned topics that do not resonate with the students.

It became apparent to me when interviewing T7 that Jewish Studies teachers' primary focus is often to be relevant and engaging. Where the aim is to make lessons engaging, the most sensitive and controversial topics may be the ones that are, in one sense, the least difficult to teach. Teachers seemed most satisfied when they believed that students will look back on a lesson feeling that they have had an interesting and engaging discussion.

T7: I have taught a class in my sixth form class where we spoke about homosexuality and there was a boy who was gay, and it ended up actually having a really nice good conversation, him and I, and there were other students commenting, a very adult good conversation and it was nice, it was very good. It was like a mutual discussion and trying to understand. It was good, but it was mainly led by him and I just sat and listened, and I think he really appreciated that, and was actually quite surprised that a Religious Studies teacher of the stereotype would actually do that and listen and I let him speak and he felt quite empowered by it.

In the excerpt above, T7 is happy that a difficult topic led to an engaging discussion. As he states in the excerpt below, he believes that making a topic ENGAGING or even INSPIRING should be a Jewish Studies teacher's first priority.

T7: First of all, when you teach a lesson, you look at a lesson and you think how am I going to teach the ten Plagues in an exciting (I mean the ten Plagues are exciting), you know teach something about shechita⁴⁵ in an inspiring way. So, that should be the first port of call anyway for any Jewish Studies teacher.

4.8.5 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

While I have shown similarities among participants and themes that recurred across the data, there was of course divergence in some areas, from the choice of words

⁴⁵ Laws pertaining to ritual slaughter of animals for the purpose of eating.

and language participants used, to what appeared to be some substantive disagreements. In my analysis I chose to focus on the similarities rather than the differences for two reasons.

The first reason is that recurrent phrases and codes can be best analysed by comparison to each other. The process of moving from open codes to focused codes and theoretical codes works by grouping different data together based on similarities and showing, by means of higher-level analysis, how the data are connected. The second reason is that points made by only one or two participants are not necessarily representative of the field and may reflect context specific issues that are unrelated to the experiences or conceptions of other participants or the field in general.

For the above reasons, I kept an open mind with regard to any themes that emerged in early interviews and looked to see if these were replicated in subsequent interviews. The findings I have shared in this chapter represent the themes that recurred across all or most of the participants, rather than issues mentioned by a very small number of participants.

Issues mentioned by a small number of participants, included, for example, the question of governors supporting the work of the Jewish Studies department, which was mentioned in just two interviews. Another niche issue was raised by one participant who dedicated a significant part of the interview to contemplating the significance of why the subject is called 'Jewish Studies' rather than 'Kodesh' (Sacred studies) as it is in the 'frummer' Orthodox schools. This point, though, was not mentioned by any of the other participants.

In an early round of interviews, I heard from two colleagues in the same department, who – each apparently referring to the other – suggested that the religious background of a Jewish Studies teacher affects her approach to her work, there being a difference between those who are raised religious and those who come to religious observance later in life, or during their time as university students. At the time I interviewed these teachers, I expected that this would be a recurring theme and that this topic would provide rich data for analysis. However, the issue of different backgrounds of teachers was not mentioned in any subsequent interviews, including the second round of interviews with the same participants.

It turned out that a small number of codes did not fit into the categories at the higher levels of analysis. Codes that did not fit in, were generally context specific and the result of my asking the open question 'tell me about your experience as a Jewish studies teacher.

In summary, the above responses suggest that there are some possible areas for further study, but once I had all the data and began analysis it became clear which divergent views and niche issues were unique to individual participants rather than representative of any group of participants and where, based on the two reasons I gave above, I should place the focus in my higher-level analysis.

4.9 HOW MUCH DATA IS REQUIRED TO PRODUCE THEORY?

Having outlined the findings from the interviews, I want now to return to the question of data collection and 'saturation'. There are two distinct but related points to address with regard to data saturation. The first is the question of sampling and whether the data collected is sufficiently representative of the diversity in the research population. The second is whether enough rich data has been collected to address the research questions and to enable analysis that can lead to a meaningful theory.

Grounded theory methods address the above two questions with the idea of, respectively, *theoretical sampling* and *theoretical saturation*.

4.9.1 THEORETICAL SAMPLING AND THEORETICAL SATURATION.

Theoretical sampling involves choosing the sample based on the categories germane to the emerging theory. The researcher makes decisions as to who will provide the most "information-rich source of data" for the developing analysis (Birks & Mills 2011, p. 11), as opposed to necessarily looking to sample a group that represents a cross-section of the population.

Theoretical sampling, by definition can only take place once data collection has already begun (see Birks & Mills 2011, p. 70, who, contra Charmaz, advocate using a form of theoretical sampling from the first interview.). Accordingly, a sense for sampling will develop as the iterative grounded theory process moves along, with the

researcher eventually forming a view on whether or not participants with different characteristics or backgrounds provide meaningful variety to the data.

The strategy for sampling used in the initial stages of data collection is referred to, in more general literature on qualitative research, as "Purposive sampling" (c.f. Stake 2005, p. 451; Gobo 2006, p. 418) or, in grounded theory literature, as "Purposeful sampling" (Morse 2010, p. 237; Birks & Mills 2011, p. 71). The idea is to give some initial thought to which potential participants might provide a variety of responses. Further, as data is often best understood by comparison, it is sometimes worthwhile observing two or more cases before breaking from data collection for analysis (Gobo, 2006). Purposive sampling, therefore, can be used to help gather rich data from the beginning of the research.

In grounded theory, the researcher is thought to have enough data once she feels that she has reached *theoretical saturation*. Data is collected and analysed until new data appears no longer to yield any new categories or concepts that have not been found in previous data. When the researcher believes that theoretical saturation has been reached and the categories have been developed to a high level of theoretical abstraction that remains grounded in the data, the final stage is the writing.

In light of the above, it appeared that, once I had analysed data using the second level of coding (*focused codes*), after 7 or 8 interviews, each new interview added relatively little that was new in terms of abstract ideas that had not been raised by other participants. Nevertheless, theoretical saturation can only be said to have been reached once the data has been developed to the point of emerging theories, the subject of the next chapter.

4.9.2 RECORD OF INTERVIEWS AND PARTICIPANTS

While grounded theory accepts the approach of moving from participant to participant in search of rich data without paying too much attention to whether the sample is representative, it seems worthwhile to at least consider retrospectively whether the sample covers the breadth of variety within the research population.

My purpose in doing so is to show that in the findings that I have presented above and the analysis of those findings below I have given full consideration to possible

divergent views with my research field. It is difficult to know how categories such as age or gender for example might influence outcomes, but if my participants include a fair spread of both age and gender then my findings are more likely to be representative of the whole field rather than to just a narrow group within the field. To make the claim of theoretical saturation – particularly in looking for recurring themes – I need to be satisfied that I have not missed out a particular group that would have been likely to return different or new data.

The table below shows all interviews and lesson observations that I had conducted, relative to the size of the research field of 6 schools and an estimated 34 Jewish Studies teachers. (I based the numbers of Jewish Studies teachers on information provided on the schools’ websites and anecdotal information and they are therefore in some cases approximations.)

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6	Totals
Round 1	2	2	2	1	0	0	8
Round 2	0	4	0	3	1	0	7
Total interviews	2	6	2	4	1	0	15
Number of unique participants	2	4	2	3	1	0	12
Lesson Observations	0	0	0	1	2	0	3
Estimated number of Jewish Studies teachers in each school	7	4	2	10	1	10	34

Research Sample - Key points

- 5 schools are represented out of a possible 6 in the field
- 12 teachers have been interviewed out of a possible 34 in the population
- 3 out of 12 participants were female
- 4 out of 12 participants were NQTs or new teachers
- 5 out of 12 were heads or assistant heads of the Jewish Studies department
- Ages were difficult to gauge but appeared to range from early 20s to around 50
- 5 out of 12 participants were ordained rabbis; 7 out of 12 were not ordained rabbis

In summary, I believe that the interviews I conducted, although fewer than I had initially hoped for, provided sufficient and appropriately varied data to conduct a full grounded theory analysis by means of completing focussed coding on all the interview transcriptions and developing these codes to higher level of theoretical abstraction through use of theoretical codes.

4.10 FROM FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS TO THEORY

Subsequent to the findings I described above, which called on the use of initial open coding, focused coding, memo writing and constantly returning to the data, my next step was to use grounded theory methods to take the data to higher levels of abstraction by means of third level coding and allow the 'theory' to emerge.

In the literature on grounded theory methods there is an array of different approaches, charting the evolving grounded theory of the originators Glaser and Strauss from the 1960s to date. Each of the more prescriptive methods appear to be open to debate.

For example, paradigms in initial coding, recommended by Corbin and Strauss (1. There are conditions – why, where, how and what happens, 2. There are inter/actions and emotions, 3. There are consequences – of inter/actions and emotions), are strongly rejected by Glaser as they are liable to force data into a

theoretical framing of the researcher's making as opposed to allowing theory to emerge inductively from the data (see Birks and Mills, 2011, p. 96). Similarly, Glaser's theoretical coding families are evaluated by Charmaz, who outlines the pros and cons of using these coding families (Charmaz, 2014, p. 151).

In summary, the more prescriptive methods of grounded theory are open to debate amongst grounded theorists and it would appear that by following a small number of key criteria a researcher could justify referring to her study as a 'grounded theory' or a 'grounded theory study'. As Glaser himself writes: "Let me be clear. Grounded theory is a general method" (Glaser, 1999, p. 9).

I outlined the key criteria for grounded theory in Chapter 3. Theories are developed 'from research grounded in qualitative data rather than deducing testable hypotheses from existing theories' (Charmaz, 2014, p. 6); a researcher will 'gather data and conduct research in parallel throughout the entire project' (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014, p. 155); analysis is conducted by means of different levels of coding from which increasingly higher levels of abstraction emerge.

Broadly, I have been following the process recommended by Charmaz, who discusses using the following series of coding sets: initial, focused, axial and theoretical. Charmaz weighs the pros and cons of using axial coding, which she warns can make grounded theory cumbersome (Charmaz, 2014, p. 150).

I used initial and focussed codes throughout the period of data collection and through early analysis and realised that I could progress directly to theoretical codes without the need for axial coding, as long as I was able to find an appropriate means by which to organise and group the data.

From Open Coding to Focused Coding

Earlier in this chapter, I shared the findings from my interviews, which emerged by means of the lower levels of grounded theory style coding and the iterative process of memo writing, reflecting and returning to the data. Initial coding showed that a number of practices across participants in different schools in the country were recurring across the data, with some common descriptions and some apparent commonality in their goals and conceptions of their role. The second level of coding,

“focussed coding”, brought together some of the most common practices and themes, many of which coalesced around a number of “in vivo” codes.

In vivo codes refer to participants’ special terms and the recurrence of them eased the move from initial, open coding to focused coding, as I was able to retain codes that appeared significant due to their ubiquitousness without having to prematurely theorise these codes.

Initially, more open codes were used for data that did not easily fit any of the emerging categories, but by grouping together the focused codes based on the areas they were addressing or the research questions they were responding to, themes began to emerge, whereby things participants had said that had been coded as unrelated, began to appear connected around particular themes.

As the themes described above emerged, I was able to begin work on developing higher level theoretical codes. In the next part of this chapter, I will explain how a relatively small number of codes captured almost all of the data, with seemingly unrelated practises or statements of participants being explicated according to these codes. At the end of the chapter, I will consider how the themes signified by each of these theoretical codes might together shed light on my research questions.

4.10.1 THEORETICAL CODING

As I explained in Chapter 3, theoretical coding involves developing the initial and focussed coding categories into groups or 'families' of categories with a higher level of theoretical abstraction. Charmaz (2014, p. 150) portrays theoretical codes as ideally being emergent from the previous levels, but recognises that the process will to some extent involve applying analytic schemes. It is at this stage in the research that some prior knowledge or existing literature can be used in fostering the theoretical sensitivity that can help with theoretical abstraction.

Applying theoretical frameworks to a grounded theory study

The philosophical analysis of religious education presented in my literature review provides the background and acts as a theoretical framework to the grounded theory

study. I am conscious of the need to address how a philosophical analysis of a topic sits together with a sociological theory.

Birks and Mills explain how theoretical frameworks from other disciplines can be utilised in a grounded theory study:

Most of the theoretical codes proposed by Glaser (2005) derive from sociological theory, although he does suggest that those from other disciplines can be used. He further acknowledges that more than one theoretical code may prove relevant to a developing theory, in which case a combined approach may prove appropriate.

We strongly encourage the use of theoretical frameworks derived from your own discipline where these prove relevant in explaining your grounded theory and discussing the contribution it makes to knowledge in your professional area. In reality these are the theoretical constructs with which you are most familiar, notwithstanding Glaser's (2005) advice that the researcher should be continually open to learning as many theoretical codes from as many sources as possible. We suggest that while you should seek opportunities to expand your repertoire of knowledge, you should use what is available to you as long as it 'fits'. Through applying the work of others to your storyline, you are able to augment, support and validate existing theories and in so doing explain and reinforce the value of your own contribution. As Glaser (2005) points out, using theoretical codes in this way ensures that the process is a reciprocal one, with the shared aim of expanding a knowledge base. (Birks and Mills, 2011, p. 125)

With the above in mind, it seemed likely that the key themes from my literature review would continue to inform the analysis of the data and provide the basis for some of the theoretical codes that develop.

In Chapter 3, I wrote about approaching grounded theory from a critical realist standpoint rather than the strictly constructivist standpoint of Charmaz. In critical realist terms I would look at "reasons as causes" (Bhaskar, 1998, p. 80), linking the understanding of participants' behaviour – the 'why' of a grounded theory study – to the social structures in which they operate. Critical realism accepts the hermeneutic insight, understanding intentional human behaviour as value-dependent (Norrie,

2010, p. 10) and it seems that teachers' conceptions can be analysed by staying close to the methods espoused by Charmaz for constructivist grounded theory, while using a critical realist ontology in developing theoretical codes that take into account the intransitive social structures

4.10.2 MEMO WRITING AND EMERGING THEORY

Memo writing is used throughout the process of grounded theory data collection and analysis to help develop the categories and to suggest possible theoretical direction based on ongoing observations. To get this process going, I took two coded transcriptions and wrote numerous memo notes, each one describing one of the codes and my instinctive understanding (or "hunch") of what was taking place. The 50 or so memos that I was using seemed to me to represent codes and themes that had been repeated across the majority of participants.

I then looked for possible ways to group these memos together based either on them addressing the same basic questions and topics or on my sense that they were connected at a higher level of abstraction.

By working to group more than 50 memo notes together in this way I started to discover ways in which the codes and themes were connected at a theoretical level. I was left with three memos which did not obviously fit into any particular group. A memo relating to the level of support the teacher felt the department had from the school's chair of governors, for example, had no obvious place amongst the other groups of memos.

Once I had noted the nascent theoretical codes that emerged from those groups of memos, I was able to use those nascent codes to look across the data and find more and more lower level codes that fit into those nascent groups of theoretical codes.

Further, I discovered that these theoretical codes seemed to have real explanatory power and shed light on particular statements made by participants in the interviews.

According to Thornberg and Charmaz, 'theoretical codes consist of ideas and perspectives that researchers import to the research process as analytic tools and lenses from outside, from a range of theories. Theoretical codes refer to underlying

logics that could be found in pre-existing theories.’ (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014, p. 160). With reference to the literature review that I undertook before commencing interviews, I found that, for the most part, I was able to develop theoretical codes which captured both the common themes in the data and the ‘logics from pre-existing theories.’

4.11 THE THEORETICAL CODES

I have chosen to express the theoretical codes as four pairs. While the two codes in each pair may appear at first glance as opposites, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive and are generally best understood by comparison with each other. There is also significant overlap between the pairs with some codes being best understood with reference to other codes.

The four pairs of codes are:

Soft Parental Wishes – Hard Parental Wishes

Religion as Product – Religion as Propositions

Autonomy as Choice – Autonomy as Criticality

Epistemology of Religion – Transmission of Religion

My aim in this section is to show how large parts of the data, in particular the recurring themes, fit into the theoretical codes and, the corollary to this, how the theoretical codes appear to explicate the data.

4.11.1 SOFT PARENTAL WISHES – HARD PARENTAL WISHES

As I explained in my introduction and literature review, I had viewed the dichotomy between parental wishes and the schools’ ethos and aims, unique to schools in the field, as a possible source of tension for Jewish Studies teachers. I had expected that Jewish Studies teachers, conscious of the cohort of parents, might feel constrained by parental wishes.

I discovered from the very first interview and throughout almost all subsequent interviews that, for whatever reason, teachers did not seem to be grappling with the question of parental wishes and, for the most part, did not see parental wishes as a constraint on their praxis.

There appeared to be a number of reasons for this:

- a) Teachers' conception of soft parental wishes
- b) Teachers/ Jewish Studies departments have learned to avoid controversy and gain confidence of parents.
- c) Teachers view parental wishes and students' wishes alike as part of the milieu rather than as a constraint.

a) Teachers' assumption of soft parental wishes

Teachers believed that in general parents do not have a strong view on the content or syllabus of Jewish Studies. This assumption of soft parental wishes was common to most participants.

T10: 'Parents don't care about the Jewish Education'; 'They just want a 'Jewish environment'; 'In a frum⁴⁶ school you know what parents want, but in a school like... you're not really sure'

T3: Parents send their kids to this school for a variety of reasons and to what extent Jewish Studies or the Jewish ethos is their priority of choice, I've never asked, but would assume that it ranks somewhere below the Chol⁴⁷ education. I mean the ambience and not being stabbed etc. is important to them, but the Jewish stuff...

T12: Parents don't have a vision for JS... But they are very supportive... As they get to know you they become more relaxed... maybe worried at first that you are going to convert their kid to a cult, but when then they get to know you and see that that's not on the agenda... and that we focus a lot on character development...

⁴⁶ Strictly observant. A 'frum school' in the context implies a school where the parent body are all strictly observant.

⁴⁷ Secular.

These teachers describe soft parental wishes, with T12 suggesting that although parents may be nervous about religious extremes, they do not have a clear view on what the students should learn or what they should or should not come to embrace or believe.

Teachers contend that parents do not have a view about the content and form of the Jewish Studies lessons, but just want a “Jewish environment”. One teacher takes a slightly different tack in saying that it is difficult to be sure what parents want. It seems that a lack of clarity about parental wishes equates, in some teachers’ minds, to an assumption of soft parental wishes.

The assumption of soft parental wishes (and/or lack of clarity on parental wishes) allows teachers the space to consider questions around the probity of religious nurture with regard only to the child. Hard parental wishes is a complicating factor that both muddies the waters of the moral question around religious nurture and, as we shall see later, may also put the teacher in a position where the fear of a backlash from parents impacts on the way she carries out her work.

T10 (below) felt strongly that the school needs to do a better job of telling parents of prospective students that the school is unapologetically Orthodox. If the school stated its ethos, parents would not be in a position to challenge, but as it stands, parents would have some justification if they were to challenge the school on the way its staff teach Jewish Studies.

R: Are you saying that if school stated its aims clearly that would give you more justification to take the kids down a particular line?

T: Yeh, not to shy away

R: Where currently you feel it’s difficult?

T: Yeh

R: And is that because you feel morally uncomfortable?

T: With pushing a certain way?

R: Yes

T: No, I think it's just because.... erm, is it morally uncomfortable to...

R: to push the kids towards religious belief, emunah⁴⁸, when the parents who have sent them there don't really know what the school stands for?

T: no, I don't think... well, you're less inclined to do that. Well, look if the school is to make it clear and you know that the parents have signed up to this, ok then fine. But if it's not clear and parents are just sending because it's closer or good education for chol ⁴⁹or whatever it might be em...

R: Maybe if parents were to challenge now, you would find it hard to justify to them, whereas if the school came out with it you could say well hold on...

T: Exactly 100%

R: Gives you the upper hand

T: Yeh, you don't have to hide behind anything. More backing to what you are doing.

In contrast, T1, felt that her school had done a good job of stating the school's ethos and this was one of the reasons that the Jewish Studies department did not usually expect conflict and could rely on parents to be generally supportive of their work.

T1: Like I say, parents know what school they're coming to, and others who go to () part of who we are, parents are fully aware that there's a very large spectrum of children who come here and they know they're coming to an Orthodox school. So most of the parents are very, very supportive of that and there isn't normally a, a conflict at all. They know what they're signing up for. It's, that's how we are.

T10, who believed that his school was not doing a good enough job of stating its ethos, felt the school's not stating its Orthodox ethos openly made it difficult for Jewish Studies teachers to state the Orthodox view unequivocally and left them exposed to complaints from parents. Although the teacher appears to dissemble

⁴⁸ 'Faith' or 'belief'.

⁴⁹ Secular academic studies.

when asked whether there is a moral issue at play, the candour with which this particular respondent approached the interview suggests that a more likely interpretation is that he was genuinely grappling with the question.

The teacher perhaps felt that, while on the whole, it was reasonable to assume soft parental wishes, a moral issue may come into play if parents have in any way been misled when choosing the school to which to send their child. Where parents have a strong view (hard parental wishes) regarding how their children are taught Jewish Studies, they would be expected to express their view either vocally to the school leadership or by 'voting with their feet' when choosing a school. If parents are not fully informed of what a school stands for, the possibility still remains that they do have a strong view against the practices of the Jewish Studies department. On the other hand, in the absence of any vocal complaints, the teacher might argue, the assumption of soft parental wishes still remains a reasonable one.

The assumption of soft parental wishes seemed to allow teachers to view parental wishes as neutral or a nonfactor. Teachers understood that they must still address the moral questions around religious nurture and protecting the autonomy of the child, but felt that they can do so largely without reference to parental wishes.

b) Teachers/ Jewish Studies departments have learned to avoid controversy and gain confidence of parents

Beyond their assumption of soft parental wishes, teachers/ Jewish Studies departments work to bring parents onside and gain parents' support for their work. In the first instance, teachers are careful to avoid sparking any backlash or negativity from parents, by being sensitive about what they teach and how they present certain ideas or material. In many cases they also work to manage their own reputation and PR so that parents have confidence in the department and appreciate aspects of the Jewish Studies teachers' work.

Interviewing teachers at different stages of their careers and hearing teachers reflect on their own development or that of their department, I could see that teachers' competence in knowing what to say and what not to say and how to deliver certain topics was the result of individuals and departments adapting over time.

T12, for example, related how in his early days in the role he got into trouble before learning how to be tactful. He explains that he was 'a bit gung-ho at first and saw it as a mission'.

In one of the schools, it was interesting to compare the responses of the experienced head of department and a newly qualified teacher. The head of department maintained that there is no conflict, while the newly qualified teacher was evidently pondering what to teach and how to approach certain topics. The difference between these two participants seemed to represent a journey from a sort of conscious incompetence through to unconscious competence, where the end result is that teachers do not feel constrained by parental wishes, because through a dialectic process they have long adapted their praxis to achieve their aims while avoiding conflict and keeping parents happy.

One experienced head of department felt that they had 'never experienced conflict' with parents because they are always 'very mindful' of who the cohort of children are.

T1: So we've got the whole spectrum, but it's never been a conflict, there's nothing I've been aware of in my 8 years here that has ever, ever come out from that... they are pretty supportive. We have, I mean yes, maybe an odd email may come in, but we respond to parents straight away and either they'll come in and have a talk or normally things are sorted out straight away. Never, it... I don't, honestly, I don't really recall an issue... enough to, for it to stand out in my mind, where there has been you know, oh we'll have to sort of look at that again or re-jig that syllabus. Because we are very, very mindful... of who our cohort of children are.

The NQT in the same school seemed more troubled by the issue of attitudes from the home that might not be congruent with what he was teaching in school and gave the impression that he was still feeling his way on how to avoid conflicts:

T2: Erm, and obviously if somebody puts their hand up and says, "well my mum says the Torah is not from G-d"... so you have, you know you have this discrepancy as well. Erm, and it's also hard because we don't want to discredit the parents, so you don't want to discredit their home life as well,

whereas ultimately as an adult Jewish religious person I believe that (), that there should be more of a Jewish life. They're not doing what they should be doing, and I need to express that in a way which is not conflicting and not maybe offensive for them.

In one of the schools, for example, although some staff were aware that some years before there had been some strong opposition from parents, they now view the incident as something historic that is unlikely to occur in the current climate. This seemed to suggest that the department had long reached a level of competence in avoiding conflict and in general getting buy-in from parents.

T7: Yes, around all the kiruv⁵⁰ that was going on at the time, kids coming home more religious

R: How many years ago?

T7: Fifteen

R: Before your time?

T7 Yes

R: Did that lead to the school fundamentally changing its approach?

T7: Erm, not really, erm, but what we're finding now is we have to have a message on more controversial issues, a standpoint on certain aspects of the curriculum that are now more prominent in society.

In another school, there was a sense from more than one teacher that parents are happy if they can see that the Jewish Studies department is effective in delivering good grades in the Religious Studies GCSE and in giving their children a generally positive experience. It seems to me that teachers feel that as long as children's needs are met in these key areas, parents would be equally happy whether their children end up rejecting or embracing Judaism's truth claims.

T4: No ... and we try to be as professional as possible. We are in check with the Jewish OFSTED, Pikuach, who came this year and gave us outstanding,

⁵⁰ Religious outreach. Sometimes used to indicate a more "evangelical" or hard-sell approach.

and, and the parents know that we're in check, and we try to keep the same standards and therefore the marking and all different things that we do within line that eventually at Key Stage 4 they will do a GCSE, which is mandatory for all these children. Erm, no, we do not come into too much conflict in any way with our parent body.

T3: But then the parents get a lot of joy from seeing us and telling us that their kid says you are their best teacher or enjoy your subject the most. So, they know what their kids enjoy, mostly, enjoy our subject tremendously and that fills the parents with a lot of nachas⁵¹, whether that's vicariously living a religious lifestyle through their children's joy of Judaism, which is great, or just being happy for them that they are enjoying something in school. So, whilst there is that void, there is also that they know their kids are enjoying it a lot so that helps as well.

T3: We're always thinking, the nuances and subtleties of everything, it's PR, but it's not empty PR in a cheesy advertising way, everything is thought out in the curriculum, the tzedaka⁵² that we do, everything goes into () parental buy in.

Moral or pragmatic reasons

It seems worthwhile noting at this point that, from participants' responses it is easy to conflate moral questions and practical issues. I set out to gauge the extent to which the moral question of indoctrination and religious nurture contra parental wishes has been a factor in the way teachers have developed their approach to Jewish Studies, but as pragmatic concerns of avoiding conflict with or complaints from parents also required that teachers seek to ensure that that they avoid acting contra parental wishes, it became difficult to discern whether a particular concern was a moral one or a practical one and whether particular actions were motivated by moral concerns or practical concerns.

My question was, to the extent that teachers have adapted their approach to Jewish Studies to suit the school's constituents, has the key driver been the moral question,

⁵¹ Pride or happiness.

⁵² Charity or acts of kindness.

the pragmatic concern or both? I tried to use more direct questioning in the later rounds of interviews, but this approach seemed not to yield clear answers to the above question.

For example, I asked teachers the question:

By comparison, if you were teaching in the, shall we say, frummer⁵³ schools, where all the students are from observant families, what sort of approach would you take to teaching Jewish Studies?

I had hoped that this would lead to either one of or a balance between the following two responses: a) I would teach according to my beliefs and those of the parents with impunity, or b) The approach taken by those schools is indoctrinatory; I would teach there as I do here.

Instead, the response was more along the lines of how the “frummer” schools may in some cases benefit from a more open approach, as the didactic⁵⁴ approach currently taken, may work for many, but seems to be also responsible for turning some teenagers away from religion and religious belief. There is apparently a pragmatic concern with teaching of religious studies in any setting, with these teachers feeling that didactic methods can backfire and turn students away from religion. For example:

T4: Erm, I feel that if I was teaching in a more observant religious school, I believe there would be from the management and the school, which would serve such a school, there would be an understanding and an expectation to teach *Limmudei Kodesh*⁵⁵ in a particular way. However, personally I feel that even within those particular schools, teachers should never make assumptions...

⁵³ A Yiddish word, meaning devout or pious. Occasionally used pejoratively, but here used descriptively to denote people or groups with strict commitment to religious observance.

⁵⁴ I have used the word didactic in contradistinction to the open debate and facilitated conversation that appears to be taking place in schools in the research field. My intention is to indicate an approach followed in schools where students are from religious backgrounds, where it is assumed that a) parents want their children to believe in the religion’s propositions, and b) children are nurtured in religious belief at home, before joining school, so the Jewish Studies teacher is not nurturing the student to a new or different religious belief.

⁵⁵ Literally ‘Sacred Studies’, refers to (Jewish) religious studies.

I still do not know what teachers' views are with regard to the probity of the more didactic methods of teaching Jewish Studies and which methods they would feel are justified in schools with students from religious backgrounds.

Anecdotally, I am, in a number of cases, aware of the schools to which participants have chosen to send their children and although based on this my instinct was that some participants operate on the view that, where parental wishes are for a strong religious education, a more didactic approach is justified, I struggled to tease this out of them in interview.

There came a point in some interviews where it felt uncomfortable and unfair to probe a question further. I was conscious that my role is not that of political journalist, pursuing a line of inquiry, by repeating a question until the interviewee makes an error or is forced to reveal more than they had intended.

It is quite possible that some actions are taken for moral reasons and others for practical reasons and that in some cases a particular action may be motivated by both moral and practical reasons. In light of the above, and considering the data, it seems that at least some of the work teachers do to bring parents onside may be best viewed as a strategy, motivated by the concern that if parents were to become negative about the department's work or to complain to the school's leadership, this may lead to further constraints upon what Jewish Studies teachers are able or feel confident to deliver.

c) Teachers view parental wishes and students' wishes alike as part of the milieu rather than as a constraint

I noted above that teachers in general did not feel themselves 'constrained' by parental wishes. On reflection, I realised that teachers had perhaps understood the notion of being constrained by parental wishes as implying that, if not for parental wishes they would be able to push a harder agenda of religious nurture on the students.

It seemed, though, that teachers felt the students' own preconceptions and attitudes to religion are as much of a 'constraint' as parental wishes. As Jewish Studies teachers, their job was to look at the whole picture, the whole social structure – the students, their homes, their communities – and find a way to deliver the curriculum

and achieve the goals of the department. Asking whether teachers view the social structure as a constraint was like asking an artist whether she views the canvas as a constraint and it is understandable that the question did not serve to provoke the response I had expected.

Some of the excerpts later in this chapter which show how teachers view their students will provide support for this idea of students and parents being viewed as part of the same context.

4.11.2 RELIGION AS PRODUCT – RELIGION AS PROPOSITIONS

I described above how in open coding a number of in vivo codes eased the move to focussed coding and I listed a number of recurring focussed codes. The process of subsequent higher-level coding and memo writing brought together a number of these codes that had previously seemed unrelated and, in some cases, contradictory.

One emerging theme that ran across much of the data was that of teachers presenting Judaism to the students as a product and students being given the option to choose whether to purchase or “buy into” the product. Autonomy was thus conceived as being more about having options and free choice than about engaging one’s critical faculty to assess propositions or truth claims.

These two themes, or theoretical codes, of “religion as product” and “autonomy as choice” are related and on the face of it interdependent. For the purposes of presenting the evidence in the data, I will deal with each one in turn, beginning with “religion as product”.

Religion as Product

I noticed that teachers were using market language to describe their work:

T4: ...but to try and build them on board and get a, erm a mutual respect and understanding between me and them as opposed to what I assume that they have bought into the product. Just simply because they are religious doesn't mean they have bought into the product.

Numerous references to students' choices, which I will explore below, also hint to the idea that teachers are viewing Judaism as a product that students will, by their own autonomous choice, decide whether to buy.

T9: It's not you are bad if you don't do this. We're not making it like that. Just these are the rules of Judaism. Ok, we don't have to buy into it necessarily.

I realised that many of those most commonly occurring descriptions that teachers had given for their practises started to fit together when understood as relating to the product that teachers were presenting:

SOWING SEEDS; ROLE MODELING; BEING RELEVANT; BUILDING A CONNECTION; EMPOWERING; ENGAGING MATERIAL; OPENNESS; DISCUSSION; FACILITATING; GETTING THEIR VALUES FROM JEWISH STUDIES; OWING THEIR SUCCESS TO JEWISH STUDIES.

If Judaism is the product, it is a product with many facets: its provenance and the evidence of its truth claims; its relevance to modern life and ability to provide a useful value system; its ability to make life more fulfilling; its 'beauty' (however that is defined); its ability to enlighten those who study it and live according to its laws.

The strength of evidence for Judaism's truth claims appeared to be viewed here as only one part of the product – or, put differently, not the only factor on which a decision to embrace Judaism should be based. As a statement about Judaism, I at first found this somewhat counter intuitive. This view of teachers though is not a statement about Judaism per se, but rather a description of the role of the Jewish Studies teacher in presenting Judaism to her students.

Role modelling (a point mentioned by almost all participants), for example, could also be viewed as part of 'presenting a product'. As a religiously observant Jew, the Jewish Studies teacher is herself part of the product.

T11: We teach it as fact because we are in it, we live it, we epitomise it, so for us we are giving over what we are.

One of the early codes was FACILITATED CONVERSATION, which implied that teachers would bring the truth claims of Judaism or some of the key values and principles of the Torah to an open debate with the students. Some teachers reported

using phrases such as 'It doesn't matter what I believe; what do you believe?' or 'What's your view on this?'. At the early stages of interviewing, I understood this as an attempt at criticality, or open exploration, but responses from other interviews suggested that approach was more about getting pupils to engage.

There are instances where teachers will use a distancing technique ('It doesn't matter what I think; what do you think') to avoid being personally associated with controversial or illiberal views. In many cases, though, it seems that teachers are using the 'it's about what you think' approach as a technique to get students to engage with the material.

One teacher described having had a 'satisfying conversation', when a student came to him one day and said that he 'had been thinking last night' about the topic discussed in class the previous day and 'I don't agree'. The teacher found this satisfying because the 'main thing is that he was thinking about it'.

To extend the product-sale metaphor, the teacher is like a car salesperson whose target is not so much to make a sale as to get the customer to take the car for a drive. The teacher is working to present the product and to get the students to engage with or test drive the product.

Another common theme was that of SOWING SEEDS where many teachers felt that their aim was to present enough of a case for Judaism that students would be open to explore further at some future point in their lives. The teacher whose student had spent time at night thinking about the topics discussed in Jewish Studies lesson, felt that he had at least 'planted a seed'.

These Jewish Studies teachers did not present themselves as working with students in a joint critical evaluation of Judaism's truth claims, but rather as PRESENTING A CASE for Judaism. While propositions may be a part of the case that teachers are presenting, they did not view their role as being exclusively about focussing on propositions and engaging in a rational investigation of the truth claims and epistemology of religion.

The first reason, which follows on from definition of the PRODUCT I presented above, is that the teacher is part of the product as a role model of a believing Jew

and it would be giving the wrong message if she were to appear to be assessing Judaism's truth claims with genuine academic scepticism.

To take this point a stage further, presenting Judaism as product requires that Judaism is presented according on its own terms – Judaism from the inside (See Alexander and McLaughlin, 2003, p. 361). Presenting Judaism on its own terms means that its truth claims must be presented as being true, rather than as propositions that might be true and need to be investigated. This is a subtle point and a fine line for teachers to walk, as teachers have stated that it is up to pupils to choose whether to believe. Teachers are looking to hold the line between on the one hand 'Judaism from the inside' – the teacher's perspective – and 'Judaism from the outside' the legitimate perspective of her pupils who have not chosen to believe and to whom she wishes to at least be given the opportunity to present the product.

It is worth noting that teachers seem to be aware that giving the impression that they are open to reaching another conclusion by pretending to be assessing the truth claims, when their minds are already made up, would be disingenuous. There is greater transparency when the teacher states it as she sees it and assuming students understand that their teachers are fully committed religious Jews, they will likely be aware that the teachers have already chosen to believe in Judaism's tenets of faith and are, in a sense, making the case for Judaism.

4.11.3 AUTONOMY AS CHOICE – AUTONOMY AS CRITICALITY

Teachers did, on the whole, recognise that there was a moral issue at play with regards to autonomy and they were keen to explain why their approaches did not impinge on the students' autonomy.

One reason appeared to be that, in their view, they were not forcing Judaism's propositions on the students or claiming that the evidence for those propositions was rationally decisive and must be accepted as fact.

The main argument teachers put forward in support of their approach was that autonomy is about choice and, by not forcing anything on the students, but rather

presenting a case for one of a number of options, the choice remained in the hand of the student.

T7: They still have autonomy, because we tell them that the choice is with them... you choose whether to believe it or not.

T4: Yes, we give them options. And pathways, empower them to make those choices

This argument was put forward by a number of teachers and the implication is that by giving the students another option that they would not otherwise have had, an option closed off to them by their relatively secular upbringing, Jewish Studies teachers were actually increasing their autonomy by widening their possible choices.

When the word 'indoctrination' was mentioned with one teacher, he told me about his 'experience with indoctrination'. This turned out to be an experience in working briefly with young people (probably late teens) who had been raised religious and were now struggling. Although they appeared uninspired and lacking in belief and conviction, they continued with their religious practice and key religious rituals. According to this teacher, they needed to be taught the intellectual side of Judaism, its truth claims and its basic tenets. Teaching children laws, practice and ritual without the religion's truth claims amounts to indoctrination, in this teacher's view.

This teacher's view is contra much of the literature presented in my literature review, Snook's view for example, which views drilling children to certain behaviours as crossing the line only when reasons are offered which are rooted in propositions.

The teacher's view seemed to be based on an understanding of autonomy as choice. When these young men were seen performing religious ritual by rote they had been, in his view, 'indoctrinated', because they were acting out of habit rather than choice.

A number of other phrases used by teachers across the interviews support the view that autonomy is viewed as being more about choice than criticality.

'Autonomy is about the voice of the individual' / 'The students are not a homogenous mass' / 'They should have ownership of their own learning and the goals that they reach' / 'It is a choice, you buy this, you buy that' / 'These

are the foundations of Judaism, what are your thoughts?'/ 'This is Jewish belief and it's your choice.'

From the above excerpts, relating to Judaism as a product and autonomy as choice, the relationship between these two theoretical codes appears to be one of interdependence. As I observed above, it seems unlikely that religiously observant teachers are viewing Judaism as a product per se. Rather, in their role as Jewish Studies teachers, they are presenting Judaism to their students as a product, which, due to their conception of autonomy as choice, they believe allows them to teach Jewish Studies without impinging on the autonomy of the student or falling foul of the indoctrination charge.

Two paradigms of autonomy

The notions of religion as a product and of autonomy as choice were both surprising to me, although for different reasons. The first is that the literature I had seen and reviewed around religious education and indoctrination had presented autonomy as having to do with use of the critical faculty to reach rational conclusions about truth claims.

The second is that Orthodox Jewish sources – the sources that I had expected would inform teachers' worldviews – did not seem to me to view Judaism as a product that one was free to choose based on subjective preference, but rather a matter of obligation and covenant (see, for example, Sacks, 1992; Sacks, 1989; Deuteronomy 29:17-19; Deuteronomy 29:13-15).

I will discuss in the next chapter the apparent divergence between what I saw as the religious perspective in Orthodox Jewish literature and the conceptions held by teachers.

As regards conceptions of autonomy, the apparent divergence between teachers' conceptions and the conception in the academic literature on religious nurture indicates a return to debates in literature over different conceptions of autonomy and their application in normative ethics. Scholars have written about the paradigm that follows Kant, which regards people as autonomous where their actions are bound to their own reason rather to their inclination (Bonnet and Cuypers, 2007; Savulescu, 2008).

While a number of post-modern philosophers have conceptions of autonomy which, contra Kant, allows for the autonomous agent to make decisions based on inclinations and desires (see Bonnet and Cuypers, 2007), the notion of autonomy as choice tends more generally to be associated with the philosophy of John Stuart Mill:

I have said that it is important to give the freest scope possible to uncustomary things, in order that it may appear in time which of these are fit to be converted into customs. But independence of action, and disregard of custom, are not solely deserving of encouragement for the chance they afford that better modes of action, and customs more worthy of general adoption, may be struck out; nor is it only persons of decided mental superiority who have a just claim to carry on their lives in their own way. There is no reason that all human existence should be constructed on some one or small number of patterns. If a person possesses any tolerable amount of common sense and experience, his own mode of laying out his existence is the best, not because it is the best in itself, but because it is his own mode. (John Stuart Mill, 1993, p. 125)

On this 'Millian' conception, a high value is placed on the freedom of the individual, the right of the autonomous agent to choose based on what is of value to them or in step with one's own mode or custom. This conception has been referred to as 'existential autonomy' (Savulescu, 2008; Madder, 1997; see also Bonnet and Cuypers, 2007), as it sees autonomous choice and action as the self-expression of the individual and the term 'existential autonomy' does seem to capture the conception of autonomy as choice expressed by participants in my research.

The most significant finding for me was that teachers' instinctive understanding of autonomy seemed to follow the Millian existential paradigm, rather than the Kantian one on which most of the academic literature I had reviewed was based. This insight helps explain at least three of the four pairs of codes I have presented in this section. While the fourth pair 'soft versus hard parental wishes' is on the face of it mostly unrelated, I will argue in the next chapter that teachers' conceptions of parental wishes may well be influenced by their viewing the Millian paradigm as dominant to the Kantian paradigm.

4.11.4 EPISTEMOLOGY OF RELIGION – TRANSMISSION OF RELIGION

By and large, teachers believed that the truth claims of Judaism were based on compelling rational evidence, although it was not entirely clear how many of them saw this evidence as meeting the bar of “rationally decisive evidence” that would usually be used to justify transmitting certain propositions in science or geography, for example, as uncontroversial or incontrovertible facts.

Teachers indicated, though, that the question of whether the truth claims of Judaism reach the bar of rationally decisive evidence was largely immaterial, as they are not forcing belief in the propositions upon the students. In some cases, they appeared to divert the conversation onto this latter point to avoid giving an unequivocal response to the question as to whether or not they thought Judaism’s truth claims met the bar of rationally decisive evidence.

R: So let's come back to the question of autonomy and to the material that you teach... If you're teaching propositions not based on rationally decisive evidence, then to do so, to teach them as fact would interfere with the child's developing autonomy. How would you view the subject matter of the Jewish Studies curriculum, the propositions and truth claims of the Torah, could they be said to be based on rationally decisive evidence?

T9: Yes, but again, it's the way that you frame it in the classroom. I think you can get around the issue, because we're not telling them this is history you need to believe it. We're saying this is why religious Jews believe what they do, this is what religious Jews believe in, or this is what Orthodox Judaism believes in... But again, if you tell them this is what you have to believe in order to be a good Jew, that would be a real problem.

T3: If we establish that as a starting point, then we'd have as much legitimacy as science teaching certain things as fact and as geography and it wouldn't be a contradiction to the autonomy of the child... Again we don't deal with the topic, just because emotionally it's a disconnect for the kids in what we're

finding. We have discussed over the years, to maybe run a discovery seminar⁵⁶ of that type of concept...

T11: So I often use the idea that 2-3 million people witnessed something... and one person can make up a story and pass it along, but can't do that with 3 million people... But if someone disputes that, the point is that ok we have evidence but at the end of the day, choice. But we do, that is our evidence.

T7: Well teaching as fact is this is fact and take it as it is. However, we do need to present it as the yesod, foundation of the Jewish people, so present it as that, but it should be also em. Science here's a fact no discussion. Whereas here it's here's a fact, what are your thoughts. We are always going to make it clear that this is the Jewish belief and it's your choice. What we are presenting is watertight, but you decide.

Teachers generally were not able to give an unequivocal answer as to whether it is legitimate to teach Judaism's propositions as 'facts'. Nonetheless, they see this question as ultimately moot as teachers do not present Judaism's truth claims as facts which students must accept. Teachers may present the evidence for Judaism's truth claims in order to demonstrate that there is an evidence base, but they believe that the process of presenting the evidence base does not endanger the rationality or critical faculty of the student, as students are not being forced to accept this evidence or to believe the truth claims

As I argued above, presenting the evidence for Judaism's truth claims is only a part of teachers' work. Teachers do not see themselves as responsible for proving that the propositions are true, but rather for presenting or faithfully transmitting Judaism as a whole – PRESENTING THE CASE for Judaism by showing its relevance and beauty as well as the evidence for its truth claims.

The notion of Judaism as a whole needs unpacking and I will say more about Judaism as a whole ('the product') in the next chapter. The key point here, though, is that by viewing their role as presenting or faithfully transmitting Judaism, autonomy,

⁵⁶ A seminar designed by the outreach organisation Aish to present a number of arguments for Judaism and its truth claims in a one day or half day session (see for example, <https://jewishcolumbus.org/en190215-aish-discovery-seminar-coming-to-columbus/>, 2019).

when conceived of as 'choice', remains in the hand of the student, as the student still has free choice as to whether or not to embrace Judaism.

4.12 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THE HEADLINE THEORY

To conclude this chapter, I want to summarise the findings in a headline theory and show how this headline theory relates to my three research questions. In the next chapter, I will unpack some of the assumptions inherent in the research questions, reflect on secondary findings and on any questions that have not been fully answered.

I began my study with the three research questions:

- 1) How do Jewish Studies teachers in Modern Orthodox Jewish schools conceive of religious education and the role of the RE teacher?
- 2) How does this conception relate to religious nurture in a liberal society?
- 3) Do teachers experience conflicts between their conception of Orthodox Jewish Education and that of liberal values? If so how do they negotiate these conflicts?

I propose the following synopsis of my findings as a headline 'theory' which addresses all the three research questions:

In contrast to much of the academic literature relating to religious nurture, where a Kantian, rationalist conception of autonomy is the dominant paradigm, in the real world of my research field, a Millian, existential conception of autonomy as choice is the dominant paradigm.

Autonomy as choice underpins Jewish Studies teachers' conceptions of their role, the way they conceive of liberal values and the question of religious nurture in a liberal society. Jewish Studies teachers see their role as presenting and making a case for 'Judaism as a whole' – including its truth claims, its relevance to students' lives, its role models and exemplars – so that students can then make the autonomous choice to buy-into the product during their time in school or at any point in the future.

When presented with the indoctrination charge based on the non-dominant Kantian paradigm, teachers understood this charge, but argued that they do not fall foul of it as they do not teach for belief in propositions, but 'present the case' thereby allowing the students to make a choice.

The above representation of teachers' conceptions of their role appears to be the result of teachers having negotiated the conflicts between their conception of Orthodox Jewish Education and that of liberal values.

Chapter 5 – Discussion – Market discourse and Explanatory Critique

5.1. Theory and meta-theory – market discourse and the dominant paradigm

5.1.1 Marketisation and market discourse in education

5.1.2 Explanatory critique – what structures ‘need to change’

5.2 Reflections on studying conceptions – understanding others’ experiences, motivations and worldviews

5.2.1 ‘Experiencing’ conflicts - the limits of determining experiences

5.2.2 Moral and pragmatic issues – the limits of determining motivation

5.2.3 Political Doctrines and Comprehensive Doctrines – the limits of determining conceptions

5.3 Reflections on secondary findings

5.3.1 Parental wishes

5.3.2 Religion as a product

5.4 Reflections on methodology – from concepts to conceptions

5.1 THEORY AND META-THEORY - MARKET DISCOURSE AND THE DOMINANT PARADIGM

My aim in this chapter is to seek a deeper understanding of the headline theory, reflect on a number of secondary findings and develop some of the methodological issues and discoveries made in the process of my research. I have divided this chapter into four parts, the first part is a deepening of the argument developed at the end of the previous chapter and the remaining parts are three standalone sections picking up on other aspects of my methodology and findings.

At the end of the previous chapter, I stated the 'headline theory' – the theory which emerged from the data by means of grounded theory methods of analysis and coding. The theory shows how the dominance of a Millian existential paradigm of autonomy influenced participants' conceptions of their role as Jewish Studies teachers and the way they negotiated the conflict between religious values and liberal values. They do not see it as their responsibility to force Judaism's truth claims on their students but rather to present an option or a 'product' which their pupils would not otherwise have access to at home, and in doing so they see themselves as widening pupils' autonomy in the sense of 'choice'.

In the previous chapter I noted my initial surprise that teachers' conception of autonomy as choice was different to the conception of autonomy in the literature I had reviewed. While I noted that teachers understood the challenge that the rationalist conception of autonomy presented and their responses showed that they felt they were not in contravention of its requirements, it was nonetheless apparent that it was the existential Millian paradigm of autonomy as choice that had the greatest influence on their understanding of their own role and the probity of their practice.

The literature I had reviewed prior to going into the field made normative arguments based on a rationalist conception of autonomy without giving any serious attention to any alternative conceptions of autonomy. Scholars, in their critique of religious nurture, viewed the rationalist conception as the dominant paradigm, but in the real world it seemed that this paradigm had far less influence on participants' conceptions than the existential paradigm. With regard to the influence on individuals' conceptions or worldview, it was not so much a case of the Millian existential

conception being the dominant paradigm, but more a case of being the only paradigm.

Something had happened to this two-sided meta-ethical debate, which was clearly alive and well in academe, as it passed through the college walls into the real world. It is a mistake to assume that participants' conceptions will match those in academic journals and more generally to assume that conceptions of people in the real world are influenced by any one particular discourse from any one particular sphere. As I will explain below, society is made up of multiple co-existing, sometimes contradictory, discourses, which can influence people's conceptions in a number of different ways.

5.1.1 MARKETISATION AND MARKET DISCOURSE IN EDUCATION

The question pertaining to my research findings and my headline theory is: What discourse or discourses may influence people's conceptions with regard to the respective weight of the two paradigms of autonomy?

In my Methodology chapter I explained why Critical Discourse Analysis was not an appropriate choice of methodology for my research. At the point of analysing my findings, though, I have found that some of the work of Critical Discourse Analysis provides great insight. There is a growing body of literature around marketisation and how the language of the market impacts on different spheres of human activity and I want to show how this market language may influence people's conceptions with regard to paradigms of autonomy.

Brant and Panjwani (2015) state that in English secondary schools 'neo-classical economics is the only economics taught to students'. They argue that this is because neo-classical economics has become the dominant paradigm, with alternative conceptualisations now left out of the debate. This is due at least in part to the marketization or commodification of education, which has led to a situation where education is seen as a commodity and visions are developed and articulated using the language of the market (see Bridges and Jonathan, 2007; Grimmitt, 2000, p. 7).

Bridges and Jonathan (2007), argue further that even though education was at best a 'quasi-market', nevertheless, "the rhetoric of the marketplace" was "reinforced by the simultaneous application of the discourse of business to educational management (the language of management itself replaced the earlier style of leadership and headship)."

From the above, it seems likely that the ubiquity of market-based language in schools, whether around providing choice or value for money to parents or around allocation of financial and human resources inside the organisation, may impact on teachers' conceptions of education as a market good. Market-based language, though, is not unique to education and it pervades many areas of the social world.

Fairclough argues that contemporary culture has been characterised as 'promotional' or 'consumer' culture where social life has been reconstructed 'on a market basis', with communication focusing on selling goods, services, organisations, ideas or people (Fairclough 2010, p. 99).

Fairclough gives examples of texts in higher education, including his own CV and application for a senior academic post, to show how marketisation has brought shifts in the self-identity of organisations and a 'reconstruction of professional identities of academics on a more entrepreneurial (self-promotional) basis' (Fairclough 2010, p. 117). In her 2010 publication *Language and the Market Society*, Mautner discusses in successive chapters: marketisation in public-sector administration; marketisation in higher education; marketisation in religion; and personal branding and marketisation of the individual.

That the conception of education as a market good and the language of the market in general was extended by teachers to apply to religious education and to Judaism as a religion was for me an unexpected finding and I will return later in the chapter to discuss what this finding might say about teachers' conceptions of religion. I want first to clear up a few points regarding what teachers appear to be saying or not saying about education and the market.

Participants were not suggesting that the market is the best way to distribute a good, or that education is a good and should therefore be distributed according to market forces. Indeed, these teachers could justifiably argue that far from deciding what to

deliver based on market demand, they are committed to delivering the product even though the market (be it pupils or parents) is not demanding it. They, so-to-speak, continue their efforts to sell even though they know there may be few buyers.

Their decision to sell this particular product has been influenced by factors other than market demand. These factors might include: belief that Judaism is these pupils' heritage or birth right; teachers' own belief in the value or truth of the propositions; their belief in covenantal obligation, viz. that every Jewish person is obligated to uphold Torah law.

The moral argument they make in support of their practice turns on the notion that a free market increases autonomy for the buyer by increasing the number of options from which the buyer can choose. Judaism here is presented as another choice, a product which their students may choose to buy, if not now, at some point after they leave school.

The above point regarding the extent to which teachers' conceptions are influenced by the language of the market is an important one and is worth explicating further. According to Bhaskar's Transformational Model of Social Activity, social structures do not determine agents' actions or conceptions, but rather they influence them. Every free-willed agentive actor – or 'person' – will encounter a number of discourses at any one time and will, whether consciously or unconsciously, constantly negotiate these discourses. When encountering apparently contradictory discourses, for example, the agentive actor may choose to jettison one or both of them or to dialecticise them into a new conception where both can co-exist.

Notwithstanding the complexities with regard to the influence that market discourse has on participants' views of religion as a commodity or a market good, there is clear evidence in the data from participants' own use of words or phrases such as 'buying in to the product' that in some aspect market language has influenced their conception of their role as teachers of religious education. It emerges strongly from the data that participants' conceptions of autonomy have been influenced by discourses which give significant weight to the notion of autonomy as choice and far less weight to the notion of autonomy as rationalist thought.

While, teachers' conceptions of religion and religious education are not entirely determined by the language of the market, it seems plausible that with the marketisation of education and the market discourse being prevalent in so many spheres of human activity, their conceptions of autonomy as choice and religion as product have been influenced by the language of the market in, for example, the discourses highlighted by Fairclough and other Critical Discourse Analysis scholars.

5.1.2 EXPLANATORY CRITIQUE – WHAT STRUCTURES 'NEED TO CHANGE'

In view of the above, a Critical Discourse Analysis would at this point look at the texts that conceal the naturalised ideological formations – the market discourse that is exerting power of individuals.

As I explained in my Methodology chapter, conducting a Critical Realist explanatory critique differs from a Critical Discourse Analysis in two ways. The first is in the definition of 'ideology', the second is with regard to the assumption of a social wrong.

According to Bhaskar, a false or superficial view can only be labelled an 'ideology' if there is some reason why that view has come to be held – some need that the structure has to labour under this false understanding. When this condition adheres, the false understanding is a 'cognitive ill' and an explanatory critique can be brought to bear by asking the question 'what may need to change in the structure for this ill to be removed?'

Aside from cognitive ills such as falsity, there may also be non-cognitive ills, such as 'poverty and ill health'. It is difficult to assess whether the dominance of one philosophical paradigm over another may entail non-cognitive ills such as poverty or ill health, although, with these two paradigms being at the centre of medical ethics (Madder, 1997: 221-225), for example, it is quite possible that devaluing one of the two paradigms or removing it from the debate could lead to poor decision making about healthcare and life and death issues.

Market discourse with its emphasis on choice and action as the self-expression of the individual, seems to be writing the Kantian paradigm out of the debate, an

outcome which would be justifiable only if done on the basis of the philosophical argument somehow being finally settled in favour of the alternative paradigm.

A conception of autonomy based solely on the Millian paradigm (or equally a conception based solely on a Kantian paradigm) is a cognitive-ill – a superficial understanding of the notion of autonomy, if not a false one – and, if it can be shown that this conception has come to be held because, for example, characterising agency as the self-expression of the individual suits the needs of the market, this conception could be justifiably labelled as ‘ideology’.

My descriptive and explanatory study has, as I hope to have shown, opened up space for a critical realist explanatory critique, which would further analyse casual mechanisms in the social structure and ask what needs to change in the structure. The work of Critical Discourse Analysis scholars in uncovering the influence of market discourse on different areas of life may already be playing an emancipatory role in freeing agentive actors from the assumptions hidden in that discourse. Developing an explanatory critique on the basis of my findings can have impact by targeting the specific area of autonomy and revealing the influence that market discourse has had on our understanding of the two paradigms.

5.2 REFLECTIONS ON STUDYING CONCEPTIONS – UNDERSTANDING OTHERS’ EXPERIENCES, MOTIVATIONS AND WORLDVIEWS

Throughout my work in the field, I discovered that there are methodological challenges with studying conceptions which place limits on the extent to which it is possible to know, understand or capture what is going on in participants’ minds. I also realised that the attempt to push too hard to find answers would encounter ethical issues, which may also preclude a researcher from finding satisfactory answers to questions about participants’ conceptions.

In this section, I have broken ‘conceptions’ down into three elements: participants’ experiences; participants’ motivations; participants’ worldviews.

5.2.1 'EXPERIENCING' CONFLICTS - THE LIMITS OF DETERMINING EXPERIENCES

My third research question asked whether teachers 'experience conflicts' and was aimed in part at finding out whether their day-to-day experience involves any feeling of living in a state of internal conflict. Although I used open questioning, particularly in early interviews, to allow teachers to describe their feelings, as well as more direct questioning, any sense of struggle or internal conflict was limited to a small number of participants, in particular teachers who were relatively new to the role.

All participants understood that there were possible conflicts between their religious goals and liberal values, recognised that these conflicts were inherent to their role and were able to respond as to how they had addressed or resolved these conflicts. It is misleading though to say that teachers 'experienced' conflicts, without defining what I mean generally by 'experience' and what I mean specifically by the experience of conflicts. As a researcher, the closest I could hope to get to identifying that participants experience conflicts would be if they described themselves as feeling conflicted, or felt in a state of stasis as they grapple with a constant dilemma.

In the event, there was no evidence to indicate a sense of struggle or feeling of conflict and it would be more precise to say that all teachers recognised or understood that there were conflicts (in a philosophical sense) between liberal and religious values.

A further problem with the question, 'do they experience conflicts' is that it assumes the possibility of discovering by means of interview what participants were experiencing or thinking before I started posing questions to them. As a researcher, it is important to reflect on the extent to which the questioning led participants to construct answers and develop or reframe their conception of their own practice. While it is possible that the process of interview simply facilitated their giving voice to conceptions that were previously held, there seems to be no way for the researcher to verify this.

Alternative methods – such as discourse analysis or direct observation – may perhaps be considered for identifying a research subject's conceptions without recourse to direct questioning, but it seems unlikely that such methods could

generate the same level of theory rich data about a participant's conceptions as can be generated by the semi-structured interview.

While it may have been the line of questioning that led teachers to construct these conceptions, the significant overlap between the responses of a number of teachers across five schools in three cities, seems to justify using the data to answer Research Question 3, with the qualification that I can only know that they 'experienced' conflicts in the sense of grappling with philosophical questions intellectually. The impossibility of knowing what a participant's conception was before the research process began remains as a reflection on social research in general.

In view of the above, I prefer to use the term 'negotiated conception' to refer to the conception outlined at the end of the previous chapter. By negotiated, I mean that this conception is the result of a dialectical process whereby teachers have had to find a path to resolve the conflicts between their religious goals or values and liberal values. Whether this dialectical process took place as part of their developing praxis before the researcher arrived on the scene or whether the dialectical process took place during the interview as participants developed a narrative which could justify their praxis remains unknown. The term 'negotiated conception' (as opposed to say 'constructed' conception) allows for both possibilities.

5.2.2 MORAL AND PRAGMATIC ISSUES – THE LIMITS OF DETERMINING MOTIVATION

In asking teachers about autonomy and the indoctrination charge, in particular in relation to parental wishes, I had hoped to find out more about the moral problems that concern Jewish Studies teachers in the schools in my field. Teachers conceded that there could potentially be ethical issues with teaching religious propositions as true, but they largely avoided suggestions that these ethical issues applied to them and generally redirected the conversation by either claiming that they were not focusing on belief in propositions, or that they were not acting contra parental wishes.

As I noted in my Findings chapter, I found it difficult to determine whether they were viewing parental wishes as a moral issue, a pragmatic issue or both. Put differently,

if they saw each of the two concerns as sufficient reason to adapt their practice, evidence of one of the two reasons as causal does not preclude the other one equally from being causal.

Further, although I asked participants about moral issues and they recognised the presence of such issues, I was unable to find out whether they understood this to mean transgression of a religious principle or contravention of liberal values. I will further explain the differences between these two sides in the next section on 'political doctrines and comprehensive doctrines', but I note it here as an example of the difficulty in determining the motivations of research participants.

As I noted above, there are methodological challenges with understanding 'conceptions' or generally what is going on in the mind of another person. When it comes to analysing a participant's deepest moral motivations, though, there seems to me to be an ethical problem for the researcher. I mentioned in my previous chapter that there came a point in in some interviews where it felt uncomfortable to probe a question further, interrogating participants until they 'cracked'. I would add now that it feels uncomfortable to even speculate as to participants' motivations. I say this on the basis that a) it is generally difficult to ever determine another person's motivations, and b) that in spite of having what I consider to be rich data about participants' conceptions of philosophically complex issues, I find I have very little data on which to infer all of their deeper motivations.

5.2.3 POLITICAL DOCTRINES AND COMPREHENSIVE DOCTRINES – THE LIMITS OF DETERMINING CONCEPTIONS

As I noted above, I initially found it surprising that teachers, whom I either knew or assumed to be religiously observant Orthodox Jews, were viewing Judaism as a product whose truth claims one could choose to accept or reject. I was well aware that traditional Jewish sources, from Scripture to the rabbinic canon, reject this notion. Furthermore, a number of teachers indicated that they believed there was strong, virtually irrefutable evidence for Judaism's essential tenets and they were able to reference an array of contemporary Jewish literature in this vein (for example Gottlieb, 2008; Kelemen, 1996, 1990; Zohar, 1994).

As I reflected further on my findings I began to think about the effect my line of questioning might have had on the outcome. If participants understood the interview questions as asking 'how would you respond to those who claim that your practices are indoctrinatory?' it is perhaps to be expected that their response would be in the language of those who would make such a claim. Had participants been questioned from a religious perspective, using say classical Orthodox Jewish sources as a point of departure, perhaps they would have articulated a different conception.

Initially, I tried carefully to avoid framing my line of questions in terms of any particular discourse and kept initial interviews as open as possible. In the first round of interviews, teachers expressed little sense of tension or conflict and put forward a narrative of professional competence, where the difficulties had been resolved, at least with regards to praxis. After this first round of interviews I decided to ask more challenging questions to try to find, or perhaps create, a rupture in this narrative. The questions I posed asked teachers how they would respond to some of the challenges posed in the academic literature.

It is perhaps also significant that, although participants may have known me as a rabbi, a colleague or in some cases a friend, I was approaching them as a PhD researcher from the UCL Institute of Education. They received and signed consent forms and they knew that the forum for publishing their responses was a PhD thesis. These factors may well have set the context of the study and suggested that there were certain expectations as to the language or discourse to which their responses should be applicable.

Although it is possible to view the above as teachers engaging in apologetics or simply saying what they imagine the researcher wants to hear, I had a sense that what was going on was deeper than that and that the conception that participants articulated evinced a conception that they genuinely held. I want to examine closely the conception of religious education that participants described and ask to what extent this represents their deeply held views, as opposed to a conception that they have been led to construct to answer the charge of indoctrination.

I will refer here to John Rawls' notion of political and non-political commitments, not for the purpose of engaging in a normative debate regarding political philosophy, but

because I believe that Rawls' observation of how people conceive of the world and how their moral identity is formed has explanatory power with regard to my data.

According to Rawls, political and non-political commitments, 'specify moral identity and give shape to a person's life; what one sees oneself doing and trying to accomplish in the social world' (Rawls, 2001, p22). Moral identity may be shaped on either of these two axes and Rawls distinguishes between a person's 'comprehensive doctrine', which may include or be founded on the person's religious principles or beliefs and the person's 'political conception'. The political conception, the argument goes, is one that all reasonable people in society can endorse even if they do so from multiple and even mutually exclusive comprehensive doctrines.

The idea of public reason, says Rawls 'specifies at the deepest level the basic moral and political values that are to determine a constitutional democratic government's relation to its citizens and their relation to one another'. How is it possible then, asks Rawls, for those holding religious doctrines based on religious authority to nonetheless endorse a political conception that supports a liberal, democratic regime?

'Here the answer lies in the religious or nonreligious doctrine's understanding and accepting that, except by endorsing a reasonable constitutional democracy, there is no other way fairly to ensure the liberty of its adherents consistent with the equal liberties of other reasonable free and equal citizens. In endorsing a constitutional democratic regime, a religious doctrine may say that such are the limits God sets to our liberty; a nonreligious doctrine will express itself otherwise. But in either case, these doctrines formulate in different ways how liberty of conscience and the principle of toleration can cohere with equal justice for all citizens in a reasonable democratic society.'

(Rawls, 1999, p. 151)

While Rawls' argument is normative, there is an empirical aspect to it – the claim that individuals may view the world concurrently through two different co-existing conceptions and the notion that all reasonable people will endorse a political conception even though it may diverge from their comprehensive religious (or non-religious) doctrine.

It seems possible then that the teachers I interviewed might at some points in the interview have been articulating their political conception of the role of the religious studies teacher and at other points their comprehensive or 'religious' conception. What I have referred to as their 'negotiated conception' was a conception that they expected would hold sway in the public discourse. That this conception may well have been genuinely held by these teachers does not negate the possibility of an alternative conception based on their comprehensive religious doctrine which may be likewise genuinely held.

It is difficult to determine whether teachers articulated a new conception brought about through a dialectical process between the political and religious conception or they vacillated between one conception and the other depending on the context. My point here is that there are limits on how far one empirical study can go in determining participants' conceptions, due in part to the inherent complexity and inscrutability of a person's conception and in part to the methodological and ethical issues I noted above of a researcher turning an interview into an interrogation.

I have shown above some of the difficulties in studying conceptions and reflected in turn on the challenges specific to determining participants' experiences, motivations and worldviews. With regard to each and all of these it is possible that methods can be developed and targeted studies undertaken which will get further in studying conceptions and resolving the unanswered questions that I have outlined above. An interesting area for further study would be to investigate the extent to which sharpening of methodological tools might open up further vistas in the study of conceptions.

5.3 REFLECTIONS ON SECONDARY FINDINGS

In my introductory chapter, I explained that the group of six schools in this study represented a discrete field on the basis of the dichotomy between the schools' religious ethos and the religious observance of many of the parent body. I developed this argument further in my literature review, explaining the significance of parental wishes in the arguments for and against faith schools.

5.3.1 PARENTAL WISHES

The arguments for and against faith schools are based on different premises, which do not quite speak to each other, so arguments based on parental wishes for example have no truck with those who argue that faith schools are by definition indoctrinatory. Either way, if the debate is viewed as being unsettled with all the arguments on both sides still in the mix, any of the normative arguments are only as useful as they are true to the reality on the ground.

In view of the above, I presented McLaughlin's 'initiation thesis' and argued that its application to the schools in my field is limited. McLaughlin argued that a stable religious framework gives a child the 'dialogic competence' for an autonomous evaluation of religion and a religious way of life. A liberal society which accepts the value of religious choice and religious pluralism will support the notion that parents have a right to raise their children in a chosen path as long they take steps to protect the child's autonomy by making it clear at the appropriate stage in the child's development that religion is based more on faith than on consensually agreed evidence (McLaughlin, 1984).

I examined the strength of McLaughlin's thesis as a normative argument in my literature review, but whatever view is held of McLaughlin's initiation thesis, its applicability to the schools in my research field was questionable. Strong parental wishes is a key premise in McLaughlin's argument and whatever assumptions we make about parental wishes in the schools in my field, they are *prima facie* not comparable to the strong parental wishes on which McLaughlin's thesis relies.

It seemed to me that the teachers I was set to interview had a job to do in explaining how, without the initiation thesis (or some form of it), they can justify religious nurture. This observation, as I laid out in Chapters 1,2 and 3 was the starting point for my research into this group of schools.

It turned out that teachers' conceptions of their role and their resolution to the above question was based on a fascinating confluence of their empirical claims about parental wishes, their definition of their own praxis and their conception of autonomy. The latter two points I have examined earlier in this chapter and in the previous

chapter, but I want to say something here about teachers' empirical claims about parental wishes.

In the previous chapter, I designated teachers' views of parental wishes as 'soft' parental wishes and also noted that some teachers seemed to be of the view that parental wishes related more to practice than propositions, viz. teachers believe that parents are not bothered about what their children believe or how they are brought to those beliefs as long as it does not translate into their children changing their practice for at least as long as they are still living at home.

Although this argument is based on an unproven empirical claim, it serves to take parental wishes out of the moral equation. The question then becomes not one of the moral probity of religious nurture contra parental wishes, but of what approach to religious education may be appropriate in the absence of parental wishes. Working with the belief that parents do not have strong wishes regarding their children's religious education and, in many cases, have limited understanding of Judaism and Jewish education, teachers see themselves as being to a degree *in loco parentis* with regard to their students' religious education. This *in loco parentis* extends only to the point that it does not clash with strong or overt parental wishes.

With the above in mind, one point of McLaughlin's thesis that may remain is that of 'dialogic competence' and the notion that having religion as a stable and coherent 'primary culture' may be necessary for an autonomous evaluation of religion, or taking the argument a step further the notion that any religion can only be properly understood if it has been seen 'from the inside' (Alexander and McLaughlin, 2003).

To see a religion from the inside requires that the child experience the full gamut of cultural and religious practice and accept without challenge the religious propositions of that religion. While to do so would be contra-parental wishes and not appropriate in the context of the schools in the field for the reasons I have shown, teachers describe their work as trying in a small way to present a glimpse into 'religion from the inside'. They do this by presenting themselves as exemplars of a religion which is confident in its own truth claims, its contemporary relevance and the power of its experiences.

The argument that a religious tradition, in order to be properly understood, must be presented from the inside is a point well made by other scholars (see, for example, Gearon, 2014: 43). Its weakness is that it is not sufficient on its own to justify uncritical teaching of religious propositions, and I have already addressed this in presenting teachers' broader arguments for their conception of their role and their argument that they nonetheless are not forcing propositions on their pupils, but are widening choice by presenting another option.

5.3.2 RELIGION AS PRODUCT

I have already stated that I found participants' description of Judaism as a product surprising and argued that their language and choice of words is best understood with reference to Rawls' political and comprehensive doctrines. I want here to further buttress this argument by showing how foreign the notion of Judaism as a product is to Orthodox Judaism and Orthodox Jews.

Rather than demonstrate this point through classical Jewish texts, Scripture and rabbinic cannon, I am going to make an empirical claim about participants. My claim is that they all accept that propositions and truth claims are essential to any definition of Judaism. I base my claim in part on the evidence in the data I have shown above, and perhaps in greater part on my insider knowledge as part of the same religious denomination as my participants.

In this vein, I would go as far as to say that this claim is so obvious as to not need to be investigated empirically. Of course, assumptions about people's religious belief always come with caveats and there may be outliers in any field, but in general, I can say with confidence that these participants subscribe to the following two premises: a) truth claims about the existence of a creator and the divine origin of the Torah are essential to Judaism and constitutive of an Orthodox religious Jew, b) according to Judaism, belief in the above propositions and adherence to Torah law are not a matter of choice but are mandated by G-d and part of a covenant made with those present at Sinai and all future generations. (See Jonathan Sacks (1992) in *Crisis and Covenant*, that I cited in Chapter 2 regarding covenantal obligation and the Talmud's statement that a born Jew is 'already foresworn at Sinai'.)

The above is not a statement regarding the essence of Judaism per se, but an empirical claim about the likely beliefs of my research participants and members of the religious communities to which they belong. In *Must a Jew Believe Anything?* Menachem Kellner (Kellner, 2006) argues that the attachment to theological dogma in contemporary Orthodoxy is a relic from Maimonides' 13 Principles of Faith, which Kellner argues was an innovation in its time and never received the broad acceptance from his contemporaries that it is assumed to have had. Whether or not Kellner's thesis has merit is not my focus here; what is significant is that Kellner states that his book is a response to what he terms the 'Maimonidesification' of Judaism and that the book therefore culminates in what he terms a 'polemic' for an alternative conception of Orthodoxy.

In chapter 6, Kellner cites passages from three eminent Orthodox Jewish Scholars (Rabbis Yehuda Parnes, Rabbi Professor J. David Bleich and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks) as examples of how even Orthodoxy's proponents of inclusivity are trapped by their fealty to a Maimonidean conception of Judaism as belief in Principles of Faith. Kellner goes on to explain why, in his view, Maimonides' position has become dominant. I cite Kellner here only in support of my claim that, by and large, Orthodox Jews view truth claims about the nature of G-d and the Revelation at Sinai, as being definitionally essential to Judaism.

In view of the above, teachers' descriptions of religion as a product appear to be totally at odds with what I assume to be their deeply held religious views on religion. To me, this conflict can be resolved only with recourse to the hypothesis I presented above based on Rawls, viz. that reasonable people will endorse political conceptions that are necessary to ensure the equal liberties of all free and equal citizens.

Adherents to a comprehensive religious doctrine understand that their own liberties depend on all citizens endorsing a constitutional democratic regime. To endorse such a regime requires that one's practices, albeit that they are largely driven by a religious doctrine, do not fall foul of the values that underpin that constitutional democratic regime. To apply this to my participants, although the notion of Judaism as a product or optional choice is foreign to their comprehensive religious doctrine, they endorse a political conception in which no individual or group has a monopoly

on absolute truth and every citizen must be given the right to make their own choice about religious propositions and practice.

As I noted above, the answer that a participant gives and the language that they use may depend on the question and how it is framed. If participants perceive the question as being asked from the perspective of or in the language of the political conception, it is more likely that their answer will be given from the perspective of the political conception. Either way, if, as I have argued, they are concerned that their conceptions of their role and their praxis do fall foul of either of the comprehensive or political conception, they will need simultaneously to argue from both standpoints, speaking variously in the language of liberal values and the political conception and religious values and their comprehensive conception.

Reflecting back on the interviews, the changes of language in the responses of many of the participants is a distinctive feature of the data. Participants moved effortlessly between academic English, vernacular English, classical and rabbinic Hebrew and Yiddish slang. In a number of cases the change of language appears to reflect moves between framing their responses in term of their comprehensive religious conception and the political conception of a constitutional democracy.

In the following excerpt, for example, the teacher moved from previously answering a question about the extent to which he thought pupils accepted Judaism's truth claims to the following reflection on whether his pupils had the status of non-believers according to Jewish Law:

T9: ...then there are kids who say I don't believe in Hakadosh Boruch Hu⁵⁷. And even that is something... you know, they're having the conversation and they're thinking about it, they're not Kofrim⁵⁸. I don't think we can relate to children and say, you know mumar l'hachis⁵⁹, this person's a, they're all tinok shenishbu⁶⁰.

⁵⁷ The Holy One Blessed be He. A fairly common term for referring to G-d.

⁵⁸ Heretics.

⁵⁹ An apostate for spite or provocateur.

⁶⁰ Literally 'a child taken captive'. This teacher is referring to the argument that someone who is not raised with Jewish knowledge and nurtured in religious Jewish practice cannot be held accountable for not living according to Jewish Law. Such a person is like a child taken captive at a young age and raised by heathens.

In summary, while it may have been difficult to always know whether participants were expressing their political conception or comprehensive religious conception, in some cases it was evident that they were at times expressing one and at times expressing the other. The deftness with which they moved between the two suggests that they hold both conceptions and simultaneously view ethical questions through two lenses.

5.4 REFLECTIONS ON METHODOLOGY – FROM CONCEPTS TO CONCEPTIONS

I want to conclude this chapter with some reflections on my research methodology. I explained in my Methodology chapter how grounded theory methods can be applied in a critical realist framework and I cited studies which have used such an approach. As I noted above, I felt that grounded theory methods worked well to enable the emergence of a descriptive/ explanatory theory which paved the way for a possible critical realist explanatory critique.

Once I had in place the headline theory that emerged from the data, it was a short step towards the literature – largely Critical Discourse Analysis studies on market discourse – that enabled me to take the theory to a higher level of abstraction and identify the direction that an explanatory critique might take.

It may be that this serendipitous coming together of critical realism, grounded theory methods, Critical Discourse Analysis and explanatory critique is simply good fortune and will not be easily replicated. But it also seems plausible that I have succeeded in developing a methodologically sound approach which when judiciously applied can be used to produce rich data that can be taken through different levels of abstraction and analysis.

Whether the latter is indeed the case can be established only by applying the above approach to future studies. I want to clarify, though, what the specific elements are that made my chosen methodological approach suitable for my study and which should be present in potential future studies considering following this methodology.

I began with a philosophical question discussed in academic literature and asked what participants' conceptions were in relation to these issues. Because there was little or no data on teachers' conceptions and how the philosophical questions played out in the 'real world', I entered the field with no data or theory at all about my actual object of study and grounded theory methods were therefore appropriate.

Conceptions are important in critical realism as, they are the first signal that socialisation has taken place – that elements of the social structure have influenced individuals. Notwithstanding the problems I have noted with studying conceptions and the general assumption that actions speak louder than words, actions tend to be subject to more conditions and more causal forces than conceptions. Studying actions requires considering the many factors that may influence a decision. To take an example that I suggested in an earlier chapter, a young child's choice of breakfast cereal may be influenced by a mature understanding of nutritional needs, a craving for sugar or the inability to reach the higher shelf.

The difficulty of studying actions in what critical realism refers to as the 'open system' of the social world is that it is near impossible to isolate individual causal mechanisms. The key difference between natural science and social science, Bhaskar explains, is that when conducting experiments, the natural scientist will look to create a closure – a closed system isolated from the influence of other casual mechanisms. In social science, it is not possible to create a closure, but it seems to me that a study of participants' conceptions is the closest the researcher can get to isolating individual elements of the society/person connection and the closest in effect to experimental activity in the natural sciences.

Looking back at my study it seems that isolating these individual elements of the relations between society and individuals enabled me to get to the heart of how parts of the structure (in this case discourse) had impacted on their conceptions, leading to the eventual finding that conceptions in the real world do not match the issues discussed in academic literature – and that generally discourses of academia are less causally efficacious than other discourses

The gap between the discourse of academia and teachers' conceptions led to a retroductive process, where I asked the question 'what aspect of the social structure could account for the conceptions of individuals suggested in my data? The body of

literature on marketisation seemed to hold the beginnings of an answer and also opened up the possibility for explanatory critique.

The specific elements that seem to have allowed the strands of my methodological approach to cohere then, are: the presence of philosophical or ethical questions in academic literature and the use of grounded theory methods specifically to determine participants' conceptions (possible only when there is little or no data or pre-existing theory on participants' conceptions). If the two above elements are in place, I believe there is merit to following the same methodology, which will, if nothing else, at least help answer the question as to whether my approach provides a suitable template for other studies.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

6.1 Research questions and key findings

6.2 Contributions to the field of knowledge

6.3 Limitations of this study

6.4 Recommendations for future research

6.5 Impact on normative inquiry and social research

6.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

In this study, I interviewed Jewish Studies teachers in a small group of Modern Orthodox Jewish high schools with the aim of finding out how they conceive of their role as a religious studies teacher in a faith school in relation to the broader context of the liberal society in which they live. For the purposes of empirical research, I broke down the above area of investigation into the following three research questions:

- 1) How do Jewish Studies teachers in Modern Orthodox Jewish schools conceive of religious education and the role of the RE teacher?
- 2) How does this conception relate to religious nurture in a liberal society?
- 3) Do teachers experience conflicts between their conception of Orthodox Jewish Education and that of liberal values? If so how do they negotiate these conflicts?

The chapters of this thesis chart the journey from my initial hunches and observations through theoretical and empirical research to answers to the research questions and further insights into and reflections on my findings.

In Chapter One, I demonstrated that the six high schools in England under the aegis of the Office of the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth constitute a discrete field, unified in the relative (to other Orthodox Jewish schools) disparity between the school's religious ethos and the religious observance of much of the school's parent body.

In Chapter Two, I showed by means of a review of the literature on the moral questions relating to faith schools and religious nurture, that the schools in my field were more vulnerable to the indoctrination charge than other faith schools whose religious ethos and practice were more closely aligned with the parent body.

In Chapter Three, I explained how using grounded theory methods within a critical realist paradigm would enable me to collect and analyse rich data from which a theory could emerge that would enable the move from 'what' questions (viz 'what is happening here?') to 'why' questions (viz. 'why is this happening?'; 'why are participants viewing the world in this way?'), leading eventually to the prospect of a critical realist explanatory critique.

In Chapter Four, I presented my findings, which I summarised in the following headline theory:

In contrast to much of the academic literature relating to religious nurture, where a Kantian, rationalist conception of autonomy is the dominant paradigm, in the real world of my research field, a Millian, existential conception of autonomy as choice is the dominant paradigm.

Autonomy as choice underpins Jewish Studies teachers' conceptions of their role, the way they conceive of liberal values and the question of religious nurture in a liberal society. Jewish Studies teachers see their role as presenting and making a case for 'Judaism as a whole' – including its truth claims, its relevance to students' lives, its role models and exemplars – so that students can then make the autonomous choice to buy-into the product during their time in school or at any point in the future.

When presented with the indoctrination charge based on the non-dominant Kantian paradigm, teachers understood this charge, but argued that they do not fall foul of it as they do not teach for belief in propositions, but 'present the case' thereby allowing the students to make a choice.

The above headline theory, I argued, directly addresses each of the research questions, with teachers' conceptions of their role appearing to be the result of their having negotiated any conflicts between their conception of Orthodox Jewish Education and that of liberal values.

In Chapter Five, I cited research from the field of Critical Discourse Analysis showing how marketisation and the pervasiveness of market discourse has impacted thinking in the field of education and beyond and, on the basis of my data, seems to have been responsible for a near writing out of a Kantian conception of autonomy as rationality. I argued further that by looking at the need that the social structure has for market discourse with its emphasis on choice, it is possible to show why the false belief (the narrow conception of autonomy in exclusively Millian terms) is held. In critical realist terms, this false view amounts to an 'ideology' and uncovering it is the start of an explanatory critique, considering the question of where structures might need to change.

6.2 CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE

In view of the above, in assessing the contribution this thesis has made to the field of knowledge, it seems best to break this down into three areas. The first area is the contributions associated with the above findings, all of which relate to my research questions; the second area involves a reflection on methodology; and the third area pertains to Rawls' political and comprehensive doctrines, which I discussed in Chapter 5.

The role of the Jewish Studies teacher and the conflict between religious values and liberal values

As I outlined above, the interview data and the headline theory give insight into the understudied area of teachers' conceptions. A number of the findings may well be due to factors that are specific to my field, whereas others may turn out to be representative of RE teachers beyond my field. While in some cases I have a researcher's hunch, further research beyond the field would be required to establish which findings are and are not context specific. As the answer to the above question is currently unknown, I state the findings below without reference to the context of the field.

1) Teachers in my study do not view parental wishes as a strong factor in the moral questions pertaining to religious nurture in a liberal society. This is due to a combination of their assumption of soft parental wishes and parental wishes being varied and or unknown. They therefore negotiate the conflict between religious values and liberal values without reference to parental wishes.

2) Teachers in my study see their role as being to present a case to their pupils. In doing so they see themselves as widening their pupils' choice, as if the case for Judaism was not presented in school, most pupils would never see Judaism as an option. Presenting the case involved for example: delivering engaging lessons, being good role models, caring about the pupils, being respected in the school community and making a good argument for Judaism's truth claims.

3) Teachers in my study largely view autonomy in terms of the Millian paradigm of autonomy as choice and self-expression. They were able to make a case to defend themselves against a version of the indoctrination charge based on the Kantian

paradigm, by arguing that they do not teach for belief in propositions, but their engagement with the arguments in the literature based on the Kantian paradigm was minimal.

4) Teachers' use of market language such as describing Judaism as 'a product' which pupils can 'buy into' suggests that marketisation and market discourse has impacted on their conception of their role and their understanding of a young person's autonomy.

Methodological contribution: Critical realism, grounded theory methods and critical discourse analysis

In Chapter 5, I suggested that my chosen methodology represents a contribution to the field, although further research would be required to establish that my methodology can be replicated to good effect in other studies. While the use of critical realism and grounded theory methods together is by no means new, the key features of my methodology were, a) using critical realism and grounded theory to study conceptions, and b) using critical discourse analysis to move beyond the descriptive theory into the more emancipatory explanatory critique.

Studying conceptions: Political and comprehensive doctrines

The dualism I discovered in teachers' conceptions seems to me to be my most important secondary finding. That teachers are able to switch between their more comprehensive religious conception of their role and the political conception in which liberal values are prime, suggests that they are extremely practiced at performing this switch. As I noted in Chapter Five, there is no evidence to suggest that participants were gaming, with one conception being real and the other being what they felt they had to say. While the very notion of the comprehensive and political doctrines gives primacy to the comprehensive doctrine, which in this case would be a conception based on religious values and truth claims, there is nuance in Rawls' thesis, which means that both conceptions are genuinely endorsed. Later in this chapter, I will suggest some possibilities for further research into this finding.

6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Limits of studying conceptions

In Chapter 5, I documented a number of limitations relating to studying conceptions and the difficulty in knowing what is going on in participants' minds. In addition to the question of knowing whether a participant's conception relates to the comprehensive or political conception described above, I identified challenges with knowing participants' experiences and with understanding their motivations.

While the above limitations may be characteristic of any social study for the ethical and methodological reasons that I outlined in Chapter Five, I note them here because, as I shall show in my suggestions for further research, it appears that there are methods that may succeed in getting closer to understanding what is going on in participants minds than my study has managed to do.

Sample size

In Chapters Three and Four, I argued that a combination of theoretical saturation and a sample that is broadly representative of the field mean that my sampling strategy was appropriate for a study of this nature and the number of participants and amount of data were sufficient for the claims that I made in Chapter Four. I nonetheless am left to wonder whether the sixth school in the field, the only school that I did not get access to, may have provided important variation on the data I collected from the other schools. Equally, the teachers in the field that I did not interview may have provided variation. The teachers I interviewed all had one thing in common: they agreed to be interviewed. Perhaps those who did not agree to be interviewed represent a different view and have different conceptions of their role.

Notwithstanding the above question, as I stated in Chapter Three, I am not looking in this study for generalisability, but for 'transferability' (see Gobo, 2006, p. 406). On the basis of the recurrence of themes throughout the data I collected from my twelve participants, my findings are on strong ground. If interviewing a different group of twelve participants from the field were to lead to different findings, this would not undermine the findings that are based on the twelve participants interviewed in my study.

The role of the researcher – ethical considerations

The purpose of my study was to describe teachers' conceptions as they relate to the morally controversial question of religious nurture and indoctrination and autonomy and I have attempted to explicate theoretically what I have designated the 'negotiated conception'.

My role is not to offer a normative argument for or against my respondents' conceptions and further analysis of their conception in relation to the arguments for and against religious nurture would necessitate crossing the line from a descriptive position to a critical one. There is room for a philosophical critique of teachers' negotiated conception and an argument either for or against its moral legitimacy, but such a critique does not fall within the purview of this study.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

I recommend three areas for future research, corresponding to the three areas of contribution to the field of knowledge I identified above.

Conceptions of religious education and of the paradigms of autonomy

The most obvious area for future research involves looking for evidence of similar conceptions within my field and beyond. In this vein, research should begin with the following two questions:

1) Is there any similarity between the conceptions of my participants of the role of the RE teacher and the conceptions of teachers in other Jewish schools and schools of other faiths: specifically, the role of the RE teacher as presenting a case of which the religion's propositions are just one part alongside engagement, relevance and RE teachers as living role models

2) Is there evidence of a narrowing of the conception of autonomy to an exclusively existential Millian one amongst the following fields: Jewish Studies teachers; RE teachers in faith schools and common schools; teachers and school leaders; education policy makers; fields beyond education, such as healthcare professionals and policy makers.

Unlike my study, the further studies I have suggested need not use a grounded theory approach, as they would begin with existing hypotheses. Methods could include interviews and/or a critical discourse type analysis of documents and articles. Looking at existing documents, whether from inside or outside of academia, over a chosen period of time has the potential to show a shift in conceptions or in the relative dominance of different paradigms.

Critical realism, grounded theory methods and critical discourse analysis

As I explained above, to establish that my methodological approach can be replicated to good effect, it would need to be used in other studies. This requires identifying research projects, which, like my project, focus on studying participants' conceptions and begin with little or no pre-existing data or literature in the substantive area of study. It is possible that once the initial theory has emerged from the data, the researcher may discover pre-existing critical discourse analysis studies germane to the theory, as was the case with my study. Where such critical discourse analysis studies do not exist, the researcher would need to conduct her own critical discourse analysis as part of the research project.

Studying conceptions: Political and comprehensive doctrines

I suggested above that further research on how participants switch between different conceptions may go some way toward understanding their motivations. Rawls' notion of political and comprehensive doctrines involves an empirical claim and I have cited it solely for the purposes of illustrating how individuals can hold dual conceptions. Rawls' empirical claim chimes with my own findings of participants' dual conceptions and their ability to switch between these conceptions, but it would require further research to ascertain whether the dual conceptions of my participants match perfectly with those of Rawls' thesis or are fully captured by his chosen terminology.

In view of the above, there are two areas for further research, the first being a deepening of the understanding of the conceptions of teachers in my field. This research would seek to establish whether teachers' 'switching' represents a move between a comprehensive doctrine based on religious values and propositions and a

political conception which endorses liberal values and requires that their own actions can be justified on the terms of these liberal values.

The second area for further research involves finding a method to examine each of the two above conceptions within one project. I noted in Chapter Five that the nature of my questions coupled with my approaching participants as a PhD researcher from the UCL Institute of Education may have led them to filter their responses through the lens of liberal values. Further research, then, should involve presenting a range of sources from academic literature and the Jewish canon and examining participants' responses to each.

An example of such research is a study by Eli Gottlieb and Sam Wineburg into 'Epistemic Switching in the Reading of Academic and Sacred History' (Gottlieb and Wineburg, 2012). Gottlieb and Wineburg compared the responses of different groups of religious believers, made up of historians and clergy, to academic texts and sacred texts. Their description of religious historians' responses bears a strong similarity to my description of teachers switching between conceptions.

Navigating between the competing commitments of their faith communities on the one hand and an academic guild on the other, religious historians engaged in epistemic switching, varying epistemological criteria to align with the allegiances triggered by the document under review. (p. 84)

Gottlieb and Wineburg designed a think-aloud task based on the work of Ericsson & Simon (1984). Participants were asked to read variously from academic and sacred texts and were told to verbalise everything they 'heard themselves thinking', to say whatever is on their mind, not to 'overexplain or justify' or 'worry about complete sentences'. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and then coded.

Further research into teachers' conceptions, whether strictly in my field or in the broader fields of RE teachers in Jewish schools or other faith schools, could make use of the method employed by Gottlieb and Wineburg, using both academic and sacred texts and comparing responses between participants.

As I noted above, grounded theory methods have done their job in my study and further research should look to both test my hypothesis and deepen an understanding of my findings. In this vein, methods like those employed by Gottlieb

and Wineburg could likely be used to good effect in further research into teachers' conceptions.

6.5 IMPACT ON NORMATIVE INQUIRY AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

My finding that, in the real world of my research field, the dominant paradigm of autonomy is a Millian-based existential one becomes particularly significant when considered in relation to the academic literature that I reviewed in Chapter Two, which considers the question of indoctrination solely on a Kantian-based rationalist paradigm. The presence of this apparent stonewall between academe and the real world has implications for philosophical inquiry and for social research.

The social researcher will need to be aware that philosophical paradigms or moral arguments which are dominant and well-explicated in academic literature may play a much smaller part, or no part at all, in research participants' conceptions or worldviews. Without this awareness, the researcher is prone to making choices about lines of inquiry that will lead her up a blind alley or to designing interview questions that are either not understood or misinterpreted by participants (as I discovered with one participant whose conceptions of autonomy and indoctrination were the opposite of the conception on which my interview question to him was based).

Conversely, normative philosophers face a double challenge, as they must on the one hand be aware that moral arguments which do not penetrate the stonewall between academe and the real world will not be able to impact on policy and practice in society, while on the other hand ensuring that the stonewall remains in place and continues to shield their normative philosophical inquiry from the effects of every discourse and ideology that are dominant in society at large.

It would be to the detriment of society if the Kantian paradigm, or any philosophical paradigm, were completely written out of all discourse, as a paradigm's lack of popularity in the real world in no way lessens its moral imperative.

If my study has helped bring this last point into focus, it has served, albeit unintentionally, an additional emancipatory role.

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