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The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens: A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how non-formal education empowers individuals and communities

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**The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens:
A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how
non-formal education empowers individuals and communities**

By

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COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

DEDICATION

This piece of work is dedicated to the soul of Nio.

A beautiful soul who accompanied and supported me through many long nights writing this work.

Nio 2003-2021
Rest in Peace

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

Relevant academic seminars and conferences were attended at which work was often presented.

Publications:

Al-Abdalla, N (2013) *Bibliography of English Books about Iraq: A Selected Bibliography of Books Published in English about Iraq & Mesopotamia, 1800-2000*, London: Createspace Independent Publishing Platform

Al-Abdalla, N (2014) *100 Years Marking the British Campaign in Mesopotamia (Iraq): Iraq in the First World War, 1914-1918*, London: Createspace Independent Publishing Platform

Al-Abdalla, N (2014) *Studies in the Politics of Education: Five Academic Studies in the Politics & Philosophy of Education; Francis Fukuyama, Michel Foucault & Multicultural Education,* London: Createspace Independent Publishing Platform

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Presentations and Conferences:

2023 Research paper, *"Non-formal learning as a tool for social empowerment"*, presented at the 5th International Forum for Professional Development in Education Management (May 2023), Marrakesh, Morocco

2022 Artistic Manager of the International Arab-African Documentary Film Festival – 28 November-2 December 2022, held in person, Zagora, Morocco

2022 Research paper, "*Non-formal Learning and Its Role in Transforming and Reforming the Education & Social System",* presented at the 4th International Forum for Professional Development in Education Management (May 2022), Marrakesh, Morocco

2021   Honorary President of the Casablanca International Festival for Documentary & Short Feature films – 23-25 December 2021, held remotely via Zoom

2021   Artistic Manager of the International Arab-African Documentary Film Festival – 26-29 November 2021, held in person, Zagora, Morocco

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2020   Research paper, *"The 1920 Revolution in the British publications: The British Voices of Withdrawal from Iraq following the 1920 Revolution"* submitted to the 7th Annual Conference for Historical Studies (April 2020), Doha, Qatar

2019   Presentation, *"Morocco in the English Language Films: 1920-1980",* given at the Casablanca International Short & Documentary Film Festival, 26-28 September 2019, Casablanca, Morocco

2019   Presentation, *"Tunisia through the Eyes of Western Authors & Artists",* given at the International Festival of Creative Poets, 7-9 February 2019, Bizerte, Tunisia

2018   Presentation, *"The Role Played by Non-formal Education in the Lives of Iraqi-British Citizens",* given at the Postgraduate Research Conference, University of Plymouth, 30 June 2018

2018   Presentation, *"World Literature: From Sumerian Tablets to the Digital Era",* given at the 8th Festival for Arab Folk Poetry, El-Jadida, Morocco, 19-21 April 2018

2017   Presentation, *"Iraq & Arab World through the eyes of Western Female Authors",* given at the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC), 8 December 2017

2017   Presentation, *"Iraqi Marshes in the English Language Publications 1800-2000",* given at Salam House, Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF), 12 July 2017

2017   Presentation, *"100 Years: British in Baghdad – Birth of a New Iraq",* given at the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC), 20 May 2017

2017   Presentation, *"Creative western female writers & their contribution to Arab culture",* given at the International Festival of Creative Female Poets, Sousse, Tunisia, 28-30 March 2017

2016   Presentation, *"Iraq in the Western Publications 1800-2000: Western Vision, Iraqi Review",* given at the Iraqi Cultural Café, 27 March 2016

2016   Presentation, *"Introduction to the Main Political Processes in Iraq post-2003",* given at the Buckingham Community Centre, Edgware, 9 February 2016

2014   Presentation, *"100 Years Marking the British Campaign in Mesopotamia/Iraq",* given at Salam House, Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF), 29 October 2014

2013   Presentation, *"Iraq in the 1920s (1920-1930): A Journey into Iraq through Western eyes",* given at Salam House, Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF), 30 October 2013

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The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens:
A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how
non-formal education empowers individuals and communities

Nadeem Al-Abdalla

ABSTRACT

This thesis highlights the role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi community members who participate in the activities offered by London's Iraqi-British cultural centres. The key aims of this thesis were; to research, document and analyse London's Iraqi community and their experiences of non-formal learning within Iraqi cultural centres; and to establish the extent to which they found their participation in this non-formal learning empowering, both at an individual and community level.

Many studies have been conducted into the lives of newly arrived communities. Generally, these studies tend to focus on their early years in the UK and the issues they face in rebuilding and re-establishing their lives. However, from my literature searches I identified what appears to be an overall lack of research which focuses on the UK's established Iraqi community. To this end, the findings of my study seek to address this gap in our knowledge and research into the lives of Iraqis in the UK and in diaspora globally, particularly relating to their non-formal learning needs. I have also included information which focuses on historic Iraqi-British links within this thesis, to contextualise the Iraqi community presence in the UK.

Utilising an interpretive research methodology, this thesis involved conducting in-depth qualitative research interviews with a group of respondents drawn from London's Iraqi community, utilising social capital and social empowerment theory approaches, and reporting the unfolding stories of eight respondents who participate in, and facilitate, non-formal learning within these centres. The key themes arising from my research included; social capital maintenance, widening participation through social media and live-streaming technologies, the role played by pedagogy and how gender, age and social background shape participatory patterns in the centres' learning activities.

The findings of this thesis aim to highlight the importance of multicultural research, social empowerment and social capital, including bonding social capital, bridging social capital, linking and imagined social capital. In particular, these findings highlight the unique stories and accounts of the Iraqi community's engagement with non-formal learning in London, with the intention of providing an enriched understanding of the Iraqi community's educational needs to academics, educators, community organisers and policy makers. In doing so, the thesis seeks to provide a clearer picture of Iraqis in diaspora, the challenges of integration they face and how society can empower them through education to improve their bridging social capital and integration with other communities and the wider global society.

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Chapter 1:

Rationale & Context

This thesis explores the non-formal learning experiences of Iraqi-British citizens within three London-based cultural centres. My study contributes to wider academic debates on non-formal education and migration by focusing on well-educated and settled migrants, a group that is not widely addressed in the literature on migration, or on non-formal education, more widely. For this reason, my study sets out to bridge the apparent lack of research into these issues; it also seeks to inform the reader about Iraqi-British relations, and to provide a greater understanding of London's Iraqi community. It addresses the research question below:

- To what extent does non-formal education empower participants involved in this study of London's Iraqi-British centres, at both an individual and community level?

This research question influenced the direction of my literature review prior to designing and commencing the project's fieldwork phase. I reviewed a wide range of literature relating to education's potential to empower participants. For instance, education can potentially empower London's Iraqi community by providing them with opportunities to access, analyse and understand new knowledge that was largely not available to them during their years growing up in Iraq. I explored whether this was empowering them and if so, in what ways. I also explored the extent to which their participation in the centres' learning activities strengthens their sense of cultural identity and provides them with a greater sense of belonging within the community.

In this chapter I will set the context for this research, explain why it has been undertaken and what it contributes to broader academic debates, and introduce

some key concepts. There has been a sizeable population of Iraqi citizens resident in the UK since the 1950s. However, the size of the UK's Iraqi population has significantly increased since the 1990s, owing to political and social instability in Iraq and the Middle East (Al-Taei, 2014). As a result, the UK population of Iraqi origin is now estimated at over 300,000. At least a third of these Iraqis reside in London (IOM, 2007).

Due to the size of London's Iraqi community, more than 20 cultural organisations have been established with different purposes. Some of them are related to a specific faith or ethnicity, whilst others are focused on culture, knowledge, literature, politics, and archaeology. They provide events for the local community. However, this thesis focuses on three cultural centres and their activities during a three-year period between 2016 and 2019. The centres chosen aim to cater for all Iraqi community members, irrespective of religion, ethnicity, political affiliation or social background, however in practice they are attended by a certain sector of the Iraqi community which is well educated and settled.

The Iraqi community

In this chapter and throughout my thesis, I provide more information about the UK's Iraqi community. The Iraqi Medical Association (IMA) in the UK reports that there are more than 5,000 Iraqi-British GPs working in the UK at this time. Tens of Iraqi ministers, former prime ministers, UK ministers, thousands of engineers, journalists and businesspeople of Iraqi origin reside in the UK, and many of them attend these

cultural centres. The centres' activities are open for everyone to attend, yet in practice participatory patterns in the centres' activities tend to reflect differences in social stratification, social and cultural capital across the Iraqi community.

The UK's Iraqi community began to grow in size in the 1950s, and this community has expanded significantly from the 1990s onwards (Al-Taei, 2014). With this expansion came the formation and opening of many Iraqi-British centres and groups. Some of these are community organisations, which focus on providing support and advocacy to Iraqis such as helping them improve their English literacy, providing them with legal and immigration advice, interpreting their correspondence and interpreting for them with local authorities, medical and educational institutions and other organisations. These community organisations tend to cater for newly arrived Iraqis, who have outstanding asylum applications or who have recently been granted residency status in the UK. Iraqis who are more established in the UK, with residency status and in many cases, British and European nationality, are generally more drawn to venues where they can gather to celebrate their cultural and social capital and heritage, and to reinforce their sense of Iraqi identities. The cultural centres' events focus on areas such as culture, knowledge, literature, politics and archaeology, and these cultural centres are the primary focus point of this study and thesis.

As highlighted above, Iraqi-British citizens can be described as a newly established community within London and the UK. However, compared with the amount of literature available about the UK's other minority groups, such as Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and Afro-Caribbean communities, I found that comparatively

little has been written about the UK's Iraqi community, their backgrounds and how they live. Most of the literature I have found and read relating to Iraqis in the UK tends to focus on the struggle of the Iraqi community to adjust to their new lives in the UK and the reasons why they came (Scharbrodt, 2020; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015; Al-Rasheed, 1995; Ata, 2017; Ali, 2019). In short, it describes why they fled their native Iraq and relocated here, and the issues they have with integration and adjusting to their new lives in a culturally unfamiliar environment. However, this research project looks specifically at how they engage in non-formal education through attending cultural centres including those which this research project studies, and the outcomes of their participation in these non-formal learning activities.

Non-formal learning

I have chosen the term "non-formal learning" to differentiate the provision in the three centres from both formal and informal learning. Simply, formal education refers to all aspects of structured learning which can be found in the mainstream educational institutions, (schools, colleges and universities) and leads to formal certification. However, both "informal" and "non-formal" education is provided within community and cultural centres (Morrice, 2007; Jackson, 2010; Latchem, 2014). Originally, non-formal learning was seen primarily as community education to provide basic literacy, numeracy and information technology skills in developing countries (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974; Latchem, 2014). However, non-formal learning provision has now been extended to developed countries such as the UK and can encompass a higher

level of learning as seen in the formal education sector. This is certainly the case in the Iraqi-British cultural centres focused on by my study. Non-formal education is defined by Rogers (2005) as follows:

> *A report on vocational education, 'Making Learning Visible: the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Europe', defines non-formal learning .... as 'semi-structured', consisting of 'planned and explicit' approaches to learning introduced into work organisations and elsewhere, not recognised within the formal education and training system.*
>
> *(Rogers 2005: p.2)*

Whilst it is structured and planned, and has some formal aspects, participation in non-formal learning is voluntary and participants' attendance at non-formal learning events is not monitored, unlike in the formal sector, and does not lead to certification. The non-formal learning provided by these cultural centres resembles that provided by the Workers Educational Association (WEA) (https://www.wea.org.uk/). This organisation operates through a network of adult education centres. Like the cultural centres this project studies, WEA centres offer roll-on, roll-off ad hoc learning which encompasses subjects like history, culture and literature.

Regarding the concept of "informal education", the Council of Europe (COE) define informal learning as a space where "each individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from the educational influences and resources in his or her own environment and from daily experience".

This definition appears on the Council of Europe's website at https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-youth-foundation/definitions, and seeks to describe activities that happen in settings such as the home and workplace, through our connections with others (Eaton, 2011), and also through our engagement with

group activities and social media (Quinn, 2017). Due to the structured nature of the learning activities in the centres I have studied, I considered the concept of "non-formal education" to be the most appropriate for use within this study.

An extensive body of knowledge has been established regarding the functions served by non-formal learning in the lives of individuals and communities (Usher et al, 1997; Coombs & Ahmed, 1974; Mezirow, 2009). However, I have not been able to find any published studies which address the role played by non-formal learning in the lives of Iraqis in the UK, provided by cultural centres.

My positioning

My interest in this field arises from my own positioning as an Iraqi Arab from a middle-class and secular background. I come from a multi-faith family from Baghdad, the capital of Iraq which is a hub of religious, ethnic and cultural diversity and the centre of the main political and social life in Iraq. Throughout the 20th century, Baghdad used to be home to Muslims (Shi'a and Sunni), Christians, Mandaees and Jews (until the early 1950s). This is reflected in the make-up of thousands of multi-faith, multi-sect Iraqi families in Baghdad, including my family with interfaith marriages (Sunni, Shi'a and Christian). From this the reader will see that I come from a multicultural and multi-faith background, which is reflected in my later career and multicultural approach to life and learning.

I studied English language and literature and qualified as a teacher in Iraq in the 1980s and worked as a teacher in Iraq, Yemen and Europe before relocating to the UK in 2000. Since that time I have worked as a linguist, community organiser and immigration advisor in Plymouth involving dealing with diverse communities, including Iraqis. In Plymouth, I obtained my Masters degree in education and moved to London, where I became a facilitator of non-formal education specialising in the subject of English language publications about Iraq. This is my specialist area of interest, knowledge and expertise, which led to me compiling and publishing a book titled *Bibliography of English Language Books about Iraq* (Al-Abdalla, 2013).

Given the size of the Iraqi community that has permanently resettled in the UK, I believe it is important for them to be aware of their history and cultural heritage and the extent to which Britain's involvement in Iraq has shaped this. That said, I recognise that the centres are mainly attended by well-educated Iraqis who generally hail from middle-class, professional backgrounds. This socioeconomic group prospered during Iraq's early years as a nation-state between the 1920s and 1970s, when the Iraqi state had reasonable relations with most countries, a greater degree of normal international connections. In that time, many Iraqis from middle-class and secular backgrounds often studied abroad and obtained well-paid jobs, both in Iraq and in Western countries. As a result, many of them tended to see the Western education as having a positive impact on their lives and life chances.

However, many other sections of Iraqi society saw this Western influence as an occupying and colonial force. As a result, when Iraq became a republic in 1958 this resulted in successive regimes removing a great body of knowledge written in

English from circulation and labelling it as pro-Western, colonial-era propaganda. This means that a great body of knowledge written in English was not available to many educated people inside Iraq, and they found this body of knowledge many years later after migrating to Western countries. However, many educated Iraqis are still inclined to question Western social science narratives, which they tend to connect with colonial discourse. This is also reflected in their patterns of attendance at the centres, and their discussions in many events. That said, I believe that by providing the Iraqis who do participate in the centres' events with the opportunity to access and critically engage with this body of knowledge, these centres can play a crucial role in helping this section of the Iraqi community integrate into mainstream British society and to increase their bridging social capital with those from other communities.

As well as facilitating non-formal learning within these cultural centres, I also participate in their non-formal learning experiences and events. These events focus on a wide range of academic, political and social issues such as health, education and international relations. A list of the learning events held by these centres between 2016 and 2019 can be found in the Appendices that accompany this thesis.

My participation in, and facilitation of, the centres' learning events has led me to explore the role these centres play in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens and to undertake this research project. My enquiry was designed to explore, document and analyse the Iraqi community's experiences of non-formal education within the cultural centres. This was designed to analyse the extent to which this non-formal

education introduces new knowledge to the Iraqi community, and to establish if and how this may empower them, at both an individual and community level.

This has been described by Martinez (2022) as social empowerment of individuals and communities, by seeking to provide them with opportunities and knowledge which allows them to overcome economic and social disadvantage and to positively change their lives. Such social empowerment is particularly important for minority groups, who face the challenges of integrating into new countries and culturally unfamiliar environments whilst retaining their own sense of cultural identity and heritage (Jackson, 2010; Ata, 2017; Ali, 2019; Scharbrodt, 2020).

The concept of empowerment is somewhat problematic, as it conveys a number of meanings. It can mean that individuals feel empowered in terms of increased knowledge, stronger connections with others, a heightened awareness of one's cultural identity and the ability to challenge and transform unequal power relationships (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Martinez, 2022). I argue that empowerment through education can amount to any, and indeed all, of these things. This is examined in further detail throughout my study, which shines a light on the ways in which empowerment through non-formal education is experienced by the Iraqi community in London.

Migration

This study of the Iraqi community's experiences of non-formal learning also takes into account the role played by increasing global migration to the West. Large-scale migration of minority groups to the UK, and other Western countries, has become increasingly prevalent since the end of the Second World War. Jackson (2010) outline this below:

> *International migration is one of the most challenging global policy issues of the twenty-first century. Although global migration is not new, the scale of it is. As a report by the UK"s Home Office (2005) shows, around 175 million people worldwide live outside their country of birth, and almost 10% of people living in the developed world are migrants.*   *(Jackson 2010: pp. 239-240)*

The migrants referred to above have made the permanent move to the UK for a number of reasons; for better life chances, to flee persecution and repression, or to join family members already living in the UK. Jackson goes on to explain the UNESCO definition of international migration as follows:

> *UNESCO defines migrants as those who move from one region or place to another. The term migrant can be understood as 'any person who lives temporarily or permanently in a country where he or she was not born, and has acquired some significant social ties to this country' although a person can also be considered a migrant even when s/he is born in the country they inhabit (European Women's Lobby).*   *(Jackson 2010: pp. 239-240)*

Since the 1990s, an increasing number of Iraqis have relocated to the UK permanently escaping war, economic difficulties and repression. However, compared with other minority groups who have lived in the UK for longer, the Iraqi community is a relatively new ethnic minority group within the UK. They face the same issues, to a great extent, as other ethnic minority groups in terms of integrating into British society whilst retaining their own sense of cultural heritage and shared identities (Al-Rasheed, 1995; Haralambos & Holborn, 2000; Morrice, 2007; Jackson, 2010; Ata,

2017; Ali, 2019; Scharbrodt, 2020). Like other minority ethnic groups, Iraqi communities have suffered from being marginalised and disadvantaged. Cruz-Saco (2008) outlines this in further detail:

> *In multi-ethnic societies where ethnic groups are also minority groups they are often marginalized because their traditions, biological, linguistic, and cultural traits differ from the mainstream population. Generally, their presence is perceived as a threat or as an 'unknown' to members of the dominant group who resist associating with them.*　　　　　*(Cruz-Saco 2008: pp. 2-3)*

The concept of integration refers to the process of establishing a degree of equality between all citizens of a given country or society. Effective social integration leads to harmony, understanding and tolerance between different communities, without groups losing their own identities and cultural heritage in this process. Social integration is the opposite of social exclusion, and it is necessary to identify and minimise the causes of social exclusion, including a lack of awareness of other groups' cultures and history, to effectively integrate minority groups into the "mainstream":

> *Social integration is the process of creating unity, inclusion and participation at all levels of society within the diversity of personal attributes so that every person is free to be the person she wants to be … social exclusion is produced by … forms of rejection that leave out persons or groups from the mainstream system of economic, social, and political relationships.*
> *(Cruz-Saco 2008: pp. 2-3)*

Many studies in educational research have dealt with a range of minority communities from Asia and Africa residing in the UK (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000; Morrice, 2007; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015). However, they have always portrayed these communities within a specific context (eg, studies about language and linguistic barriers for asylum seekers, traumatised refugees in the UK, cooking traditional cuisine, designing traditional costumes, jewellery and hairstyles in

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community centres). Whilst these types of non-formal learning exist, it is unfair to portray minority communities' non-formal learning within these categories only, and to give the impression that their abilities are limited to this extent only. My thesis attempts to challenge such patronisation and stereotyping of minority communities.

Social capital

Drawing on the work of Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1986; Jenks, 1993), I make use of applied social capital theory throughout this thesis. Social capital describes the connections and relationships we attain, maintain and strengthen through our relationships with others:

> *Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition … which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.*
> *(Bourdieu 1986: p. 247)*

We can describe social capital as that which we can attain through interpersonal relationships and by participating in certain group activities. In short, the social capital to which we have access is obtained and maintained through our social connections and membership of social networks. This applies exactly to those within London's Iraqi community who participate in the shared cultural and non-formal learning activities offered by these cultural centres. In turn, this creates a shared sense of identity, shared values, shared norms and understandings, trust and co-operation.

However, it is important to acknowledge that not all Iraqis have equal access to these centres; those who choose to participate in their activities do so due to feeling a sense of belonging there. This sense of belonging arises from their social positioning; they are mainly highly educated individuals from professional backgrounds. Indeed, these cultural centres act as cultural gathering places for Iraqis (Jenks, 1993), in which Iraqi-British citizens can meet with their peers. This allows them to retain and enhance their social capital within their communities (Morrice, 2007; Jackson, 2010; Baratz & Kalnisky, 2017).

Cultural capital

Due to the positioning of those involved in the centres' learning activities, the concept of cultural capital is also relevant to this study. This concept was also pioneered by Bourdieu to explain economic and cultural advantage within societal structures (Bourdieu, 1986; Haralambos & Holborn, 2000). Cultural capital refers to individuals' level of knowledge, education, intellect, appearance and communication styles, among other things:

> *Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.) … and in the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which … confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee.* (Bourdieu 1986: p. 243)

Bourdieu also refers to the way in which the advantages bestowed on individuals by cultural capital are overlooked and normalised within educational systems:

> *From the very beginning, a definition of human capital, despite its humanistic connotations, does not move beyond economism and ignores, inter alia, the*

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fact that the scholastic yield from educational action depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family. Moreover, the economic and social yield of the educational qualification depends on the social capital, again inherited, which can be used to back it up. (Bourdieu 1986: p. 243)

As Bourdieu highlights, cultural capital encompasses the social assets of individuals which promote social mobility in a stratified society, which have been derived from patterns of social stratification. This means that cultural capital helps those higher up the social structure in terms of educational achievement and entry to professional occupations.

The concepts of social and cultural capital are largely theoretical, and as a result not everyone in the Iraqi community is familiar with these concepts. However, this study highlights that these cultural centres are places which the Iraqi community can approach to know about their cultural and social capital. In the last decade, Daesh terrorists destroyed many important cultural and historic sites and icons in Iraq and Syria. The Iraqi community found relief in the fact these centres in London contained a great body of knowledge about these treasured cultural and historic sites. This body of knowledge included photographs and maps of the same places that had been destroyed.

Many studies have been conducted focusing on newly arrived immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees from many countries, including Iraq, who have come to the UK (Ali, 2019; Al-Rasheed, 1995; Ata, 2017; Al-Taei, 2014; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015). However, I found there was an overall lack of studies dealing with established minority communities, or with specific aspects of their lives in the UK. As a result, little is known about how the Iraqi community engage with non-formal education. The

three cultural centres in my study play a pivotal role in reinforcing Iraqi-British citizens' sense of Iraqi cultural capital, heritage and identity. I felt that their contribution to the lives of the community members attending, and engaging with, them and their activities was worthy of analysis and documentation.

Britain's involvement with Iraq (formerly known as Mesopotamia)

As this study deals with the UK's Iraqi community, I consider it important to provide some information about the historical relationship between Iraq (Mesopotamia) and the UK. Is it 100 years or 400 years? What kind of relationship do these countries have? Was Iraq under British occupation or a British administration? Is this a relationship between the colonisers and the colonised, or another kind of relationship? Al-Taei (2014) argues that:

> *By the 1990s, London was home to a number of opposition parties. The recent history of Iraq has had a direct impact on the community in the UK in a number of ways. Many are refugees and asylum seekers who escaped from the Baathist regime. Others have been affected by the upsurge in sectarian violence in more recent times.* *(Al-Taei 2014: pp. 3-4)*

The British involvement in the territories which later became known as the nation-state of Iraq began back in the 19th century with the River Euphrates expedition of 1836 (Richardson, 1840; Chesney, 1850). The aim of this expedition was to find a shorter route to connect Britain via the eastern Mediterranean and River Euphrates down to Basra and into the Gulf and to India, which was Britain's main overseas colony during the 19th century.

In the 1840s, the age of modern mass-scale archaeological excavations in Iraq (Mesopotamia) began in earnest. This was led by the British archaeologist Sir Austen Henry Layard (1817-1894). Layard led many expeditions to excavate Mesopotamia's ancient city-states including Nineveh, in which thousands of artefacts were found (Layard, 1853). Many Assyrian winged oxes (known as lamassus) were dramatically recovered and removed and taken by river down the Tigris to Basra, and then by steamer ship to the UK. Several of these lamassus were taken to the British Museum in London, where they can still be seen today.

In 1914, the Great War (World War I) broke out. The Ottoman Empire was an ally of Germany and then found themselves at war with Russia, France and Britain. In the case of Iraq, Britain's first priority was to protect their interests in the Abadan oil refinery which was located opposite Basra on the other side of the Shatt Al'Arab waterway in Persia, the country we now know as Iran (Barr, 2011). At the end of October 1914, the British Army's Mesopotamia Campaign began and by the end of October 1918, Britain occupied all the Mosul wilayat. The war ended with the armistice declaration between Britain and the Ottoman Empire on 30 October 1918.

Although the British Army landed in Al-Faw with a few thousand personnel, at the end of the war in 1918 this had swelled to a few hundred thousand personnel, mainly from Britain and India, with all its impacts of native Iraqi citizens seeing thousands of things representing modernism in the 20th century, including cars, planes, railways, trains, armoured tanks, ships and dockyards in a short period of time between 1914 and 1918 (Al-Abdalla, 2014).

The British presence in Iraq, as an occupying power between 1914-1920, as a mandatory power between 1920-1932, then as a supporter and close ally to the independent Kingdom of Iraq between 1932-1958, brought many positive aspects of modernisation in all aspects of life (economy, transport, agriculture and education). However, the British presence in Iraq was seen by many sections of society as an occupying power and as a coloniser.

This sense of British imperialistic occupation has led to a revolutionary rhetoric, revolutionary and political movements, anti-British sentiment and anti-Western values (Longrigg, 1954; Birdwood, 1959; Gallman, 1964; Batatu, 1978). In turn, this led to Iraq entering decades of military republics and dictatorship rule from 1958 until 2003 (Franzen, 2011). Sadly, this brought many unwanted wars and incompetent rule in all aspects of life, including education, to Iraq. In turn, this caused hundreds of thousands of Iraqis to flee for their lives. All of this led to a wave of Iraqis relocating to the UK for a more settled future, which I outline in further detail below.

Iraqi relocation to the UK

Thousands of Iraqis came to the UK as adults, whilst some of them came at a young age with their families. Others were born here as the second or third generation. Their contribution to UK society, and how this has resulted in the establishment of several Iraqi cultural centres, is outlined below.

The republic of Iraq was declared in 1958 with its unfriendly anti-Western discourse, as I have outlined above. However, despite their anti-Western sentiment and stance, the Iraqi government continued sending students to Britain. Speaking generally, Iraqi citizens continued to choose Britain as their preferred higher education study destination, and this continued to be the case until 1990 (Tripp, 2007).

This means that thousands of Iraqis studied, and graduated, in Britain and hundreds of them would choose Britain as a new place to live, or to escape having to return to a country waging wars with compulsory military service and political and social repression. There were other major events inside Iraq leading to a wave of Iraqis emigrating to Britain. Around 150,000 Iraqi Jews left Iraq in 1950 and 1951 and went to Israel, however thousands of them ended up in Western countries, including Britain (Julius, 2017). Iraqis resettling in the UK made notable contributions to British life, an example of which is the architect Zaha Hadid (1950-2016) who was awarded the highest medals in the field of architecture. Hadid is best known in the UK for constructing parts of London's Olympic village (Davies et al, 2016).

In 1958 came a republic with a new political and ideological discourse. For the next 30 years Iraq endured cycles of regime changes, military coups, contradicting ideological discourses and political instability. Large numbers of Iraqis, whether they were associated with the former monarchy or with Western values, or with political beliefs such as Communism, Islamism or Arab nationalism, fled to neighbouring countries and then thousands of them ended in Britain (Ansari, 2004). From this the reader will note that with the coming of each political regime, came a new wave of victims fleeing their country. Al-Taei (2014) has outlined this below:

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The migration to the UK in the 1940s and 1950s was a small influx of Iraqi political refugees, including liberal and radical intellectuals who had become dissatisfied with the monarchist regime … when the monarchy was overthrown in 1958, many of its associates and supporters also migrated to the UK … in the 1970s and 1980s, political and religious repression by the Iraqi government led to a bigger influx of refugees.   (Al-Taei 2014: pp. 3-4)

A dramatic and negative change came in August 1990, when the Iraqi regime invaded Kuwait. It then led to the first Gulf War, between Iraq and an international military coalition. This led to Iraq suffering tragic losses all round, whilst suffering from the heaviest economic sanctions in their history which prevented them from trading with the entire world. For a country which relied on the exporting of oil for its economic prosperity, it became impossible to function. Monthly wages in Iraq dropped to less than $10 per person.

All this economic repression, leaving Iraqis with no hope and no future, combined with severe political repression at the hands of the regime, led to tens of thousands of Iraqis fleeing the country every year in the 1990s. In April 2003, an international military coalition toppled the ruling Iraqi regime and hopes were great that this would lead to positive change and the birth of a new democracy, and that Iraqis who fled their country would start to return. Wage levels returned to the levels of other countries in the region, but this was accompanied by a new wave of terrorism and sectarian violence.

This violence continued to increase, and it was seen in its worst form in 2014, with the emergence of the terrorist groups of ISIS (Daesh), who took over entire cities and regions in northern Iraq. It took the Iraqis and the international community three years, and great human sacrifices, to liberate this land from Daesh. All of these

violent events between 2003 and 2020, in a country which suffers from extreme financial corruption and administrative mismanagement, with many military and armoured groups controlling people's lives, led to a continuation of Iraqis fleeing the country in their thousands between 2003 and 2020, just as in the 1990s.

The reader will note from this that the UK and London is an important hub for Iraqis for many reasons. These reasons include the historic connections between Iraq and Britain; in the 1990s, Arab TV channels opened their main offices in London. After 2003, many Iraqi TV channels opened their main branches in London. Arab national newspapers have offices based in London, and hundreds of Arab local media channels have correspondents based in London. All of this has attracted thousands of Iraqis to settle in London for jobs, careers and a better life.

Iraqi-British groups and centres in London

The Iraqi community, in the same way as any other community group in London, can access community organisations which serve the wider society, in their local areas or in other parts of the country. This can be for leisure, language courses, advice and support, among other things. The Iraqi community also access the further education colleges and schools to attend English classes and other available courses.

There are also numerous political and faith organisations; political groups include Islamic parties, Arab nationalist parties, communist parties and liberal parties. After 2003, these parties came to power in Iraq and those who held senior positions

during the Iraqi government of 2014-2018 came from London's Iraqi community. This applied to Iraq's president and prime minister during this time period (Fuad Masum and Haider Al-Abadi), and also to Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, the Iraqi Prime Minister between 2020 and 2022.

The majority of Iraqis, including myself, come from a Muslim background (IND, 2002; Ali, 2019). However, a great number residing in London do not practice religion and come from secular backgrounds, including myself. There are also large Christian and Jewish Iraqi communities in London (Al-Rasheed, 1995; Al-Taei, 2014; Julius, 2017). The main Iraqi community groups in London include the Iraqi Welfare Association (IWA) and the Iraqi Association (IA). Other community groups include the Kurdistan Children's Fund, the Iraqi People Support Group, the Kurdish Charitable Trust, the Federation of Iraqi Refugees, Iraqi Relief Trust and Help the Children of Iraq.

For Iraqi community members who still have outstanding asylum applications or issues with their refugee status in the UK, they usually contact organisations such as Refugee Action (https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/), the Refugee Council (https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/about-us/) and other local refugee groups which provide them with legal advice, immigration advice and practical support. All of the above organisations serve the wider society, including Iraqi community members. However, other Iraqi-British centres act as places where Iraqis can gather to talk about their country, their heritage and other related matters. This research project has focused exclusively on three such cultural centres. The respondents who took part in my study all attended, or facilitated, events at these centres.

Most who attend these cultural centres are educated to university degree level or higher, work or have worked in Iraq or the UK, in professional occupations as doctors, lawyers, university lecturers, accountants, writers, journalists, government ministers, and similar occupations. They represent a kind of educated, somewhat privileged group among London's Iraqi community. The cultural centres are open to all community members and do not exclude anybody based on level of education, social background or any other characteristics. However, in practice they act as cultural gathering places for the educated elite within the Iraqi community (Jenks, 1993) and in Bourdieu's terms exclude those without such cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Those attending these cultural centres, and all Iraqi-British cultural centres in London, do so to sustain their sense of cultural heritage and identity and to discuss intellectual subjects of interest to them. The centres also act as cultural gathering-places, which serves to reinforce their levels of social capital and their sense of Iraqi cultural and national identity further. A list of all the cultural events, including knowledge presentations, delivered by the three cultural centres between 2016 and 2019 featured in my study can be found in the accompanying Appendices.

Cultural centres and learning communities sampled by this research project

The cultural centres and learning communities this research project specifically focused on are:

- British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI) (www.bisi.ac.uk)

- Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF) (www.hdf-iq.org)

- Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC) (www.angloiraqi.org)

These centres provide non-formal education to Iraqis and the community through the mediums of knowledge presentations, their websites, media channels, and printed and digital material. The centres' printed and digital material includes books and articles published on the centres' websites. Thus, non-formal education opportunities are provided to Iraqis and the community through e-learning (which takes place via their websites and media channels), presentations, social and cultural events which are designed to provide both educational and cultural growth experiences for participants. In Chapter 3, I will outline how I conducted research with facilitators and users of the centres in order to address my key research question. Here I will introduce each centre.

British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI)
www.bisi.ac.uk

This centre was established in London in 1932 and was known as the "British School of Iraqi Archaeology" until 2007. It was set up to honour the life of the British political diplomat Gertrude Bell (1868-1926). Most of BISI's activities were, and continue to be, concerned with archaeology and the role of British archaeologists in excavating ancient Mesopotamia.

BISI's management committee is made up of British academics, including university professors, lecturers and readers, from some of London's most well-known and renowned universities. These include the University of London and the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS). Their activities include facilitating knowledge presentations on academic subjects relating to archaeology and Iraq's ancient and modern history.

Between 2016 and 2019, BISI hosted nearly 20 knowledge presentations and events on a range of academic issues relating to Iraq. In addition, they are involved with some outreach activities in Iraq and hosting visiting professors from Iraq in London. When they visit Iraq, it is to engage in continued archaeological excavations, and to collaborate with Iraqis in several projects. BISI have worked closely with Iraq to reopen the Basra Museum, something they achieved in 2016. All BISI's past and future events, outreach work and projects can be found on their website at www.bisi.ac.uk.

It is also possible to become a member of BISI via their website. Although their knowledge presentations are open to both members and non-members, membership gives interested persons access to, and a copy of, their annual journal, "Iraq" for most members. BISI's annual journal, "Iraq" is a comprehensive and detailed guide to the history of ancient Mesopotamia, excavations of these cities and city-states and what it reveals about their daily lives at the time. It also provides readers with information about BISI's outreach activities in Iraq, the Iraqi academics they work closely with and a range of issues which affect daily life in Iraq.

Although BISI's concern with Iraq is primarily academic, they also provide comprehensive and critically informed information about the stages of Iraq's political and diplomatic history, including life in Iraq under the Ottoman Empire, the monarchy which lasted from 1921 until 1958, up to the present day.

Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation
www.hdf-iq.org

This is a non-governmental organisation, with a head office based in Baghdad. In 2010, they opened an office in London which is also known as "Salam House". This is significant because "salam", an Arabic word, means "peace". The greeting word "salam" in Arabic means "peace be upon you".

As the centre's name suggests, they are established to facilitate dialogue on a range of academic and political issues which are of interest to the Iraqi community. Between 2016 and 2019, the foundation held almost 160 knowledge presentations on a range of subjects. Presenters include university professors, experts from the medical profession, journalists and writers, among others.

Prior to the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, the centre held weekly events (an average of 40 events per year). Details of these knowledge presentations, with dates and facilitators' names, can be found in the Appendices which accompany this thesis and on the centre's website at www.hdf-iq.org. In addition to holding regular knowledge presentations, the centre also facilitates daily and weekly workshops for Iraqis to

attend and discuss a range of issues such as health, education and international relations.

Due to the current political and security situation in Iraq, the foundation does not normally facilitate knowledge presentations in Iraq or the Middle East. However, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic officials from their Baghdad office visited London at least once a year, and their visits were usually publicised via the foundation's website and social media pages. Iraqis can attend workshops featuring visits from these officials, which HDF describe as "dialogue events", at which they update London's Iraqi community with the situation in Iraq, providing them with important links to their native land and culture.

The foundation not only publicised this information on their website, but also on their social media pages. They have accounts with Twitter and Facebook, both of which are used extensively by the Iraqi community who follow them and by doing so, are kept updated regarding their activities and upcoming events.

Not all Iraqis interested in their events are able to attend in person, for a number of reasons which are discussed further in Chapter 4, "Data Analysis". It is for this reason that the foundation has media channels. They own the Salam TV media channel, which is broadcast in Arabic, and features debates and knowledge presentations about a range of issues. The foundation also has a media channel on YouTube from which all knowledge presentations from their London office are broadcast live. Full video footage of all knowledge presentations is also shared on their YouTube channel and their website after the event, so that Iraqis wishing to

watch it in their own time can do so. By taking these steps, the foundation aims to create and maintain knowledge and learning communities among Iraqis.

Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre
www.angloiraqi.org

When I began my PhD Education studies, one of the centres I proposed to study was the Iraqi Cultural Centre as it was well known, attended by a wide range of Iraqi community members and met the criteria used to choose the other featured centres. However, in 2015 the Iraqi Cultural Centre closed; it was funded by the Iraqi government's Ministry of Culture, who decided to discontinue funding cultural centres for Iraqi communities abroad after Iraq's financial crisis of 2014/2015 and the collapse of oil prices, which Iraq relies on for 95% of its revenues. Iraq has again found itself in a more difficult situation since the Daesh terrorist group occupied the city of Mosul and much of northern Iraq between 2014 and 2017. As a result, cultural enrichment for Iraqis abroad became a luxury and not a necessity or a priority. This again highlights the importance of understanding the role played by cultural centres in the lives of Iraqis in diaspora, so that they can be supported to remain open and to support their communities' needs for social cohesion and integration with other communities.

To ensure that I continued to focus on three cultural centres, I instead included the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC). This centre is part of the Anglo-Iraqi Dialogue Foundation, formerly known as the Al-Hakim Foundation. The centre, based in London, opened in January 2016 and provides non-formal learning to Iraqis in

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London. I worked as a researcher and facilitator at this centre between 2016 and 2019; it is an academic and community project which aims to enhance knowledge and understanding of Iraq, Anglo-Iraqi studies and Iraqi-British connections.

The centre's library holds more than 2,000 rare books and periodicals published in English about Iraq. This is a unique and specialised library, open to researchers and interested persons. The centre offers cultural events, presentations, workshops, studies and outreach visits; their aim in doing so is to enhance public education and British/Iraqi communities, and to assist Iraqi citizens' further positive integration into UK society. In addition, the centre previously published regular newsletters which included detailed features on one or more of the publications held in the centre's library, as well as information regarding cultural events held at the centre and their outreach activities with other community and cultural organisations. The centre's newsletters between 2016 and 2019 have now been published in book form (Al-Abdalla, 2020), and provide a flavour of London's Iraqi cultural scene. A list of presentations hosted by the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre, at their offices or elsewhere, between 2016 and 2019 can be found in the accompanying Appendices.

The Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre also has links with British organisations such as the Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House), the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), and the Royal Society for Asian Affairs (RSAA). Information on the centre's work with these organisations, and outreach activities with them, features prominently in the centre's monthly newsletters.

Relevant factors; age, gender and social background

From my own observations as an Iraqi community member and having attended and facilitated the centres' events for some time, I already knew that these centres are mainly attended by adults aged 40 or over. There are several reasons for this and much can be done by the centres to address this issue, which is discussed later in this thesis.

I am also aware, from my own observations and experiences, that women attend these centres. However, generally more males than females attend these centres. This was also borne out by the make-up of my sample, which is discussed further in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Due to their lifestyles and family commitments, they can be defined as part-time learning communities; they attend the centres and participate in events when time permits.

Participating in non-formal education remotely and in cyberspace

Each centre's website and/or social media platforms contain video records of these events. These video records can also be found on some Arabic TV channels. Learners can access these electronic records, and they can also follow the events during live-streaming. In doing so, they can participate in non-formal learning both at the centres and online. As such, these learning communities exist within the centres themselves and also in cyberspace. It is also worth mentioning here that many of those who deliver the centres' non-formal learning activities have often been hosted

on Arabic TV channels as political, social and cultural experts on Iraq and Anglo-Iraqi issues.

Pedagogical Issues

At this point, I will clarify for readers that adults within Iraqi communities prefer to refer to events as "knowledge presentations" rather than lectures or classes. It also demonstrates the extent to which adults engaging in non-formal education wish to be treated differently to younger students in schools, colleges and universities (Dart, 1997; Knowles, 1998; Cross, 2007). This highlights the pedagogical issues that my study also examined in detail. Pedagogy refers to the way in which we choose to teach or to learn, what we decide to teach or learn, what we decide is valuable to include in learning plans and structures, and that which can be disregarded, sidelined or minimised:

> *The concept of pedagogy refers to how educators take full responsibility for the student learning experience … The teacher builds on the student's prior knowledge to help them develop skills and knowledge. The goal of the pedagogy concept is for teachers to assist students in understanding the subject being taught by first understanding how the students themselves learn.*   *(Owa 2022: pp. 2-3)*

Owa then goes on to describe effective pedagogical approaches in the following terms:

> *The pedagogy approach is concerned with how educators convey knowledge in the classroom. It requires educators to do more than simply cover the curriculum; it requires them to teach students until they understand. Pedagogy focuses on eliciting understanding from students rather than simply passing knowledge.*   *(Owa 2022: pp. 2-3)*

Pedagogical considerations also encompass the teaching methods employed, such as workshops, which allow learners to engage in group discussions and hands-on practice. I highlight this further below, as these cultural centres also offer workshops on subjects of interest such as journalism. The Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF) offered a series of workshops on the art of film-making. These workshops were facilitated by one of the Iraqi community members in London, the Iraqi film director Jamal Amin (https://hdf-iq.org/).

Facilitators of non-formal learning within the centres, and those responsible for managing these centres, have pedagogical concerns around the quality of learning they seek to provide. This is due to the teaching methods used. The centres I focused on primarily offer what one of my respondents called a "teacher-led presentation", and not all facilitators giving such presentations in the centres provide enough time for questions, answers and dialogue as part of their events. This is of concern to the centres, as they have all stated their aim to provide participants with opportunities to question, analyse and suggest improvements to any given situation.

However, our ability to understand, interpret and analyse the information available to us to form judgments and opinions can be impeded by censorship. For instance, in British educational institutions the history of the former British Empire is considered to be largely irrelevant to modern society. As a result, it has been largely excluded from the curriculum. The information presented to students about this period of British history has not focused on the negative aspects of British colonialism (Fairweather, 2004; Akel, 2020).

Effective learning requires us to analyse information, not to just accept it as fact. Freire (1994) describes this as representing a "banking" model of education, where information is "banked" in learners without encouraging them to question it. However, a "problem-posing" model of education encourages learners to question and analyse the information they receive. This can draw our attention to patterns of social and historical development which have formed our world. By doing so, we can recognise and distinguish between fairness and injustice which in turns helps us to create a better world.

Summary

The Iraqi-British community are well-established within the UK and in London, and they have a long history of Iraqi-British connections. This is what led so many of them to rebuild their lives in the UK when their living conditions inside Iraq became too unbearable for them to remain there. Despite this, comparatively little is known about Iraqi-British citizens' participation in non-formal education through the cultural centres set up to cater for them.

This research project focuses specifically on their experiences of non-formal education within these cultural centres, with reference to relevant ontological factors including gender, age and social background and relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks. It examines the extent to which their involvement in non-formal learning produces social empowerment, and in what ways it may do so.

My study also highlights the educational experiences of a highly educated and settled group of migrants. We know relatively little about this specific group; moreover, such middle-class communities are not the main focus of existing studies in migration or lifelong learning. The study thus makes a new contribution to these fields and it aims to shine a light on their needs for education, social support from their communities and peers, and for them to integrate further into mainstream society. By doing so, we can further understand what migrant lives in the UK look like and the support they require to improve their life chances and participate fully in public life.

In the next chapter, I discuss relevant literature on the distinctions between formal, informal and non-formal learning, and theoretical and conceptual frameworks and their relevance to this research project. In Chapter 3, I highlight how they influenced the methodology underpinning my research project and the associated research methods utilised. I also focus on the issues I faced whilst carrying out my study, including negotiating access to my sample, conducting interviews remotely due to the Covid-19 lockdown in the spring of 2020, and the relevant ethical considerations taken into account whilst completing this project's data collection phase.

The results of my data collection phase are highlighted and analysed in Chapter 4, and their specific reference to this project's aims, research questions and the relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks are examined further in Chapter 5. Finally, in Chapter 6, I summarise this research project's findings and its implications for educational research and community relations and make recommendations which

aim to help Iraqi-British citizens reach out to other UK communities and to integrate

further into contemporary UK society.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

This chapter explores non-formal learning provided within community settings such as those frequented by London's Iraqi community, the development and expansion of non-formal learning in the post-war era since 1945 and the learning outcomes of non-formal education for participants. My research into these outcomes involved the application of social capital theory, in addition to consideration of what Giroux (1997) describes as critical pedagogy. For John Dewey (1859-1952), it was essential for the development of society and democracy for us to develop skills of analysis and reflection. Freire (1994) has described this as a "problem-posing" model of education, while Dewey focuses on the ability to reflect on our experiences to develop our understanding and analysis of them, and not to make "judgments" too quickly until a subject had been thoroughly explored and understood:

> *Imagine a doctor called in to prescribe for a patient ... a large part of his technique, as a skilled practitioner, is to prevent the acceptance of the first suggestions that arise … even, indeed, to postpone the occurrence of any very definite suggestion till the trouble the nature of the problem has been thoroughly explored … this proceeding is known as diagnosis, but a similar inspection is required in every novel and complicated situation to prevent rushing to a conclusion.* (Dewey 1910: p. 74)

Dewey stresses the importance of reflective thinking and reasoning based on factual evidence and logical analysis to fully understand subjects before forming an opinion or judgment. However, this is heavily dependent on the information available to learners. This invokes issues of power and knowledge. Foucault (1966) highlights that those in positions of power decide what constitutes valid "knowledge" and what does not, by censoring information or sidelining it. As a result, knowledge can be

seen as being socially constructed (Marshall, 1990). It is tied to language and history, both of which are social constructs.

This means that the knowledge available to us is framed within the constraints of approved perspectives which reflect the views of those in power, and constrain our ability to develop opinions or judgments independently. Indeed, a key argument I put forward in this thesis is that this ability can be developed further once individuals and communities have access to new knowledge that was not previously made available to them. In the case of London's Iraqi-British cultural centres, for instance, learners have the opportunity to engage with, and analyse, the content of English-language publications about Iraq in the last two centuries. These publications were not made available to them whilst growing up in Iraq, as they had been censored and removed from circulation by successive governments after Iraq became a republic (Tripp, 2007).

Although the centres involved in my study aim to develop learners' knowledge by presenting new bodies of knowledge to them, those engaging with the centres' learning activities are, in practice, an educated group of individuals. Many of them are from professional backgrounds. Some Iraqis in London will not choose to participate in the activities of such cultural centres; they may choose the activities of other centres (community/faith etc), or they may choose not to be involved in any centres' activities. This raises issues of social stratification, cultural capital and social capital, as Bourdieu (1984) highlights. The effects of social stratification, cultural and social capital become clearer when we examine the learning experiences of Iraqis attending the cultural centres focused on by this study. Most of them are educated to

degree level or higher and have worked in professional occupations, and they attend these centres due to a sense of belonging they feel within them. Although the centres are open to all Iraqis, in practice those who do not share this level of education, life chances and experiences do not choose to attend and involve themselves in the centres' activities. Those who do enhance their social capital among their peers and communities through their participation in the centres' learning activities, and I have seen this myself through my own involvement with the centres. This is examined in closer detail throughout the thesis.

The key concepts and perspectives of critical pedagogy, Bourdieu's social capital theory and their relation to Foucault's take on power and knowledge influenced my literature review prior to designing and implementing the study's fieldwork phase, bearing in mind the research question that this study sought to address and answer:

> To what extent does non-formal education empower participants involved in this study of London's Iraqi-British centres, at both an individual and community level?

To address this question I firstly provide the reader with a critical analysis of the different spheres of education; formal, informal and non-formal, explaining why I have classified the community education provided by Iraqi-British cultural centres to London's Iraqi community as "non-formal learning". This has also been briefly outlined in the first chapter of my thesis. Following this, I turn to the social capital theory that underpinned this study and critically analyse its relevance to the Iraqi-British community my study focuses on, and the extent to which this has informed my methodological approach.

Non-formal education and learning

The terms "non-formal education" and "non-formal learning" have been used in the field of education to describe learning outside of formal education. The formal education sector refers to schools, adult education centres, colleges and universities, and covers both state and private sector educational provision. Whilst a large body of knowledge has been established regarding desired educational outcomes in formal education, some of which I refer to in this thesis, the study of non-formal and informal education and its outcomes for individuals is far more recent in terms of the attention devoted to it by educationalists. Most of the literature reviewed which specifically looks at non-formal learning, who participates in it and its outcomes has been published after the Second World War.

The terms "non-formal learning" and "informal learning" have both been used, often interchangeably, by Sheffield (1972), Coombs & Ahmed (1974) and Haralambos & Holborn (2000) to refer to the ways in which non-formal education helped African and Latin American communities to overcome rural poverty after becoming independent nation-states in the aftermath of the Second World War. Non-formal learning and education differs from informal learning and education in that informal learning and education is not structured, and that it can be significant in nature:

> *It is essential to recognise that significant learning takes place beyond these confines: at home, in communities, at work and leisure, through activism and volunteering, in arts and popular culture, in nature and digital media.*
> *(Quinn 2017: p. 145)*

As the above quote shows, informal learning can take place in everyday life situations (McGivney, 1999; Eaton, 2011; Quinn, 2017). For instance, informal

learning and education can occur within the family and other everyday social situations such as the workplace, and does not follow a set path of learning, unlike in the sphere of formal education within schools, colleges and universities (Usher et al, 1997; Eaton, 2011).

There are also pedagogical differences between the provision of non-formal education and informal education. Those providing training and mentoring to others, in any educational sector (formal, informal or non-formal) make pedagogical choices relating to the best way in which to lead and support learning. In the case of informal learning, for instance, I may decide to train and mentor co-workers by means of informal discussion, either with individuals or within small groups, and advising them on what is considered to be best practice for dealing with particular types of enquiries, types of clients, and the reasons for this.

This differs from the pedagogies typically used in formal and non-formal education, which often revolve around presenting information to participants in classroom-style events. These are known as lectures in settings such as colleges and universities, and which I refer to throughout my thesis as "knowledge events". Informal learning tends to be unstructured and responsive to evolving situations and learners' needs. However, both formal and non-formal learning are structured. The key difference between formal and non-formal learning is that formal learning is generally certificated (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000; Davies, 2008), whereas this is not always the case with non-formal learning. Rogers (2005) describes the key differences in societal perception between formal and non-formal learning as follows:

'Non-formal' is the celebration of liberation, throwing off the shackles of formality which have for so long prevented education from being education .... precisely because it is non-formal - it is the freedom from everything that is not within a very restricted (and restrictive) set of walls .... a concept which was born within the world of development assistance has now become relevant within a wider arena, in particular in Western contexts.

(Rogers 2005: p.4)

The learning activities offered by these Iraqi-British cultural centres are not certificated. However, community and cultural centres providing non-formal education sometimes offer certificates of attendance to participants, stating which learning areas and topics were included, but this is not always the case. It is more common within community education settings for this non-formal learning to be uncertificated (Davies, 2008). However, if participants require evidence of their attendance at the centres' events, this can be provided.

Non-formal learning, unlike formal learning, typically takes place in an individual's own time. Adults participating in formal learning, and all age groups who participate in non-formal learning choose to do so of their own free will. This is in contrast to the formal education provided by primary and secondary schools to children aged between 4 and 16, at which the learners' attendance is compulsory and mandated by national law (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000; Cross, 2007; Davies, 2008).

Both formal and non-formal education seek to harness the use of information technology as far as possible to widen participation in their learning activities, by making their learning materials and knowledge more accessible to wide audiences and allowing individuals to participate at times convenient to them. For instance, the Open University (OU), founded in 1969, provides distance-learning degree programmes which do not require in-person attendance (Usher et al, 1997). The

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Britain's state broadcaster, air some Open University lectures for students enrolled in their range of distance-learning degree programmes on their channels. Tutors at the OU also provide learners with online support, although this support was generally provided by post before the birth of the internet and email in the 1990s. However, it was not until the early 2000s that home internet access and use became increasingly commonplace (Johnson, 2020).

Prior to the birth of the internet in the 1990s, Coombs & Ahmed (1974) provide several examples of how community organisations harnessed available information technology, including radio and TV broadcasts, to provide non-formal education and help improve the life chances of participants:

> *In Tanzania … a series of courses was designed for study groups, using printed text materials and correspondence units, reinforced by related radio broadcasts ... available recorded evidence plus limited direct observation by an ICED researcher indicate that this unique program is getting useful results.*
> *(Coombs & Ahmed 1974: pp. 158-159)*

Today, community and cultural centres delivering non-formal education have harnessed internet and social media technologies to provide a wider audience with access to their learning activities (Drotner, 2008; Elias & Lemish, 2008; Kerrison et al, 2016). In the case of Iraqi-British cultural centres, they broadcast their learning activities in real time via their websites and social media pages, on sites such as Facebook and YouTube. This is known as live-streaming, which participants attending the centres' events also tend to do simultaneously via their social media pages, on sites such as Facebook through their mobile phones.

The types of formal and non-formal learning described above are centred around structured programmes offered by community groups and adult education institutions, which has always been a feature of UK life. However, its expansion became particularly prevalent in the 1960s when adult education centres and community groups began to offer learning opportunities in a wider range of fields than had previously been the case. This marked a period when adult education opportunities in the UK were transformed, and access to these opportunities was widened on an unprecedented scale (Usher et al, 1997).

Although non-formal education and learning can be seen to differ from informal education and learning in that the latter are largely gained through life experiences, Hodkinson et al (2003) have pointed to several ways in which non-formal education programmes, such as those described above, also contain a substantial amount of informal learning and education. For instance, participants in non-formal learning courses about the history of their native land also have opportunities for informal learning about the customs, manners and cultures of their ancestors which may not have been anticipated by the facilitators of this learning in the programme's development stage. Awareness of this requires educators to exercise a degree of reflexivity, particularly when they are engaged in giving voice to marginalised communities and ways of knowing (hooks, 1994; Mezirow, 2000; Suffla & Seedat, 2014). Both non-formal and informal learning focus on bringing marginalised knowledge of this nature to the fore, enabling those from minority communities such as the Maoris of New Zealand to reclaim a voice (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). This applies to the Iraqi community focused on in my study; the Iraqi cultural centres hold non-formal learning events which critically engage with a variety of sources drawn from

differing perspectives relating to Iraq's history, culture and heritage. By doing so, they seek to strengthen Iraqis' sense of cultural identity and awareness of the links between themselves and other nations, such as Britain and its links to Iraq during the last two centuries.

Both non-formal and informal learning and education can play an important role by empowering individuals and communities (Mezirow, 2009; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). Non-formal and informal learning and education can also play an important role by providing additional voices and power to those who have been marginalised, disciplined and silenced by dominant social groups (Foucault, 1975; Marshall, 1990). Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) describes this as reclaiming a voice:

> *In terms of the way knowledge was used to discipline the colonised, it worked in a number of ways ... the effect of such discipline was to silence (for ever in some cases) or to suppress the ways of knowing, and the languages for knowing, of many different indigenous peoples. Reclaiming a voice in this context has also been about reclaiming, reconnecting and reordering those ways of knowing which were submerged, hidden or driven underground.*
> *(Tuhiwai-Smith 2012: pp. 71-72)*

The cultural centres in this study aim to empower Iraqis in diaspora by presenting new knowledge to them which was not available inside Iraq for various reasons. By doing so, the centres aim to help Iraqis critically engage with the literature and reassess the "frames of reference" through which they learned to see the world and form judgements in their earlier lives (Mezirow, 2009). The type of non-formal learning they engage with is somewhat unique, in that the subjects studied overlap with the formal education sphere, particularly higher education. This is in contrast with non-formal learning offered by community organisations which often relates to

the teaching of basic literacy, numeracy and information technology and crafts (Morrice, 2007).

This highlights the unique nature of the Iraqi community in my project. From my literature search I found that we know relatively little about how highly educated groups of migrants engage with non-formal education, and about their ways of life in diaspora. By focusing my study on this group of migrants, I aim to bring this to the attention of educationalists and policy-makers in the hope that this helps Iraqi migrants with their further integration into mainstream UK society.

There are important alignments between non-formal and informal learning and education as set out above. However, as the subject matter of the centres' learning activities tends to be more academic in nature, I consider the terms "non-formal learning" and "non-formal education" to be more appropriate for the types of learning and education provided to the UK's Iraqi-British community by the cultural centres this project studies. Informal education also forms part of the learning experiences provided by these cultural centres, by their nature. This is particularly true of cultural events, such as Iraqi music and poetry evenings. However, I have used the terms "non-formal learning" and "non-formal education" throughout thesis to avoid any confusion and to stress that non-formal learning provision is the primary focus of these Iraqi-British cultural centres.

The voluntary nature of participation in these centres' learning activities also warrants due consideration. Knowles (1998) and Davies (2008) argue that voluntary participation in adult learning within formal education settings, and voluntary

participation in non-formal learning in community and cultural settings, provides

individuals with a greater motivation to learn and to develop oneself than may be the

case during their years of compulsory education.

Davies (2008) believes that this is because the opportunity to study of your own free

will is "genuinely discretionary" and motivates learners more than mandating

courses:

> *Genuinely discretionary opportunities .... neither the gravity of the experience, nor any external or learned discipline, compels us to take time to reflect, but nevertheless on an individual basis we can try to find out why something happened. These are discretionary in the sense that no one outside is telling us how to do it, or even whether to do it at all.*　　　　*(Davies 2008: p. 51)*

Those who facilitate and provide adult learning, both in the formal and non-formal

education spheres, point out that adults' increased motivation to learn themselves

changes their role from being a lecturer to that of facilitating and supporting self-

directed study:

> *In constructivist learning, the learning drives the teaching …. adjustments need to be made in the teaching role to enable learners to recognise their own relevant ideas and beliefs, evaluate these ideas and beliefs in terms of what is to be learned and how this learning is intended to occur …. thus, the teacher becomes a facilitator of learning rather than a giver of information.*
> *(Dart 1997: p. 31)*

What is also notable in the literature, aside from how it highlights the expansion of

non-formal learning in the postwar era, is the extent to which the development and

expansion of information technology allows community organisations to reach more

learners. Without the existence of such technology, it would have been extremely

difficult for these community organisations to reach these learners in the first place.

Today, the internet has become a space for enquiry and dialogue:

Online learning developers and professionals like content providers and experts easily apply their ideas into the Internet, specialised programs or platforms ... It is not very hard anymore .... transformative learning starts to play a key role in this stage, with its opportunities to utilise the potential online learners.   *(Yuzer & Kurubacak 2010: p. 4)*

This post-war expansion of post-compulsory education, described by Usher et al as the "postmodern era", has led to knowledge becoming more widely available everywhere in society:

In postmodern conditions, knowledge is not only constantly changing but is becoming more rapidly, almost overwhelmingly, available, mirroring a world of rapid change …. the decentring of knowledge has resulted in a valuing of different sources and forms of knowledge and a corresponding devaluing of specialist discipline-based knowledge.   *(Usher et al 1997: pp. 9-10)*

What Usher et al do not specifically refer to is the role played by information technology in furthering the availability of non-formal education in society. When the non-formal education sector first expanded after the Second World War, available technologies included radio and television sets (Tarbet, 1954; Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). Later, from the 1960s onwards, the information technology revolution gathered pace and led to an increase in household ownership of personal computers and later, of personal laptops (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000; Johnson, 2020). This eventually led to a digital environment in which adults could return to education in a variety of settings (Drotner, 2008). For some adults, their return to learning in a digital environment provides them with a route back into formal education in colleges, adult education centres and universities (Kerrison et al, 2016). Others return to education not to obtain certificates or qualifications, but for personal growth and advancement.

The digital media available today has all enabled these centres to deliver non-formal education to communities, both in person and remotely, via written and spoken content. Written content can be found on the centres' websites and social media pages. For instance, information about the cultural events, conferences, seminars and activities of the centres this project studies can be found on their websites and social media pages, which the community can access, read and watch remotely in their own time. Drotner (2008) highlights the significant impact of digital media on communities and their social practices in the following terms:

> *Digital and increasingly globalised media, then, are both symptoms of and possible solutions to exert temporal co-ordination, spatial flexibility, and personal identity performance. As such, they have attained a central importance, not accorded to media with former generations. Digital media also impact on social relations and practices.* *(Drotner 2008: p. 19)*

Drotner then goes on to explain that:

> *Because of their flexible and often mobile nature of joint meaning-making, digital media intensify modes of virtual co-production and collaborations … The so-called second-generation services on the internet, called web 2.0 – such as social networking sites, free, user-generated encyclopaedias (wikipedia or wikis) … offer more and easier ways of social participation and networking.* *(Drotner 2008: p. 19)*

Whilst the role of information technology and the birth and expansion of social media in expanding the reach of non-formal education is clear, individuals' motivation for using it to participate in learning is also a key factor. According to Kerrison et al (2016), four broad motivations can be found in adult learners:

- to support lifelong learning or to gain understanding of a subject or subjects, with no particular expectations for completion or achievement;

- for fun, entertainment, social experience or intellectual stimulation;

- convenience (although this term can be interpreted differently in a number of ways);

- to experience or explore online education.

Kerrison et al (2016) also point to the impact of technology in encouraging adults to return to learning for what they describe as convenience (for the learner). They point out that in 2012, more people bought e-readers, including the widely known and used Amazon Kindle, than printed books for the first time. This clearly shows the impact of increasing digitisation on lifelong learning patterns, both for formal and non-formal education. In my own experiences participating in, and facilitating, non-formal education at Iraqi-British cultural centres, I have seen myself how digital technology, such as websites and social media sites, enable these institutions to expand their reach beyond those who attend events in person.

This clearly highlights the impact of digital technology and social media in widening participation in non-formal education among the Iraqi community, both in London and around the world. Younger Iraqi-British citizens, who were born in Britain or who relocated here at an early age, are often more familiar with these new digital technologies. In turn, they have helped the older generation of Iraqi-British citizens to familiarise themselves with these technologies which play such a vital role in expanding the reach of non-formal learning to Iraqis. The effects of generational shifts and changes on the non-formal learning experiences of the Iraqi community, and the opportunities this may provide for integration with other communities and the wider society, is discussed in more detail below.

Iraqis in the UK: Generational Factors

Whilst the role of cultural centres in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens is significant, this is not the only source of what can be described as new knowledge for them. Most first-generation Iraqi-British citizens have children in their teens and twenties, and these can be described as second-generation Iraqi-British citizens. The majority of these young people were born in the UK, or they emigrated here from Iraq at a very young age. As a result, these children are more closely integrated into contemporary British society. Most of them speak English as their first language, although Arabic is the main language spoken in their homes. This is the typical experience of second-generation children born into migrant families around the world (Attius-Donfut & Cook, 2017).

The experiences of Iraqi-British citizens' children and their learning in school and the wider society include second-generation children's adoption of values such as freedom of speech, freedom of thinking and tolerance of others, and also the use of modern technology. Such factors create a kind of generation struggle and gap between the parents, the first generation that were born in Iraq, and the second generation who were born or raised in the UK. Again, this is a typical experience of second-generation children of migrants (Renzaho et al, 2017; Yasin, 2018). This suggests that the centres are answering the needs of first-generation Iraqi-British citizens to hold onto their culture and ways of living, whilst their children, second-generation Iraqi-British citizens, feel a greater sense of belonging to Western society (Yasin, 2018).

Second-generation Iraqi-British citizens may have the potential to guide and teach their parents, and to help them integrate further into contemporary British society. The extent to which this occurs is something which this study examined, and which also informed my review of the relevant theories and concepts, methodology and research methods.

There is little doubt that the second generation can help their parents and grandparents to integrate further into contemporary British life, and the extent to which this happens is examined alongside the role played by cultural centres in delivering non-formal educational experiences to the Iraqi community in London. This can include how often first-generation Iraqi-British citizens attend events with their children in settings such as schools, colleges and universities, and how often they undertake leisure activities together and the general nature of their relationships with their second-generation children.

One way in which second-generation Iraqi-British citizens will have helped many first-generation Iraqi-British citizens is with their computer literacy, educating them and showing them how to become part of the digital and social media revolution, which is used by many cultural centres and enables non-formal learning to reach far more participants globally (Drotner, 2008; Elias & Lemish, 2008; Kerrison et al, 2016). Iraqis participating in the non-formal education offered by the cultural centres this project studies do not all attend in person. Not all of them live in London, or even in the UK. Most Iraqi community members have social media accounts, with Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp being the most popular platforms they use to

engage with others and the centres in question. This is described by Filipova et al (2020) as intergenerational solidarity.

For the above reasons, intergenerational relations between older and younger age groups have the potential to play an important role in empowering the first generation of Iraqi-British citizens. In theory, these cultural centres are well positioned to provide active learning opportunities to the Iraqi community, by providing them with opportunities to critically engage with new knowledge and perspectives which were not made available to them in Iraq. This includes tens of thousands of books and articles written in English which were censored by the Iraqi authorities. By removing them from general circulation, they were subsequently removed from societal discourse inside Iraq. In the UK, these cultural centres are now free to present these new texts and sources, drawn from a wider range of perspectives, as part of their non-formal learning activities. I argue that this can potentially provide Iraqi-British citizens with new perspectives and learning opportunities which contrast with their earlier educational experiences.

Similarly, I am aware from my own experiences of growing up in Iraq that Iraqi-British citizens' earlier experiences of education in Iraq were dominated by rhetorical statements over the presentation of scientific evidence and logical thinking. The cultural centres in London which cater for this Iraqi community aim to overcome this by presenting factual information and using scientific, logic-based approaches when facilitating non-formal learning events. Significantly, they also encourage learners to engage in question and answer sessions and active dialogue, both between

themselves and facilitators/presenters. This is evident throughout my study of the learning experiences provided to Iraqi-British citizens by these cultural centres.

The dominant societal discourse many of them grew up with, living in Iraq, was characterised by anti-Western sentiment and the removal from circulation of all written material which challenged the culture of rhetorical speeches and an illusion of greatness. The cultural centres in London are able to provide learning activities to their communities which can lead to a different discourse and allow the previously silenced voices of logical thinking and scientific evidence to be reclaimed (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012).

One of the cultural centres I have facilitated events with, the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC), specialises in re-presenting and critically engaging with publications written in the English language about Iraq (previously known as Mesopotamia) in the last two centuries, and a great number of these publications are not available inside Iraq. I have found that most Iraqis attending AISC and visiting its library are not aware of the existence of most of these publications, and know little, if anything at all, about these publications and topics related to all aspects of life, nature and politics in Iraq during the 20th century.

AISC and their staff would very much like to believe that their work to bring these publications to life, and to present this to Iraqis for whom it constitutes new knowledge, has the potential to provide them with new ways of thinking and knowing the world through critical engagement with, and analysis of, these publications. All other Iraqi-British cultural centres hope to achieve the same thing in an open

environment which aims to avoid the negativity of some of the rhetoric established by many previous dictatorships in Iraq.

I have seen for myself the way in which these cultural centres provide the Iraqi community in London with social capital. This includes bonding social capital, allowing Iraqi-British citizens to link with their peers through their attendance at the centres' venues (Coleman, 1990), and imagined social capital which is gained through symbolic links. An example of such imagined social capital would be when a large number of Iraqi community members participate in a learning event about Iraqi poetry (Quinn, 2010). As shown in the Appendices, the cultural centres this study focuses on hold a number of Iraqi poetry, art and musical events. This highlights the symbolic links to be gained from such events, and their significance to the Iraqi community the centres cater for.

Indeed, it is also known in social research and community studies that migrant communities gain and strengthen their sense of social capital, belonging and identity by gathering together in venues such as these cultural centres. This is why I have chosen to use applied social capital theory which examines the role played by these cultural centres, and the non-formal learning they provide, in the lives of London's Iraqi community.

Empowerment, discourse and unequal power relations

This study's key research question is whether the centres' non-formal learning events empower participants, both individually and collectively, and in what ways such empowerment may take place. From an educational perspective, the term "empowerment" is often used to refer to the extent to which our life chances and opportunities are improved by learning some skills and participating in specific activities. These skills can be acquired through participating in education, within employment environments, and in social and community activities.

Empowerment provides individuals with a degree of influence within their family, community or society. However, this view of empowerment fails to take account of the impact of structural inequalities which affect our life chances, such as adequate housing and financial security (Freire, 1994). This is where community organisations such as the cultural centres in this study play a key role in what Martinez (2022) refers to as social empowerment:

> *Social empowerment is the process of building the autonomy, power, confidence and other necessary means to enact change … and pave the way for a better future … for an individual, social empowerment could look like gaining the inner and outer resources to make personal choices, such as what to eat, where to live and other decisions that allow us to control our environment and way of life.* *(Martinez 2022: pp. 2-3)*

Martinez distinguishes between direct and indirect "power blocks" affecting our life chances and the potential for individual and group empowerment. Direct power blocks include unequal access to adequate housing and financial resources. Indirect power blocks result from structural inequality, and this includes the marginalisation of minority groups such as New Zealand's Maoris (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012), Israel's

Ethiopian community (Baratz & Kalnisky, 2017), and in the UK, the Sudanese community (Morrice, 2007) and the Iraqi community this project studies. The role of the centres involved in this study is to provide knowledge and resources to the Iraqi community that would not otherwise be available to them owing to a combination of direct and indirect power blocks in operation.

The concepts of social and cultural capital all relate to the issue of unequal social stratification and how this affects societal power relations. Indeed, the concept of power refers to the ability to exercise one's will, or a group's will, over other individuals and groups:

> *'Power' is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests … The concept of power is sociologically amorphous. All conceivable qualities of a person … may put him in a position to impose his will in a given situation.* (Weber 1978: p. 53)

Such power relationships can be seen in social groups, professional organisations and governments around the world. This is not limited to governments enforcing their will to control their own citizens but can also be seen in the ability of nations' governments to enforce their will on other nations. Again, this is a result of unequal power relations which permeate social life (Bourdieu, 1986; Freire, 1994).

From this we can see the capacity of powerful groups and individuals to shape the discourses that govern all aspects of our lives. Indeed, the concept of discourse refers to the knowledge, beliefs and values held by societies (Marshall, 1990). It is tied to language, shared understandings and social meanings:

> *Discourse is verbal or written communication between people that goes beyond a single sentence. Importantly, discourse is more than just language*

> *… discourse goes beyond this and looks at the overall meanings conveyed by language in context … it is important to take this into account to understand underlying meanings expressed through language.   (Crosley 2021: p. 3)*

Discourse refers to the knowledge, beliefs and values that are held by societies, such as attitudes towards religion, gender and sexuality. It also takes account of societal power relations and who has the power to shape such social attitudes, as outlined below:

> *Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody the meaning and use of propositions and words. Thus, certain possibilities for thought are constructed. Words are ordered and combined in particular ways and other combinations are displaced or excluded.   (Maguire & Ball 2006: p. 6)*

As education constitutes the study of socially constructed knowledge in all its forms, it then follows that education is shaped by discourse. In turn, discourse then affects the experience of education for its participants in all spheres – formal, informal and non-formal.

One function of discourse which is relevant to the UK's Iraqi community is the way in which it seeks to classify aspects of social life as bad or good, positive or negative (Rabinow, 1984). For instance, it is in education that we learn to value academic knowledge above vocational and practical skills (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000; Woodhead, 2002). Discourse functions through the mechanisms of what Foucault describes as society's disciplinary institutions, one of which is education. Marshall (1990) describes educational institutions and their role in disciplining individuals as follows:

> *From the violence of … public execution, we move to a quiet, ordered, and private scenario in which peoples' abilities and knowledge about themselves are gently and quietly shaped in a gentle, 'caring' institution … within such*

institutions knowledge has … been developed, refined, and used … to change us in various ways … [and] are also used to legitimise such changes, as the knowledge gained is deemed to be 'true'. (Marshall 1990: p.15)

In the case of Iraqi-British citizens, the discourse they were exposed to during their years undergoing formal education in Iraq did not make them aware of the large body of knowledge written about their country in English. This is for a number of ideological reasons, meaning that a great part of this body of knowledge has been excluded and marginalised in the second half of the 20th century. As a result, it is not easily accessible for Iraqis to discover it (Al-Abdalla, 2020).

Throughout their years of formal education in Iraq, the Iraqi community were not made aware of the large body of knowledge written about their country in English. As a result, learners were not aware of the existence of alternative views and perspectives. They may also have been afraid to challenge the information provided to them for fear of exclusion from school, and in some cases, from society. In Iraq, it was not considered safe for anyone to openly challenge or disagree with the information being provided to them by their political masters. However, many educationalists believe that learning something new, in short being exposed to new discourses and new "truths", has the ability to change learners' perspectives and ways of knowing, thinking and viewing the world (hooks, 1994).

What is also known about Iraqi-British citizens' participation in the centres' learning activities is the sense of social capital it provides them with. This includes bonding social capital through shared activities, in that by participating in these learning events Iraqi-British citizens meet with their peers in person and online via live-

streaming (Coleman, 1990), and imagined social capital which they gain from attending events relating to key Iraqi figures, such as Iraqi poets (Quinn, 2010). More information about social capital theory and its relevance to my study of non-formal education among Iraqi communities can be found below.

Social and cultural capital and its relation to participatory patterns in non-formal education among Iraqi communities

The architect of modern social capital theory, and cultural capital theory, was Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002). Bourdieu was a French philosopher who wrote extensively about social stratification and the advantages (capital) that groups who were seen as being higher up in social structures possessed over their counterparts:

> *Cultural capital … in its objectified state presents itself with all the appearances of an autonomous, coherent universe which, although the product of historical action, has its own laws, transcending individual wills, and which, as the example of language well illustrates, therefore remains irreducible to that which each agent, or even the aggregate of the agents, can appropriate (i.e., to the cultural capital embodied in each agent or even in the aggregate of the agents).*   *(Bourdieu 1986: p.246)*

Indeed, Bourdieu defined cultural capital as those factors helping those higher up the social structure achieve higher grades in education, to go on to university and to professional careers and highly paid occupations:

> *It should not be forgotten that it exists as symbolically and materially active … and invested as a weapon and a stake in the struggles which go on in the fields of cultural production (the artistic field, the scientific field, etc.) and, beyond them, in the field of the social classes—struggles in which the agents wield strengths and obtain profits proportionate to their mastery of this objectified capital, and therefore to the extent of their embodied capital.*
> *(Bourdieu 1986: p.246)*

Cultural capital reproduces itself through what Bourdieu describes as "habitus", a term which refers to our socialised norms and tendencies. Bourdieu's concept of

habitus also refers to our cultural choices, such as the type of music, art and literature we choose to engage with. These socialised norms and tendencies guide the behaviour and thinking of individuals and communities. In this way, culture reproduces itself through the acquisition, maintenance and transfer of a particular habitus which enables its preservation:

> *The habitus continually generates practical metaphors, that is to say, transfers … or, more precisely, systematic transpositions required by the particular conditions in which the habitus is 'put into practice' … the practices of the same agent, and, more generally, the practices of all agents of the same class, owe the stylistic affinity which makes each of them a metaphor of any of the others to the fact that they are the product of transfers of the same schemes of action from one field to another.* (Bourdieu 1984: p.173)

As the above quote highlights, cultural capital produces a habitus which enables its continual reproduction and preservation. Social capital, however, is that which individuals can attain through their relationships with others and by participating in certain group activities held in high esteem socially:

> *The reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed. This work, which implies expenditure of time and energy and so, directly or indirectly, of economic capital, is not profitable or even conceivable unless one invests in it a specific competence … and an acquired disposition to acquire and maintain this competence, which are themselves integral parts of this capital.* (Bourdieu 1986: pp. 248-249)

Bourdieu has also stated that:

> *Because the social capital accruing from a relationship is that much greater to the extent that the person who is the object of it is richly endowed with capital (mainly social, but also cultural and even economic capital), the possessors of an inherited social capital … are able to transform all circumstantial relationships into lasting connections. They are sought after for their social capital.* (Bourdieu 1986: pp. 248-249)

This is particularly applicable to Iraqi communities who participate in non-formal education, which is why I have chosen to use applied social capital theory throughout my thesis. There is evidence that those participating in community

activities through relevant cultural centres, such as those studied by this research project, attain and enhance their sense of social capital through this participation and group activity (Field, 2005; Morrice, 2007; Baratz & Kalnisky, 2017; Wellman & Frank, 2017; Lin, 2017).

This is known as gaining, and enhancing, one's sense of social capital through participation in learning communities (Quinn, 2010; Morrice, 2012; Riel & Polin, 2004). The cultural capital and habitus, derived from learners' social backgrounds, that these learners bring with them to these learning communities also plays a part, depending on the subjects their learning focuses on, as can be seen by the nature of learning events held by the centres. I have provided more detailed information about this in the Appendices, and also in Chapter 4, "Data Analysis". From this the reader will note the way in which the development of our learning abilities is aided by the levels of social capital and cultural capital we possess (Bourdieu, 1986; Jenks, 1993).

Effective learning and social capital

Within this conceptual sphere, some educationalists have tended to highlight the mainly positive aspects of learning. For them, they saw learning and developing one's knowledge and reasoning skills as having the potential to positively change the lives of those who participate in it. However, some types of non-formal education can be negative or dangerous, as highlighted by Morrice (2012) and Webb (2017), depending on learners' positioning and habitus within the wider society. This is best

illustrated in the case of the UK's minority communities with the negative impact of non-formal education on those receiving it from organisations which have radical or sectarian agendas which in many cases may spread mistrust, resentment and division in society along the lines of ethnic origin, nationality, religion and gender.

For instance, the role played by some faith centres in radicalising those attending them is well known (Wilner & Dubouloz, 2010). This can be seen in many cases of venues which provide a kind of non-formal education, and a kind of discourse which promotes intolerance and hate views (Thomas, 2012). Those attending such so-called "faith groups" were negatively affected by their experiences of non-formal education here, and this can be seen in many tragic events which affected the UK and other countries in the last two decades. Wilner & Dubouloz (2010) outline why this is a particularly problematic phenomenon for the wider society, both in the UK and in other Western countries, due to the ways in which extremist ideology appeals to disaffected and marginalised groups and individuals who feel a sense of unbelonging:

> *Homegrown terrorism stems in part from the appeal al Qaeda has found in certain pockets of Western society. For the most part, homegrown terrorists have been citizens and residents born, raised, and educated within the countries they attack and groups have been self-generated and independently organized. A recent study of over 200 European jihadists, for instance, found that over 90% were residents of a European country and almost 60% retained European citizenship.* *(Wilner & Dubouloz 2010: p. 34)*

This non-formal education negatively changed not only those participating in it, but those who their behaviour impacted (Morris, 2019; Ali, 2019). Providing that these organisations do not have such agendas, it is hoped that the non-formal education provided by community organisations will then impact participants and those around

them in a positive way, both for individuals and communities. This brings me to the role played by learning communities (Quinn, 2010) and their relevance to social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984), which are outlined in further detail below.

Dewey believed that education was essential for the healthy function of democratic societies, for motivating those who receive education to participate in democratic processes such as voting, and for transmitting the values of tolerance, understanding and liberalism. However, for Michel Foucault (1926-1984), education had the impact of disciplining those who received it. Marshall (1990) explains how this functions in modern society:

> *Modern power has emerged in the name of governance … Foucault notes a shift in thinking of obedience to a violent and imposed power where property was protected at any cost, towards a theme of governance of the self, children, family and state … Population and its welfare then become the central theme of governance, according to Foucault.* *(Marshall 1990: p.15)*

Marshall explains further how education becomes one of the tools of social control, or as Foucault described them, societal disciplinary institutions, below:

> *The control of populations to ensure political obedience and a docile and useful workforce for the demands of an emerging capitalism become the central concerns in this art of governance ... quietly shaped in a gentle, 'caring' institution … Foucault notes in particular the prison, hospital, asylum, military, work place, and school.* *(Marshall 1990: p.15)*

Bearing in mind the role played by institutionalised education as a social disciplinary function, I have been mindful of the work of Foucault on the role of education and how it impacts individuals, as well as the work of bell hooks and Linda Tuhiwai-Smith on how institutionalised education legitimises some experiences whilst denying, marginalising or downplaying that of the "other" (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; hooks, 1994). Both hooks and Tuhiwai-Smith highlight this as one negative way in which education can change and shape individuals. The centres in this study have stated their aim to

provide learners with opportunities to enhance their knowledge and ability to integrate further into mainstream UK society. However, they seek to avoid holding events on topics which may lead to social division, and indeed possible social unrest.

Taking this into account, my study also considers whether the non-formal education provided by these centres leads to Iraqis developing new and differing perspectives on their lives and on society. My view is that for learning to be effective, for it to have been truly understood by a learner, it should leave the learner with new and changed perspectives on the world and society. In this respect, my views on effective learning were shaped by those of the American educator Leo Buscaglia (1924-1998). He believed that no education was effective unless its nature and content could lead to changes in individuals' knowledge and perspectives (Buscaglia, 1985). I set out to explore the extent to which these centres' non-formal learning events that the Iraqi community engages with change their perceptions of the world and society.

A key question posed by my study was: has taking part in non-formal education changed the way my study participants view the world and society? And if so, in what way? My study has critically analysed this, with emphasis on the types of centres, the kinds of non-formal learning offered and by who, and who participates, by which I am referring to their habitus and positioning within London's Iraqi community and within contemporary British society as a whole.

I now turn again to social capital theory. This theory has been expanded in educational research to consider the various forms it can take, and how some types of social capital are more beneficial to educational outcomes than others (Field,

2005). This can be clearly seen with reference to Wilner & Dulouboz's example of young, disaffected and socio-economically disadvantaged males who were changed negatively by the non-formal education they received.

By contrast, those with higher levels of social capital are more likely to succeed in formal education and become doctors, lawyers, accountants, scientists, business figures, media figures and professionals in other areas (Bourdieu, 1984). For them and their families, their educational outcomes were undoubtedly positive (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000). They become more affluent, they are able to improve their children's life chances and society benefits from their expertise (Feuer, 2020).

Above, I have highlighted the positive and negative aspects of learning for those who participate in it, both in formal (university) and non-formal (community) settings. What this also demonstrates is that social capital is another type of capital that can be attained from participating in education, particularly in relation to non-formal learning provided by community organisations (McGivney, 1999). From this, we can see that the concepts of learning communities and social capital are closely related to each other.

Learning communities and their role in creating and maintaining social capital

Learning communities are groups of people who share a common interest in learning, who meet semi-regularly to engage in learning. These learning communities also exist in cyberspace; these are known as online learning

communities (Wenger, 1998). Types of online learning communities include e-learning communities, whereby groups connect with learning through digital technology, and blended learning communities.

The term "blended learning communities" refers particularly to the Iraqi community this research project has focused on. They participate in non-formal learning face-to-face by attending events at the cultural centres this project studies, and also online in their own time by accessing their websites and social media platforms including Facebook and YouTube. Based on the Iraqi community's patterns of engagement with this non-formal learning, they can be described as a knowledge-based online learning community (Riel & Polin, 2004). Learning communities are also seen by many educationalists as a potential source and producer of social capital for their members:

> *Community becomes a yardstick by which people may measure their failure to belong … Turning to adult education more generally, learning communities are envisaged as producing social capital, as in the resources generated by our relationships with others. Learning communities as sources and producers of social capital are a dominant image in UK policy, thinking about adult education and lifelong learning more generally.* *(Quinn 2010: p. 47)*

Morrice (2007) also points to the established role of social capital theory within educational research and policy, as highlighted below:

> *Social capital is said to have an established relationship with the outcomes that policy makers [in education] are concerned with, including .... social inclusion and social cohesion .... [and] active citizenship.*
> *(Morrice 2007: p. 160)*

Field (2005) expands on this further by explaining how social capital is produced through adults' participation in community activities, which by their nature can also include non-formal learning:

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> *Social capital can provide a substitute for human capital ... for many purposes, information acquired informally through connections, and skills picked up from workmates and family, can be far more effective in certain circumstances than those transmitted by formal educational institutions ... [they provide] powerful and effective opportunities for informal learning, and may therefore create substitutes for more conventional forms of human capital and investment.*   *(Field 2005: pp. 77-78 & p. 109)*

This shows that social capital can be gained for individuals through participation in community activities, which in turn means that they can be seen as active blended learning communities. The importance of community organisations such as those studied by this research project is highlighted by Morrice (2007) in her discussion of Sudanese community associations in the Brighton and Hove area:

> *Informal networks of family, friends and neighbours are often vital sources of support, and may provide a substitute for economic and human capital. Many refugee communities ... can also be very rich in social capital ... the Sudanese community in Brighton and Hove is a supportive and vibrant community with groups such as the Sudanese Elders Association … informal networks, self-help and voluntary groups are crucial sources of support and information.*
>   *(Morrice 2007: pp. 163-164)*

In light of this, I decided to consider the reasons of Iraqi community members for participating in non-formal learning and belonging to blended learning communities. Baratz & Kalnisky (2017) believe that minority groups participate in shared experiences and activities to gain a sense of social capital, both within their own communities and the wider society they live in. As with the Ethiopian community in Israel that Baratz & Kalnisky (2017) have studied, the Iraqi community are a relatively new minority group within the UK, which was outlined earlier in this chapter and the previous chapter. The UK's Iraqi community began to expand significantly in the 1990s, and there are many marked cultural differences between Iraqi society and UK society (Al-Rasheed, 1995; Ata, 2017; Ali, 2019). Israel's Ethiopian community seek equality with other social groups in Israeli society, but at the same time they

also hold a shared desire to retain important aspects of their community's social and cultural past (Baratz & Kalnisky, 2017).

According to Wellman & Frank (2017), participating in these communities, including the blended learning communities this project studies, provides community members with social capital. As such, participating in non-formal learning at the cultural centres this project studies may provide Iraqi community members with a sense of belonging (to their own cultural group). It is also intended to promote a sense of belonging to the UK society, giving learners the opportunity to acquire knowledge about subjects which they may not have had the opportunity to acquire during their years of formal education in Iraq.

Lin (2017) states that individuals seek social capital through group activities to gain an increased sense of belonging to a group or society:

> *Individuals engage in interactions and networking in order to produce profits ... social relations are expected to reinforce identity and recognition ... [it equals] being assured of one's worthiness as an individual and a member of a social group sharing similar interests and resources ... [it] provides emotional support.*
> *(Lin 2017: p. 23)*

He goes on to outline four broad functions that social capital fulfils for individuals:

● Information (to know)

● Influence

● Social credentials

● Reinforcement (of one's sense of identity and self-esteem)

Having outlined the role played by learning communities in creating, transmitting and maintaining social capital, I will now examine in greater detail the role played by pedagogy and its impact on those attending the centres' learning activities.

The role played by pedagogy and its impact on educational experiences

Pedagogy refers to the choices educators make about how to approach teaching, what educators decide is valuable to include in learning plans and structures, and that which can be disregarded, sidelined or minimised. Due to his seminal work drawing attention to the politics of pedagogy and how pedagogical perspectives have been shaped by societal power relations and discourses, pedagogy as a concept is, for many adult educators, associated with Paulo Freire (1921-1997), a Brazilian academic and politician well known in education for his lifelong commitment to improving the lives of individuals and communities. His main focus was on improving literacy among Brazilians, but his later academic works showcased his overriding commitment to opening learners' eyes to injustice and inequality. He referred to this as the practice of "critical pedagogy" (Freire, 1994). His ideas on critical pedagogy, and its importance in bringing about positive social change for individuals and communities, is summarised by Giroux below:

> *Freire rejected those modes of pedagogy that supported economic models and modes of agency in which freedom is reduced to consumerism and economic activity … critical pedagogy attempts to understand how power works through the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge within particular institutional contexts and seeks to constitute students as informed subjects and social agents.* (Giroux 2010: p. 717)

Critical pedagogy differs from what Freire describes as the banking model of education, in which teachers instil information into docile students who do not question it, and a problem-posing model of education which encourages learners to develop critical consciousness (Dewey, 1916; hooks, 1994). Giroux describes this further below:

> *Critical pedagogy is thus invested in both the practice of self-criticism about the values that inform teaching and a critical self-consciousness regarding what it means to equip students with analytical skills to be self-reflective about the knowledge and values they confront in classrooms … it provides a sphere where the unconditional freedom to question and assert is central to the purpose of public schooling and higher education, if not democracy itself.*
>
> *(Giroux 2010: p. 717)*

This has also been described by Haynes (2015) as a process of social and active enquiry. Giroux (1997) has described the ideal function of education as being to develop participants' capacity for analysis and reasoning, and argues that it is the role of educators to ensure this happens:

> *Educators need to develop a critical pedagogy in which the knowledge, habits, and skills of critical citizenship, not simply good citizenship, are taught and practised. This means providing students with the opportunity to develop the critical capacity to challenge and transform existing social and political forms, rather than simply adapt to them.* *(Giroux 1997: p. 123)*

There is an assumption here that adult education is characterised by critical pedagogy, shifting the role of the educator from teacher to facilitator (Cross, 2007), whilst compulsory education follows the "banking" model of education which Freire (1994) has described in detail. What is clear is the absence of what Kasl & Elias (2000) describe as "critical reflection" in Freire's banking model of education. They argue that it is the capacity for critical reflection that leads to change in learners:

> *Transformation in the context of consciousness is facilitated most effectively when we nurture interdependent processes of discernment and critical reflection. Critical reflection is a process of precipitating transformation in*

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frames of reference by surfacing and challenging uncritically assimilated assumptions about oneself and one's world ... new frames of reference emerge. *(Kasl & Elias 2000: p. 231)*

What emerges from the discourse about critical pedagogy in education, and particularly in non-formal educational opportunities for adults, is the need to reassess what Mezirow (2009) calls the "frames of reference" that individuals and societies established in their earlier lives and their participation in education at that time. This is due to the educational pedagogies being used in schools, colleges and universities which function to indoctrinate a set of values, customs and norms into individuals (Marshall, 1990). As such, pedagogy can be seen to function as a means to minimise or marginalise knowledge that does not fit into this sphere. To do this, certain types of knowledge are included in educational syllabuses within formal education at the expense of others.

This focus on pedagogy and its impact on learners has been adopted by several sociologists and educationalists. One of these is bell hooks (1952-2021) (pen name), an American feminist who drew attention to the position of women and minority ethnic groups. Taking into account her ontological positioning, bell hooks was an African-American woman whose work pointed to the way in which education seeks to deny, marginalise and minimise the ways of knowing that exist in African-American communities. She took the view that "white men" dominate society and that African-Americans, their culture, ways of life and ways of knowing are denied and marginalised through the education process (hooks, 1994). Similarly, this can also be said about Iraqi-British citizens' experiences of education during their formative years growing up in Iraq, when large bodies of knowledge were excluded

from general circulation, which marginalised and denied a large part of Iraq's historical development.

As highlighted above, this occurs through the mechanism of pedagogy in education, meaning how we teach and what we choose to teach to participants. In the sphere of formal education, this is known as a "curriculum" that is followed throughout the land (Usher et al, 1997). In the sphere of non-formal education, it comes down to community groups to decide what will and will not be highlighted during the course of one's learning (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). These decisions, about what to highlight and what to minimise or marginalise, are based on political positions and viewpoints:

> *No education is politically neutral ... Emphasising that a white male professor … in an English department who teaches only work by 'great white men' is making a political decision … we found … again and again that almost everyone, especially the old guard, were more disturbed by the overt recognition of the role our political perspectives play in shaping pedagogy than by their passive acceptance of ways of teaching and learning that reflect biases.* *(hooks 1994: p.37)*

The aspiration for those facilitating education, for hooks, is to teach in a way that does not limit them to what is and is not seen as acceptable knowledge (hooks, 2003). However, she acknowledged that this is difficult due to the way in which education functions and for facilitators and teachers to be self-aware of this, which further highlights the importance of reflective practice and reflexivity among educators and educational researchers (Mezirow, 2000).

Kincheloe & Steinberg (1997) believe that through exercising critical pedagogy, it will be possible for a range of discourses and views to come to the fore through education and not for it to "discipline" participants in one direction or the other:

Critical multiculturalists believe that the decentring of race, class and gender power is one of the most important needs of Western societies. In this context, critical multiculturalism seeks to increase the localising power of non-whites, women and individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds …. [this] must include everything from engaging such individuals in an empowering situation to a more equitable distribution of wealth.

(Kincheloe & Steinberg 1997: p. 101)

Generally speaking, the views of hooks are echoed by Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) who believes that education has been used to silence the voices of those whose views and life experiences do not fit with that which the educational system seeks to instil in learners. This ensures that learners are not well placed to challenge the information provided to them at all stages of formal education.

The exclusion and marginalisation of other viewpoints leads to many learners being unaware of their existence, which in turn restricts their ability to reassess their frames of reference through which they view and understand the world (Mezirow, 2009). This is applicable to the non-formal education provided to Iraqis by London-based cultural centres, who present, review and critically analyse knowledge drawn from a range of perspectives which was not available to them during their formative years living in Iraq which the centres hope will enable learners to reassess their frames of reference in the light of this new knowledge, and perspectives, provided.

This exclusion and marginalisation of knowledge can also be described as information poverty (Haider & Bawden, 2007). However, their definition of "information poverty" is somewhat problematic. The "information poor", as Haider & Bawden describe it, are not all in this position due to lack of funds and resources; it can also include individuals and groups who do not have access to information

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(knowledge) that their political masters have marginalised and excluded (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). What has happened in countries such as Iraq, Iran, Egypt and Syria, is the opposite of disciplining the colonised (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). Instead, they sought to establish discourses and ways of thinking which excluded, marginalised and denied the existence and contributions of the "colonisers" in the history of their respective nations.

Re-presenting, reviewing and critically analysing this new knowledge for generations of citizens who were previously unaware of its existence can lead to them critically reflecting on the knowledge banked in them during their years undergoing formal education (Freire, 1994). They then have the opportunity to reassess the frames of reference they grew up with, through which they viewed their lives and the world around them before relocating to the UK and becoming involved with the activities of these cultural centres.

These ideas come to the fore in non-formal education, particularly community education (Davies, 2008). It is this which allows learners to reassess their frames of reference, which may potentially result in their viewpoints and ways of thinking about their lives being changed. In the case of London's Iraqi community, it is their relocation to the UK with all its social and cultural differences, and the wider availability of knowledge drawn from a wide range of perspectives, which can potentially lead them to reassess their frames of reference for viewing and understanding the world.

However, we also need to ask whose education it is. Who wants the public to be educated, and for what purpose? In the case of London's Iraqi-British cultural centres, they were founded by Iraqi-British citizens for the purposes of allowing Iraqis to gather with their peers, celebrate their heritage and retain their cultural identity, and also with the aim to help the Iraqi community improve their lives and integrate further with other communities and the wider society. To this end, the centres look to provide non-formal learning which covers a broad range of subject areas and topics. This contrasts with the Iraqi authorities, who have used education to indoctrinate their citizens with anti-Western, anti-Imperialist and anti-colonial rhetoric and ideologies.

Usher et al (1997) argue that the expansion of post-compulsory education in the postwar era (which they refer to as the postmodern world and postmodern era) has allowed "the other" to come through, to tell their stories, and provided them with a space to provide learning experiences which leave participants re-assessing the frames of reference through which they saw the world:

> *Postmodernity has provided spaces for rising social groups such as the new middle classes, for new postmodern social groups and for hitherto oppressed and marginalised groups such as women, blacks, gays and ethnic minorities to find a voice, to articulate …. The postmodern emphasis [is] on ephemerality, fragmentation and reinvention. (Usher et al 1997: p. 22)*

For Usher et al, hooks and Tuhiwai-Smith, education now has the opportunity to provide learners with a range of different views and perspectives. According to Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998), the postmodern world which came into being after the end of the Second World War is characterised by pluralism in a way which he feels other philosophers did not acknowledge:

Simplifying to the extreme, I define 'postmodern' as an incredulity towards metanarratives … The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements … Narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, and so on. *(Lyotard 1984: p. XXIV)*

The question of whether post-compulsory education, particularly that provided through non-formal learning, allows for this can be further examined by looking at the patterns of participation in post-compulsory education, both in the formal and non-formal sphere of education. What do participants choose to study? Which subjects and topic areas do they look to explore further?

This may tell us more about the positioning, habitus and cultural capital of those participating in post-compulsory education than about whether the education provided, both in the formal and non-formal sphere, acts to deny the existence of alternative viewpoints and factual evidence. Jenks (1993) has described this as cultural reproduction, and it is up to educators and those who facilitate post-compulsory learning to be aware of all these factors affecting pedagogy in all spheres of education.

As this shows, the concept of critical pedagogy is closely linked to the role played by cultural and social capital. It follows from this that education can become the act of social and cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984; Jenks, 1993). However, it also provides opportunities to bring about positive social change which empowers learners to recognise the origins of their social and economic disadvantage, bringing about transformation in the discourses used in everyday life (in the case of changed attitudes towards sexuality since the 1960s) and opportunities for enhanced social

mobility arising from the unprecedented expansion of adult education in all its forms (formal, informal and non-formal) in the postwar era. This also aligns itself with Martinez's description of social empowerment, as it highlights education's role in challenging and transforming unequal power relationships, assumptions and stereotypes that had previously been taken for granted for decades (Martinez, 2022).

Turning to what this social empowerment encompasses for the Iraqi community participating in the centres' learning activities, they are most likely to be empowered in terms of increased social capital (bonding social capital with peers, bridging social capital with those they would not otherwise meet, linking social capital with institutions such as universities and imagined social capital realised through cultural events such as traditional music and poetry evenings), social cohesion, a strengthened sense of belonging among their peers and the preservation of their Iraqi identity and cultural heritage. I recognise that this represents social and cultural reproduction insofar as membership of this learning community is constrained by their habitus and social status. That said, it nevertheless provides them with opportunities for positive social change by reinforcing their sense of belonging among their peers, and by strengthening their sense of Iraqi identity, heritage, traditions and culture.

Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined and contextualised literature which supported my study of, the non-formal education provided to Iraqi communities within London-

based cultural centres. This includes the sphere of adult learning and its outputs for participants, and the establishment and expansion of London's Iraqi community in the last 100 years. I have reiterated my reasons for undertaking the research and the project's key questions; whether Iraqis' participation in non-formal education in these London-based centres empowers them and in what ways, and whether it has the potential to provide positive experiences and opportunities for them.

Those participating in post-compulsory formal education, such as adults attending colleges and universities, are doing so of their own free will. The same applies to all those who participate in non-formal learning within community settings, which is known to heighten one's motivation for participating and seeking positive outcomes such as increased knowledge, the opportunity to develop new interests and hobbies and in some cases, to obtain improved employment opportunities.

I have highlighted the nature of London's Iraqi community and the institutions which arose to support them when their community increased in size from the 1990s onwards. From this, the reader will note that many Iraqi-British citizens are educated to degree level or higher and that they work, or have worked, in professional occupations within academia, media, journalism, business and science. This highlights the habitus and the level of cultural capital possessed by those who choose to participate in the centres' learning activities.

From this the reader will see why these Iraqi-British cultural centres were established and the demographic nature of those who participate in, and facilitate, the centres' non-formal learning and cultural activities. The intergenerational factor affecting Iraqi-

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British citizens' ability to integrate further with other communities and the wider societies, and the extent to which younger people (second-generation Iraqi-British citizens) participate in these centres' activities was also highlighted and discussed with reference to other migrant communities globally (Attius-Donfut & Cook, 2017; Renzaho et al, 2017; Yasin, 2018).

I have discussed the key theoretical concepts of social empowerment, social and cultural capital, migration and integration, pedagogy and its interconnected concepts of discourse and power which formed the basis of my enquiry into the nature of non-formal education provided to Iraqis by cultural centres in London. Social capital theory is applicable to patterns of participation in these centres' non-formal learning and cultural activities, as the desire to maintain and enhance one's social capital forms the basis of learners' main motivation for engaging in these activities in the first instance and for continuing to do so throughout their lives.

These theoretical and conceptual frameworks were key to my research methodology, and associated research methods, utilised during this project's fieldwork phase. Their relevance to the learning experiences of Iraqis in London-based cultural centres, together with other literature characterising the Iraqi community and how their experiences of relocating to the UK mirror those of other migrant communities around the world, and about the development and expansion of non-formal education in community settings and the role played in this expansion by technological advances such as the social media revolution of the early 21st century, can be seen within this chapter which focuses on the non-formal learning

experiences of Iraqi communities and how these mirror those of other migrant

communities in the West and throughout the world.

Chapter 3:

Methodology & Research Methods

I began my PhD research by defining the subject I wanted to address, relating to Iraqi-British citizens' participation in the learning activities of selected London-based cultural centres. As outlined in previous chapters, these learning activities can most accurately be described as "non-formal education" because they follow structured plans. However, participating in the centres' learning activities does not lead to certification or recognised qualifications. My previous experience of facilitating learning activities within these centres, and my experiences of relocating to the UK from Iraq, led me to form the view that engagement with this non-formal learning could be empowering for Iraqis participating in the centres' activities.

In this project, such empowerment is understood not only in terms of increased knowledge, but a greater degree of self-confidence among learners and stronger connections with their peers and those from other communities and the wider society around them. The centres also aim to provide learning which helps Iraqis integrate further into mainstream society. The extent to which this happens is examined throughout my study, but it should be noted that this is another way in which they seek to empower the Iraqi community. Martinez (2022) describes this as social empowerment, seeking to provide individuals and groups – particularly minority communities – with the tools to overcome economic and social disadvantage and to change their lives in a positive way.

Empowerment in education is described by Kreisberg (1992, p.19) as "a process through which people and/or communities increase their control or mastery of their own lives and the decisions that affect their lives". Although I agree with his interpretation of empowerment, as previously outlined in Chapter 2 this does not take account of the structural inequalities and the direct and indirect power blocks holding back individuals and groups (Freire, 1994; Martinez, 2022). Bearing in mind the steps these centres are taking to encourage learners' critical engagement with new information, this study set out to uncover the extent to which Iraqi-British citizens felt empowered by their participation in the centres' learning activities. As such, my key research question and my aims in completing this study were:

Research Question

To what extent does non-formal education empower participants involved in this study of London's Iraqi-British centres, at both an individual and community level?

Research Aims

1. To research, document and analyse the Iraqi community in London, with specific reference to their non-formal learning experiences within Iraqi cultural centres over a specified time period.

2. To examine the nature and settings of non-formal education that Iraqi citizens engage with in London, and their patterns of attendance and engagement with these learning activities.

3. To analyse the extent to which these non-formal learning opportunities introduce new knowledge to Iraqi citizens.

4. To critically examine how this may have empowered them, at an individual and community level, and whether this has influenced their sense of social capital and cultural identity, whilst integrating into UK society.

As outlined in Chapter 1, I am a member of London's Iraqi-British community, very much a part of this community I know so well, and I have taken part in and facilitated

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non-formal learning within cultural centres for more than 10 years. I specialise in re-presenting, reviewing and critically analysing information written in English about Iraq and Mesopotamia during the last two centuries, as I believe it is important for Iraqis to become aware of and critically engage with their history and cultural heritage and the extent to which Britain's involvement in Iraq has shaped this. English is the second language all Iraqis learn from an early age, and as I also outlined in Chapter 1, Anglo-Iraqi relations go back centuries to the dawn of modern archaeology up to the age of British influence in Iraq before the country became a republic in 1958.

Although the influence of English-speaking countries in Iraq has lessened since this time, it nevertheless remains and has shaped Iraqis' knowledge, the ways in which key institutions function (eg, within the Iraqi education system) and their life experiences. It also led to the establishment of a large Iraqi community, as outlined in Chapter 1; many Iraqis have relocated to the UK to study and work since the 1920s. Iraqi migration to the UK steadily increased in the postwar era (after World War Two), and significantly increased from the 1990s onwards due to war, economic difficulties and political instability (Tripp, 2007). Well-known Iraqi-British citizens, such as Zaha Hadid (1950-2016) have made significant contributions to the fields of art, technology, business and politics. From this the reader will note their connections with the UK and the important role they play in British life, while the UK continues to play an important role in Iraqi life as outlined above.

My previous experience as an immigration advisor and support worker in Plymouth's refugee support council between 2000 and 2008, in which I strived to help Iraqis and other minority groups integrate into the UK, also played its part. I have first-hand

experience and knowledge of the difficulties members of the Iraqi community, and other minority communities, faced with life in a new country which is culturally unfamiliar to them. The UK, and other Western countries that minority communities find themselves relocating to, have been described by Fuadi Mohammed (2018) as individualistic societies, whereas minority communities from countries such as Iraq have come from collectivist societies with stronger social and familial support networks. These collectivist societies also place more importance on the sense of duty to one's family and community than in more individualistic societies, which place a greater emphasis on individuals' freedom of choice over one's lifestyle and identity.

My own experiences of adjusting to life in the UK have produced in me a desire to support my community to integrate further into the wider British society. For me and other Iraqi-British citizens involved in these cultural centres, providing educational opportunities for the Iraqi community and allowing them to critically engage with Iraq's historical ties to the UK, and how this impacted in shaping some aspects of Iraqi culture and education, can be seen as key to facilitating their further integration into mainstream UK society whilst retaining their own sense of cultural identity and heritage.

Unfortunately, many communities in mainstream British society have little awareness of the culture and history of minority groups who they see as being "different" from them (Cruz-Saco, 2008). The cultural centres aim to critically engage with other communities, making them aware of the historical Iraqi-British links that have existed for centuries. However, in practice most of those participating in the centres' learning activities are of Iraqi origin and I designed the methodology and research methods

taking this into account. Issues of cultural and linguistic interpretation, such as differences in language and culture, were also considered in the design of questionnaires and interview schedules used in this study.

The literature, theories and concepts include social capital theory, which informs my study throughout, non-formal education and its function in community settings, the impact of pedagogy and pedagogical choices (both those of learners and teachers/facilitators), and the role played by learning communities in encouraging and empowering individuals. These central concepts and theories have been outlined in detail in earlier chapters of this thesis, together with their relevance to the subject of my study – Iraqi-British citizens' experiences of participating in non-formal education – and how my theoretical and conceptual framework informed the data collection methods, questions asked and ethical considerations such as using audio-recording during interviews.

Completing the fieldwork phase of this research project has proved to be an intensive and rewarding process, requiring self-awareness on the researcher's part. This includes how the researcher's positionality affects the data collection process and respondent-researcher interactions, both in a positive and negative sense, and the actions required to overcome limitations placed upon researcher-respondent interactions by my own position as a facilitator of non-formal learning in Iraqi-British cultural centres and as part of London's Iraqi community. This required me to be aware of the limitations of the centres' ability to offer non-formal learning opportunities, both in terms of subject matter and methods of delivery (eg, presentations/film screenings/workshops) and the extent to which Iraqi community

members feel comfortable attending the centres. This is dependent on a wide range of issues, such as the exclusions and barriers created by social and cultural capital. Many Iraqis who are not highly educated and from professional backgrounds will not feel that they belong in this environment, and as a result they will not attend the centres' activities. This was outlined in further detail in earlier chapters of my thesis.

The location of the centres' venues and the level of involvement the centres' founders have in their daily activities are also relevant factors, as they highlight the strength of the centres' cultural capital and bridging social capital with other communities and mainstream British society organisations, such as local and national authorities, and the financial resources available to them. It is important for us to be aware of how this can affect participants' views of their learning experiences within the centres.

Suffla & Seedat (2014) describe this as being essential to constructing shared "meanings" between researchers and respondents. They also highlight the marginalised role of minority communities, and the importance of taking this into account when researching their positions in relation to educational knowledge, concepts and values:

> *Reflexivity is central to participatory forms of knowledge construction and consciousness raising directed at transformation … the interaction of researcher and participant subjectivities is integral to meaning making … [the] aim is to … Promote the inclusion of marginalised voices … Arab community psychologies formulate community participation … as a values-based orientation to knowledge creation, community capacity … and issues of context, power and wellness.* *(Suffla & Seedat 2014: p.5)*

Indeed, my own positionality and experiences of trying to help fellow Iraqi-British citizens integrate into the UK and improve their lives informed my aims in carrying out the project. This process includes the research paradigm of social reform, when a researcher aims to bring new knowledge to the educational research field to improve the experiences and life chances of those participating in non-formal education (Ernest, 1994). By conducting this study, I aim to bring new knowledge to the educational research field of Iraqi communities and their interactions with education, the meanings they attach to their participation in education and how they feel it impacts their lives. This is described by Suffla & Seedat (2014) as "an attempt to insert voices from the margins in established academic spaces" (Suffla & Seedat 2014: p.8). It is my aim, for the UK's Iraqi community and all Iraqi diaspora communities, that this new knowledge will contribute towards the wider society's efforts to integrate Iraqis further.

Epistemological and ontological framework

In sociological studies and research, epistemology can be described as our attempts to answer the question, "how do we know what we know?" The word "epistemology" is of Greek origin and can most accurately be described as the discourse of knowledge. Although some academics believe there is an objective external reality that can be measured, this view is predominant in the natural sciences such as chemistry, botany and biology.

This theory, that knowledge relates to a measurable external reality which is identical for all, was advocated by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), a French sociologist seen as the founding father of "functionalism", also known as "functionalist theory" in social research (Pope, 1975; Haralambos & Holborn, 2000). Durkheim sought to establish parity of esteem between the natural and human sciences by advocating a functionalist perspective on all aspects of social life, including education. He viewed knowledge as an external, objective reality which could be applied to society as a whole (Durkheim, 1895).

However, this view of epistemology (knowledge) as being derived from a universal external reality has been widely rejected by other academics, social researchers and educationalists. Foucault (1966) points this out at length; according to Foucault, our knowledge is socially constructed according to the rules of social stratification. As such, knowledge is closely related to, and bound by, social power. This is because specifically, Foucault sees knowledge as being socially constructed according to social discourses and ways of thinking (Marshall, 1990). This has been explained by Martin (2010) in the following terms:

> *We're being asked for the justification for a kind of inference; in this case, it's an inference from the way things seem to be to the way they (often) are. This problem, sometimes called 'the problem of the existence of the external world', has perplexed epistemology throughout its history … If we must infer the way things are from the way things seem, what could ever justify this inference? The way things are is never logically entailed by the way they seem ... is it really justified?* (Martin 2010: pp. 133-134)

One analysis of Martin's statement above is that we only believe something is red because society has conditioned us to believe this to be the case, when we are dealing with beliefs and value systems (Marshall, 1990). This most closely

represents my own epistemological position. For me, Durkheim's functionalist view of knowledge as universal, external and unproblematic is overly descriptive in nature and fails to acknowledge the role that social stratification and social power plays in defining what is defined as valuable knowledge and what is not (Foucault, 1966).

This is highly relevant to the cultural centres' learning activities; within these centres, participants are presented with new knowledge and perspectives that were not available to them during their formative years growing up in Iraq, for ideological reasons. As previously outlined, Iraq (Mesopotamia) was under British military occupation between 1914 and 1920. Iraq as a new political entity and nation-state was established in 1920, and the country was under British mandate until 1932. Iraq became an independent nation in 1932 and enjoyed a very close relationship with Britain until 1958 when a new anti-Western discourse and rhetoric took centre stage, during the Cold War era and the flourishing anti-colonialism and independence movements of the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, a great body of knowledge written in English has been removed from circulation and labelled as pro-Western propaganda.

This means that it is a great opportunity for such cultural centres to re-present, review and critically analyse this knowledge for the Iraqi community, and to recognise how the knowledge contained within these publications was also constructed against the backdrop of Western colonialism. However, it is not about adopting Western knowledge or Western arguments. It is about adopting the evidence-based approach to analysis that is used by universities and institutions which played a key role in developing the world. Nevertheless, from the above the

reader can see how knowledge is socially constructed and shaped by societal power relations, and the role played by these cultural centres in critically engaging learners with this new knowledge, with the aim of empowering them at an individual and group level.

Before discussing these concepts and their relation to my study further, here I briefly outline and summarise the ontological issues also associated with conducting research. The main aspects of ontology are the phenomena of objectivism and subjectivism. According to objectivism, social entities exist in reality and await discovery through learning, which aptly describes Durkheim's functionalist world-view (Durkheim, 1895). However, subjectivism states that knowledge and social life itself are created by our perceptions and actions (Foucault, 1966; Marshall, 1990; Matthews & Ross, 2010). This view, which I share, asserts that we construct truth and shared senses of experience. As such, subjectivism sees knowledge as being socially constructed (Foucault, 1966; Marshall, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 2001).

Relevant factors affecting the Iraqi community's experiences and perceptions of non-formal education within community settings, such as the centres this project focuses on, include social stratification, gender, age, ethnic origin, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and the demographic global locations of individuals being studied in any given research project. For instance, the position which the UK's Iraqi community occupies is that of a minority ethnic group within a society with significant cultural differences to that of Iraq and the Arab world (Fuadi Mohammed, 2018). Factors of this nature affect our life experiences, the knowledge and experiences we are exposed to, and the beliefs we internalise during the formative years of childhood

and youth (Foucault, 1966; Marshall, 1990). In turn our life experiences, beliefs, knowledge and experiences vary according to our positioning within the world.

In the case of the UK's Iraqi community, we need to consider their social and cultural history to then understand the general position this minority group (Iraqi-British citizens) occupy within the research project and the wider society. I recognise that this is further affected by gender, age, religious beliefs, ethnic origin and sexual orientation. However, I argue that all members of the Iraqi community share a common history over the last 60 years; since Iraq transitioned to a republic in 1958, at the time of the revolutionary era (as outlined in earlier chapters of this thesis), the ruling political regimes continually strived to spread specific discourses of modern Iraqi history and culture. This was reflected in the Iraqi education system and its curriculum, and the belief systems it aimed to ingrain within Iraqis. The same process occurred in other countries such as Iran, Syria, Egypt, Libya and Algeria.

The end of the pro-Western monarchy and government in Iraq in 1958, and the establishment of a new regime with its anti-Western rhetoric, its new ideological revolutionary stance and educational system, led to a great marginalisation of the West's social, cultural and educational contributions to the country. This included censoring a great body of knowledge written in Western languages about Iraq in the 20th century, justified by discourses known in Iraq as "anti-Colonialism", "independence", "sovereignty" and "patriotism" (Franzen, 2011). These discourses affected the learning experiences of all Iraqis for over half a century.

Sadly, this discourse and the historical chain of events resulting from it led ultimately to the 1991 Gulf War, and its aftermath, which resulted in a great wave of migration from Iraq to other parts of the world. In these countries, including the UK, their position is that of a minority ethnic group (IND, 2002; IOM, 2007). Many of them can be said to be somewhat vulnerable, irrespective of social background, religion or political beliefs, due to the traumatic experiences they have been exposed to both inside Iraq and outside on leaving and resettling elsewhere in the world. This should be taken into account when researching this minority group and dealing with them in sensitive situations, which may involve recalling memories of their earlier lives before coming to the UK.

Turning now to the sphere of post-compulsory education, particularly non-formal education which is characterised by voluntary participation and not bound by the rules of curriculum and assessment criteria, unlike in formal education (Rogers, 2005), adults are exposed to new ways of thinking and knowing (Mezirow, 2009; Morrice, 2012; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Webb, 2017). This is also true of the Iraqi community in London. The cultural centres that this research project focuses on host presentations, workshops, discussion events and other activities. Many of those attending are unaware of the existence of a great body of knowledge relating to Iraq and other topics, as this information was not available for them to discover during their formative years in Iraq. This has been outlined in earlier chapters of my thesis and has informed my study throughout the research process.

Reflexivity and positionality

I have also taken account of my own positioning as a member of London's Iraqi community. This has required me to be both reflective and reflexive at all times whilst conducting this study of Iraqi-British citizens' experiences of non-formal education. Cole & Gary-Knowles (2000) differentiate between reflective and reflexive practice and enquiry methods. They see reflective enquiry as a process of reviewing, analysing and refining one's practice which takes into account pedagogical, structural and ethical issues influencing the practice of teaching and learners' participatory patterns in education. However, reflexive enquiry (reflexivity) incorporates a reflective approach and takes account of one's own positionality as an educator or researcher, and how his/her own social positioning and personal history impacts on his/her educational practices as a teacher or researcher. This further requires educators to take account of, and interrogate, normalised assumptions and accepted practices and to be aware of how these have been shaped by societal power relations:

> *Reflexive enquiry is … situated with the context of personal histories in order to make connections between personal lives and professional careers, and to understand personal influences on professional practice … Especially with respect to issues of power and control.   (Cole & Gary-Knowles 2000: p.2)*

As this highlights, the terms "reflexivity" and "reflective practice" can be described as the researcher ensuring that he or she is aware of his or her positionality within the project. This is vital given that the researcher's positionality affects his or her data collection processes and respondent-researcher interactions, both positively and negatively, so that he/she may understand how best to overcome the limitations this may place on respondent-researcher interactions during the data collection and

analysis stages. In my case, I need to be aware of my own position as an Arab Muslim (albeit secular) Iraqi male from a middle class background who grew up in Iraq, a relatively conservative society when compared with the more liberal social attitudes found in the UK, Europe and other Western countries (Fuadi Mohammed, 2018), and the ways in which my upbringing and life experiences have impacted my predisposed attitudes to non-formal education.

Middle class families in Iraq and the Middle East, with a high level of education and professional occupations, prospered during the period when their governments had strong connections with the West (Martinussen, 1997). From a middle class positioning, such as my own shared Western/Iraqi culture, this has created positive associations which led me to support the cultural centres in their work. It has inevitably shaped this research project and is a bias I need to be aware of. Not all Iraqis will share it and those who do not share it will not attend these centres.

As such, for many middle class families the overthrow of Western-backed governments was a great blow for their freedom, democracy and prosperity. This is not only my view. The number of Iraqis who have fled to the UK since the 1970s, and particularly since 1990, highlights the political instability that has raged within Iraq and the Middle East and its impact on Iraqis (IOM, 2007). Not all Iraqis saw Western-backed governments as a positive aspect of their lives before 1958, and this was largely a result of social positioning and personal beliefs. However, it can be seen that the replacement of Western-backed governments with anti-Western political regimes was not only a blow for Iraq's middle classes, but for the prosperity, liberty

and social development of the nation as a whole, which took countries like Iraq into a series of miscalculated conflicts.

In addition, Iraqi society is more conservative when compared to more liberal countries in the West, which place more value on the freedom of individuals to think and act as they see fit. Fuadi Mohammed (2018) explains that the west consists of individualistic societies, whilst countries such as Iraq are more collectivist in nature:

> *Understanding of cultural differences and the knowledge of socio-pragmatic rules of other cultures facilitate social communication and enhances friendliness or at least minimises confrontation … one culture will be different from other culture in terms of being more or less individualistic or collectivistic … Western societies can be considered low-context societies … [and] at the core of a low-context society is the belief in the freedom of the individual, hence the term 'individualistic' societies.*
> *(Fuadi Mohammed 2018: pp. 761-762)*

He goes on to describe the differences between high-context and low-context societies as follows:

> *High-context societies include … Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt, Iraq and Iran … and Latin American countries. Sometimes, these cultures have been referred to as collectivistic, or interdependent. Very often, these high-context cultures are hierarchical and traditional societies in which the concepts of shame and honour are much more important than they are in low-context societies.*   *(Fuadi Mohammed 2018: pp. 761-762)*

Indeed, I observed this myself after relocating to the UK and seeing the plurality of information available, which is to some extent unrestricted by ideologies and highlights the increased freedom available to learners in the UK and Western countries when compared with Iraq. Based on my experiences of relocating from Iraq to the UK and my perceptions of these cultural differences, I came to see non-formal education as a tool of empowerment.

As I have previously outlined, empowerment is a problematic concept which conveys a number of meanings. It can mean that individuals feel empowered in terms of increased knowledge, stronger connections with others, a heightened awareness of one's cultural identity and the ability to challenge and transform unequal power relationships (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Martinez, 2022). I argue that empowerment can amount to any, and indeed all, of these things. We cannot only see empowerment in terms of increased knowledge, gaining qualifications and gaining entry to professional occupations with higher salaries and prospects. Martinez (2022) highlights the importance of enabling individuals and communities to overcome direct and indirect power blocks to achieve what she describes as "social empowerment". This was discussed in earlier chapters of my thesis. Direct power blocks include constraints such as unequal access to housing and financial resources (Freire, 1994), whilst indirect power blocks relate to social exclusion and discrimination against minority communities (Jackson, 2010). Social empowerment is envisaged as enabling us to overcome and resist social and economic disadvantages of this nature.

Within social and political communities, which function on the basis of our connections with one another, such as London's Iraqi community, empowerment can also stem from their participation in blended learning communities (Wenger, 1998; Riel & Polin, 2004). This is because the members of these learning communities feel that participating in continuous, lifelong learning empowers them by providing them with enhanced social power and status among their peers, both within the Iraqi community and beyond with those from other communities (Coleman, 1990; Puttnam, 2000; Kalenda & Kocvarova, 2022). I concluded that the education

provided within Iraqi-British cultural centres could potentially empower those engaging with it, which informed my research questions and aims.

Sample

My status is that of a person who has facilitated learning activities at the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC), and at other centres focused on in this study. When I began, I intended to study the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI), the Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF) and the Iraqi Cultural Centre (ICC). The ICC was based in London and was part of the Iraqi Ministry of Culture. Unfortunately, as the Iraqi government withdrew their funding for cultural centres outside of Iraq, ICC closed in 2015 and many of their management team returned to Iraq. Records of the ICC's work and their knowledge events and conferences have not been kept on a website, which made it difficult for me to continue studying a closed centre without access to their data or management team.

For this reason, I decided to include the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC) as an alternative third centre, as it fitted the criteria used to select the centres (specifically, that the centres should be cultural in nature and cater for all Iraqi-British and other community members, irrespective of religion, ethnicity, political affiliation or social background). In practice, due to cultural capital matters, it is mainly those with a higher level of education and who have worked in professional occupations that tend to participate in the centres' learning activities and those with a particular view of Iraqi history and politics; this comes down to the sense of belonging they feel within

the cultural centres' environments. I was mindful of the fact that focusing my study on three centres would help to triangulate my research (Merriam, 2009), and bring added insights to the study to form a fuller picture of Iraqi-British citizens' participation in non-formal learning within the centres.

My experiences in facilitating learning activities within this centre (AISC) gave me an invaluable status of being an insider-researcher, with a level of understanding of the processes, functions and challenges faced within the settings they are studying. I would argue that my position as an insider within the cultural centres' non-formal learning provision enhanced my ability to conduct the research, as I had the opportunity to gain access to this group of learners within the Iraqi community and to understand the social and cultural nuances at play. In turn this, in my view, has had the overall effect of adding to the validity of my research findings (Costley et al, 2010).

However, as the centres form an important part of my life and reflect my own ideas about Iraqi culture and history, this influences my research and needs to be accounted for. To do so, I have exercised reflective and reflexive practice throughout the enquiry process and taken account of the social and cultural capital held by those who participate in the centres' learning activities, as well as those who manage the centres and facilitate their learning activities. It required awareness of Iraqi history and my own upbringing, and these have been considered throughout this enquiry and when analysing the data.

Although I recognise that not all Iraqis in London choose to participate in the centres' learning activities for reasons outlined above, my study was designed to focus primarily on the learning experiences of London's Iraqi community. The three cultural centres were chosen for my sample as they are not affiliated with any religious or political standpoint, or any particular ethnic group (eg, Arab, Kurdish or Assyrian community). In addition, I have tried to avoid any writing which could appear to favour any particular centre throughout this study.

Methodological considerations and the validity of interpretive research

I used an interpretive research methodology in this study. As a member of London's Iraqi community myself, I am an insider-researcher (Costley et al, 2010). The research methodology adopted for this project has been described by Elliott (2006) as "educational research" as opposed to "research on education" by those outside of the educational process. For Elliott, the key difference between educational research and research on education is the focus of educational research "to realise educational values in action" (Elliott 2006, p. 169). Educational research conducted by insider-researchers is designed to uncover the pedagogic practices employed by educators, how these have been shaped by issues of power and knowledge and how they can be adapted to take account of this. Carson & Sumara (1997) also describe this as living educational theory. Although I gathered information about my respondents to include age, gender and social background, my research methodology is predominantly qualitative in that it seeks to illuminate the experiences and perspectives of my respondents, as my main aim was to explore

the meanings that my respondents attached to participating in the centres' learning activities. In doing so, it sought to empower them by analysing and uncovering the meanings they attached to their participation in education and their subjects of study. By doing this, we hope to give voice to marginalised communities (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Suffla & Seedat, 2014).

The qualitative data gathered comprised a thematic analysis which I created from selected respondent interviews, to further enrich my analysis and review of the series of semi-structured interviews conducted. I describe this in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5. Essentially, the qualitative data gathered related to respondents' reasons for participating in, or facilitating, non-formal learning within the cultural centres, and the value they attached to their involvement in the centres' non-formal learning and cultural activities. This formed part of the interpretive methodological approach adopted throughout my study, to give voice to this marginalised group and insert this into academic educational debates (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Suffla & Seedat, 2014). The emerging themes from my analysis of these semi-structured interviews, combined with the informal observations I had already made of the centres' learning activities (both as a facilitator of, and participant in, the learning activities), tell the story of how my respondents' involvement with the centres enhances their sense of social capital, community cohesion and sense of identity, and also the ways in which they felt it could be enhanced and promoted to appeal to a wider audience and provide a greater degree of bridging social capital to the Iraqi community (Puttnam, 2000) and in some cases, linking social capital to help them integrate further into the wider society and improve their life chances (Woolcock, 1998). This is discussed in further detail in the next chapters of the thesis.

Research methods

I undertook semi-structured interviews with the aim of generating personal accounts from those involved in non-formal learning (participants, facilitators and managers). These research methods were designed to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data from participants, with the aim of enhancing the reliability and validity of my research findings (Merriam, 2009). As stated above I utilised semi-structured interviews, which in turn led to the creation of selected personal accounts emerging among those involved in non-formal learning at these cultural centres. The questions asked were designed to actively seek to uncover respondents' feelings and experiences, and any barriers which are, or are not, present in their lives.

During the last 15 years, I have been involved with the Iraqi-British cultural centres in many ways. This includes being the main speaker in some events, facilitating events and introducing other speakers, and being part of the audience attending the events. My involvement with these events gave me the opportunity to observe non-formal learning within the centres.

While formal observations can be very useful in many academic studies, I found that it was not suitable for use within this study. Conducting a formal observation would require all parties involved in an event, including facilitators, main speakers and participants to be informed that I would be carrying out a formal observation. From my experience and knowledge of the Iraqi community, being observed, monitored, watched and seeing others take notes about them could cause discomfort and

concern. Most of the Iraqi community who are engaged with these events lived under a repressive regime in Iraq which used to monitor, watch and record their movements. Being formally observed could make them feel uncomfortable and perhaps choose not to participate in the events, and to question the purpose of the observation. This could also cause embarrassment to the centres and their managers.

I found that the best approach was to conduct interviews as part of the interpretive research methodology employed throughout my study. The sample selected for this study have worked in professional occupations, and they have been involved with these centres' non-formal learning activities for many years as managers, facilitators, speakers and participants. Most of them were happy for their interviews to be recorded with their consent.

Due to their involvement with the centres' activities over the years, they have also gathered their own informal observations, and this was reflected in their responses to the interview questions. Indeed, the informal observations were very informative. For instance, I facilitated an event in June 2018 at AISC, at which the Iraqi-British author Emily Porter was the main speaker. She talked about her British father and Iraqi mother and their experiences in Iraq in the first half of the 20th century. I observed that this event was attended by people from all the ethnic and faith groups of Iraq; Iraqi Arabs, Iraqi Kurds, Iraqi Muslims (Shi'a and Sunni), Iraqi Christians and Iraqi Jews. I observed the same thing in another event I attended at HDF, featuring the British archaeologist Dr Stephanie Dalley as the main speaker about a current Iraqi archaeological project. In fact, the interview questions and the responses

received, and the subsequent data analysis, reflected the important role played by the informal observations made by the researcher and the respondents.

Interviews were conducted with respondents drawn from all three cultural centres in the project, although I found that in order to respect respondents' privacy and be fully compliant with data protection principles and academic protocols, I had to let them provide me with information which they were comfortable disclosing in terms of the previous occupations of their parents, grandparents, siblings and other family members. That said, I knew many respondents personally and from this I am aware that they had worked in professional occupations, and that their parents had been business owners, writers, politicians, journalists, lawyers and scientists. Again, this highlights the cultural capital which leads to individuals joining the learning community these cultural centres have created, as Kalenda & Kocvarova (2022) highlight:

> *Structuring institutions [such as schools, colleges and universities] can also influence the dispositions and motivations of individuals, ie their perception of the value, meaningfulness and effectiveness of lifelong learning … the influence of institutions on participation in NFE [non-formal education] remains the same.* (Kalenda & Kocvarova 2022: p. 147)

This highlights the link between participation in the centres' non-formal learning activities and cultural capital. Those in the Iraqi community educated to degree level or higher, who have worked in professional occupations, have a higher degree of cultural capital. In turn, this leads to them placing a greater value on lifelong learning and produces a greater motivation to engage with it continually.

Returning to the questions I asked respondents, I was also mindful that too many may have led to some respondents questioning the interview's real purpose, which could cause them unnecessary anxiety which is unethical in social research (Merriam, 2009) and affect the validity of the information provided (May, 2001). It was therefore essential for me to conduct the interviews in a semi-structured way. The qualitative data was mainly collected by asking respondents a series of questions which required them to elaborate on their feelings about the non-formal education they were engaging with; why they were interested in the subjects they had chosen to study through community education; and also if they felt that they had gathered new information to make them reassess their frames of reference for viewing life in general, and their situation as Iraqi and Iraqi-British citizens. This again aligns itself to the interpretive research methodology adopted throughout my study. Copies of a selection of semi-structured interview schedules with participants and facilitators, together with transcripts of my research interviews, can be found in Appendix 2.

From the results of my semi-structured interviews, I have generated a range of interesting personal accounts. I also used semi-structured interviews of this nature, containing a different set of tailored questions, with managers of the cultural centres, and with those responsible for facilitating non-formal learning by delivering knowledge presentations. The same enquiries were made with managers and facilitators, including age, gender, level of education and family background.

The qualitative element came into play when managers and facilitators were asked for their feelings on delivering this education; what personal satisfaction did it give

them to see participants learn and grow through the non-formal education process? What prompted their interest in the subjects they facilitate and deliver? These questions also generated interesting personal stories and accounts from those individuals involved in the delivery of non-formal education, as well as those participating in it.

In choosing semi-structured interviews as my primary research method, I was mindful of Fadyl & Nicholls (2012) who state that research interviews are the obvious approach to soliciting both quantitative and qualitative data from those we wish to study regardless of the research subject:

> *Interviews have become an obvious method for gathering information on the experiences of everyday living ... research interviews have become used very widely used to help understand how people construct meaning around their lived experiences ... it has also provided a vehicle to bring to the surface voices that had previously been marginalised. (Fadyl & Nicholls 2012: p. 4)*

My interviews were designed in a way which aimed to bring out the feelings of both participants in, and facilitators of, non-formal learning within the community. I have also taken account of my own experiences and observations of participating in, and facilitating, learning within these centres, and in other cultural centres. I have taken into account the quality of the information which is generally provided within these events, the reactions of participants to the information given, and whether I felt that anything within these events and presentations could have been enhanced or delivered differently.

The data collection phase aimed to illuminate the centres' work, their objectives, aims and intended outcomes for the learning communities they serve. More

information about my sample, the issues I encountered during the research project's data collection phase with them and with writing up the results of my study in the research project's writing-up phase, and the ethical considerations, are outlined below.

**Sample involved in this research project:
Issues of representativeness and negotiating access**

In London there are more than 20 organisations set up for, and used by, the Iraqi community. I have also referred to this in the first chapter of my thesis. These organisations have differing purposes; some of them are related to a specific faith or ethnicity, whilst others are focused on culture, knowledge, literature, politics and archaeology. They provide events for the local community, and a list of some of these centres can be found in the next chapter of my thesis.

There are many community, cultural, professional and faith groups in existence catering for the Iraqi community in London. This project focuses on three of the cultural groups, as they do not represent any particular profession, or align themselves with any particular religious or political beliefs. Although participatory patterns in their events and activities are aligned with social backgrounds, the centres chosen for my study aim to bring together the Iraqi community as a whole. Those participating in the cultural centres' learning activities are a well-educated and settled group of Iraqi migrants, as set out in Chapter 1 of my thesis. This is a group which finds itself largely overlooked in the literature on migration and non-formal education, as highlighted in the first chapter of this thesis.

However, given the size of London's established Iraqi community and the contribution made to British life by highly educated Iraqis, I consider it important for educational researchers and academics to be aware of their engagement with non-formal education and to challenge patronising stereotypes which typically situate migrants in a position of learning basic literacy, numeracy and information technology skills. This is a distinctive aspect of my study, which has the potential to challenge previously held assumptions about the type of learning undertaken by migrant communities and their positioning within mainstream Western societies.

With this in mind, and having reviewed and critically analysed relevant literature on education and migration, I began the data collection phase of my study. This commenced with a period of negotiating access to my sample of respondents. I aimed to access a cross-section of respondents who were participating in, and facilitating, non-formal education within these cultural centres. This took nearly three months (September to December 2019), and I contacted almost 40 people during this time, in person or remotely. I ended with 20 respondents, both male and female, who both participated in and facilitated non-formal learning within London's Iraqi cultural centres.

This sample was selected for their level of involvement in the centres' learning activities, and for their commitment to their community. All eight respondents featured in Chapter 5, "Thematic Analysis" are well known in London's Iraqi community as they often write articles or participate in TV reports or interviews, and they have participated in academic studies and surveys. Thus they can be easily

identified by the Iraqi community. As such, it does not make sense to use pseudonyms for the managers of HDF and BISI, for instance, as they are well known within the community. These respondents were happy to participate in this study, and consented to do so with their names being used in the interviews and the thesis.

All of these respondents informed me that they were happy for their contribution to the Iraqi community's development and empowerment through non-formal education to be published in the form of this academic study. In fact, they welcomed the opportunity for their contribution to the Iraqi community's development and wellbeing to be recognised by educational researchers and to inform community relations specialists and policy-makers.

Interviews

I conducted 20 semi-structured interviews between January and June 2020. I am happy with the sample, as it fits the criteria I used for selection; those I interviewed are involved with the centres' non-formal learning activities, either as participants or facilitators (in many cases, as both, as Chapter 5 highlights). However, I had hoped to interview another five people, particularly three British academics, as I felt that their positioning outside of the Iraqi-British community would give them differing perspectives from my other respondents and would add invaluable inputs to this study.

In the spring, the coronavirus pandemic and national lockdown also impacted people's availability. Women had additional caring responsibilities due to the closure of schools, as Howlett (2020) found, and others were caring for loved ones at such a difficult time. Many who were happy to participate found themselves needing to reschedule their appointments on more than one occasion. Some were happy to undertake these interviews in person, but were not so keen to do them remotely or online. However, despite facing these challenges I managed to conduct 20 semi-structured interviews.

My research project was specifically concentrated on the Iraqi-British cultural centres in London and the people who attend them and facilitate events there, as their events are public and are open to people of all ages and professional backgrounds. That said, I recognise that those with a higher degree of cultural capital tend to become involved in the centres' non-formal learning activities (Kalenda & Kocvarova, 2022) and this is reflected in my sample of participants.

Most participants and facilitators/managers involved with these cultural centres have lived in the UK for at least two decades. They are now British citizens and many of them occupy or occupied professional roles including former Iraqi ministers, journalists, medical doctors, poets, artists and musicians. Although these people occupy a professional position in society, they are still vulnerable in some ways. They are members of a diaspora who have been forced into exile and have experienced trauma and displacement in the process.

As a result, some participants have a combination of educated elite position and

vulnerable experience, which is both an interesting and unique aspect of this research project. Other points regarding the sample, and the criteria used to select my sample, are:

- Interviews were conducted and completed with 20 respondents (10 in person, 10 remotely due to the coronavirus lockdown). 15 of them were audio-recorded, however 5 of them were not recorded as the respondents did not feel comfortable with this.

- The plan was to include facilitators and managers in the interviews as they possessed a heightened awareness and understanding of the nuances surrounding non-formal learning provision from both a participant and facilitator/manager perspective. The interviewees included seven facilitators. Three of them are managers at these three cultural centres this project studies.

- The plan was to include participants (attendees) in the interviews. The interviewees included 13 participants, and three of them have done some facilitation and have managed other institutions.

- The plan was to include female participants in the interviews, which was achieved. Seven interviewees were women.

The education level of those interviewed was also significant, which is why I asked questions to capture this information. Only two out of twenty respondents held qualifications below degree level, and this is representative of the cultural capital

held by those who participate in these centres' activities. Although the centres are open to all, in practice Iraqis who are educated to degree level feel a greater sense of belonging there and they feel more comfortable attending the centres' events and becoming involved in their learning activities. This is an important point to bear in mind, because the centres aspire to widen participation in their activities to all. However, in practice the barriers created by these differences in educational attainment and social background remain.

In my Appendices, I have included information about the centres. They confirm that there are more male facilitators than female facilitators and more male attendees than female. Both aspects are reflected in my sample. It is also clear that most people involved with these cultural centres are aged over 40. This was reflected clearly in the overall sample; 2 were aged 18-39, 9 were aged 40-59 and 9 were aged 60 and over.

Although the centres are nominally open to all, the nature of the centres means that for many Iraqis they are actually closed. Many Iraqis do not feel a sense of belonging there, which highlights the role played by social and cultural capital in shaping participatory patterns in the centres' learning activities. They do not, largely, represent other sections of the Iraqi community who attend faith groups, support groups and specific professional bodies. I am also aware of this from my own experiences and observations working with these centres. This can also be seen from the videos of events which can be found on the centres' websites.

That said, it is important to study the non-formal learning provided within these

cultural centres due to the established presence of a highly educated Iraqi community within the UK, and particularly in London. This includes former Iraqi ministers, medical doctors, engineers, journalists and businesspeople of Iraqi origin, many of whom attend activities within cultural centres such as those my study focuses on and who are represented among this study's respondents. Although they may be considered to occupy a somewhat privileged role within the community, which Bourdieu (1984) and Jenks (1993) may describe as a cultural elite, it is nevertheless important for us to understand the role played by their continued participation in lifelong learning within these cultural centres. This will provide other communities with a greater knowledge of the Iraqi community, and in turn, help them to integrate further with other communities and the wider UK society.

Turning now to the occupations and careers of respondents, I took into consideration the advice of the University's ethics committee not to ask respondents intrusive questions. I did my best to avoid asking them any embarrassing, direct questions such as "what do you do for a living today?" Instead, I asked them what careers and occupations they had worked in. It is up to them to tell me whether they are still doing it today.

If I expand a little bit on this point, we can find a few thousand Iraqis with university degrees in humanitarian occupations. Many of them have limited English language abilities, which makes it difficult for them to be part of mainstream careers (for instance, journalism, TV reporting and lecturing in universities). As London in the last 30 years was the base for many Arab TV channels, and a correspondence office for hundreds of Middle Eastern channels, and the base for many Arab newspapers, this

has provided some work opportunities for them. However, these jobs are on-off, ad-hoc, and not stable. This is described by Beck (1992) as the new "risk society" in that jobs are not permanent, and safety nets provided by permanent employment and "jobs for life" (Kalenda & Kocvarova, 2022) no longer exist.

It has been suggested by Kalenda & Kocvarova (2022) that adults participate in non-formal learning to update their skills continually, due to permeating job insecurity. However, it is also likely that such insecurity also motivates learners in the Iraqi community to continually attend the centres' non-formal learning activities to gain, enhance and maintain their social capital levels. The centres, and attending the events in person, give learners the chance to keep in touch with each other and retain important bonding, bridging and linking social capital connections (Coleman, 1990; Woolcock, 1998; Puttnam, 2000). Through their membership of the centres, they bond with their own peers, meet those they would not otherwise come into contact with such as journalists and politicians, and maintain links with institutions such as universities by attending events facilitated by presenters from the University of London's School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) and the London School of Economics (LSE).

The content of my semi-structured interview schedules: Participants

I conducted my semi-structured interviews with participants by using an interview schedule, as shown in Appendix 1. The first part of the schedule was primarily designed to elicit quantitative data, as I felt that this should be gathered to

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understand the positioning of my participants. This would influence the answers that participants would provide in response to the second part of my interview schedule which was designed to elicit qualitative data from participants. For this reason, I wished to ensure that both were gained at the same time (May, 2001; Merriam, 2009).

Where possible I asked participants to fill in the first section of the schedule before the interviews commenced. However, in many cases participants informed me they would do this during the interview. In any case, it did not take long to elicit this data and I did not feel this impacted on the time spent interviewing participants or on the quality of data they provided to me overall. Full details of my interview transcripts with these participants, together with their responses to my individual questions, can be found in Chapters 4 and 5 and also in Appendix 2.

The questions asked in the first section related to their positioning. This included gender, age, education level and professional background. I asked respondents for the highest qualification obtained (eg, BA, MA, PhD), how long they had participated in the centres' non-formal learning activities, which centres they attended and the subject areas of particular interest to them.

Respondents' answers to some of these questions also contained a qualitative element. I found that several of them wanted to clarify that they had worked in certain areas/professions in Iraq, the UK or in other countries. For instance, one respondent was a chemist in Iraq but became involved in childcare when she and her husband relocated to the UK.

I found that in the first half of my interview schedule for participants, only the first three questions could truly be seen as gathering purely quantitative data. Questions 4 to 8 all contain both a quantitative and qualitative element as they uncovered not only the factual information (what respondents had done for a living, for instance) but respondents expanded freely on why they chose to do this and what influenced their decisions to do so. For instance, their family backgrounds or associations and their lifelong interests in certain subject areas, which also came through in their answers to questions 5 to 8 to an extent.

Question 5 generally told me how long participants had lived in the UK. When we moved on to Question 6, respondents were generally happy to discuss the many cultural centres they attended, as the majority of them attended learning events at other centres besides the three this project focused on. I found that respondents very much welcomed the opportunity to be asked questions about themselves, how they lived their lives, what they did and how. My study enabled them to add their voices, previously unheard and marginalised, to educational debates (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Suffla & Seedat, 2014).

Question 7 asked them which topics and subjects they had mainly attended non-formal learning events for, which showed me their main areas of interest, and Question 8 was designed to elicit data regarding their motivations for participating in non-formal learning and how often they do it, providing invaluable information about the external factors which limit respondents' available time to undertake non-formal learning within the centres.

The second part of the interview contained open-ended questions inviting respondents to elaborate and provide as much information as they wished to do so. This semi-structured interview schedule has some elements of a questionnaire. This is because the respondents asked to see what questions I wanted to ask, and to send them the information I needed beforehand. In the end, all of my respondents felt that to conduct semi-structured interviews was a better option than asking them to answer the questions on paper. I designed the interview questions to be open-ended, attempting to give the Iraqi community a voice that has until now been unheard in the sphere of non-formal education.

The questions were informed by the need to ascertain the types of non-formal learning that participants in non-formal education prefer to participate in, and whether these centres had created blended learning communities which exist both physically (in person) and in cyberspace (Riel & Polin, 2004), what motivated them to participate in this non-formal learning, their preferred learning styles and main areas of interest, whether they felt empowered by their participation and in what ways (eg, enhanced social capital with peers and those from other communities), the issues and challenges they identified in participating in the centres' learning activities and how they suggested the centres reach out to others to widen participation in their activities. The results of these interviews are discussed further in Chapter 4, and can also be seen in Appendix 2.

The content of my semi-structured interview schedules:
Facilitators and managers

As with participants, I conducted my interviews with facilitators and managers with the aid of an interview schedule, which was also divided into two parts. The first part was designed to elicit primarily quantitative data from respondents. I found that facilitators and managers tended to give more focused answers in response to these questions, and were less likely to volunteer additional information at this stage of the interview process.

That said, they elaborated freely on their motivations for facilitating and managing non-formal learning within these centres, talking about their professional backgrounds, their other commitments to similar roles within their communities, their pedagogic viewpoints and their suggestions for how these centres could widen participation among all age groups and social backgrounds, both within the Iraqi-British community and other communities.

The second half of my interview schedule was designed to invite them to reflect actively on their pedagogic practices, activities and notions. I now provide more information about the issues I faced when conducting these interviews, and the ethical implications I was required to take account of when conducting the project's data collection phase, below.

Negotiating access: respondents' privacy rights and other ethical issues

I conducted 10 of these interviews with respondents in person. The other 10 interviews were conducted remotely via telephone, WhatsApp and Messenger. Turning to the interviews conducted in person, I should point out that some Iraqi-British women did not feel comfortable to be alone with a male interviewer. As a result, some female respondents who I interviewed in person asked their husbands or another male relative to remain in the vicinity where the interview was taking place. In some cases, they preferred to have the presence of another woman nearby, and for this reason my partner accompanied me on two of these in-person research interviews. However, only myself as the researcher/interviewer and the female respondent were directly involved in the interview process.

Indeed, this highlights the reflexivity I had to exercise when carrying out the project's data collection phase. Being flexible and reflexive in this way, bearing in mind the relevant ethical considerations of my study, meant finding reasonable adjustments to continue my research and my interviews by accommodating the cultural needs of some respondents.

Audio-recording was only carried out with the consent of respondents. Out of 20 respondents most (15) were happy for their replies to be recorded. Five interviews were not recorded, three of which was at the respondents' request. In the other two cases, I decided not to record the interviews as the respondents appeared to feel uncomfortable looking at the recording device, and I felt that they would feel able to talk more freely, and provide more accurate information about their feelings, without

me recording the conversation; even without them asking me directly not to record the interviews. To ensure that, as far as possible, correct and accurate records of all interviews were kept, which was particularly important when they were not recorded, I wrote up transcripts of the interviews shortly afterwards and asked respondents to check the transcripts to ensure they were a fair record and that my understanding of them was correct.

My experience of interviewing the sample of respondents involved in this research project has differed markedly from my experiences of conducting educational research as part of my MA Education at Plymouth University in the 2000s and early 2010s, in which I found that the majority of respondents from minority backgrounds did not feel comfortable with audio-recording of interviews (Al-Abdalla, 2014). Iraqis in general have bad experiences with authoritarian regimes and audio-recordings being used against them. The fact that this time, many of my respondents had lived in the UK for over two decades appears to have changed their attitudes positively towards audio-recording and its importance for academic research and the way it is seen as being a normal societal process.

I had also made it clear to all respondents at the outset that they were under no obligation to answer questions unless they wished to, and where they did not provide a response I noted this in my interview transcripts. Although the centres are identified, which all centres involved in my study consented to, I have provided respondents with a unique reference number and taken all necessary steps to ensure that nothing is written which could identify the respondents in any way unless they consented to this, as I have outlined earlier in this chapter. This is in line with

the confidentiality commitments I have made to all those involved in this study's data collection phase.

None of the respondents who took part in these interviews asked to withdraw from the study afterwards. However, if they had done so I would have destroyed all records of their involvement, and this would have included destroying audio-recordings of their interviews had this been required. I believe that they did not withdraw as I had established a rapport and built trust with them, due to the fact that many of them knew me personally due to my involvement in these centres. Although I recognise that it is not possible to offset what Sapsford & Jupp (2006) describe as the researcher effect completely, I took several steps to minimise the impact of this.

The steps I took to minimise this researcher effect and my own positioning within the non-formal education provided by these centres included allowing respondents to view their interview transcripts after translating their replies (which were usually given in Arabic) into English, interpreting where necessary with them remotely using the telephone and social media tools such as WhatsApp and Messenger. This was so that they could comment and verify my understanding of the information they had provided prior to submitting my completed write-up and thesis to the University, as they were able to correct me in cases where I may not have fully understood what they had said. This proved invaluable in some cases, where it proved necessary for respondents to explain to me in greater detail why they engaged with the centres' learning activities and what they saw as positive aspects of this involvement. Also, at their request I removed any quotations or other information from the interview

transcripts which they felt uncomfortable with seeing in the project's interview records.

I consider that this gave my study added credibility, as respondents had the opportunity to confirm that my interview transcripts were accurate prior to the completion of this project's writing-up phase and the submission of my thesis to the University. Many respondents had unique perspectives as they were both participants in, and the facilitators and managers of, non-formal learning within these centres and other Iraqi-British cultural centres in London.

That said, it can never be assumed that the researcher in studies of this nature will have a shared discourse with his or her respondents. For this reason, I ensured that all relevant terms, such as "pedagogy" (how we teach and how we prefer to learn) and "intergenerational factors" (the nuances of relationships between different familial generations) were explained in simpler terms to respondents when I presented them in interviews.

During the project's data collection phase, the sudden onset of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, and the abrupt ceasing of all unnecessary social contact that it necessitated, required me and all other University researchers to change their strategies, and associated practices, for conducting parts of research projects' data collection phases and safeguarding respondents' welfare. This affected the process of conducting this project's data collection phase. However, it was completed within a timeframe of 6 months, ensuring compliance with all necessary ethical research protocols and safeguards for respondents' welfare and privacy rights. These

considerations, and the forms they took on during the project's data collection and writing-up phases, are examined further below.

At the start of the schedules/questionnaires, I included my Research Ethics Protocol (see Appendix 3) which I read out to respondents before the interviews commenced. The first aspect, which was vital from both an ethical research perspective and the perspective of building rapport and trust (May, 2001), was to clarify the issue of confidentiality during the interviews. To this end, I assured all respondents that all the information they provided to me during the interviews would remain confidential, that it would only be used for the purposes of this research project and that in my final write-up, they would not be identified without their prior consent.

I made it clear to all respondents that they were not obliged to answer any of my questions should they not wish to, and of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Had they withdrawn from the study, all records of their involvement would have been securely destroyed prior to final submission of this thesis to the University. I made it clear that I would only use the records of their involvement if they consented to me doing so, to comply with research ethics protocols and data protection regulations (Costley et al, 2010).

At the outset of all interviews, I explained my reasons for carrying out the research project, along with the issue of any positive impacts I envisaged my research into their non-formal educational experiences would lead to. All of this ensured that the data collection and writing-up phases of my research project complied with research ethics protocols and data protection regulations at all times, and maintained the trust

relationship which I have with the Iraqi community in London. Maintaining this trust was absolutely crucial.

Here, I have looked to summarise the key points arising from the results of my interviews. More information about how they correspond to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used throughout this project, with reference to social and cultural capital and the creation and maintenance of learning communities, alongside consideration of the relevant ontological factors affecting both my respondents and myself, is included in later chapters of this thesis.

Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined my reasons for adopting an interpretive research methodology to complete this project, and why this was suitable to shine a light on Iraqi communities' experiences of non-formal learning provided within cultural centres. I have reiterated the research questions that this project was designed to address and answer, the relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks which were taken into consideration and the reasons for their application to London's Iraqi-British community, the research methods employed for the fieldwork phase of my study and the ethical considerations and dilemmas I faced in conducting the project's data collection phase and the ways in which I dealt with them.

The results of my interviews are discussed in the next chapter of this thesis and in Chapter 5, which focuses on a selection of personal stories derived from the 20

respondent interviews completed with the consent of the respondents concerned. The respondents whose personal stories feature in Chapter 5 all stood out in terms of their experience in facilitating non-formal learning, their general life experiences which informed their perspectives on these centres' non-formal learning provision, and sometimes where they brought a unique contribution to the development and enhancement of non-formal education within the Iraqi community. This is the case with one participant who I discuss further in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis, who has single-handedly widened participation in the centres' learning events to many thousands of Iraqis around the world by live-streaming most of the learning events he attends in London. For this reason, they were happy to be featured in Chapter 5 of this thesis and for their names to be used, as they are well known community figures who play a central role in uniting the Iraqi community and providing for community needs. Finally, the main themes arising from the results of my interviews are discussed in the conclusion in which I also briefly refer again to these issues of methodology, relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks and their relevance to this study of the Iraqi community's experiences of non-formal learning provision, sampling and research methods.

I have outlined the steps I took to ensure that my sample was as representative as possible of those who attend these cultural centres within London's Iraqi-British community, highlighting participatory patterns in non-formal learning activities within London-based cultural centres, the ethical considerations and dilemmas faced, and the relevant cultural sensitivities which I was also required to address during the project's data collection phase to ensure that the voice of Iraqis in the sphere of non-

formal education could finally be heard, coherently understood and interpreted by educationalists.

Such an understanding of Iraqi communities' experiences of non-formal education, where they undertake it, when and how, and their motivations for participating in and/or facilitating non-formal education, are vital to our understanding of this relatively new ethnic group within British society, their particular needs and how they can be collectively assisted to integrate further with other communities and the wider society in Britain and throughout the world.

Chapter 4:

Data Analysis

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of my research interviews. A number of themes can be seen to emerge as this chapter progresses, which I set out below:

- Motivation to engage in non-formal education and the respondents' social positioning, cultural and social capital

- The role of non-formal education in promoting and enhancing social cohesion, community engagement and social integration

- The role played by pedagogy in facilitating effective learning

- The role played by information technology and social media in expanding the reach of non-formal education to wider audiences

- Widening participation in non-formal education

This research was conducted to address the question below:

To what extent does non-formal education empower participants involved in this study of London's Iraqi-British centres, at both an individual and community level?

With this in mind, I set out to establish how participating in the centres' learning activities may empower the Iraqi community and in what ways. As discussed in previous chapters of my thesis, empowerment is a contested concept that conveys several meanings. I have utilised Martinez's model of social empowerment through learning throughout my study (Martinez, 2022). Her model of social empowerment sees learning as a tool helping minority groups identify and overcome the sources of socioeconomic disadvantage and what Cruz-Saco (2008) describes as social exclusion.

The centres' participatory patterns (who attends the centres' learning activities and who manages and facilitates these activities) are shaped by what Bourdieu (1984) describes as social capital, cultural capital and cultural habitus. Whilst conducting the literature review, it became apparent to me that participating in shared activities of this nature contributes to, maintains and enhances individuals' social capital. Engaging with these shared activities also allows individuals and groups to preserve and reproduce their culture, by celebrating and strengthening their historical and cultural heritage and shared cultural identity (Bourdieu, 1984; Jenks, 1993).

The role played by what Freire (1994) and Giroux (1997) describe as critical pedagogy in facilitating effective, engaging learning activities was also a focus of this study. I was also mindful of the expansion of social media and information technology in the last 2-3 decades, and the role this has played in widening participation in the centres' activities, when conducting my literature review and designing and implementing the study's data collection phase.

Utilising an interpretive research methodology, my research questions were designed to uncover the meanings respondents attached to their participation in the centres' learning activities; both as participants in, and facilitators of, these learning events; and their reasons for engaging with the centres' activities. I found that their motivation to engage with the centres' events was largely shaped by age, gender and social background, a factor I was already aware of from my own position as a facilitator of the centres' learning events. Whilst the themes listed above emerged from my analysis of the interview data, my research questions were designed to assess the extent to which these affected participatory patterns in the centres'

learning activities, the social capital outputs for learners and facilitators, and the steps the centres can take to widen participation in their learning activities to younger people, women and those from other communities.

Before I discuss the results of my research interviews, I remind the reader of the context of my study. This includes the centres this study focuses on, the types of activities and events they hold for the community, and the social positioning of Iraqis who choose to engage with the centres' events on a regular basis.

Iraqi-British groups and centres in London

As outlined in the first chapter of my thesis, many centres have been established in London to cater for the Iraqi community's needs. This includes community and cultural organisations, faith groups and professional organisations such as the Iraqi Medical Association. The types of learning activities and events offered by these centres are outlined in Table 1 and Figure 1.1.

This is designed to show the reader the types of events that the Iraqi community engage in regularly, and to provide a fuller picture of the Iraqi community's varied interests and needs. This study has focused on three of these centres; the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI), Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF) and the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC). More information about these three centres and those participating in, and facilitating, their events and activities can be found below.

Table 1

**TYPES OF NON-FORMAL LEARNING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES:
IRAQI COMMUNITY**

Name	*Type of Centre*	*Activities offered*
British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI)	Cultural group/ organisation	Knowledge presentations Cultural events Film screenings/exhibitions
Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF)	Cultural group/ organisation	Knowledge presentations Iraqi cultural events Workshops/seminars Advice sessions
Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC)	Cultural group/ organisation	Knowledge presentations Iraqi cultural events Workshops/seminars
Awlad Al-Taraf Forum	Cultural group/ organisation	Knowledge presentations Iraqi cultural events
Dewan Al-Kafeel Centre	Cultural group/ organisation	Knowledge presentations Cultural salon (debates/talk) Iraqi cultural events
Iraqi Cultural Café	Cultural group/ organisation	Knowledge presentations Iraqi cultural events
Iraqi Association	Community/cultural group/organisation	Knowledge presentations Iraqi cultural events Advice/support sessions Leisure activities
Iraqi Welfare Association	Community group/ organisation	Immigration advice Language courses General advice/support Iraqi cultural events
Iraqi Refugee Federation	Community group/ organisation	Immigration advice General advice/support Iraqi cultural events

Name	Type of Centre	Activities offered
Iraqi Relief Trust	Community group/ organisation	General support/advice
Kurdistan Children's Fund	Community group/ organisation	General support/advice
Children of Iraq	Community group/ organisation	General support/advice
Iraqi Artists' Network	Professional group/ organisation (artists, sculptors)	Art exhibitions Iraqi cultural events Knowledge presentations
Al-Kindy Society	Professional group/ organisation (engineers)	Knowledge presentations Iraqi engineers' events
Iraqi Medical Association	Professional group/ organisation (medical doctors and pharmacists)	Knowledge presentations Events for Iraqi medics
Assyrian Aid Society	Faith group/organisation	Knowledge presentations General advice/support Christian faith sessions
Iraqi Christians in Need	Faith group/organisation	Christian faith sessions Knowledge presentations
Dar Al-Islam Centre	Faith group/organisation	Muslim faith sessions Iraqi cultural events
Al-Rasool Centre	Faith group/organisation	Muslim faith sessions Iraqi cultural events
Imam Ali Foundation	Faith group/organisation	Muslim faith sessions Iraqi cultural events
Al-Khoaee Foundation	Faith group/organisation	Muslim faith sessions Cultural events
Al-Balaghiya Centre	Faith group/organisation	Muslim faith sessions Cultural events

Figure 1.1

**TYPES OF NON-FORMAL LEARNING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES:
IRAQI COMMUNITY**

Types of non-formal learning & other activities:
Iraqi community

Faith groups/organisations
Assyrian Aid Society/Iraqi Christians in Need/
Dar Al-Islam Centre/Al-Rasool Centre/
Imam Ali Foundation/Al-Khoaee Foundation/
Al-Balaghiya Centre

Professional groups/organisations
Iraqi Artists Network/Iraqi Medical Association/Al-Kindy Society

Cultural groups/ organisations
BISI/HDF/AISC/Iraqi Cultural Café/
Dewan Al-Kafeel Centre/
Awlad Al-Taraf Forum

**Community/cultural groups/
organisations**
Iraqi Association

Community groups/organisations
Iraqi Welfare Association/Iraqi Refugees Federation/
Iraqi Relief Trust/Kurdistan Children's Fund/Children of Iraq

Selected Iraqi-British cultural centres and their range of events

As outlined above and in earlier chapters of this thesis, the cultural centres focused on throughout the course of this research project are listed below:

- British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI)

- Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF)

- Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC)

The centre which hosts the most learning events is HDF, and Appendix 4 details all the centres' learning activities offered between 2016 and 2019. HDF hold approximately 40 learning events per year, which participants can either attend in person or remotely.

Whilst both BISI and AISC host fewer learning events, both of these centres are more heavily involved in outreach work with other organisations in London, the UK and abroad. Some of the events they have helped to deliver have been delivered by their staff, but in other organisations' venues outside London and abroad, as shown in Appendix 4.

I divided the centres' events into four categories: knowledge events, cultural events, seminars/projects and outreach events. The first two categories refer to events held at the centres' offices. Where these activities have been held outside the centres' offices by their facilitators and/or managers, I have classified these as "outreach events".

An example of outreach events, for instance, can be seen in the knowledge presentations delivered by AISC at international conferences in Morocco and Tunisia (Al-Abdalla, 2020), and which other cultural centres have also delivered outside of London or abroad.

The other category refers to seminars and projects, and covers workshops held for interested community members. However, most learning events held by the centres are knowledge presentations, as the illustration overleaf shows (Figure 1), which also shows that there was a slight reduction in the centres' activities in 2018. This may be because several new cultural groups and centres, such as the Khan Mirjan Club (another Iraqi-British cultural organisation) and the Al-Shader Cultural Salon, opened in 2017 and 2018.

Another possible reason for this is that in 2017, Iraq defeated Daesh terrorists and could now focus on rebuilding their cultural heritage and activities. Many people involved in these centres' activities returned to Iraq at that time to help with this, including those involved with facilitating events at the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI). Their staff went to Iraq and worked with the Iraqi authorities to establish and open the Basra Museum. More information about these activities can be found on BISI's website.

Iraqi parliamentary elections were also held in May 2018, and 3-6 months before the election was held many Iraqi academics and journalists normally living in London went to Iraq to be part of, and report on, the political activities within the country. In

2019, these centres returned to their normal levels of activity as the data in Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3 shows.

One of the centres involved in this study, AISC, opened in 2016 and has gradually expanded the number of knowledge presentations held at its offices since this time. The role played by outreach events in providing Iraqis based in London with non-formal learning opportunities is somewhat limited. However, it does highlight how learning can expand beyond the Iraqi community in London and reach Iraqis in every corner of the world.

Some of the centres have hosted a greater number of outreach events than knowledge events in their offices. As the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI) is a quasi-academic organisation, it is not surprising that they held a higher number of seminars and projects for interested participants between 2016 and 2019. However, HDF host more knowledge presentations than seminars, conferences and workshops.

Knowledge events

Knowledge events revolve around teachers (facilitators) presenting information to participants in classroom-style lectures. I refer to them as "knowledge events" as most Iraqi community members who participate in, and deliver, these learning events do not usually refer to them as "lectures". Instead, they describe them as "knowledge

events" or as "knowledge presentations", although one of the centres studied, BISI, uses the term "lectures" for these events.

Cultural events

The centres' cultural events normally take place in the evenings or on weekend afternoons. For instance, these cultural events can involve traditional Iraqi music, art, poetry or cuisine. Many cultural events are a mixture of these features. They provide what Quinn (2010) describes as imagined social capital for those attending the centres' cultural events. One of my respondents, Ehsan, is a well-known Iraqi musician. He highlights the way in which cultural events are designed, by default, to invoke memories of, and pride in, Iraqi culture, history and heritage and to bond participants together in this sense of imagined social capital:

> *If the subject is related to Iraqi issues, history or music … (I deliver many musical events related to Iraqi music between the 1940s and 1970s, which people like as it combines knowledge and music), such events strengthen their sense of cultural identity. Most of these events end with participants going to cafes afterwards together, and having further discussions about the event or current affairs.* *(Ehsan; Respondent No 012)*

I have also attended cultural events focusing on art exhibitions showcasing the works of London-based Iraqi artists, which are often accompanied by traditional Iraqi music and cuisine. From my own experience, knowledge and observations, I have seen that cultural events of this nature attract higher attendance rates among the Iraqi community than the centres' knowledge presentations, as they allow Iraqis to come together and celebrate their shared culture and heritage (Bourdieu, 1984; Jenks, 1993). This was echoed by many respondents during my interviews with

them, as the quote from Ehsan above highlights. These cultural events show both bonding social capital (Coleman, 1990) and imagined social capital (Quinn, 2010) in action, as well as their role in motivating more Iraqis to participate in them. Participants' bonds with their communities and their culture, history and heritage are enhanced by their attendance at these events which strengthens their sense of belonging within their community and enhances social cohesion among Iraqis.

Workshops and seminars

This consists of group learning activities, such as group presentations and discussions. One of my respondents, Sadeq, is the executive manager at HDF. He describes one of the workshops that HDF organised about film-making techniques:

> *Outside of HDF's weekly events, they also had a workshop about film making. This was attended by some media students, who learned the techniques of making short films over a few sessions run by the Iraqi film director Jamal Amin. Each participant made a short film, and these films were subsequently screened in an event at HDF (Salam House) held to highlight their work.*
> *(Sadeq; Respondent No 011)*

Another example of this is a workshop held as part of a roundtable translation seminar at AISC, a centre I worked with, in 2018 (Al-Abdalla, 2020). This seminar was held to discuss the translation of publications from English to Arabic. The seminar concluded with the recommendation of 10 books for translation from English to Arabic which delegates considered particularly important for Iraqi and Arab readers.

Figure 1.
Events hosted by three Iraqi-British Cultural Centres in London: 2016 - 2019

Figure 2.
Knowledge presentations hosted by three Iraqi-British Cultural Centres, 2016-2019
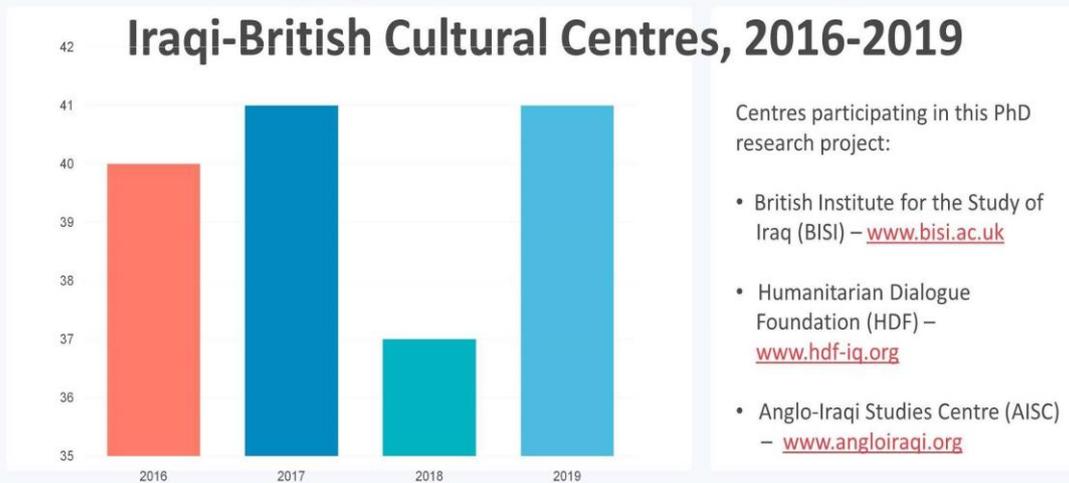
Figure 3.
Events hosted by three Iraqi-British Cultural Centres in London: 2016 - 2019

BISI

Knowledge events – 14
Cultural events – 5
Seminars/projects – 1
Outreach events - 1

HDF

Knowledge events – 138
Cultural events – 15
Seminars/projects – 2
Outreach events - 3

AISC

Knowledge events – 7
Cultural events – 2
Seminars/projects – 4
Outreach events - 12

Centres participating in this PhD research project:

- British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI) – www.bisi.ac.uk

- Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF) – www.hdf-iq.org

- Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC) – www.angloiraqi.org

Knowledge Events

Cultural Events

Seminars/Projects

Outreach Events

Projects

This category refers to the centres' specific projects to preserve aspects of Iraqi-British heritage. An example of this is an online project BISI have set up to gather photographs of Iraq in the early 20th century, which is featured on their website (www.bisi.ac.uk).

Outreach events

Outreach events generally take the form of knowledge presentations, but can also be cultural events held by centres outside their main venue. One of my respondents, Paul, is the chairperson of BISI. He describes his organisation's outreach work as follows:

> *Outreach work, meaning that we pass our knowledge on through community engagement, is a key focus for us not just holding lectures and conferences. A recent example … of this is BISI's work with the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) … in Russell Square. In March 2019, SOAS held a series of lectures under the theme of 'The Jews in Iraq' which BISI's staff and facilitators participated in and contributed to. (Paul; Respondent No. 003)*

I can identify with this myself, as during my time working with AISC I have delivered knowledge presentations at outreach events in Morocco and Tunisia and at other Iraqi-British cultural centres in London (Al-Abdalla, 2020). As workshops often form part of seminar events, I have classified workshops under the "seminars" category. Many respondents felt that workshops were a particularly useful method of learning due to their interactive and practical nature, so it may be that all centres could

potentially improve the learning opportunities they offer by increasing the number of these events between them.

Social status and the challenge of widening participation in the centres' non-formal learning activities

As previously mentioned, those attending the centres and who work within them to deliver their non-formal learning activities are mostly male, aged over 40 and educated to degree level or higher. Most of them have, or have worked in, professional occupations. This is reflected in the types of learning they choose to engage with, and which the centres offer to them. This was also reflected in my sample of 20 respondents, as Figures 4 & 5 highlight. These charts show the issues that centres have with widening participation to include more females and to those under the age of 40. Bourdieu (1989) highlights how the habitus of those involved in the centres' activities is excluding those from other social groups:

> *Habitus produces practices and representations … which are objectively differentiated; however, they are immediately perceived as such only by those agents who possess the code, the classificatory schemes necessary to understand their social meaning.* *(Bourdieu 1989: p. 19)*

The challenges faced by these centres, and other cultural centres serving the Iraqi-British community, in moving the delivery of these events online due to the Covid-19 pandemic also warrants consideration. When I was halfway through this study's data collection phase, all centres were forced to close their doors to the public and to suspend their in-person activities or to move them online, using technologies such as Zoom.

Moving their learning activities entirely online presented challenges for the centres. The results of my interviews indicated that the centres had already begun to consider how to make their in-person events more appealing to a wider cross-section of the community, and the ways in which they could encourage those under 40 to participate in their activities. Since July 2020 HDF have offered fortnightly knowledge presentations using Zoom, whereas they previously held weekly in-person knowledge presentations and events at their offices. BISI have also moved their learning activities online to comply with the national social distancing restrictions in place between 2020 and 2022. It will be interesting to see how this impacts the extent to which people participate in their events and how their role within the Iraqi community develops as a result of these social distancing restrictions and their aftermath.

It is well known that blended learning communities exist physically (in person) and in cyberspace (online) (Riel & Polin, 2004; Wenger, 1998). However, none of my respondents, or those working within the centres this study focused on, suggested that non-formal learning should be moved entirely online at any stage. The life stories shared by respondents who participated in, and facilitated, the centres' learning activities also highlight the way in which the centres tend to appeal to certain sections of the Iraqi-British community and the potential this also has for them to expand their reach outside of London and the UK, and possibly to widen participation to those from younger age groups and other communities, hence providing Iraqis attending the centres with opportunities to enhance their bridging social capital with those from other communities and the wider society.

These life stories are discussed further in the next chapter of my thesis, which focuses on a selection of eight respondents who have been named with their consent. I introduce this group of respondents below, and will return to them in greater depth in the next chapter of my thesis.

Participants

Ehsan – interviewed March 2020

Ehsan came to London after leaving Iraq in the 1990s. He has lived in the UK for almost 30 years and is now in his 50s. Ehsan is a professional musician with a diploma from the Iraqi Institute of Music, who sings and plays instruments at musical events. He has also taught others to sing and play musical instruments in the traditional Iraqi and Arabesque styles at many institutions in London and the surrounding area, including at the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS). Tens of cultural icons in Iraq and the Arab world have been taught to play music by Ehsan.

He has been participating in the non-formal education activities offered by cultural centres for over 20 years. Due to his connection with the musical industry, he has connections with many institutions such as the Iraqi ambassador's office in London, the Kufa Gallery which showcases the artwork of Iraqi-British artists, Awlad Al-Taraf which is an Iraqi-Jewish cultural forum in London, and a community organisation known as the Arabian Oud School.

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Figure 4.
Summary of research interviews conducted:
January-June 2020

Male

Female

Participants
Male – 6
Female - 7

Facilitators
Male – 7
Female - 0

Respondents
Male – 13
Female - 7
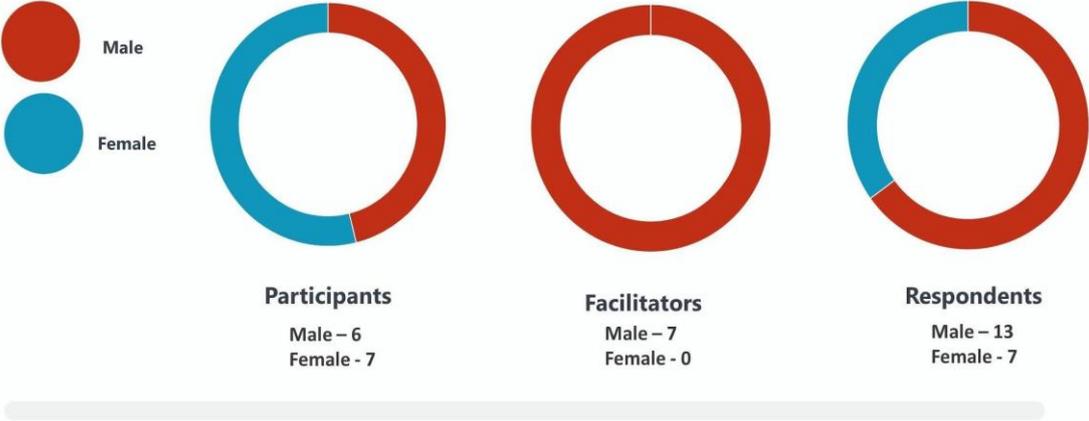
Figure 5.
Summary of research interviews conducted:
January-June 2020
Age Ranges of Respondents

18-39 (2)

60+(9)

40-59 (9)

142
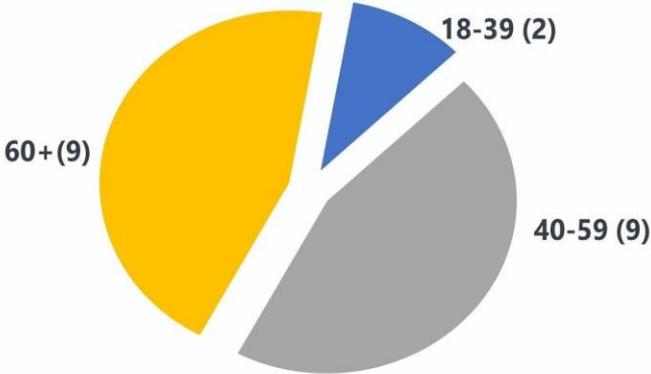
Fawzia – interviewed March 2020

Fawzia is from Iraq and came to the UK in the 1990s, where she settled in London with her family. She graduated from Iraq with a BSc in accountancy in the 1970s, and has a son and daughter and two grandchildren. This means that Fawzia has both second- and third-generation Iraqi-British citizens in her family. Since moving to London, Fawzia has become heavily involved with Iraqi community activities, working with the Iraqi Association based in London. Fawzia's background in professional and community work led to her becoming chairperson of the Iraqi Association after many years as their Welfare Officer, working with Iraqi-British citizens in London and across southeast England.

As Fawzia has worked with the Iraqi Association, and other Iraqi-British centres, since arriving in London she has been participating in their non-formal education activities for more than 20 years. This includes the centres this research project studies (BISI, HDF and AISC), the Iraqi Association and many others.

Samir – interviewed May 2020

Samir came to the UK from Iraq in the late 1980s and is now in his 60s. He settled in London, where he went on to work for Al-Hayat News's London studio and the Translation & Consultancy Bureau, also in London. His work with these organisations built on his degree (B.Sc) in economics and administration.

Since his arrival in London, Samir has been involved with many community activities and has attended the non-formal learning offered by cultural and community centres for over 30 years. Samir is mainly interested in "events relating to culture, history, literature and Anglo-Iraqi issues."

Alaa – interviewed March 2020

I have known Alaa for many years, as like me he has participated in, and facilitated, learning events at Iraqi-British cultural centres since moving to London. In 2011, Alaa and his family moved to London from the Netherlands owing to the freedom of movement regulations applying to EU citizens before Britain left the EU in 2020. He has lived in Europe for more than 20 years, and he is now in his 50s and has worked as a journalist and correspondent for Iraqi TV channels. When I interviewed Alaa in March 2020, he had recently become editor-in-chief of Al-Mustakel, an Iraqi newspaper published online once a week.

As mentioned in the first chapter of my thesis, Iraqi and Arab TV and media channels and newspapers have bases in London. Alaa moved to London seeking a wider range of career opportunities in this area. He is also a poet, which led him to set up a literary and events club called "The Word Club".

Alaa attends learning events at most of the Iraqi cultural centres, with the exception of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI). He attributes this to BISI's events

being held in English and their events being more academic in nature than at centres like HDF and AISC, Alaa has strong connections with other centres, to include Libyan and Palestinian cultural centres. He is also a member of several "think-tanks" at other British cultural centres.

Facilitators

Paul – interviewed January 2020

Paul is an archaeologist in his 50s, who has been involved in facilitating non-formal learning activities for over 30 years. He is a museum curator and a lecturer with Oxford University, and he is currently chairperson of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI). Paul is the curator of Oxford University's Ashmolean Museum, founded in 1683, and this is where I interviewed him in January 2020.

This was also a very welcome opportunity for me to visit the Ashmolean Museum and to view all its treasures and antiquities from ancient Mesopotamia and many other ancient-world civilisations. Since childhood, I have had a passion for learning about the ancient history of Iraq and other ancient civilisations, such as the Nubian civilisation in Sudan and the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt. Paul explained that he became involved with BISI, and Oxford University's Ashmolean Museum, because his area of archaeological expertise centres on ancient Mesopotamia and the excavation of its former cities and city-states.

In his capacity as BISI's chair, both within BISI's central London venue and at other venues as part of BISI's outreach work, Paul organises the facilitation of non-formal learning to communities interested in Iraqi-British issues. This includes 3-4 "formal lectures" per year at BISI's London venue and him meeting with Iraqis in community settings once every two months on average.

Tahseen – interviewed February 2020

Tahseen, a university professor with a PhD in information technology, has worked as a deputy state minister and government spokesperson in the Iraqi government after 2003. He obtained a PhD in information technology from France in the early 1980s, and then worked in Iraqi universities, where he helped to establish many information technology departments. Tahseen also worked on Iraq's nuclear programmes during the 1980s. In 2012, he relocated to London with his family and has worked with Kingston University. Since arriving in London, Tahseen has facilitated learning activities at many Iraqi-British cultural centres, including the centres that this project focuses on, in London and southeast England.

On average, Tahseen facilitates learning events once every two months, mainly at the offices of HDF. The centres where he facilitates learning events at tend to broadcast them via live-streaming technologies or TV reports. He regularly appears on TV interviews with Arab-speaking media channels such as Sky News Arabia and BBC Arabic.

Wisam – interviewed February 2020

Wisam, who is now in his 50s, has lived in London with his family for more than 20 years. He worked as a university lecturer in Iraq in the fields of sports science and sports medicine, and he founded his own academy in London in the 1990s – the Academy of Scientific Research & Training. Wisam obtained his PhD in sports medicine from Tokyo University and has worked internationally as a lecturer. He has been facilitating learning activities to communities for nearly 30 years on subjects relating to sport as part of a healthy lifestyle, and how sportspeople can improve their performance within medical and health regulations.

Out of the three centres that this research project studies, Wisam facilitates learning events at HDF and attends "many other centres" as a participant in non-formal learning activities. He facilitates non-formal learning activities on the subjects of sport and sports medicine.

Sadeq – interviewed March 2020

Sadeq was born in the 1960s in Iraq. He graduated from Baghdad University in the 1980s with a BSc in Engineering. As he has a great interest in social science, he decided to go back to Baghdad University in the 1990s and obtain another degree (BA in Social Sciences). He and his family left Iraq after 2003 after the security situation in Baghdad deteriorated, and went to Egypt where they lived for some

years. This was also an opportunity for him to obtain a Masters degree (MA) in Anthropology from Cairo University.

Sadeq and his family relocated to London in 2012. Since that time, he has been heavily involved in working with Iraqi-British cultural centres and Arab media organisations in London. Sadeq has also gained a postgraduate certificate in the field of immigration studies from the University of East London. He has worked as executive manager for HDF since 2013.

He facilitates weekly events as the manager of HDF, and he also facilitates monthly "film shows" with the Iraqi Cinema Club, which is part of the Iraqi Association (IA) in west London. He has also been part of the judging panel at the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) film festival in Holland. When asked which topics and subject areas he facilitates learning activities about, Sadeq named media, films, culture, literature, arts, economy and science.

Key findings derived from research interviews

Social cohesion, bonding and bridging social capital and widening participation

Both those who participate in, and facilitate, learning within the centres felt that it encouraged greater cohesion within their community. Respondents in my study felt they gained an enhanced sense of bonding social capital through participating in the centres' learning activities. This is in line with the findings of Baratz & Kalnisky

(2017) into the social cohesion element of learning within Israel's Ethiopian community, and that of Morrice (2007) into the social capital gained by Brighton and Hove's Sudanese community through their involvement in non-formal learning activities.

However, it was felt that more could be done to widen participation to other communities and to other age groups, particularly second-generation Iraqi-British citizens under the age of 40. My participants had many constructive suggestions about how the centres could work together, with cultural centres serving other sections of the community and also with local and national organisations from the public and voluntary sector, to enhance the learning opportunities offered by the centres and to expand their reach by making their events more appealing to a wider range of community members.

Both facilitators at the centres and those participating in the centres' learning activities felt that the centres should not only focus on knowledge presentations, conferences, seminars and workshops to cater for their communities. They also spoke about the important role these cultural centres could play by organising cultural events. Examples of this were poetry evenings, as poetry plays a significant role in the cultural fabric of Iraqi society, and musical events featuring traditional Iraqi and Arabic music, dancing and cuisine where possible. These were seen as more "fun" events which encouraged the Iraqi-British community to come together, to feel a sense of social cohesion and to reinforce their sense of cultural identity and imagined social capital as Iraqis. This is also in line with the findings of Morrice

(2007) into the social cohesion and social capital gained by the Sudanese community in Brighton and Hove from their involvement with cultural centres.

It was felt that such events played a significant role in cementing community cohesion and reinforcing Iraqi-British citizens' sense of belonging to the Iraqi-British community, both in London and throughout the world. The importance of hosting cultural events alongside learning opportunities was highlighted as key to centres retaining high levels of participation, and to encouraging more Iraqi-British citizens to attend the centres. Whilst this may encourage higher levels of participation among the Iraqi community, this also reinforces the centres' role as places of cultural reproduction (Jenks, 1993) and as the centre of what Bourdieu (1984) describes as society's "habitus" – that is, the socialised norms and tendencies which guide people's behaviour and thinking, and their desire to form links with each closer that strengthen individuals' and communities' bonding and imagined social capital through this habitus. Those participating in such cultural events do this through increased in-person interaction with their peers, and through their symbolic links to their Iraqi history, culture and heritage.

Impact of information technology and social media on non-formal learning activities

Information technology, and particularly the role played by social media sites such as Facebook and YouTube, emerged as a key facilitator of widened participation in non-formal learning at the three centres studied by this research project. It is well known within educational research that information technology and social media has been

key to the expansion of formal, informal and non-formal education (Usher et al, 1997; Drotner, 2008; Elias & Lemish, 2008: Yuzer & Kurubacak, 2010; Kerrison et al, 2016).

Research interview results: Participants

As outlined in the previous chapter of this thesis, the first part of my interview schedule with participants was primarily designed to elicit quantitative data. I felt that this should be gathered at the beginning to understand the social positioning and status of my participants. To this end, the questions I asked participants in the first section were related to gender, age and social background. To gather key data regarding participants' social backgrounds, I asked them for the highest qualification level they had obtained and which occupations they worked, or had worked, in. I then asked them how long they had been attending non-formal education for, which centres they mainly attended and how often, and the topics and subject areas which particularly interested them.

Respondents' answers to some of these questions also contained a qualitative element. I found that several of them had worked in certain areas/professions in Iraq, the UK or other countries. For instance, one respondent was a chemist in Iraq but became involved in childcare when she and her family relocated to the UK.

Question 5 generally told me how long participants had lived in the UK. When we moved on to Question 6, respondents were generally happy to discuss the cultural

centres they attended, as most of them attended non-formal learning at other centres besides the three this research project focused on. I found that respondents very much welcomed the opportunity to be asked questions about themselves, how they lived their lives, what they did and how.

Question 7 asked them which topics and subjects they had mainly attended learning events for, which showed me their main areas of interest, and Question 8 was designed to elicit data regarding their motivations for participating in non-formal education and how often they do it, providing invaluable information about the external factors which limit respondents' available time to undertake this learning within the centres.

More male participants than females attended learning events at the three centres, and at other Iraqi-British centres in London. Only two respondents (both participants) were aged under 40. All other respondents were between 40 and 59 or aged over 60. This can also be clearly seen when one watches videos showing events at these centres.

Only two respondents (both participants) held qualifications below degree level. One had a diploma, which is the equivalent of the UK's "A" level and BTEC National Diploma qualifications, whilst the other was educated to "secondary school certificate" level. In the UK this is the equivalent of GCSEs, which were known as "O" levels until 1988 (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000). All other respondents, both participants and facilitators, were educated to degree level or higher. They showed a tendency to prefer subjects related to their professional backgrounds, which were

also of strong personal interest to them.

Respondents' professional occupations, both past and present included academics (university lecturers and professors, historians, archaeologists); scientists and engineers; journalists, writers and authors; poets and musicians; media production specialists; business owners; information technology experts; teachers and childcare specialists; former Iraqi government ministers, and government advisors in Iraq and other Arab countries.

Most respondents had been involved in attending these learning activities, or facilitating it within their communities, on arrival in the UK or other European countries in the 1990s and 2000s (Appendix 2) and which I also draw attention to in the next chapter which tells the stories of a selection of respondents involved in this study.

Very few participants attended events at the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI) regularly, citing language issues as an obstacle as most of BISI's events are held in English. Most participants attended regular events held at the Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF), as this centre holds the most events and most of them are held in Arabic, their native language.

Many participants had attended events held at the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC), which like HDF holds most of its events in Arabic. This highlights the sense of belonging felt by many within the Iraqi community at events conducted in Arabic, however they feel this less in centres which conduct most of their events in English.

All my respondents speak English as a second language and can converse in English, which can be expected given their social status and education level. However, there is a language barrier in place for many respondents who completed their higher education in other languages. As English is not their first language and their higher education was not studied in English, this discourages them from attending learning events at other centres who mainly deliver events in English. This highlights the issues Iraqis face with enhancing their bridging social capital with other communities, and their integration into mainstream British society. It is also another direct power block impeding their social empowerment through learning (Martinez, 2022), and also aligns itself with the description Cruz-Saco (2008) provides of the way in which social exclusion often affects marginalised minority groups.

By contrast, it became clear that they prefer to attend events at centres which enhance their sense of bonding and imagined social capital within their community. Here, they reported feeling a greater sense of belonging and cohesion within their communities:

> *I go to these events for knowledge and intellectual reasons – to know more about a specific subject. Also, there is an element of social cohesion that you don't want to be isolated from other Iraqi community members, you want to be part of their community …. The most rewarding part of attending these events is to exchange knowledge, thoughts and information with others.*
> *(Alaa: Respondent No. 010)*

> *I go to non-formal learning events at many centres and yes, there is that feeling of being part of a learning community there ... Regarding social cohesion, yes, this is a major factor for me attending these events. It is about meeting other people, socializing with them, exchanging knowledge with them, networking with them and updating about what is going on in London's Iraqi community and in Iraq. In many events you feel a kind of cultural identity.*
> *(Samir: Respondent No. 019)*

> *These events are helpful to build a sense of social cohesion. You would not meet such a variety of people from the Iraqi community, and socialize with*

them in one place and through one event, if it wasn't for them attending these events in the Iraqi-British centres ... Without such events, your contacts will be limited to your immediate social group, but these events help you forge new friendships and social connections. Regarding the cultural identity issue, yes, I do feel a great sense of identity and belonging particularly if the events' subjects are related to Iraq (Iraqi arts, archaeology, history etc).

(Fawzia: Respondent No. 013)

Due to this sense of belonging gained from attending the centres' events, most participants attended learning activities at many other cultural centres besides those involved in my study. The Iraqi Association, a cultural centre based in west London which also provides community support and social events, was frequently mentioned by participants. Fawzia (quoted above), whose story I focus on in the next chapter of this thesis, has worked extensively with the Iraqi Association and developing its support services for London's Iraqi community.

Participants who had connections with other communities, such as the British community or other Arab communities, also commonly cited attending learning events at their cultural and community centres. However, they mainly attended events relating to what one could term "Iraqi issues". Their responses indicated that they gained a stronger sense of cohesion, sense of belonging and enhanced bonding and imagined social capital through attending these events. Specifically, these events included knowledge presentations and workshops on issues relating to Iraqi heritage, history and cuisine and cultural events with traditional Iraqi poetry, music and/or art.

As most participants were drawn from professional backgrounds and were educated to degree level or higher, they tended to favour events that focused on subject areas and topics such as engineering and technology advances, political developments in

Iraq and the Middle East, literary events such as book launches, events to remember the lives and achievements of well-known Iraqi academics, artists and literary and media figures. From this, I argue that this indicates how the centres function to facilitate social and cultural reproduction (Jenks, 1993) and as gathering places for those Iraqis with high levels of education, who may be perceived as being the "cultural elite" within the community they serve (Bourdieu, 1984). This is important to take account of when considering how the centres can widen their range of activities to appeal to a wider cross-section of participants, both within the Iraqi community and other communities; whilst the Iraqi community seek greater levels of bridging social capital with those from other communities, the way in which their collective habitus, social and cultural capital functions can in some cases perpetuate their isolation and exclusion from other communities and the wider society.

I found that most participants could not engage in learning events every week. Most engaged in it once a fortnight, once a month or less frequently dependent on issues like work and family commitments. Participants did point to the role of the media – both television and social media channels such as YouTube and Facebook, and organisations' own websites and media channels – as allowing a greater degree of participation. Those who were unable to attend an event in person either followed it live via live-streaming, or they watched recordings of it later on.

Social cohesion, identity and sense of belonging

Most respondents cited the social element of attending learning activities within these centres, meeting other Iraqi-British citizens and reinforcing one's sense of identity and belonging to that group of Iraqi-British citizens. As such, their attendance at these cultural events and knowledge presentations came to symbolise belonging and to reinforce their sense of cultural identity (Bourdieu, 1984; Jenkins, 2004). Many of them were not sure if they could be described as a learning community, but it was clear that they had formed one in London regardless: the concept of "learning communities" is unfamiliar to the Iraqi community, which explains their responses.

Shift to online learning and widening participation in the centres' activities

Unfortunately, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 forced most organisations to find ways of moving their activities online. Some organisations suspended their operations, whilst others attempted to hold events online, which took away the social element of participating in non-formal learning activities. Whilst many respondents felt that the centres should improve their abilities to offer non-formal learning online, none of them advocated that the centres should move this offering online in their entirety. I know from my own experiences of interacting with colleagues during the pandemic that meeting with them online, cannot be seen as any real substitute for attending such meetings and events with others in person.

Other issues raised by respondents were the need for centres to reach out to a

greater cross-section of Iraqis, and indeed to other communities to make the centres more inclusive of the wider community and society in London, to try and encourage younger people to get involved with them and the benefits they felt this could bring to the centres themselves and those who attended them and facilitated events within them.

Research interview results: Facilitators and managers

As with my participants, the first part of my interview schedule with facilitators and managers was designed to elicit quantitative data to gather an accurate picture of their social positioning and status. As such, the questions I asked facilitators and managers in the first section related to gender, age and social background. I found that facilitators and managers tended to give more focused answers in response to initial factual questions, and were less likely to volunteer additional information at this stage of the interview process.

That said, they elaborated freely on their motivations for facilitating and managing the centres' learning activities, talking about their professional backgrounds, their other commitments to similar roles within their communities, their pedagogic viewpoints and their suggestions for how these centres could work to widen participation among all age groups and social backgrounds, both within the Iraqi community and other communities.

All facilitators were male and although some female respondents had experience of facilitating learning within community and cultural centres, including Iraqi cultural centres, they chose to complete participant interviews rather than facilitator interviews. This may be a reflection of males having more time available to become involved in facilitating learning within the centres, or possibly because those who manage the centres tend to be male and may invite more males than females to facilitate events.

All facilitators were aged over 40, although it was apparent that many of them had been involved in facilitating learning within community settings from their late 20s or 30s. This appears to be reflective of the established nature of London's Iraqi community within the UK (Al-Taei, 2014; Ata, 2017; Ali, 2019). It was noted by facilitators and participants alike that centres tended not to invite "speakers" aged under 40 to lead events and deliver knowledge presentations.

All facilitators were educated to degree level or higher, with Masters degrees or PhD qualifications. As with the participants I interviewed, facilitators' professional occupations, both past and present, included academics (university lecturers and professors, historians, archaeologists); scientists and engineers; journalists, writers and authors; poets and musicians; media production specialists; business owners; information technology experts; teachers and childcare specialists; former Iraqi government ministers, and government advisors in Iraq and other Arab countries.

I then turned to the non-formal learning institutions where my respondents facilitated events. Some facilitated events at the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI). However, most of them mainly facilitated events held at the Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF) as this centre holds the most events, and also holds these events in Arabic, as shown in Appendix 4. Facilitators who had connections with other communities, such as the British community or other Arab communities, also commonly cited facilitating learning events at their cultural and community centres.

Turning to the types of events respondents mainly facilitated, these events related to what one could term "Iraqi issues". This included knowledge presentations and workshops on issues relating to Iraqi heritage and history and cultural events with traditional Iraqi poetry, music and/or art. This is an indication of their pedagogical inclinations, which my research indicates to have come from their cultural and professional backgrounds (Freire, 1994; hooks, 1994; Giroux, 1997). As a result, facilitators within the centres have turned them into places for those seen as the social elite within their communities (Bourdieu, 1984) and as spheres of cultural reproduction (Jenks, 1993).

Regarding how often respondents facilitated non-formal learning most engaged in it once a fortnight, once a month or less frequently dependent on their work commitments. Facilitators also noted the role played by the media – both television and social media channels such as YouTube and Facebook, and organisations' own websites and media channels – in driving a greater degree of participation in these

events remotely among participants unable to attend in person. Through the remaining questions, I looked to tap into their expertise as the facilitators of non-formal learning to uncover vital information about the issues which would help them to enhance their educational delivery.

Types of non-formal learning facilitated and pedagogical perspectives

Most facilitators delivered knowledge presentations, cultural events and workshops within the Iraqi-British cultural centres on a regular basis. Many of them are subject matter experts and to this end, they found that participants would often approach them for what was termed "advice sessions". Facilitators expressed a common view that learning is only effective, and thus having the potential to empower learners, if it is reinforced with appropriate learning materials such as diagrams, photographs, books and articles. For this reason, they commonly use these learning materials during events or refer interested participants to these materials, including where they can be sourced from, after events. The facilitators therefore saw their role as being to help participants learn for themselves rather than banking information in their audiences (Freire, 1994; Dart, 1997; Cross, 2007).

Live-streaming was something all facilitators had experience of. Most facilitators found that the centres would frequently feature their events on TV reports, particularly when they were known subject matter experts in their fields (such as literature, sports and medicine), as highlighted in Appendix 2. Facilitators highlighted workshops as being particularly useful to learners, as they constituted "practical

learning". Participants also informed me that they found workshop learning particularly useful, as it allowed them to actively bounce ideas off each other. Facilitators generally felt it to be more practical than sitting and listening to a speaker.

This is not to say that facilitators or participants did not value knowledge presentations. However, both highlighted that for them to constitute effective learning, they should be interactive and allow learners to have active discussions with the presenter: a relationship between equals and not a student-teacher relationship. Facilitators highlighted the importance of asking the audience questions and engaging them at every convenient opportunity, and also of supplementing their learning delivery with appropriate learning materials and making these readily available to participants to continue their learning at suitable times for them.

Both facilitators and participants had many examples of what they saw as poor learning strategies. They included speakers talking at their audiences without allowing learners to engage with them, presentation issues which impacted the effective delivery of their learning, leading to participants becoming bored and "switching off", turning to their peers to socialise and/or to leave the centre feeling they had not gained any additional knowledge that they did not possess prior to the event. All facilitators explained that they had become involved in the delivery of these educational topics and subject areas due to both personal interest and their professional expertise.

When I asked facilitators about the main demographics of their participant groups, it transpired that this depended on the subjects being presented and the centres' appeal beyond London's Iraqi community. For instance, facilitators at HDF found that most participants were of Iraqi origin. However, where subjects centred on "Arab issues" which were not specific to Iraq, this tended to attract participants from other minority communities (eg, Syrians, Egyptians). I was informed that generally, participants from the British community would attend if a subject or topic was of interest to them and the presentation was given in English. Examples included presentations on British archaeologists' work on excavating ancient Mesopotamian cities such as Babylon, Nineveh and Nimrud. All of this highlights the sense of belonging, collective habitus and social capital that attracts people to participate in these events. Those who speak Arabic in London come to events about issues affecting their communities or nations, as they feel a sense of belonging and community cohesion from attending them.

The same is true of British people attending events which appeal directly to their sense of imagined social capital, such as the publications and memories of this age of British excavations and presence in this region. By attending such events they bond with each other, share common interests, memories and historical accounts of a bygone age of Anglo-Iraqi co-operation, and increase their bridging social capital with Iraqis in the UK. Facilitators felt that the types of events hosted by the centres, and the subject matter involved, depended largely on the centres' ability to appeal to a wider audience beyond the Iraqi community they had been set up to cater for. This

also led to interesting discussions as to how centres could widen their appeal to more diverse communities and age groups.

Due to the main ages of participants, facilitators had not seen participants bring their elderly parents to events. This is because many participants' parents were no longer alive, or they resided abroad. It was noted that most participants did not bring their teenage and young adult children to the centres' events with them. Extensive discussion about the reasons for this followed. It was noted that many of the centres, particularly HDF who hold weekly learning events, did not deliver most of their events in English, and that young people's English language abilities are usually stronger than their spoken Arabic. This is because the second generation of Iraqi-British citizens tended to be born in the UK after their parents' migration here, or they came from Iraq or other Middle Eastern countries at a young age.

Not only did this pose a barrier to bridging the generational divide between first- and second-generation Iraqi-British citizens, this also formed a barrier between the Iraqi community and other communities around them. It also suggests that younger, second-generation Iraqi-British citizens and other communities do not feel a sense of belonging within the centres. As a result, they do not attend the centres' events or participate in the centres' activities. Indeed, it was noted that younger people were less likely to attend events which did not appeal to them. Both facilitators and participants felt that the centres could take several steps to attract more young people to participate in their events and activities.

However, it is also known that young people tend to have their own interests and it

may be that they do not choose to become involved with these types of cultural and community centres. I have also noticed from my own attendances at learning events held by think-tanks and centres such as the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) and Chatham House that young people do not generally engage with these centres. This highlights the cultural and social capital of those who choose to participate in these centres' activities; they tend to be over 40, well-educated and from professional backgrounds. These participatory patterns are thus shaped by social stratification and status. This suggests that it may be somewhat unrealistic for both participants and facilitators to see young people as the means by which they can achieve greater integration with other communities and the wider British society.

Motivation for facilitating non-formal learning events

I found that facilitators generally had a great desire to transmit their knowledge to others and to help them improve their lives. This was particularly true with facilitators who wanted to help participants become more aware of their rights as citizens and of the opportunities available to them. Subjects such as information technology, for instance, were seen as having a particular value in helping participants integrate into the wider community and society and not to become, or remain, "isolated" looking at internal Iraqi issues such as the lives and achievements of key figures in Iraqi politics, history and literature.

Empowering learners and the challenges of widening participation

Regarding the main benefits of learners' participation in non-formal education, facilitators felt that these included obtaining increased knowledge in the subject areas and topics concerned, and the opportunity this gave participants to discover "new areas of interest" for them and to pursue these further. Many facilitators spoke about participants who had attended their events, gone away and researched areas further and who then invited them to the events they were presenting at the centres this research project studies and other Iraqi-British cultural and community centres. Other participants had used their new-found interest in a subject area to go on to further study within formal education and to forge new careers in some cases.

This highlights the potential for social empowerment that community education, and non-formal education of this nature, holds for individuals and groups. They discovered new subjects and cost-effective ways to further their studies in these fields, as lack of knowledge about subject areas and where to access further study (and how) is one example of what Martinez (2022) describes as "indirect power blocks" holding back the social mobility and progress of minority communities. An example of what Martinez describes as "direct power blocks" is the cost of further study; where participants found cost-effective ways of studying it further, through remote learning or by obtaining grants to cover the costs, this enabled them to overcome the structural inequalities previously blocking their access to increasing their knowledge and their access to better career opportunities and life chances.

Facilitators felt that the learning they provided had the potential to bring positive

change to participants if something new was presented, which Kasl & Elias (2000) describe as presenting learners with new frames of reference through which they could re-assess their previously held assumptions and so-called knowledge from their earlier lives. These facilitators stressed the importance of presenting new sources from a range of perspectives that participants were not already aware of, and highlighted that they had seen many presentations which did not include new knowledge for learners. They reported that this limited the number of people who would attend and again, raised barriers between these participants and the wider community and society.

This highlights the issues faced by the centres in providing learners with social empowerment opportunities, and the opportunities to expand their bridging social capital with those outside of the Iraqi community and to help them integrate further into mainstream British society. Indeed, the main issue that facilitators highlighted was the challenges the centres faced in finding facilitators with this new knowledge. Most centres did not have the facilities, the connections or the financial resources to bring "new" people with knowledge that the Iraqi-British community did not already possess. This again highlights the relatively limited levels of bridging social capital the Iraqi community possess, in terms of their connections with those from other communities. Bourdieu (1984) explains how their collective habitus functions to differentiate them from other communities:

> *An agent's whole set of practices (or those of a whole set of agents produced by similar conditions) are both systematic, in as much as they are the product of the application of identical (or interchangeable) schemes, and systematically different from the practices constituting another lifestyle.*
> *(Bourdieu 1984: p. 170)*

As mentioned above, this has impacted on the centres' ability to empower those participating in their non-formal education activities (Kasl & Elias, 2000) and to integrate them further with other communities and the wider society. This also raised issues of widening participation and helping Iraqi-British citizens integrate further into the wider community and society. Facilitators and participants both noted that "patriotic" subjects, such as major events in Iraq's recent history or cultural celebrations, had a tendency to increase participation rates among Iraqi-British citizens.

My research data shows that this is because those attending these events gain a greater sense of belonging, a heightened sense of cultural identity and social capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Field, 2005; Quinn, 2010; Lin, 2017; Wellman & Frank, 2017). Whilst this was generally seen as a positive thing, the issue is one of who participation is widened to and whether opportunities to help Iraqi-British citizens integrate further into the wider British society are being recognised and utilised. One solution suggested was for centres to work more closely with centres based outside of London, and to offer low-cost transport to events for Iraqi communities based in other UK cities where possible. Transport was seen as a major barrier to Iraqi-British communities throughout the UK travelling to and from their major centres of population, such as London, Manchester, Birmingham, Cardiff and Glasgow.

Another issue highlighted by both facilitators and participants centred around the quality of learning events delivered, which again comes down to the educational pedagogy selected by facilitators (Giroux, 1997). Participants were quick to point it out when they found a facilitator's delivery of an event boring, and facilitators said they had seen this themselves on several occasions. Often, the centres would not challenge these facilitators due to a lack of available presenters to deliver events to the community. A funding requirement for many centres, such as HDF, was to deliver a set number of presentations throughout the year unless exceptional circumstances prevented them from doing so such as when the Covid-19 pandemic hit the UK in March 2020.

A particular dislike of presenters who did not treat participants as equals was expressed by participants. I was informed by many participants that if they knew a facilitator led their events in this way, they did not attend. This resulted in those attending being "the same people all the time" and those who attended to socialise with their peers rather than to expand their knowledge on the topic or subject area concerned, according to one facilitator that I interviewed. Also, both facilitators and participants stressed the importance of centres steering well clear of controversial and sectarian subject areas for their events. Participants recognised that these had the potential to change learners' attitudes in a negative way, and were also divisive:

> *The event topics, and the speakers, also play a role for me to decide if I want to attend and broadcast the event to people. If the speaker tends not to be inclusive or has some controversial views against mainstream society or communities, I don't attend (for instance if they have hidden sectarian agendas).*   *(Samir: Respondent No. 019)*

All centres should be inclusive and have an open doors policy. They should have a friendly and welcoming environment for all, irrespective of religious beliefs, ethnicity, nationality, social and cultural background, or even any bias within communities. They should aim to serve the best of humanity, and not to promote any sectarian or discriminatory hate speech against any individuals or communities.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*(Samir: Respondent No. 019)*

As outlined earlier in the first chapter of this thesis, the centres exist to bring communities together and to promote cohesion and a sense of belonging and cultural identity. When we consider this, the importance of centres avoiding controversial and sectarian topics can be clearly seen.

Facilitators felt that to widen participation in non-formal learning activities, the centres should firstly understand the needs of their community. This meant holding events relevant to them, such as cultural evenings featuring poetry, music, literature and art, or events relating to "Iraqi issues". For instance, poetry plays a large part in the lives of Iraqis. It was suggested that the centres should expand their outreach work with other organisations, as many Iraqis living in south London did not have transport to come to events held in north and west London which is where most of London's Iraqi community reside.

When asked how the centres could enhance and improve the non-formal learning activities they offered, both facilitators and participants highlighted the need for wider community engagement. This partly related to centres not advertising their events far enough in advance, which meant that many people who may otherwise attend do not. The timing of events, many of which are held on weekday evenings, was also an issue inhibiting further participation in many cases. To address these issues many

respondents, both facilitators and participants, felt that the centres should employ more staff to plan events and to increase their frequency and variety. A number of Iraqi-British cultural centres have limited funds and so rely on the efforts of volunteers. Lack of funding also limited centres' access to suitable venues and information technology equipment to enhance the delivery of their learning opportunities.

This highlights the structural inequalities that the centres themselves are subject to, and which limit their ability to develop and expand learners' knowledge and to provide the Iraqi community with social empowerment opportunities through their range of activities. The Iraqi community's status in the UK as a minority group with concerns and disadvantages related to their social capital, and socioeconomic power, is highlighted by the lack of funding available to them from the British and Iraqi government, as it was felt that neither the British government or the Iraqi government made sufficient efforts to provide funding to these centres. Some facilitators who had worked with the centres' management teams noted there was more funding available prior to Iraq's financial crisis of 2014, including many Iraqi cultural centres in Europe and financing the studies of thousands of Iraqi students in European universities.

For some centres, the importance of their outreach work with other organisations was highlighted by their locations. One facilitator with BISI, for instance, felt that the centre's location in central London was not encouraging and that many would-be participants may not feel comfortable going there. In addition, both facilitators and participants felt that the centres should make more effort to include the younger

generation of Iraqi-British citizens, who had grown up in mainstream British society, in their activities and ways of working. In practice, they suggested inviting more young people to deliver presentations. This has been described by Filipova et al (2020) as promoting intergenerational solidarity.

Unfortunately, respondents often noted that the managers of many centres seemed to view young people as lacking in life experience and believed that they would not have the expertise or sufficient understanding of the cultural needs of first-generation Iraqi-British citizens to deliver presentations that would meet their needs or bring "new" knowledge to them. It was widely felt that this rather discriminatory attitude was incorrect, and that as second-generation Iraqi-British citizens have a closer degree of integration into the wider society, allowing them to present more events or to become involved with managing the centres' operations and activities would help first-generation Iraqis become more closely integrated into the wider community and society.

One example of this was that most Iraqi-British citizens, both young people and those who are older, are interested in issues relating to technology, new technology and how it can be used. It was felt that events such as these, and also cultural events which attracted participants from other communities (for instance, those centred around music or art) could help Iraqi-British citizens to increase their integration into the wider community and society. At present, many facilitators have noted that "the same people attend all the time". Both facilitators and participants informed me that most Iraqi-British citizens do not participate in the learning events that these centres offer, and that they believed this should be addressed to help

enhance social cohesion among the Iraqi-British community in London and their integration and cohesion with London's other communities.

Several facilitators and managers informed me that other communities, and in particular younger people, had rebuffed the attempts of these centres to engage with them and to encourage them to participate in their activities. However, as I have stated above young people generally do not choose to engage with these types of cultural and community centres. We should, therefore, be wary of seeing young people as a key to the greater integration with other communities that their parents and grandparents aspire to. At the same time, which noticeably bucks the trend of young people choosing to pursue other interests and social activities, it was noted that younger people would attend knowledge presentations at these centres when it involved a subject of interest to them. Again, shortly after opening AISC's offices in 2016, one of the centre's first events was a film screening by a young, second-generation Iraqi-British citizen about life in Baghdad that he had travelled there to film. I noticed that this attracted many of his peers from the British community to attend and to see his work, in addition to the older generation aged 40 and over who traditionally attend the non-formal learning activities these centres offer.

It appears from my own observations, which was also incorporated into my discussions with respondents and reflected in the outcome of my interviews, that a more diverse range of participants attend events which appeal to their sense of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984; McGivney, 1999; Field, 2005; Morrice, 2007; Lin, 2017). For instance, Britain's involvement in Iraq's historical archaeology excavations is part of their cultural and social psyche, whilst events centred on the

lives of young people focus on their social and cultural psyche. This highlights the need to employ engaging pedagogies; that is, to engage learners by offering subjects and events which are relevant to them and which interest them. Engaging audiences in this way leads to greater diversity in the participatory patterns of those attending the centres' events, and many examples of this came through in my interviews with both participants and facilitators.

More information about the results of my interviews with facilitators and managers can be found in the next chapter and in Appendix 2. However, both participants in, and those facilitating/managing, learning within these centres agreed that more should be done to address issues around widening participation, making the centres more inclusive in their outlook and in turn, increasing their role as the facilitators of greater social integration for London's Iraqi community.

Widening participation and facilitating greater integration into the wider society for Iraqi-British citizens are two of the themes to emerge from this study. The other themes, which are closely related to these, are the role played by personal motivation to get involved in attending, and facilitating, learning within these community and cultural centres, the role played by facilitators' chosen educational pedagogies in maintaining and enhancing levels of participation in the centres' learning activities, the role played by information technology and social media in widening participation to Iraqis outside of London, and the sense of community cohesion, identity and belonging (social capital) that participants and facilitators gain from their involvement with non-formal education within these cultural centres. They clearly highlight the value of non-formal education within community settings and the

positive impacts community education of this nature can have on the lives of Iraqi-British citizens in London and the UK.

Summary

In this chapter, I have highlighted and analysed the key findings of my study into the non-formal learning experiences of a selection of Iraqi-British citizens living in London. I have provided further information about the centres that cater for London's Iraqi community and the types of events and activities they offer. This includes the three cultural centres involved in this research project, the types of learning activities these centres offer to the Iraqi community and their symbolism in terms of social capital, cohesion and identity for Iraqis in London, the UK and around the world. The role played by live-streaming and the social media revolution of the 2000s has also played a key role in widening participation in the centres' learning activities to Iraqis living outside of London.

From my research interviews with those participating in, and facilitating, non-formal education within these Iraqi-British cultural centres it can be seen that this generates and enforces bonding social capital (Coleman, 1990; Morrice, 2007). The extent to which my sample felt empowered by their involvement in non-formal education was less clear. However, what did clearly emerge was the image of a London-wide blended learning community based around the non-formal education provided by the three cultural centres involved in my study, and other Iraqi-British cultural centres in London. Social media and live-streaming has led to the centres widening

participation in their learning activities to Iraqis around the world, cementing further the bonding social capital facilitated among Iraqis by these cultural centres.

Whilst those involved with the centres' learning activities cited high levels of bonding social capital as a result, they were concerned at the lack of bridging social capital the centres were facilitating between themselves, other communities and younger age groups (Puttnam, 2000). There was also concern at the lack of younger people (second-generation Iraqi-British citizens) attending the centres' events, and the fact that those from other communities generally did not participate in the centres' learning events. Again, this highlights the fact that whilst the centres are open to all, in practice it is only a group of highly educated and settled Iraqis who feel able to participate in the centres' activities due to their social status and their cultural and social capital. As such, the centres very much remain gathering places for those who can be considered as a "cultural elite" (Bourdieu, 1984) and as places of cultural reproduction (Jenks, 1993).

Although those attending the centres tended to be well educated and settled Iraqis, the centres and those who frequently participated in their learning activities generally had issues with social integration outside of their own communities. Solutions cited to address this centred around involving younger people in the centres' activities and inviting them to present more learning events. It was envisaged that this could lead to greater intergenerational solidarity (Filipova et al, 2020) and also a greater degree of bridging social capital in the form of closer integration with other communities and the wider society.

To this end, it was felt that British authorities and community organisations should assist the centres more proactively by putting them in touch with people and organisations from other communities. This, in turn, was seen as something which would lead to the centres holding more outreach events and finding it easier to access funding, thus improving their financial situation and resources. Many of my respondents felt this would enable the centres to host events in larger venues and to purchase new technologies, which they could use to make learning events more engaging to wider audiences.

Improved access to funding and to other communities, and the greater involvement of younger people in the centres' activities where possible, was seen as key to allowing the centres to widen the range of subject areas and topics for their learning events. In turn, many respondents expected that "better presenters" would come to lead these learning events. Not only were such aspirations seen as key to providing the centres and the Iraqi community with a greater degree of bridging social capital, but also with learning experiences that were more likely to be empowering for the Iraqi community in terms of their nature and content. My respondents believed that this would overcome the direct and indirect power blocks to the Iraqi community's social empowerment, and help Iraqis participating in the centres' activities to integrate further with other communities and the wider society around the world.

Chapter 5:

Thematic Analysis

In this chapter, I focus on a selection of examples drawn from those participating in, and facilitating and delivering, non-formal education within the centres this study focuses on. I have included a selection of eight respondents – four participants and four facilitators, who stood out in terms of their efforts to encourage others within the Iraqi community to participate in the centres' learning activities, their contribution to enhancing learning within these Iraqi cultural centres, and in light of addressing my research question below:

> *To what extent does non-formal education empower participants involved in this study of London's Iraqi-British centres, at both an individual and community level?*

These eight respondents clearly showed, through their interview responses, how they found their participation in, and the facilitation of, non-formal learning activities within the centres empowering. It empowered them, and their communities, in terms of increased social capital with their peers and other community members they would not otherwise meet. As such, their commitment to attending, facilitating and participating in the centres' learning activities has brought them increased levels of both bonding and bridging social capital (Coleman, 1990; Puttnam, 2000). They also felt that their participation in the centres' learning activities actively promoted an enhanced and strengthened sense of belonging within their communities. Many of them referred to their participation in, and their facilitation of, the centres' learning activities as strengthening "social cohesion" among their community. This highlights the social capital that they maintain and enhance through their membership of the

centres' learning communities (Morrice, 2007; Quinn, 2010; Lin, 2017) and aligns itself with Bourdieu's definition of social capital and how this functions to create, maintain and strengthen bonds between individuals, groups and communities. Specifically, Bourdieu states that:

> *Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network … of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.* (Bourdieu 1986: p. 247)

My respondents also felt empowered by continuing to learn new things, in short by embracing the concept of lifelong learning. To some extent, many of their interview responses mirror those of other respondents. However, the eight respondents featured in this chapter stood out in terms of their commitment to attending, delivering and encouraging others to participate in lifelong learning within community education settings. They expressed a passion for helping others to empower themselves in a positive way. Although they did not use words like "empowerment", they were keen to help others in their community to improve their lives and further their knowledge and they believed this would improve the lives of their community members, by providing them with new knowledge drawn from a variety of different perspectives and increasing their awareness of their own history and that of British-Iraqi relations.

Their efforts to encourage greater participation in the centres' activities among the Iraqi community amounts to what Martinez (2022) describes as social empowerment, and their accounts provide invaluable insights into the interesting and varied lives of those attending the centres, and their connection to the wider society; these

respondents have a wide variety of interests and expertise in fields including media, politics, science, art and literature. This also illustrates the different types of activities offered by these cultural centres, and the habitus of those who choose to engage with them (Bourdieu, 1984). Although those participating in, and facilitating, the centres' learning activities tend to have higher levels of education and associated social and cultural capital, these accounts act to highlight the diversity among facilitators of, and participants in, the centres' learning activities.

Turning firstly to participants, stand-out figures include Samir who has live-streamed the events of many cultural centres and widened participation in their learning activities to Iraqis around the world; Ehsan, a well-known traditional Iraqi musician with experience of participating in, and facilitating, non-formal learning events within a number of settings; Alaa, who is actively involved in Iraqi journalism and media, edits a weekly Iraqi newspaper and established an Iraqi-British cultural group in London; and Fawzia, who manages another Iraqi-British community and cultural centre in London (the Iraqi Association). Like Ehsan, Fawzia has experience of participating in, and attending, non-formal learning events within several community settings.

The live-streaming of events has played a significant role in expanding the bridging social capital offered by the centres to participants, as many Iraqis across the world now participate in these events in real time. Neither Iraqis inside Iraq, or Iraqi diaspora communities around the world, would normally meet and interact with each other in the absence of such live-streaming of these events. Music, media and journalism also play a key role in providing Iraqi communities worldwide with bonding

and bridging social capital, community cohesion and a sense of belonging to one's community. This is not surprising when we consider Bourdieu's description of how social capital functions within such groups:

> *Social capital … may exist only in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them. They may also be socially instituted and guaranteed by the application of a common name … and by a whole set of instituting acts designed simultaneously to form and inform those who undergo them; in this case, they are more or less really enacted and so maintained and reinforced, in exchanges.* *(Bourdieu 1986: p. 247)*

And again, this reveals the cultural habitus of the Iraqi community members who engage with the cultural centres' events and activities. As stated in previous chapters, many of those attending the cultural centres are musicians, artists and journalists. The ways in which social and cultural capital reproduce themselves within such environments is also evident (Bourdieu, 1984; Jenks, 1993; Jenkins, 2004).

Turning now to facilitators, the stand-out figures include Paul, who facilitates learning activities at one of the centres this study focuses on, the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI), and whose specialist area of expertise is archaeology and ancient Mesopotamia; Tahseen, a former Iraqi government deputy minister with many years' experience of teaching and facilitating learning within a variety of educational settings; Wisam, who specialises in sports medicine and health and facilitates learning events relating to these fields, who has delivered learning in a variety of educational settings for over 20 years; and Sadeq, one of the managers at the Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF), who has many years' experience of facilitating non-formal learning events.

All of these respondents are well known in London's Iraqi community as they often write articles and appear on TV reports or interviews, and they have participated in many academic studies and surveys. Transcripts of their interviews can be seen in Appendix 2. These respondents will be updated about any future publications of this thesis, in full or in part.

In the sections below, readers will find my thematic analysis of their responses and how they relate to the key concepts of empowerment, social and cultural capital, pedagogy and its impact on participants and the centres' ability to widen participation in their activities, and the challenges presented by large-scale migration and issues of social integration and socioeconomic disadvantage which are faced by the centres and the Iraqi community participating in their activities.

Social capital, cultural capital and habitus within the cultural centres

The key question this study seeks to address is the extent to which the centres' non-formal learning activities empower participants, both at an individual and community level. This empowerment can take many forms; it can mean that individuals feel empowered by increasing their knowledge continuously, and/or by meeting regularly with others and feeling more connected to their community and sense of cultural identity and heritage. It can also mean individuals feeling empowered to overcome direct and indirect power blocks holding them back, such as unequal access to knowledge drawn from a varied range of perspectives and/or financial constraints (Martinez, 2022).

However, before we can look more closely at the issue of social empowerment and whether participating in the centres' learning activities achieves this for individuals and the Iraqi community, it is important to understand the social status, and the social and cultural capital and associated habitus of individuals who choose to participate in the centres' activities in the first place. From my respondent profiles outlined in Chapter 4 and earlier in this chapter, the reader will note their social status, cultural capital and habitus; this includes a well-known Iraqi musician, a renowned journalist and poet with interests in politics and lifelong learning, and facilitators with a passion for archaeology and the history of Iraq and who have held high offices within Iraqi universities and government institutions. All of them are passionate advocates of lifelong learning and widening participation in the centres' activities, thereby reproducing the social and cultural capitals they migrated to the UK with (Bourdieu, 1984; Jenks, 1993; Jenkins, 2004). Indeed, Bourdieu highlights how groups enhance, maintain and reproduce their social and cultural capital through their shared activities:

> *The possessors of an inherited social capital … symbolized by a great name, are able to transform all circumstantial relationships into lasting connections. They are sought after for their social capital. and … because they are well known, are worthy of being known ('I know him well'); they do not need to 'make the acquaintance' of all their 'acquaintances'; they are known to more people than they know, and their work of sociability, when it is exerted, is highly productive.*   *(Bourdieu 1986: pp. 248-249)*

This social and cultural reproduction continues in spite of the cultural centres catering for the Iraqi community, and those which this study focuses on, aiming to cater for all Iraqi community members irrespective of religion, ethnicity, political affiliation or social background. As outlined earlier in this thesis and from my own observations, the centres' activities tend to appeal to those within the Iraqi

community who are well educated and settled. This is reflected in the types of events the centres hold for their communities, and indeed, in the motivation of individuals to get involved in the centres and attend their events in the first place.

The social status of those participating in the centres' activities, and the cultural capital and habitus they possess can be seen in my respondents' motivations for participating in the centres' events and activities. For instance, Ehsan describes the events he is mainly interested to attend within the centres below:

> *I mainly go to cultural subjects, musical subjects, art, literature, painting. However, also I attend events on other subjects if they are related to prominent current affairs in Iraq.*   *(Ehsan; Respondent No 012)*

Ehsan generally participates in learning events and cultural events of this nature at least once a week. Although the centres' events are live-streamed and participants can join them remotely, Ehsan prefers to attend them in person if he can:

> *I prefer to attend and deliver the cultural/knowledge/musical events, where I can meet others in person, play music, listen to a presenter or a musical performance. This gives a horizon of human interaction and leads to intellectual discussions.*   *(Ehsan; Respondent No 012)*

This shows that Ehsan values the bonding social capital he gains from attending the centres in person (Coleman, 1990; Morrice, 2007). Also, his reference to enjoying "intellectual discussions" with others shows the extent to which he values feeling part of an active learning community within these centres (Field, 2005; Morrice, 2007; Quinn, 2010) and the importance of the social capital associated with intellectual activities. Ehsan goes on to describe his participation in, and facilitation of, non-formal learning events within several educational settings below:

> *I've delivered and attended many musical events at SOAS (University of London), the Iraqi Cultural Centre and others. I also deliver many events such*

as music and poetry (eg, I'll play music whilst the other person recites poetry) in many centres …. I often find myself giving advice to many individuals who are seeking to pursue their careers, their talent and their studies in this field of Arab music.   *(Ehsan; Respondent No 012)*

Regarding Ehsan's main motivations for participating in, and facilitating, these events, he informed me that:

In addition to events which I regularly attend and deliver related to music (my occupation and career), I also go to other cultural events for personal interest and to keep up-to-date in many fields …. These events keep me updated with the latest information and many speakers …. I do my best to attend any event that furthers my knowledge in a subject area that's of interest.
                                                          (Ehsan; Respondent No 012)

As Ehsan's comments above show, continually furthering his knowledge is of great importance to him and he does feel part of a learning community within these centres:

When I see many colleagues who attend the same events regularly, this makes me feel that I am part of these centres' learning communities. I've got no doubt that such events by these centres, leading to a gathering of many individuals and groups from the Iraqi community … increases social cohesion and if the subject is related to Iraqi issues, history or music (I deliver many musical events related to Iraqi music between the 1940s and 1970s, which people like as it combines knowledge and music), such events strengthen their sense of cultural identity.   *(Ehsan; Respondent No 012)*

Ehsan also states that in his view, music "does not need a translator", which is indicative of the central role centres of this nature can play in bringing people together through shared leisure activities (Puttnam, 2000; Wilks, 2011). This is because such events appeal to people's cultural habitus, and their social status, social and cultural capital, and the centres host several cultural events featuring traditional Iraqi and Arab music every year. Ehsan sees these cultural events as being particularly important in maintaining and enhancing the social capital of those who attend them:

Events relating to arts, theatre and music play a significant role to integrate communities further within the wider society. Music is a cultural language in itself and does not need a translator ... From my experience with many events, I've found that the British and Western community are very interested in knowing more about my instrument (the Arabian oud) which is closer to the Spanish lute. They always ask questions related to the techniques and history of this instrument, and the music it produces.   (Ehsan; Respondent No 012)

This indicates the bridging social capital that music can potentially provide, by connecting communities and aiding the integration of minority groups, such as Iraqi diaspora communities, with others and the wider society. Ehsan's comments about his motivations for participating in the centres' activities, and the types of events he prefers to attend, were echoed by my other respondents. Fawzia informed me that she also finds herself drawn to cultural events of this nature:

My interest is mainly in cultural events, including monthly events at the Iraqi Cinema Club (a project of the Iraqi Association) where more than 60 international films were screened and reviewed in the last 6 years. I also go to most of the Iraqi-British art exhibitions and events displaying artworks, photography and paintings. In addition to my other interests in events related to health and many scientific events, I go to events related to the current situation in Iraq …. [to obtain] a greater knowledge of a subject area or topic.
(Fawzia; Respondent No 013)

Through participation in the centres' learning activities and her work with the Iraqi Association, Fawzia acknowledges feeling part of a "learning community" that there is "no subscription or membership", as she describes it, required to belong to. This makes access to such learning communities, with the enhanced social capital to be gained from participation in them, easier for a more diverse range of learners than with organisations that you have to enrol with, apply to, or pay to be part of. Within these centres, Fawzia highlights the strengthened sense of belonging and cultural identity that Iraqis gain from participating in their activities:

Regarding the cultural identity issue, yes, I do feel a great sense of identity and belonging particularly if the events' subjects are related to Iraq … (Iraqi arts, archaeology, history etc) an example of cultural identity building was an

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> *event I attended … at the offices of the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC), featuring a knowledge presentation by Emily Porter about her British father and Iraqi mother ... such topics strengthen the sense of the Iraqi cultural identity.*   *(Fawzia; Respondent No 013)*

It is noticeable that Fawzia describes many cultural events as "parties", which suggests that she and other Iraqi community members value the informal nature of cultural and musical events, and their potential to bring individuals and communities together through shared leisure activities. Aside from increased knowledge and continually learning throughout her life, Fawzia identifies a key positive aspect of her participation in the centres' activities as "the social side" through networking, meeting other Iraqi-British citizens on a regular basis and keeping up-to-date with them and what is happening in the community. Again, this highlights the bonding social capital she gains by participating in this learning community (Coleman, 1990; Wellman & Frank, 2017; Lin, 2017). This is again echoed by Alaa, who explains that he attends the centres' events due to personal interest and also because of his work with Iraqi and Arab media channels and organisations:

> *It is part of my work and occupation to attend these events and to cover cultural and political events in media and TV. I also go to keep up to date with other presenters and cultural activities ….. The most rewarding part of attending these events is to exchange knowledge, thoughts and information with others.*   *(Alaa; Respondent No 010)*

> *In my professional work as a journalist and TV reporter, attending these events helps me to meet, connect and network with other professionals and experts, speakers and politicians. This can take more time and effort to get to know them without attending such events.*   *(Alaa; Respondent No 010)*

Here, Alaa makes direct references to the bonding, bridging and linking social capital that he gains through his participation in the centres' learning activities (Coleman, 1990; Puttnam, 2000; Woolcock, 1998). He writes many cultural articles regularly and reads cultural articles by others "relating to the Iraqi-British cultural scene".

As a result, Alaa's participation in learning at these centres fulfils a networking function for him and he values it in both a personal and professional capacity. When asked about his main motivations for participating in non-formal education activities within the centres, he cited them as being "for knowledge and intellectual reasons". Samir also refers to the social capital maintained and enhanced by participating in the centres' learning activities as leading to "social cohesion" among the Iraqi community. Indeed, Samir states that this is his main motivation for participating in the centres' events and learning activities:

> *Social cohesion … is a major factor for me attending these events. It is about meeting other people, socialising with them, exchanging knowledge with them, networking with them and updating about what is going on in London's Iraqi community and in Iraq … [my participation in non-formal learning has] many positive outcomes.* *(Samir; Respondent No 019)*

Sadeq and Tahseen also see the social cohesion as an important aspect of the learning events they facilitate within the centres, including HDF which Sadeq manages:

> *There is a great sense of social cohesion as participants attend together, have discussions together and socialize together, both in the events and afterwards in cafes. There is no doubt that such community gatherings and associations are part of their efforts to maintain their cultural identity … people want to know what is going on in Iraq's cultural scene and its film industry.* *(Sadeq: Respondent No 011)*

> *A great benefit to participants from attending these events is the sense of belonging to their community and social cohesion, meeting their peers and socializing with them. Usually after the events, at both HDF and the Iraqi Cinema Club, individuals gather together in cafes after the events and continue their discussions among themselves … so they get the fun part and information part and the day out on top. As such, it is all about the combination of knowledge, community contact and leisure.* *(Sadeq: Respondent No 011)*

> *These events have played the role of being social gatherings, and usually many of those attending these events then socialize in cafes and restaurants.*

> *This in turn helps to integrate communities and to strengthen individual relationships. It is a kind of supplementary step to help them integrate into the wider society.* *(Tahseen: Respondent No 004)*

Again, the comments made by Samir, Sadeq and Tahseen highlight the bonding and bridging social capital that these centres provide to participants in their learning activities (Coleman, 1990; Puttnam, 2000). Alaa has also made reference to the social cohesion element of attending and the sense of belonging to the Iraqi-British community, not being outside it or isolated from it. He has found that many of the centres' presentations, and indeed the follow-up discussions which usually follow on from them, open horizons for further research. In turn, he finds that this leads him to write articles or make TV reports regarding subject areas which he considers to merit more awareness among the public and the Iraqi community (eg, current archaeological excavations taking place in Iraq). Again, this highlights the ontological factors, social stratification and status which affects participatory patterns in the centres' learning activities and the extent to which these centres have become cultural gathering-places for Iraqis who can be described as an educated elite group (Bourdieu, 1984) and places of cultural reproduction (Jenks, 1993). For Bourdieu, this is a direct result of the way in which social capital functions. He argues that:

> *[Social capital is] … based on indissolubly material and symbolic exchanges, the establishment and maintenance of which presuppose reacknowledgment of proximity … the volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected.*
> *(Bourdieu 1986: p. 247)*

From my respondents' accounts above, and Bourdieu's description of how social capital functions to maintain, enhance and continually reproduce itself, the reader will see that participants in, and facilitators of, learning within the centres strengthen and

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maintain their bonding social capital within the Iraqi community. They also strengthen their bridging social capital with others they would not otherwise meet, as Fawzia and Alaa have both highlighted. The imagined social capital they gain and maintain through attending Iraqi cultural events is also evident.

However, membership of the centres' learning communities remains constrained by social status and the habitus, cultural and social capital already possessed by those who attend and facilitate their events. Widening participation in the centres' activities invokes issues of pedagogy and closer integration with other communities and the wider society, which I examine in more detail below.

Pedagogy and its constraints on the centres' participatory patterns

The centres' pedagogical choices of what events to offer to the Iraqi community, and how to deliver them – by means of presentations or workshops, for instance – was identified as a constraint preventing the centres from widening their appeal to other Iraqis and those from other communities. Pedagogy refers both to what we decide to learn and the ways we prefer to learn. However, the pedagogical choices made by the centres are not entirely dependent on choice. The centres' financial situation limits their access to the most modern digital equipment, such as whiteboards and other software, or to pay national and/or international travel expenses for "quality speakers" from outside London and the UK to come to their venues and facilitate events. They also have insufficient connections with "presenters" who are more familiar with information technology and social media, or who speak other languages

fluently, as they rely heavily on volunteers to continue operating and holding events

for the community:

> *There is no doubt that to widen participation, the centres should include more topics … and more variety of subject areas, and invite respected academics and speakers from around the world … as the Executive Manager of HDF, I'd like to take these steps to widen participation and expand the centre's remit. However … HDF is an organisation with limited financial resources and so we can't afford to invite speakers from abroad and to pay for their flights and accommodation in London. As such, we're limited to the speakers and academics based in London and the UK.* (Sadeq: Respondent No 011)

Sadeq explains the actions that HDF take to minimise the impact of this issue on the

centres' delivery of events:

> *To get around this, HDF try to accommodate speakers from abroad, to present events at HDF while they are in London for whatever reason. Generally, HDF tries to invite quality speakers who can engage the audience and maintain their level of interest. However, this can sometimes be difficult to achieve … at the same time … we should not forget the contribution of many Iraqi individuals in establishing or supporting these centres, including HDF which has been founded and is financed by an Iraqi body for the last ten years and which managed to survive with all these events during this time. This can also be applied to many other Iraqi cultural centres, which are based on their own efforts and their own means of financial support.*
> (Sadeq: Respondent No 011)

As Sadeq's comments above highlight, the direct and indirect power blocks to the

Iraqi community's social empowerment through learning are painfully evident. The

function of these direct and indirect power blocks to individuals and communities are

outlined by Martinez (2022) below:

> *Direct power blocks are the systems and structures that prevent people from achieving important goals, such as better employment conditions, higher education or safe housing ... Individuals and communities are directly blocked from empowerment when they don't have equal access to quality schools, fair lending practices …. or ethical treatment in the workplace, to name a few.*
> (Martinez 2022: p.3)

> *Indirect power blocks … are the result of internalized oppression. Groups with personal and historical experiences of widespread mistreatment … internalize narratives about who they are, what they can achieve … and then those narratives are passed down through generations. These blocks are deeply*

> *ingrained and often require … interventions ... to help individuals shift their mindset.*   *(Martinez 2022: p.3)*

Based on Martinez's definition of direct and indirect power blocks, the centres' limited financial resources can be seen as a direct power block to the Iraqi community's social empowerment through learning. This is in spite of the centres' efforts to overcome the indirect power block affecting the community, conferred by their status as a minority group which finds itself in a culturally and linguistically unfamiliar environment within western countries (Cruz-Saco, 2008). Although the centres host learning events on a range of subject areas and topics to overcome this indirect power block, their limited financial resources can be seen to limit the extent to which the centres can provide Iraqis with social empowerment through learning.

At the same time, the centres have helped Iraqis develop bridging social capital with others they would not otherwise meet through attending their events, such as politicians and journalists. However, these centres are not currently in a position to provide Iraqis with bridging social capital between themselves and those from other communities. This is reflected in the language used to deliver events within the centres. Whilst BISI holds its events in English, the other cultural centres hold most of their events in Arabic. Some events are held in English and Arabic, but the majority of events are held in Arabic. Again, this is a pedagogical choice; events can be delivered in Arabic and English, but this is dependent on the ability of facilitators to speak fluently in both languages. Inevitably, this means that those from other communities with a limited understanding of Arabic will not attend and participate in the centres' activities.

The example Fawzia has given, which refers to an event she attended held in Arabic and English, highlights the limited bridging social capital that the cultural centres currently provide due to this language barrier. This limited bridging social capital can clearly be seen from the centres' lack of events featuring speakers such as Emily Porter, who have dual British-Iraqi heritage and are therefore somewhat better placed to help Iraqi-British citizens feel a sense of belonging to both communities simultaneously. Both of these factors limit the Iraqi community's connections with other communities, the wider society and those who speak other languages, perpetuating their social exclusion as opposed to their integration into mainstream society (Cruz-Saco, 2008).

There are several adult education centres which help non-native English speakers to improve their written and spoken English, as outlined in the first chapter of this thesis. However, regular interaction with English-speaking communities is an important part of learning fluency in another language. As Boyd-Jenkins (2002) points out, learning a language means learning a culture. This would expose Iraqi diaspora members to other cultures and communities and help them integrate further into the wider society.

However, at present the fact that the centres hold most events in Arabic means that people from other communities do not feel a sense of belonging there. Indeed, Ehsan sees this as a barrier to the community's closer integration with other communities and the wider society. He also feels that the centres would benefit from younger people's expertise in the use of what he describes as "new technologies". Ehsan suggests that to integrate Iraqi-British citizens further with other communities:

Centres should invite more English speakers and British academics to present some more events related to Anglo-Iraqi issues, or any issues which interest the Iraqi community or communities in the UK. This will help the Iraqi community to integrate further, culturally and linguistically, into the wider society.

(Ehsan; Respondent No 012)

The number of English language events are not sufficient, and need to be increased significantly … [and] increase the variety of subject areas and topics for cultural events and knowledge presentations … centres should always do their best to keep their events and activities multi-lingual and multi-cultural, to be broad and not narrowly focused on ethnic or faith groups, and to be mindful of their duty to provide non-formal learning for the wider society.

(Ehsan; Respondent No 012)

Ehsan's view of non-formal learning, and of the institutions and groups providing it, is that it should be for all of society and appeal to diverse communities. Whilst it is envisaged globally that lifelong learning should be available to all, in practice it tends to interest and engage those who are already comfortable in a learning environment because of their previous experiences of the formal sphere. From this, we see the reproduction of culture in action (Jenks, 1993; Jenkins, 2004). As stated above and earlier in my thesis, this is the result of social stratification, the social status, habitus and social and cultural capital held by Iraqis who engage with the centres' learning activities.

Samir has suggested that learning events should highlight how Iraqi cultural identity can be part of a global identity with "the world's impact on it, and vice versa". This refers again to pedagogy and the ways in which events can position Iraqi culture and history adjacent to, rather than isolated from, other countries and communities. Many other respondents shared this view, stating that events should consider Iraq's links to other countries and regions where possible. This reinforces the message to Iraqis

that they are part of a global society and not only part of a narrowly focused, isolated Iraqi culture and community:

> *In many events you feel a kind of cultural identity and how the Iraqi cultural identity can be part of a global identity and the world's impact on it, and vice versa. This can be seen in Iraqi/Arab topics, particularly if it is approached as a part of multi-cultural, global identity and how it contributes to a global culture rather than as an isolated Iraqi cultural identity. (Samir; Respondent No 019)*

> *I strongly believe that these events help to integrate the community within the wider society in Britain, as exchanging knowledge between communities is very helpful. This sense of integration can clearly be seen in the events conducted in English, with British and European speakers and academics who have researched many aspects of Iraq's history and culture. This feeling is that all humans are in one unit – the oneness of humanity.*
> *(Samir; Respondent No 019)*

On the subject of knowledge presentations, Samir prefers those led by more than one person where possible, to "be followed up with sufficient time for audience discussion". Although self-directed study is not one of his preferred learning methods, he has taken this up when facilitators have given out books to read or referred participants to particular publications if they wish to further their knowledge in a subject area. This, again, highlights the importance of pedagogy in engaging the interest of learners and in motivating them to explore new areas of knowledge further. In turn this has the potential to open up space for enquiry, dialogue and critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2010).

Workshops are seen as more interactive, as participants in these activities work in small groups to critically engage with knowledge from a range of different perspectives. Respondents such as Ehsan have participated in, and delivered, several workshops. However, Ehsan feels that knowledge presentations play an important role in delivering learning:

I still believe in the importance of the role played by teacher-led events (teacher, lecturer, main speaker etc) to deliver knowledge and information to participants, and to be responsible for the quality and intellectual content of the event. However, a great part of these events is allowing sufficient time for intellectual questions and interaction between a presenter and participants. This applies to events that I attend and/or deliver.

(Ehsan; Respondent No 012)

Ehsan's reference to his preferred participative way of learning raises key pedagogical issues in the sphere of adult learning. These were highlighted in previous chapters of this thesis, and relate to the way in which adults choose to learn and their preferred learning methods. Particularly given the voluntary nature of adult learning, adults seek opportunities for critical reflection and critical engagement with the knowledge presented to them (Kasl & Elias, 2000), as Ehsan's comments highlight. This shifts the role of the educator from teacher to facilitator of one's independent learning (Cross, 2007), and facilitates a process of social and active enquiry through adults' learning activities. Ehsan's comments can therefore be seen to echo the way in which adults prefer to engage with all types of learning, in both formal and non-formal educational settings (Dart, 1997; Knowles, 1998; Cross, 2007; Davies, 2008). This strongly indicates the measures that the centres can take to widen participation in their learning activities.

Sadeq also highlights the importance of providing learning events in which people can learn effectively, and he refers to the role of pedagogy in facilitating these events. Describing his pedagogical approach, he informed me that he seeks to "present academic and intellectual facts in an easy-to-follow way which participants can build on to further their knowledge". Sadeq's view is that this can help engage those educated below degree level in the centres' learning activities.

However as previously stated, in practice those participating in the centres' learning activities tend to be educated to degree level or higher, and work, or have worked, in professional occupations. Sadeq and HDF, and indeed all the cultural centres involved in this study, aspire to widening participation to those educated below degree level, but this suggests they do not participate out of a sense of unbelonging in an environment frequented by those with a higher level of education and social status. As such, building an environment in which all Iraqis can feel this sense of belonging is clearly a challenge for all cultural centres in London and in the centres focused on by this study.

My discussion with Sadeq then turned again to pedagogical issues. He informed me that he, and HDF, try to transform participants' views and perspectives in a positive way by highlighting "the facts, logical thinking, critical thinking, and it is then up to individuals to absorb this information". Opportunities for critical engagement with knowledge, which Dewey (1916) advocated throughout his lifetime, are found in question/answer and discussion sessions which follow knowledge presentations, and this is why most of my respondents stressed how important they considered this aspect of non-formal learning events. However, I also noted that other respondents tended to focus on the pedagogical aspects of delivering non-formal learning activities which had made some people avoid the events, as they believed they were not learning anything new.

Indeed, my respondents' main motivation for participating in the centres' activities was based around their needs for enhanced social capital and a sense of belonging

to their community. I found that when I asked questions relating to pedagogy, their attention tended to shift towards the negative aspects of some events held in the centres. They felt they had "learned something" or enhanced their knowledge of a subject area or topic when appropriate pedagogies were used by facilitators, but they spent a great deal of time focusing on some facilitators' negative pedagogical choices. Most of the participants had attended some events within the centres with facilitators who "talked all the time", who did not allow enough time for interaction with the audience after giving presentations, and whose events were based too heavily on rhetoric or inaccurate information.

Based on their comments and the views expressed by Sadeq, it can be seen that Sadeq understands the importance of choosing appropriate pedagogies for facilitating effective learning. However, generally speaking my respondents did not have issues with the pedagogies used in the events they attended. They appeared satisfied with the subjects and topics the centres' events focused on, and indicated that they were unlikely to attend events that did not interest them and which did not involve question and answer sessions as part of the discussion.

However, as Ehsan's comments above highlight there is a need for the centres to offer a greater variety of subjects and topics for learning events. There are a number of factors preventing the centres from doing this at the moment; these can be broadly attributed to relatively low levels of bridging social capital with other communities, and their limited financial resources. These are both acting as direct and indirect power blocks to the centres' ability to provide social empowerment to the Iraqi community through their learning activities. This section outlines the main

pedagogical issues identified in my study; below, I analyse further how this forms part of the direct and indirect power blocks facing the centres and the Iraqi community in their efforts to integrate further with other communities and the wider society, both in the UK and around the world.

Barriers to Iraqis' social integration with those from other communities

I have highlighted above how the social status, social and cultural capital and habitus of those attending the centres impacts who chooses to participate in their learning activities – and who does not. This all comes down to the habitus of those who attend the centres of their own free will and the types of subjects and topics they are interested to engage with and to explore further. As a result, these cultural centres have become gathering places for a section of the Iraqi community who can be described as a cultural elite (Bourdieu, 1984) and in practice, they are functioning as agents of cultural reproduction (Jenks, 1993; Jenkins, 2004).

Those who attend the centres' events and learning activities speak warmly of feeling a sense of belonging within their community through participating in these events, feeling more connected with others, and they believe that the centres' learning activities lead to greater social cohesion among the Iraqi community. Whilst this may be the case, this means that those who choose not to attend the centres' activities do not feel a sense of belonging there. This is attributable to issues of social capital, cultural capital, habitus and pedagogy; the events are mainly held in Arabic, and also those attending the centres are mainly aged over 40 and grew up in Iraq before

migrating to the UK. The centres' relative lack of bridging social capital with those from other communities is clearly demonstrated by constraints on the types of events hosted, the subjects and topics chosen for these events and the language barrier between the Iraqi community and those from other communities.

Social integration and intergenerational issues within the Iraqi community

Most Iraqis attending the centres have children and grandchildren who were born in the UK, or who came to the UK with them at a young age. This generation have closer links to mainstream British society, and speak English as a first language. They are also more familiar with information technology developments than the first generation of Iraqis who came to the UK later in life, having spent their formative years living and studying in Iraq. However, the younger generation of Iraqi-British citizens generally do not participate in the centres' events. Many respondents expressed disappointment at this, and felt that this held back their ability to meet and engage with those from other communities through the centres' events and activities.

Ehsan suggests that this is because the centres' events do not appeal to the younger generation of Iraqi-British citizens. His teenage daughter and his wife attend most of the musical events and concerts he plays at, because they enjoy listening to his music. However, Ehsan has noticed that second-generation Iraqi-British citizens do not usually participate in the non-formal education offered by these cultural centres. He feels that the centres could do more to address this, and suggests that:

The centres should take steps to include second-generation Iraqi-British citizens to be part of the decision-making processes, and to be responsible for organizing and delivering events related to their way of thinking and topics of interest. We have to be prepared for the coming decade, in which the first-generation's topics of interest will fade into the past to some extent.

(Ehsan; Respondent No 012)

We shouldn't keep telling the second generation that they have different interests or live in a different world, instead we should invite them to the centres to deliver presentations and events on the areas of interest to them and in their chosen language. Many centres, over the last ten years, always have the same people attending these events. However, a large section of the Iraqi community are not involved in attending them. The centres should make attempts to address this and the ways to interest the wider community.

(Ehsan; Respondent No 012)

Ehsan's comments highlight the extent to which first-generation Iraqi-British citizens still struggle to develop a sense of belonging within the UK, and their relative lack of integration into mainstream British society. Second-generation Iraqi-British citizens have a greater sense of belonging, as they were born in the UK or emigrated here at a young age. However, it is not only young people, but many Iraqis who do not participate in the centres' activities. Indeed, Ehsan feels that the centres should ask themselves why their activities do not appeal to them.

In the case of second-generation Iraqi-British citizens, most events at these centres are held in Arabic and their strongest language is often English. This indicates that young people do not feel a sense of belonging there, and that younger Iraqi-British citizens feel they do not fully belong to the Iraqi diaspora community. The subject areas and topics chosen by the centres for events appeal mainly to the needs of first-generation Iraqi-British citizens to retain their culture and ways of life. In the meantime, their children feel a greater sense of belonging to Western society, but do not feel that they completely belong within the Iraqi community (Yasin, 2018). This

sense of not completely belonging to one's community – in this case, the UK's Iraqi community – is common among the second-generation children of migrants (Renzaho et al, 2017).

Ehsan also suggests that the centres should advertise events further in advance, so that they will attract more media coverage and to provide better opportunities for Iraqi-British citizens to connect with other communities around them. Taken together, he believes that the centres can then widen participation in their non-formal education activities and help Iraqi-British citizens integrate further. However, this shows the gaps in familiarity with information technology and social media to be bridged by Iraqis in the centres to achieve this. This is also a generational thing; first-generation Iraqis are less familiar with websites and social media than their children and grandchildren, who are more comfortable navigating these relatively new digital technologies. Again, this highlights how structural inequality constitutes an indirect power block facing the centres and those involved with them as they try to bring social empowerment to Iraqis in London and around the world.

Unfortunately, whilst younger Iraqi-British citizens are more familiar with information technology and social media the challenge for the centres is holding events that appeal to them as outlined above. Fawzia also highlights this; she has a son in his 20s. She has attended many events with him that are run by the Iraqi Association and other centres, and which are aimed at second-generation Iraqi-British citizens. Fawzia says she has noticed that these events are more likely to be conducted in English than Arabic, unlike most of the events held by these centres.

This indicates that young people are choosing not to participate in the centres' events because they do not feel a sense of belonging in these centres. Fawzia believes that first-generation Iraqi-British citizens tend to have more time to attend them, or rather that they prioritise making time to attend them due to the social cohesion and sense of belonging, and reinforced bonding and bridging social capital their participation brings to them. Nevertheless, Fawzia still feels that the centres can and should look at how they can increase participation in their activities among this age group.

Having the time available to attend learning events is not the only issue which the Iraqi community face. Fawzia finds that often, community members cannot attend if they have been impacted by issues in Iraq which affect their family members still living there:

> *There are also health issues (mental and physical) which prevent many participants from attending between time to another, particularly after major events in Iraq which can affect people … negatively in regards to attending these events.* *(Fawzia; Respondent No 013)*

This is understandable given that first-generation Iraqi-British citizens came from a country with a long history of political and civil unrest, and four decades of wars which claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. To widen participation in the centres' activities, Fawzia suggests that they start by holding learning events focusing on a wider variety of subject areas and topics. To help the centres do so, she suggests that they actively involve second-generation Iraqi-British citizens in their decision-making processes and encourage them to deliver knowledge presentations. At the moment, Fawzia sees the centres as being "run by first-generation Iraqi-British citizens with their mentality and way of thinking". She has noticed in screenings held

by the Iraqi Cinema Club that when films in Arabic have English subtitles, a wider proportion of second-generation Iraqi-British citizens and British citizens attend the events.

This again highlights the language barrier created between cultures (Boyd Jenkins, 2002), and how languages can limit individuals' sense of belonging within groups and communities. Multi-cultural, multi-lingual environments can therefore be seen to play an important role in creating and maintaining bridging social capital between diverse communities and generations. Samir highlights this in further detail below:

> *There is an issue of second-generation Iraqi-British citizens not participating in events at these Iraqi cultural centres. This is a serious issue, and I'm involved in discussions with the centres about ways to overcome this … Younger people have their own interests which are different from those of the first generation, in addition to their education and cultural backgrounds in the UK being different from those of their parents. (Samir; Respondent No 019)*

> *It means that their social, cultural and literary interests are not the same as those of the first generation. Also, the linguistic factor plays a role. They speak English and most of these events are held in Arabic. Although many of them speak Arabic, they do not have the same reach of vocabulary and understanding of it. Their English language ability is stronger.*
> *(Samir; Respondent No 019)*

Samir suggests that to mitigate this, the centres should hold more events that appeal to a wider range of the community and age groups:

> *The best way to resolve this is for the centres to hold more events in English, aimed at younger people. The centres should also encourage younger, good speakers to give presentations in English, and to invite their peers to these events (there are many stories of young Iraqi-British individuals who have some experience, knowledge and success stories to share with others). Also, centres should include younger people in their decision-making processes as they are closer to the wider UK society, its culture and customs.*
> *(Samir; Respondent No 019)*

Again, Samir sees this as key to unlocking a greater degree of bridging social capital for the Iraqi community by expanding their connections with other communities and

the wider society. He believes that the challenge lies with those who manage these centres. They are the ones not inviting younger age groups to become involved in the centres' activities, as they believe that this generation have different interests to the core Iraqi community they serve and would not deliver events that are of interest to first-generation Iraqi-British citizens. Overcoming these assumptions is a key challenge for those seeking to integrate Iraqi-British citizens further with other communities and the wider society through their participation in learning events.

Information technology and its impact on
participatory patterns in the centres' learning activities

Many of my respondents, such as Fawzia, identified the centres' limited use of information technology to deliver learning events and to advertise events in advance as limiting participation in the centres' activities. As outlined above, it was widely felt that involving younger Iraqi-British citizens in the centres' activities would assist the centres in this respect. This is because the younger generation are more familiar with information technology and using social media, as Tahseen has found from the number of young people attending the events he facilitates which focus on information technology and software development:

> *I've noticed that when the subject of the presentation is of interest to participants, they make more effort to get involved. This is what happens with the younger generation when they [attend] a presentation on information technology.* (Tahseen: Respondent No 004)

> *I've given presentations at many cultural centres, mainly HDF. They include education in the digital age; the impact of the digital technology; future and digital age; the future of human beings; political challenges facing Iraq …. I've also given advice on learning materials (theses, dissertations) for tens of students coming from Iraq to study in the UK.* (Tahseen; Respondent No 004)

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Tahseen went on to inform me that younger people in particular approach him after his presentations for advice on "pursuing their MAs and PhDs in the UK, particularly in the fields of information technology and software engineering". He gives an example of one Iraqi student at Brunel University who he advised to complete a thesis "about big data, as this is an important subject for future digital development". Tahseen also keeps in touch with many of his "previous students in Iraqi universities, who are now completing their studies in Europe, America and Australia" in the fields of digital technology and software engineering.

However, involving younger Iraqi-British citizens in the centres' activities was not the only issue faced by the centres in terms of using information technology more to widen participation in their activities. This also requires the centres to address funding issues, which constitutes a direct power block to the social empowerment of the Iraqi community and Iraqi cultural centres. Fawzia informed me that most Iraqi-British centres lack sufficient financial resources to have "better facilities, the ability to invite more distinguished speakers from different parts of the UK and abroad, the ability to employ more staff such as good administrators" to become more operationally effective.

Fawzia also notes that centres' lack of funds can be particularly disadvantageous to older Iraqi-British citizens. Many Iraqis drawn from this age group are computer literate, and a significant proportion of them can read. However, a significant number of older Iraqis are unfamiliar with computers and internet use. This is a disadvantage for them with many organisations moving their publication of written materials online to reduce costs. For instance, in recent years the Iraqi Association has had to stop

producing printed versions of its monthly newspaper, Al-Muntada Al-Iraqi (meaning "The Iraqi Forum"), due to a lack of available funding. Their newspaper is now distributed digitally, and Fawzia has found that a number of Iraqi-British citizens over 60 are "unfamiliar with websites, website addresses, internet technology and social media sites", and also they may not know how to adjust a computer screen to show digital content in large print.

Whilst centres and adult education institutes can offer free information technology courses and sessions to help these older Iraqi-British citizens address this, there is a risk that moves towards moving activities and literature online to save funds may disadvantage them and lead to their participation in the centres' activities ceasing. All of these issues need to be addressed by looking into the financial support the centres have, where it comes from and how centres could find new sources of funding. This highlights the disadvantaged position of Iraqis as a minority group within the UK and the direct power block – their socioeconomic disadvantage and lack of financial resources – faced by the centres in providing social empowerment to the Iraqi community through non-formal learning events. Fawzia feels that it is very important to address these issues, in order to help the communities served by these centres integrate further with other communities in London and the wider society.

Fawzia's comments show that being relatively unfamiliar with information technology and social media disadvantages the Iraqi community, and limits the centres' ability to widen participation. Yet at the same time, the practice of live-streaming events in real time through social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram has become more widespread. As most Iraqis attending the events, and facilitating

them, have smartphones they are proficient in using live-streaming technology. Samir points to the way in which this has widened participation in the centres' events and activities to Iraqis across the world:

> *I'm well known in the Iraqi community for my extensive efforts to live-stream the events which I'm able to attend. I started this live-streaming via mobile phone to people, and I've live-streamed over 200 events since October 2016. My first live-streamed event was broadcast to 1,000 viewers within 3 days. Later, some event live-streams reached 40,000 viewers. A record of these live-streamed events can be seen on my Facebook page.*
> *(Samir; Respondent No 019)*

Samir then goes on to describe the nature of events he live-streams for the Iraqi community as follows:

> *In the last event I live-streamed in April 2020, at the height of the coronavirus peak, which was an event by the Iraqi Medical Association to hail the sacrifices of Iraqi medical personnel who died of coronavirus, and the other virus victims in the Iraqi community and wider society, this broadcast was followed by 8,000 viewers.* *(Samir; Respondent No 019)*

> *Live-streaming these events has been a great experience for me, as hundreds of people write their comments and write for me from inside Iraq, or from Iraqi communities in other countries such as Australia, America, Canada and other Arab countries. Even Iraqi viewers living in Thailand have contacted me regarding these events.* *(Samir; Respondent No 019)*

It is not difficult to live-stream events. In Samir's words, "all you need is a good mobile phone and a stand to broadcast from your Facebook page, you do not need TV cameras, you do not need cinematic cameras. All these events can be recorded with an acceptable level of quality and can be kept as documents." He goes on to explain that many Iraqis participate from their homes in Iraq, out of interest to know how their peers in London live and in their activities.

Samir's comments highlight the role played by live-streaming in expanding bridging social capital (Yuzer & Kurubacak, 2010). Suddenly, Iraqi-British citizens in London

find themselves meeting other Iraqis from all over the world virtually through their attendance at these centres' events in person and interacting with them in real time. Due to Samir's experience in media journalism, and the increasing role live-streaming plays in what he calls "21st century digital culture", this has convinced him that if the centres utilised social media more, they could do much to widen participation in their learning activities.

Turning to the types of non-formal learning events the centres provide, Samir mainly enjoys attending what he describes as "knowledge events" and broadcasting them to others so that they can also participate from their homes. Unfortunately, social media also has the potential to spread negativity in that individuals can misquote others, and post hate speech and falsehoods there for others to internalise (Wilner & Dubouloz, 2010; Thomas, 2012). However, Samir's work highlights the positive impacts of social media on individuals and communities.

Samir has suggested that the centres should try to secure larger venues so that events can be presented, and broadcast, using a greater range of modern technologies. He feels that this would help with live-streaming, which he has seen to be the main driver of widened participation in the centres' learning activities. Before live-streaming technologies were available, Samir informed me that these events were attended by "100 people on average", but are now attended live by between 1,000-5,000 people on average due to live-streaming via Facebook.

In particular, Samir notes that several centres he has attended events at record their events for others to watch afterwards. However, he feels that live-streaming is more

likely to engage people's interest in real time. Samir describes the functionality of Facebook here, and highlights the fact that Facebook "knocks at your door and tells you that this page is showing a live event", which leads to participants following the centres rather than the other way round. This also highlights the extent to which these centres need to update their operating models. Instead of "knocking at your door" to encourage participation in real time, their technique of advertising events two weeks in advance and recording them for participants to join in with afterwards is rapidly becoming outdated and largely irrelevant in the modern digital and social media age.

Most of the events that Samir attends and live-streams are held at the offices of the Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF). Sadeq, who manages HDF's events and learning activities and facilitates many learning events himself, informed me that HDF live-stream their knowledge presentations and cultural events on their Facebook page. HDF also record their events and upload them to the centre's YouTube channel and website. Sadeq informed me that he finds the live-streamed events to be more interactive, as they enable participants to ask questions of presenters and gain answers in real time. Although HDF and the presenters of events do receive some enquiries afterwards, they tend to be limited and this again highlights the way in which live-streaming has become the preferred medium of participation in the centres' learning activities among the Iraqi community in London, the UK and around the world.

Indeed, HDF do not only live-stream their events; they can also broadcast them or show short reports about them, as their head office in Baghdad runs Salam TV, an

Arabic-speaking Iraqi TV channel also based in Baghdad. However, this is less interactive than live-streaming the events on Facebook and other social media sites. Sadeq explains that Salam TV do not "broadcast the whole event" all the time, but that they make "short TV reports about these events and broadcast them".

Like Samir, Sadeq says that live-streaming HDF's events has led to Iraqis living in Iraq and throughout the world participating in them in real time. As such, live-streaming has played a great role in widening participation in the centres' learning activities among Iraqis worldwide, and enhancing their collective senses of community cohesion and cultural identity. However, whilst widening participation among Iraqis globally is undoubtedly positive, Sadeq feels that lack of appropriate financial support limits the centres' ability to widen participation. He says that his peers, who have resided in the UK for longer than he has, have informed him "that in the past, such community organisations and centres had greater financial support from the local and national authorities".

To highlight this, Sadeq points to these centres' heavy reliance on volunteers, who many centres would not "survive" without. These volunteers do what they do out of a desire to help their communities, as they do not wish to see the centres close and for this community support mechanism to cease. The importance of volunteers for centres such as HDF and AISC to continue operating again highlights the low levels of funding for community education in the UK (Learning & Work Institute, 2020) and the limited resources these centres have for their operations. Who volunteers, and their positioning in terms of gender, age and social background, has been outlined in previous chapters of this thesis and manifests itself in terms of low levels of

engagement with technology and social media platforms, limited choices of subject areas and topics for learning activities, and also shows why most of the centres' events are held in Arabic. From this, the impact of direct power blocks (lack of financial resources) and indirect power blocks (lack of access to modern technology and knowledge from a more diverse range of perspectives) on the centres' ability to provide social empowerment to Iraqis is evident.

As highlighted above, information technology and social media has been key to the centres widening participation to Iraqis around the world. However, the centres need financial support and practical help from other communities and local and national authorities to improve their access to, and confidence in using, information technology to widen participation in their activities further and to help the Iraqi community integrate more fully with other communities and into mainstream society.

Barriers to social empowerment and integration: Cultural diversity

Many respondents informed me that a monocultural environment exists within these cultural centres. This is evident, insofar as most events are held in Arabic; centres which hold events in Arabic and English tend to appeal to a more diverse range of participants from a variety of community and cultural backgrounds. However, it goes further than the issues related to use of languages. My respondents informed me that many of the centres' learning events did not make links between Iraqi culture and history and other countries and cultures. It was felt that the centres should offer

a more diverse range of events, which as Alaa put it, would instil "multicultural values in universal communities".

In practice, this means providing knowledge drawn from a diverse range of perspectives to Iraqi-British citizens attending these centres about other communities, stressing how Iraqi culture and history is linked to other countries, regions and cultures, and highlighting the need for different communities to understand, and respect, each other's differences (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). This is essential to help Iraqis integrate further into mainstream society, as integration is a two-way process requiring dominant groups to become more aware, and tolerant, of others' cultures (Cruz-Saco, 2008).

To help Iraqis integrate further with other communities, Alaa suggested that the centres align their events with community members' daily lives and the wider society. As he put it, "how will participants benefit from this? What will they get out of it? Why should they attend?" Alaa gave examples of this as "Brexit and its effects on the Iraqi community or its perceived effects" and "Islamophobia and its impacts on various communities". Both of these are urgent political issues which have wide-ranging implications globally on our lives; however, the centres do not hold many events of this nature.

I know from my own experiences that many Iraqis are not supportive of the UK's decision to leave the EU in 2020, and fear it will lead to many negative implications in terms of their abilities to migrate to other countries in Europe and to work in other European countries. However, because the centres are keen to avoid being seen as

politically biased, they do not hold many events relating to issues of this nature. Similarly, all Iraqis know that Islamophobia is present in society and negatively impacts them at an individual and community level. However, the centres largely prefer to disassociate themselves from it to show that they have no religious biases.

The quality of facilitators was also an issue Alaa highlighted; he suggested that the centres should bring presenters "with success stories in their professional and public lives" who can inspire audiences. Alaa also spoke about the financial challenges facing many of these centres, who require appropriate financial support to expand and to be in a position to invite "quality presenters". Again, this highlights the structural inequalities and socioeconomically disadvantaged position of Iraqis within the UK; both of these can act as direct and indirect power blocks to Iraqis' social empowerment through learning.

Alaa feels that the media and communities are well placed to help centres expand in this regard, thereby providing centres and those who attend them with greater levels of bridging social capital (Puttnam, 2000). In doing so, those with greater socioeconomic advantage and social capital can help the Iraqi community to empower themselves and integrate further with the wider society. However, responsibility for improving relations with other communities also rests with the centres.

To achieve this, Alaa also suggests that centres offer more informal community events such as "cultural salons" at regular open days, creating what he describes as "a cultural café environment". Alaa believes that a less formal environment of this

nature can trigger ideas, improve the centres' relationships with the communities they serve and lead to widened participation in their learning activities to include a more diverse range of learners drawn from all ages and backgrounds.

Samir also highlighted the importance of holding "knowledge events" which are of acceptable quality and inclusive of other communities and the wider society to widen participation in the centres' learning activities. He believes that such events have the potential to form and transform the "knowledge attitudes" of participants, as well as creating a multicultural and tolerant atmosphere which encourages enhanced social cohesion and integration of Iraqi-British citizens with other communities and the wider society (Mezirow, 2009; Illeris, 2014).

The timing of events is also an issue Samir highlighted, which he strongly believes the centres should address. For instance, HDF host many of their events on Wednesday evenings which may be impossible to attend for people who work, particularly if they work shifts or finish later in the evening. Again, this limits the amount of bridging social capital the centres can provide to those participating in their learning activities. These events are held at times convenient for a particular section of the Iraqi community, but this also limits the number of people who can attend them.

However, this is not the only issue. Wisam, who organises several international conferences in London and abroad, and particularly in many Arab countries, told me that he noticed a lack of diversity among those attending learning events in the UK:

Participants are mainly of Iraqi origin in the UK's Iraqi-British centres … participants are mainly of that country's origin in their own countries (eg, Egyptians in Egypt, Moroccans in Morocco) … participants are from more diverse ethnic and national backgrounds (Europeans and Arabs) in the events and lectures that I've given in European countries such as Sweden.

(Wisam; Respondent No 006)

This suggests that in other European countries, minority ethnic groups such as Iraqis may have found it easier to integrate with other communities and the wider society. However, further comparative academic studies would be required to determine this. It is known in sociological research that generally, migrant communities including those of Iraqi origin find it difficult to integrate with other communities in a culturally unfamiliar environment (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; Haralambos & Holborn, 2000; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015; Ali, 2019). In the meantime, Wisam expressed his view that his subject areas (relating to medicine and sports science) have a broader appeal and a greater potential to provide bridging social capital between different communities than many of the events held at Iraqi cultural centres in London and the UK, which tend to concentrate heavily on Iraqi issues, Iraqi heritage, culture and history. As a result they perpetuate the Iraqi community's social isolation as opposed to social integration with other communities and mainstream society (Cruz-Saco, 2008).

Again on the subject of providing bridging social capital with other communities, and positive opportunities to integrate Iraqis with mainstream society, Wisam highlights the importance of being "interconnected" with other countries and communities. He says that his "networking activities in London and Europe, with the latest international knowledge, methods and theories in sports medicine, enable me to deliver information on the latest modern theories, knowledge and methods to

participants at the events which I deliver in the Arab world". I myself have seen that

many non-formal learning events held by the Iraqi cultural centres make little or no

reference to their connection to other countries, cultures or communities. Wisam

informed me that by facilitating non-formal learning events in a variety of settings

worldwide, he finds that:

> *In my presentations, whether I deliver them in the UK or abroad, I find that*
> *many young people attend, whether on their own or with parents and other*
> *family members. I believe this is because my subjects, about sports and*
> *staying healthy and active, are of interest to young people and this is why they*
> *attend.*   *(Wisam; Respondent No 006)*

> *I believe that these types of events and non-formal education give individuals*
> *a greater sense of belonging to a learning community. Also, they aid social*
> *cohesion and strengthen participants' sense of individual and group identity.*
> *For instance, many Iraqis attend events at the Iraqi-British centres, but their*
> *numbers at events held in other Arab-British centres are lower. This definitely*
> *comes down to a kind of sense of belonging and identity.*
>   *(Wisam; Respondent No 006)*

This highlights the bonding social capital provided to those participating in these

cultural centres' learning activities. It is also interesting to note that the Iraqi

community do not appear to be closely integrated with other Arab communities in

London. I myself noted during my research interviews that whilst there is an Arab-

British cultural centre in London, based near to St Pauls' Cathedral, very few of the

Iraqis who took part in my study attended this centre and participated in its learning

and cultural activities. Wisam paints a picture of Arab communities in London being

isolated, with Iraqis attending Iraqi-British cultural centres, Egyptians attending

Egyptian-British cultural centres and Moroccans attending Moroccan-British cultural

centres. Wisam also believes that:

> *Any presenter should know the participants' cultural backgrounds, in order to*
> *accommodate his/her knowledge with them. Not all Iraqi-British centres take*
> *steps to do this. It is always the traditional way of a teacher-led knowledge*
> *presentation.*   *(Wisam; Respondent No 006)*

Iraqi-British centres should compile statistics and databases showing their learning community's characteristics. For instance, how many engineers? How many doctors? What are their occupations? This is because the centres' events should fit the needs, interests and knowledge of their main learning community. Presenting on a subject with limited interest among the learning community leads to low levels of participation. (Wisam; Respondent No 006)

Sadeq is also very aware of these challenges. He informed me that HDF, like many other centres, finds itself constrained by limited funds and connections. Ideally, as stated above, he believes that all centres "should include more topics and more variety of subject areas, and invite respected academics and speakers from around the world to give a talk and tell the audience about their experiences and knowledge" to widen participation to younger age groups and other communities. In reality, centres such as HDF "can't afford to invite speakers from abroad and to pay for their flights and accommodation in London", so they find themselves "limited to the speakers and academics based in London and the UK".

To offset this, Sadeq informs me that if he and his colleagues at HDF know that "speakers from abroad" are in London for another reason, they try to schedule events for these speakers at HDF during their time in London. He says that "a lot of academics live in Europe and other parts of the world, who are interested to make events at HDF" so they contact him for their events to be arranged before their arrival in the UK "on their planned visits". Although HDF do what they can to offset the socioeconomic disadvantages they face, this is a direct power block limiting their potential to provide Iraqis with social empowerment through learning.

To offset this, Sadeq suggests that local and national authorities in the UK should work with the centres to help them become more inclusive of other communities and

younger age groups. This does not necessarily mean giving them money, but mentoring them to help them reach out and integrate the communities they serve with other communities and the wider society. Unfortunately, in reality local and national authorities have little time or resources available for this.

As a result it falls to the younger generation, who as described above have little engagement with the centres, to help Iraqis integrate further with other communities and mainstream society. However, this is not the only issue hindering Iraqis' social integration with other communities; centres such as the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI) make many efforts to work with the Iraqi community, to engage them with their events and to help them integrate into mainstream British society more fully. Britain's colonial past and their history as the "colonisers" of Iraq also presents challenges for the Iraqi community in this regard, which I examine in more detail below.

Barriers to social empowerment and integration: Post-colonial Britain

One of my respondents, Paul, highlighted the issue of post-colonialism and the challenges this presents for Iraqis who find themselves living in a culturally unfamiliar environment in the UK. In his role as chairperson of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI), Paul advocates for organisations such as BISI to partner with other agencies and organisations, such as cultural and community centres in other areas of London and outside London, to deliver events in venues which he believes community members will feel more comfortable to attend. BISI are based at the

British Academy in central London, close to Trafalgar Square, and Paul does not consider this to be a particularly welcoming venue for a lot of people who may feel a sense of unbelonging within such an academic and intrinsically post-colonial environment. This is because BISI is seen to represent the British establishment and it is, in various ways, perceived to represent the unequal power relationship that existed between Britain and Iraq, and their subsequent ability to shape our knowledge and discourse around the subject of Anglo-Iraqi relations.

I outlined in earlier chapters of this thesis the rhetoric and anti-Western discourse that the Iraqi community grew up with during their formative years in Iraq, which sidelined and excluded knowledge about Britain's historic connections with Iraq and Iraq's closeness to the West before the country became a republic in 1958 (Al-Taei, 2014). As Iraq became an independent nation in 1932, it becomes clear that the establishment of BISI in the same year – also in 1932 – coincided with this to serve as a permanent reminder of Britain's colonial involvement in Iraq, as a permanent symbol of Britain's former power in Iraq and over the lives of the Iraqi people.

Today, many years after the dissolution of the British Empire, BISI is today very much seen by many Iraqis as a post-colonial environment which highlights and celebrates the positive aspects of Britain's involvement in Iraq. However, it largely overlooks the more negative aspects of Britain's colonialism in Iraq, such as the repression of Iraqi opposition to British rule during the early years of Britain's mandate in the country (Fairweather, 2004; Tripp, 2007). This means that many Iraqis may not feel a sense of belonging, or feel comfortable, within BISI's central London venue. Unfortunately this acts as a barrier to the participation of Iraqis in

BISI's learning activities, and to the Iraqi community's further integration with other communities and the wider society.

This is in spite of BISI now covering all aspects of Anglo-Iraqi issues and relations, whereas in the past they focused on archaeology. Until 1990, they had a base in Iraq and regularly carried out excavations in Iraq. After the Gulf War started and diplomatic relations between the UK and Iraq ceased, it was no longer possible for BISI to carry out these excavations in Iraq or to continue working in the country, which the British government had funded them annually to do. Paul explained that this left BISI with a choice; "to either come to an end, or reinvent ourselves to be more relevant". As a result, BISI have now widened their remit "to include arts, humanities and social sciences, with the principal aim of engaging with Iraqis." Paul says that BISI, as a quasi-academic organisation which works closely with universities and libraries throughout the UK and worldwide, shares "the commitment of the UK's educational establishments to widening participation among communities".

This also highlights the difference between BISI and the other cultural centres this study focused on. The events held by BISI are mainly delivered by current or former university academics, and are always attended by those in academia who have an interest in Iraq. This highlights the advantages of BISI in terms of their bridging and linking social capital and their financial resources compared to the other centres focused on by my study. That said, the other centres' events aim to appeal to all sections of the Iraqi community, whether they are engaged in academia or other professions and occupations.

Paul also informed me that BISI host "major conferences" once every two years with "speakers from Iraq". He goes on to say that he is constantly seeking to raise BISI's profile so that "more people and organisations" are aware of their existence, as this is currently an issue for them. In turn, Paul sees this as enabling BISI to transmit their knowledge to a wider section of the community, both in the UK and abroad. He informed me that BISI would like to hold conferences inside Iraq. However, this would require funding from many sources, including the relevant Iraqi authorities.

When I interviewed Paul in January 2020, Baghdad and many other major Iraqi cities were enduring a new wave of demonstrations by young people which had begun in October 2019; they were protesting about the state of the economy and the country, seeking a better life, better public services, and an end to financial corruption and the rule of armed groups in Iraq. Unfortunately this wave of protests, which was eventually ended by restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic just weeks later, was at that time met with repressive force by the armed groups they were protesting against. More than 600 young people were reported to have been killed between October 2019 and January 2020.

As a result, the situation at that time was not encouraging for the commencement of new projects in Iraq, or for those from other nations to visit Iraq for any purpose. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic also rendered this prospect unfeasible for the foreseeable future. This has all impacted BISI's bridging social capital with Iraqis around the world, and their ability to renew and enhance positive Iraqi-British

relations. Paul goes on to describe BISI's relationship with Iraqi academics, and the

Iraqi community, in further detail as shown below:

> *BISI host major conferences every 2 years, with speakers from Iraq … We look to raise our profile so more people and organisations are aware of our existence and the services and knowledge we can offer. In turn this enables our organisation's outreach work and for us to enable and facilitate non-formal learning in other community organisations.*   *(Paul; Respondent No 003)*

> *We're looking to re-establish a base in Iraq but not to have a permanent presence there in the same way that we did before. An example of this is our extensive work with the Basra Museum, to re-open it and re-present its collection of antiquities to the public.*   *(Paul; Respondent No 003)*

> *Media representatives do attend BISI's conferences but not as much as we would like, which again highlights why we need to raise our profile …. I'm hoping that this will lead to a map of the UK on the wall, on which we'll see activities relating to Iraq that we've funded, enabled and facilitated throughout the UK. We would like to facilitate more non-formal learning of this nature, but we're limited by our size and funding constraints at the present time.*
> *(Paul; Respondent No 003)*

Paul's reference to the "map of the UK on the wall", on which BISI can see activities

relating to Iraq, shows his desire, and that of BISI, to network more closely with the

UK's Iraqi community and to provide a greater level of bridging social capital

between Iraqi diaspora communities, other communities and the wider society. His

aspirations show that he, and BISI, wish to help the Iraqi community integrate further

into UK life and that he sees the way to do this as being by way of befriending and

networking.

BISI's desire to strengthen their links and bridging social capital with the Iraqi

community can be clearly seen. However, the unstable financial and security

situation in Iraq prevents them from working as closely with institutions inside Iraq as

they would wish. With this in mind, Paul has turned BISI's attention to networking

with Iraqi-British institutions, community and cultural organisations. However, Paul

goes on to state that BISI have issues encouraging Iraqi communities in London and the UK to engage with them. For BISI this is "one of our main challenges". He says that BISI "have a largely British base and despite our extensive efforts to reach out to Iraqi communities in the UK, we've found there isn't much interest among Iraqis in getting involved in BISI and participating in our activities". Paul notes that "other institutions like BISI" have their origins "in the colonial era" and that as a result these communities now living in the UK will not engage with them and do not see these institutions as being "a place for them".

This highlights the challenges faced by minority communities against those who they see as the colonisers of their nations, which understandably leads to resentment and division between these communities and organisations such as BISI (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). Unfortunately, this in turn appears to be inhibiting minority groups' opportunities to integrate further with other communities and into the wider society in the countries they have found themselves having to relocate to. I recognise myself, as a member of the UK's Iraqi community, that this is not made easier by the reluctance of the former "colonisers", including the UK, to face up to the darker side of their occupation of other countries far away from London. In Britain, many years after the dissolution of the British Empire following the end of the Second World War and many of its former colonies breaking away to become independent states, there is a widespread belief that Britain brought modernisation to less developed societies and nations (Gott, 2011).

This is certainly true in relation to the rapid modernisation which occurred in Iraq between 1917 and 1958 (Tripp, 2007; Al-Abdalla, 2014). However, one only has to

look at the ways in which colonial powers crushed native rebellions, such as the Iraqi uprising of 1920, to see the brutality with which the UK repressed dissent among those who did not accept British colonial rule. This included an extensive aerial and military bombardment of cities and regions not accepting British rule in Iraq, which crushed the Iraqi uprising of May to October 1920 (Fairweather, 2004; Tripp, 2007). However, the 1920 Iraq revolution resulted in the establishment of Iraq as a new nation-state in 1921, the British Mandate of Mesopotamia coming into being between 1920 and 1932 (Kadhim, 2013), following which Iraq became an independent nation and entered the League of Nations, with a reduced number of British personnel and military from hundreds of thousands to a few thousand in number.

Rather than acknowledging this dark side of British Empire history and apologising to "the colonised", as Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) describes the natives of former colonies, for this violent repression of those opposing their rule, successive British governments and establishments are reluctant to acknowledge this dark side of the British Empire, instead concentrating on the positive aspects of it (Gott, 2011). Minority groups such as the UK's Iraqi community, understandably, find this hurtful and this makes it difficult for them to integrate into a society which they see as having colonised them during the first half of the 20th century (Vinogradov, 1972).

To illustrate this point, in 2002 the BBC, Britain's main media broadcaster, held a poll to establish who was "the greatest Briton" (Clennell, 2002). The former British Prime Minister during the Second World War, Winston Churchill (1874-1965) won this poll overwhelmingly. This is because Churchill is seen by the British as having saved them from occupation by Germany, which was at that time ruled by the Nazis (Stuart,

2002). However, earlier in Churchill's governmental career he was Britain's Air & War Secretary during the 1920 Iraq revolution, and he authorised its repression with the use of overwhelming aerial and military bombardment. The bombs dropped by the British forces on rebel villages and towns in Iraq to crush the uprising included delay-action devices, designed to explode some time after landing, which led to hundreds of deaths among innocent Iraqi civilians.

As a result the British community's "greatest Briton", Winston Churchill, who was a British colonial minister in the 1920s, is seen as a controversial figure by many minority communities, including the Iraqi diaspora community in the UK (Glancey, 2003). This highlights the need to be aware of who is writing history and educating the public in Western society (hooks, 1994), particularly as it tends to overlook the negative aspects of Western colonial history and its impacts on traumatised colonised countries and communities, who have been forced to flee their native countries and live in exile in culturally unfamiliar environments in the West. On reaching Western countries, they find that these negative aspects of colonial rule, including the repression of dissent (as with Britain's brutal repression of the Iraqi uprising in 1920), are overlooked, minimised and denied within countries which seek to avoid raising public awareness of their historical actions overseas. Their control of discourse, and how this represents unequal power relations between Britain and Iraq, and other formerly colonised states, is painfully evident.

Indeed, "decolonising the curriculum" seeks to present knowledge and information in all sectors of education (including formal, informal and non-formal learning) from the perspectives of others, including minority communities and those who were

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colonised by Western empires (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Akel, 2020). The cultural centres involved in this study, with their variety of events and presenters from a diverse range of backgrounds, can help to highlight these eras and the issues surrounding them of colonisation and decolonisation. However, given this divergence of perception of Britain's colonial past within contemporary British society, it is unsurprising that Paul identifies the main challenge as being to get Iraqi-British citizens to participate in non-formal learning activities his centre offers in the first place. He continues to see outreach work with community organisations and cultural centres as the best way to overcome this.

Paul believes that "if more Iraqis participated in BISI's non-formal learning activities, they'd probably gain a stronger sense of identity and social integration". This may be true, but the combative approach taken by Britain in the early 20th century to governing Iraq, and the mistrust of Britain this created among Iraqis (Vinogradov, 1972) has not been forgotten by many Iraqis, including many Iraqi diaspora communities around the world. This acts as a barrier to Iraqi communities' willingness to engage with British establishments and organisations.

Paul himself acknowledges this. He says he believes that many Iraqis come to the UK having ingrained "anti-colonial attitudes" which were instilled in them during their formative years in Iraq. However, it is important for organisations such as BISI to understand what has given rise to such "anti-colonial attitudes", as I have outlined above, to build the bridges they aspire to construct between themselves and Iraqi diaspora communities. He hopes that once BISI can live-stream their events, more Iraqi-British citizens will participate in them online. This will allow BISI to widen

participation in their learning activities, in the same way that information technology and social media have enabled greater participation in education from the 2000s onwards (Drotner, 2008; Elias & Lemish, 2008; Yuzer & Kurubacak, 2010; Kerrison et al, 2016). Again, this highlights the role that social media can play in providing participants in non-formal learning activities with a greater degree of bridging social capital.

As Paul is not a member of the UK's Iraqi community, who made up the majority of my respondent sample, this enabled him to see the disadvantages Iraqi-British citizens tended to bring on themselves by rebuffing British community organisations' efforts to engage with them. He is the only respondent to have made a direct reference to the impact of "the colonial era" and its lasting effects on the psyche of Iraqis who have relocated to the UK, and now find themselves living in the country which colonised them in the early 20th century.

Other respondents did not make any direct references to the concept of anti-colonialism. From my own experiences as an Iraqi-British citizen, I believe this to be because they fear that their words could be twisted and reproduced in such a way as to present them as being against the community or the society they have relocated to, or in which they have been granted refuge, residence and citizenship. They may also wish to avoid repeating the same anti-Western rhetoric of the ruling Iraqi regimes from which they fled. All of these factors make it difficult for Iraqi-British citizens to discuss the issues of anti-colonialism in a factual, neutral way.

As outlined above, Iraqis find it difficult to integrate with other communities and mainstream society due to cultural differences and the fact that Britain, like other Western countries, is now a post-colonial society. Sadeq also drew my attention to the established Iraqi communities, by which I refer to the Iraqis who came to the UK between the 1950s and 1980s. This was outlined in the first chapter of my thesis. Sadeq expressed the view that these more established, more financially secure Iraqi community members and groups could help their fellow Iraqi citizens integrate more closely with other communities and the wider society, if they had the will to do so.

However, Sadeq informed me that "wealthy Iraqi businesses" in London and the UK do not participate in the centres' activities and have shown little to no desire "to help these Iraqi cultural centres or to promote them". As he puts it, "they are not looking at ways to turn this community into a lobbying power in the British political or cultural scene". Sadeq went on to illustrate this with the example of his time editing the London Lifestyle magazine, an "Iraqi-Arabic magazine with English parts based on adverts for London businesses and great articles about the community and the Arab-British social scene", and he says that "many Iraqi businesses were not interested to place paid adverts to support this voluntary work by the London Lifestyle magazine".

The fact that Iraq has witnessed many governmental changes between the 1950s and the 2020s has in itself produced a cycle of thousands of oppressors and victims, who have ended in many countries outside of Iraq including the UK. Many of them are wealthy Iraqis, however I would not expect wealthy Iraqis belonging to the era of

the Iraqi monarchy (1920 to 1958) to open and fund a centre which provides talking spaces for Iraqis from the later revolutionary eras to tell the community how bad the monarchy was for them. The same can be said of wealthy Iraqis from other political and social backgrounds (republicans, Arab nationalists, communists and Islamists); they will not participate in funding cultural activities unless they consider that it fits with their own beliefs, values and ideological backgrounds.

It can be seen from this that many wealthy Iraqis have chosen to withdraw from being part of the Iraqi-British cultural scene, as this can provide spaces for others to make approaches they are not happy with. This highlights the sensitive nature of continuing to open and manage Iraqi-British cultural centres which are inclusive of all, regardless of their social, political and cultural backgrounds, and should be borne in mind when considering how to help participants in the centres' learning activities integrate further with other communities and the wider society.

Conclusion

The thematic analysis I have presented in this chapter tells us a great deal about the participatory patterns in the Iraqi cultural centres' learning activities. They highlight the diverse forms of knowledge and experience that participants in, and facilitators of, learning within these centres bring to the cultural centres in themselves. Also, they show the complexities involved in producing non-formal learning activities within these centres and the extent to which participation in the centres' learning communities generates social capital for individuals and communities (Bourdieu,

1984; Field, 2005; Morrice, 2007; Quinn, 2010). Issues relating to pedagogy and how it can bridge intergenerational divides and attract participants from other communities and the wider society are all highlighted by participants in, and facilitators of, the centres' learning activities.

Turning firstly to participatory patterns in the centres' learning activities, most participants in, and facilitators of, non-formal education at these centres are educated to degree level or higher and work, or have worked in, professional occupations. As a result, these centres can be seen to function as gathering places for the social elite (Bourdieu, 1984) and as places of cultural reproduction (Jenks, 1993).

Some facilitators believed that those with a lower level of education can attend non-formal learning events and learn effectively from them if they are tailored to them, with facilitators explaining information to them "in an easy-to-understand way". Pedagogy plays a part here; this reflects facilitators' pedagogical choices as to what knowledge to transmit, and the ways in which to transmit this knowledge to audiences, as does the tendency for those who mainly attend the centres as participants and facilitators to choose subject areas and topics that interest them, but which may not necessarily appeal to those educated below degree level.

However, I noted that most respondents did not express a high level of interest in how the centres could attract more participants educated to below degree level. They were more concerned to see the centres increase the level of bridging social capital they generated for learners in terms of attracting younger people and those

from other communities to participate in the centres' learning activities. As such it can be seen that respondents participated in, and facilitated, the centres' events and learning activities to celebrate and preserve their cultural and social capital and heritage, and to reinforce their sense of Iraqi identity. Many respondents highlighted that they participate in the centres' learning activities, and prefer attending in person where they can, to meet with their peers and feel a "sense of belonging" to their communities, a sense of community cohesion and a strengthened sense of Iraqi identity. The results of my study highlight the importance for those participating in, and facilitating, the centres' activities of preserving their cultural and social capital as Iraqis; particularly given their social status as a minority group within a culturally and linguistically unfamiliar environment in the UK, as is the case with other diaspora communities living outside their native country (Morrice, 2007; Baratz & Kalnisky, 2017). Their participation in the centres' activities plays an important role in helping them to retain their sense of Iraqi identity, culture and heritage.

The role of live-streaming and social media in widening participation in the centres' learning activities to Iraqis around the world is undoubtedly positive, and has created global blended learning communities centred around the activities of these centres (Wenger, 1998; Riel & Polin, 2004). This has also allowed the centres to increase the degree of bonding social capital provided to the Iraqi community around the world who participate in their activities. It also highlights the extent to which information technology and social media have made participation in education more accessible to wider audiences around the world (Drotner, 2008; Elias & Lemish, 2008; Yuzer & Kurubacak, 2010; Kerrison et al, 2016). Yet encouraging younger age

groups and other communities to attend has emerged as a major challenge for the centres.

The bridging social capital was highlighted by many of my respondents in their references to meeting others at the centres' learning events who they would otherwise have never become acquainted with (Puttnam, 2000). However, what they wanted in terms of bridging social capital was the opportunity to meet and mix with other communities and younger people, and to have the chance to attend learning events centred around a broader range of topics and subject areas. They believed that this would empower them by providing them with stronger links to other communities and the wider society.

Unfortunately, this does not take account of the role played by habitus in attracting people to participate in such shared activities in the first instance. Bourdieu (1984) explains that habitus, by its own social function, tends to exclude those with a habitus that differs from our own:

> *The habitus is necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions … an agent's whole set of practices … are the product of the application of identical (or interchangeable) schemes, and systematically distinct from the practices constituting another lifestyle.*   *(Bourdieu 1984: p. 170)*

From this we can see that the habitus of the Iraqi community is functioning to exclude those from other communities, with whom they do not share that many common interests. Indeed, it is telling that when my respondents referred to the inappropriate use of pedagogies by facilitators, they did so more in terms of their own learning preferences than in terms of how it could help to widen interest in the

centres' learning activities to a wider audience. This again highlights the way in which their social and cultural habitus as middle-class, well educated Iraqis in diaspora leads to their first instinct being to protect their own interests, social and cultural capital first and foremost, before considering the role that those from other communities could play in providing them with social empowerment and greater levels of bridging social capital and social integration with the wider society.

Although they recognised the significant role that pedagogy could play in this respect, the direct power blocks faced by the cultural centres – in terms of limited financial resources – limits the pedagogies that centres can select for their learning activities. In this respect, pedagogy refers to the subject areas and topics that learning events focus on; to the quality of learning materials used, such as digital technologies to make events more engaging and appealing to wider audiences; and to facilitators' style of delivery. Many events take "the traditional form of a teacher-led knowledge presentation" as Wisam highlighted, some do not allow enough time for open dialogue following presentations, and it was reported that some events appeal mainly to a narrow range of Iraqi community members.

The direct power blocks were outlined by the centres, particularly by Sadeq, in terms of access to, and familiarity with, up-to-date digital technologies and access to a wider range of facilitators for events. All of this results from their position of socioeconomic disadvantage, as they rely largely on volunteers to continue their operations and remain open for the Iraqi community. The centres' reliance on volunteers raises issues of who chooses to volunteer, and their social backgrounds, habitus, social and cultural capital; this in itself constitutes indirect power blocks to

the Iraqi community's social empowerment. It is likely that their interests will be limited by their social status and habitus, as Bourdieu (1984) has highlighted. This can be seen in the limits of the subject areas and topics the centres' learning events focus on, and their tendency to appeal mainly to older, first-generation Iraqi community members seeking to preserve and maintain their cultural and social capital and sense of Iraqi identity and heritage. From this, what Martinez (2022) describes as direct and indirect power blocks holding back social empowerment within minority communities, such as London's Iraqi community, can be clearly seen.

I noted that the Iraqis I interviewed appear largely unaware of how their unconscious perceptions of the British community as "colonisers" of Iraq and its people may be holding them back here. That said, as mentioned earlier in this chapter I am sceptical that my respondents, who grew up in Iraq and completed their years of formal education there, are not aware of this. I believe that they are aware of this factor, but fear their words being presented in a way to make them appear anti-British, and against the community and society which gave them the chance to relocate and rebuild their lives after they fled from Iraq. They also fear that others will see them as sharing the anti-Western sentiments and ideologies of the regimes from which they fled and sought refuge from in the UK. This makes it difficult for Iraqis in the UK to publicly discuss issues relating to Iraq's colonial past, and of anti-colonial sentiment, in events or conversations with others.

Although my respondents from the Iraqi community did not make direct references to the notion of Britain "colonising" Iraq, Paul's account shows that this is a factor limiting their integration into mainstream British society all these years after the

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demise of British colonialism. This shows the great need for all types of education curriculums (formal, informal and non-formal) to take a new and updated approach to the issues surrounding colonisation and decolonisation. This is not only confined to Iraqi-British citizens, but to all minority communities from previous British colonies who have relocated to the UK due to political and social instability in their native countries. Providing the Iraqi community with access to more funding, more support from other communities and organisations and better technology to deliver more varied and engaging learning events, will definitely help them to integrate further with other communities. However, the role played by habitus (in this case, the habitus of those attending and facilitating BISI's learning events) can be seen as another indirect power block to the social empowerment of Iraqis through learning within the cultural centres.

Returning to the impact of postcolonial tensions between Iraq and Britain, my respondents' focus on integration through their children and grandchildren, although this aspiration appears somewhat unrealistic, is also self-evident of their reluctance to address and acknowledge the role played by Iraq's colonial past in Iraqi-British relations. Instead, they seek to recover from it, and bury its history and role in shaping their life experiences and destinies as Iraqis in diaspora dispersed globally, through their children and grandchildren's closer integration with other communities and the wider society. For them, this is key to overcoming their traumatic past experiences, their years of isolation from the rest of the world and bridging the gaps between them and other communities, enabling them to fully integrate with the wider society in the UK and around the world.

Chapter 6:

Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of my study into the learning experiences of London's Iraqi community within three cultural centres. This includes: the motivation for undertaking this enquiry, which includes my own positioning as an Iraqi-British citizen with a background in facilitating adult education and working as an immigration advisor, what I identified as a relative lack of research into the educational experiences of Iraqis in diaspora, and the relative lack of focus on highly educated and settled groups of migrants generally in the fields of education and migration. All these factors, combined with my own experiences, led to the completion of this study and thesis.

I then outline the findings of my study and the extent to which it addresses my research question of how non-formal education can empower those who engage with it within cultural centres, and the extent to which this education facilitates what Martinez (2022) describes as social empowerment, at both an individual and community level.

The key themes arising from my study were: social capital and how it is maintained and enhanced through participation in learning communities; the role played by social media in enhancing social capital, and widening participation in community education; the community support needed to widen participation in the centres' learning events to those from other communities and how this inhibits the centres'

ability to provide Iraqis with social empowerment through learning; how this is limited by the centres' tendency to reproduce the cultural habitus of the Iraqi community members participating in their activities, thereby constituting what Martinez (2022) describes as direct and indirect power blocks to the community's integration with mainstream society; the ways in which this limits their ability to widen their appeal to those from other communities and younger age groups, who do not share the habitus, social status and cultural capital of the Iraqis attending these centres; and issues of pedagogy, postcolonialism and generational changes.

This study was conducted to document the lives of a section of the UK's Iraqi community, with particular reference to Iraqis living in London and attending Iraqi cultural centres. As highlighted throughout this thesis, due to the size of London's Iraqi community, many cultural centres exist. These cultural centres host a range of non-formal learning events, and this study focused on three of these cultural centres.

The findings of my study present challenges to the somewhat patronising and stereotypical assumptions underpinning attitudes towards Britain's minority communities. As outlined earlier in the thesis, I found that many studies about minority communities and their educational and social experiences centre on language barriers, overcoming the traumas of migration and displacement from their homeland (Boyd-Jenkins, 2002; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015; Baratz & Kalnisky, 2017).

I also found that most minority groups' community centres are portrayed in such studies with activities such as cookery, hairstyles and costume design (Haralambos

& Holborn, 2000; Morrice, 2007). Whilst migrant communities do engage with these types of activities within community centres, this portrayal of many minority communities, including the Iraqi community, is very limited and misleading. The data from my study shows that a significant number of Iraqis living in the UK are involved in academic and professional life; this is reflected in the activities of the cultural centres featured in this project, and in the interviews conducted with my sample of respondents.

I discuss the implications of this study's findings for further research into the learning experiences of Iraqis in diaspora and consider how it can help them to reconnect with each other globally, enhancing their social capital and life chances and opportunities for greater social integration with other communities from all parts of the world. My study contributes to wider academic debates on non-formal education and migration by focusing on well-educated and settled migrants, as this is a group not widely addressed in the literature on migration or on non-formal education. Indeed, my study was conducted to address the relative lack of research into these issues, to highlight the role played by Iraqi-British relations and to provide an enriched understanding of London's Iraqi community and other Iraqi communities in diaspora globally.

Key findings relating to Iraqi communities' non-formal learning experiences

The key findings arising from my research into Iraqi-British citizens' experiences of non-formal education related to their personal and collective social capital gains, a

heightened sense of social cohesion, a heightened sense of belonging and a strengthened sense of community and cultural heritage. From this the reader will see that as Bourdieu (1990) argues, shared activities of this nature which connect individuals with each other lead to social capital maintenance, social capital enhancement and reproduction of the Iraqi community's cultural capital and habitus.

This is because such shared activities constitute "the enduring behaviours, characteristics and cultural practices of social groups or classes" (Hunter et al, 2015, p. 12). In turn, what Bourdieu describes as a group-habitus is produced which consists of individuals with a "shared history" (Hunter et al, 2015, p. 12). Those who participate in activities appealing to their sense of shared culture and history reinforce their sense of belonging within their group (community), their cultural capital, habitus and social capital. Bourdieu (1990) describes this group-habitus as:

> *Being the product of a particular class [or group] of objective regularities, the habitus tends to generate all the 'reasonable', 'common-sense' behaviours … which are possible within the limits of these regularities, and which are likely to be positively sanctioned because they are objectively adjusted to the logic characteristic of a particular field.* *(Bourdieu 1990; pp. 55-56)*

Key concepts also emerged around the potential of education to provide learning experiences which empowered the community, appropriate use of pedagogies by facilitators and intergenerational issues. Empowerment through education is the opposite of what Martinez (2022) describes as "disempowerment" which she sees as being produced through a combination of what she calls "direct and indirect" power blocks, as outlined in previous chapters of this thesis, which generate what she describes as "oppression":

> *Oppression is a primary contributor to disempowerment, which is experienced across a number of marginalised groups. Empowerment … seeks to empower*

individuals and communities to gain personal, interpersonal and political power to better their lives. This … also strives to challenge systems that hinder these groups from meeting their needs. (Martinez 2022: p. 4)

The centres' potential to provide learning experiences which can lead to social empowerment, as described above by Martinez, are constrained by the direct and indirect power blocks they are subject to. This has been outlined in earlier chapters of my thesis. The pedagogies used by facilitators to deliver learning events are impacted by direct power blocks – limited access to modern digital technologies to deliver more engaging events, and limited funds to hold events led by facilitators who do not already reside in London and are known to the centres – and indirect power blocks, such as the centres' group-habitus restricting the types of events they offer and the topics these events tend to focus on. My respondents were keen to see greater levels of participation in the centres' activities among younger people, but attracting them to the centres has proved challenging due to generational differences between younger, second-generation Iraqi-British citizens and the older generation who spent their formative years in Iraq and relocated to the UK as adults.

Participatory patterns in the centres' activities:
Social status, habitus & cultural capital

Before I summarise this study's findings, I will highlight the distinctive character of the sample chosen for my study. This underscores the positioning, habitus and social status of respondents and their personal and professional backgrounds, indicative of those within the Iraqi community who participate in the cultural centres' learning activities. Except for two respondents, all the others participating in my study were educated to degree level or higher and had worked in professional

occupations. This influenced their choices of topics they were interested to know more about, and to teach others more about. Their social positioning highlights how their collective habitus, social and cultural capital reproduces itself through their shared activities (Bourdieu, 1990).

This positioning was also reflected in the schedule of events held at the centres between 2016 and 2019. I argue that the centres act as gathering places for the cultural educated elite within Iraqi communities (Bourdieu, 1984) and as the agents of cultural reproduction within the Iraqi community (Jenks, 1993). The centres featured in my study aim to cater for all Iraqi community members, irrespective of religion, ethnicity, political affiliation or social background. Yet in practice, they are attended by a certain sector of the Iraqi community which is well educated and settled. The types of events the centres offer, and the subject areas and topics chosen for learning activities, all act to reproduce the cultural habitus of well educated Iraqis with professional backgrounds.

My respondents offered suggestions for how centres could address this, based on issues including pedagogy, community engagement and community relations. However, the impact of social background on individuals' decisions to join these centres' learning communities, and to become involved in delivering non-formal learning activities to their peers, was evident in the results of my study.

The findings of my study showed that social background was not only reflected in the class sense. With the exception of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI), those participating in the centres' activities were mainly of Iraqi origin. Very few centres found that people from British communities, or indeed from other community groups apart from Iraqis or other Arab-British citizens, attended the centres and participated in, or delivered, their activities regularly.

Issues of pedagogy (including linguistic barriers) and what Puttnam (2000) refers to as bridging social capital play a key role in facilitating or blocking engagement with the centres and the further integration of Iraqi-British citizens with other communities and the wider society. The role played by post-colonial tensions between mainstream British society, given Britain's history as a colonising power in countries such as Iraq, and the Iraqi community was also indirectly blocking the Iraqi community's social empowerment and closer integration. Paul highlighted this when he explained that because BISI has "a largely British base" and originated "in the colonial era", Iraqi communities in the UK do not see BISI as "a place for them". As mentioned in Chapter 5, Paul also informed me that similar institutions have identical issues in reaching out to diaspora communities, who find themselves having to flee their native countries and relocate in the countries which they have learnt from an early age to see as the colonisers of their nations.

As outlined in earlier chapters of this thesis these diaspora communities, including the Iraqi community, have been forced to flee their native countries and live in exile

in culturally unfamiliar environments. They then find that these western countries overlook, deny and minimise the most negative aspects of their former colonial rule to present an overly positive image of their historical actions overseas. This limits the centres' ability to provide participants from Iraqi communities with a wider variety of learning experiences.

From my research findings, my sample appear to be empowered in terms of obtaining what Coleman (1990) describes as bonding social capital within the Iraqi community. However, social empowerment in terms of helping them build bridging social capital with other communities and the wider society does not appear to have been achieved at this moment in time. This shows how the social capital, cultural habitus and cultural capital possessed by the Iraqi community acts to exclude those who do not have what Hunter et al (2015) describe as a "collective habitus" with them:

> *A collective or 'group-habitus' is possible after a long period of shared or similar social experiences leading to a parameterising and exclusivity of practice. A group-habitus is evident when only those individuals who embody a shared history of involvement in a particular field possess the code, knowledge of the rules … necessary to understand their social space.*
> *(Hunter et al 2015: p. 12)*

Bourdieu (1989, p. 19) argues that this collective habitus functions to imply "a sense of one's place, but also a sense of the place of others". In this case, the findings of my study indicate that those outside of the Iraqi community, who do not share their collective habitus, culture, history and identity, do not see the centres as "a place for them" as one respondent, Paul, described it. This is in spite of the centres' events being open to all and as a result, those outside of the Iraqi community and the wider society do not usually attend the centres' events. Bourdieu's explanation of how

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habitus functions, below, highlights why it can be challenging to widen the membership of groups to include others who do not share the common habitus of most group members:

> *As an acquired system of generative schemes, the habitus makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the particular conditions of its production – and only those. Through the habitus, the structure of which it is the product governs practice … but within the constraints and limits initially set on its inventions.* *(Bourdieu 1990: p. 55)*

As this shows, practice within groups is governed by what Bourdieu describes as the "constraints and limits" of their collective experiences, ways of thinking and knowing. He goes on to describe how the collective habitus of groups "protects itself" from challenges, and how this can isolate groups from others who do not share their life experiences and ways of thinking:

> *Through the systematic 'choices' it makes among the places, events and people that might be frequented, the habitus tends to protect itself from crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible, that is, a relatively constant universe of situations tending to reinforce its dispositions by offering the market most favourable to its products.* *(Bourdieu 1990: pp. 60-61)*

Age also emerged as a key factor driving involvement within the centres' cultural and educational activities. Only two respondents were under 40, and neither of them facilitated learning within these centres. All other respondents were 40 or over, and several of them were over 60. Respondents typically described taking their children (young, second-generation Iraqi-British citizens) to the centres' events and finding that their children described these events as "boring" and refused to go again. This indicates that these types of cultural centres do not appeal to the interests of young people, which is something I have also noticed through my own engagement with these cultural centres. Many of my respondents believed that the greater involvement of young people in the centres' activities was one way of achieving

increased integration with other communities. However, as outlined throughout my thesis these cultural centres tend to cater mainly for older generations with a stronger sense of cultural identity gained from their earlier life experiences in Iraq.

Participatory patterns in the centres' activities: Gender

My study found that gender was also a key factor determining patterns of participation in the centres' activities and events. The learning activities offered by these centres, and all the cultural centres I am involved with, are attended by more men than women. This can be seen in photographs and videos of the centres' events, in literature published by the centres online or in book form (Al-Abdalla, 2020), and was also reflected in my own sample of respondents, consisting of 7 women and 13 men.

It was difficult to determine from respondents' answers why this was the case, although respondents complained about the timing of the centres' events making it difficult for them to participate as much as they would like. Respondents, both men and women, also pointed out that the centres advertised their events at relatively short notice, making it difficult for them to plan ahead and attend many events that they would otherwise have participated in. Those involved in managing the centres and their events also tend to be male. This also has implications regarding their choices of subject areas and topics for learning events and how events are run.

As mentioned in earlier chapters of this thesis, Iraq is a socially conservative country in which women's traditional role is focused on domestic responsibilities and

nurturing the family (Al-Jawaheri, 2008). This is in spite of the efforts of successive Iraqi governments since 1920 to encourage women's greater participation in education and employment (Ali, 2018). Within the Iraqi community, women generally assume a greater responsibility than men for domestic responsibilities and looking after the family due to their cultural and societal norms. Bourdieu (1998) also points out that male domination systems are so historically ingrained in society, that they have become hard to recognise and challenge successfully:

> *Male domination is so rooted in our collective unconscious that we no longer even see it. It is so in tune with our expectations that it becomes hard to challenge it. Now, more than ever, it is crucial that we work to dissolve the apparently obvious and explore the symbolic structures of the androcentric unconscious that still exists in men and women alike. (Bourdieu 1998: p.1)*

Given the time constraints my respondents identified as preventing them from attending the centres' learning events as often as they would like, this has a visible impact on rates of female participation within the centres' learning activities. Clearly this is another issue to be addressed when considering how the centres can widen participation to include more women, younger people where possible, those from a wider range of social backgrounds and from other communities.

Participatory patterns in the centres' activities: The impact of information technology

On a more positive note, my study found that both participants and facilitators noted the key role played by technology and social media in widening participation in the centres' learning activities beyond London's Iraqi community. The live-streaming of events via social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube boosted participation rates in the centres' learning activities significantly. Iraqis still living in

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Iraq, and who reside in other countries across the world, were interested to join in with their peers in London and participate in their events.

This has been described by Elias & Lemish (2008) as m-learning, because many of those participating in it do so using mobile phones and Wi-Fi connections. My findings in this respect mirrored those of Drotner (2008) and Yuzer & Kurubacak (2010) on the impact of the technology and social media revolution on global participation rates in education.

My respondents participated out of a desire to connect with fellow Iraqis, to "network" with them and keep up to date with their lives and the main issues affecting the community. Several also saw it as being good for their careers, as they had the opportunity to meet others and connect with institutions they would not otherwise come into contact with. This is evident of bridging and linking social capital in action (Puttnam, 2000; Woolcock, 1998), which is examined in further detail below.

Bonding and imagined social capital:
Sense of belonging and the challenges of integration and widening participation

I found strong evidence of what Quinn (2010) describes as imagined social capital within the learning communities these centres had formed. When events involved subjects related to issues of Iraqi heritage, such as books by renowned Iraqi authors and the lives of key cultural figures, and cultural events involved Iraqi music, literature and poetry, higher numbers of Iraqi community members would come to the events. This is because as Bourdieu (1984) argues, such events are held in high

prestige and esteem and act to increase one's sense of belonging within groups. For this reason, more Iraqi community members attend these events to enhance their bonding social capital and to maintain their sense of cultural identity and Iraqi heritage.

This also highlights the benefits of symbolic links for Iraqi citizens with their cultural heritage and history including with mythical and fictional figures (Quinn, 2010). Generally, respondents identified the most positive aspect of their involvement with the centres' activities as an enhanced "sense of belonging" to their community and a strengthened sense of cultural identity, which stopped them feeling lonely and isolated.

Whilst this is clearly positive, the absence of bridging social capital which, as Puttnam (2000) highlights, forges trust and connections between people from a diverse range of social backgrounds could also be seen clearly. Puttnam argues that bonding social capital enables communities and groups to get by, whilst bridging social capital with other communities is essential for them to get ahead and integrate further with other communities. At present, this limits the centres' potential to help their communities integrate more closely with other communities and the wider society.

I found that within the centres, there were issues relating to facilitators' chosen pedagogies to deliver learning. The subjects they chose to teach, and their methods (eg, teacher-led knowledge presentations) were largely viewed as being outdated and not appealing to a wider range of Iraqis. However, many respondents expressed their view that all this could be resolved if younger, second-generation Iraqi-British citizens became more involved in the centres' activities, thereby leading to a wider variety of subject areas, topics and "better presenters" and new knowledge being made available to learners.

As well as seeing younger people's involvement in the centres as key to widening participation and interest in the centres' activities, attracting younger age groups and those from other communities and a more diverse range of social backgrounds, respondents highlighted young people's greater familiarity with information technology as something the centres could benefit from. Their rationale was that the younger generation could show the centres how to make better use of technology, to make presentations more engaging and easier to follow, and easier to participate in remotely.

On the same note, they envisaged that younger people would help the centres plan and advertise events further in advance, and connect with other communities and organisations who could help them strengthen their financial situation and their resources. They felt this would allow the centres to deliver a more diverse range of

learning activities attracting more "quality presenters" and those from the British community and other communities.

In doing so, young people would help the Iraqi community overcome what Martinez (2022) describes as direct and indirect power blocks (lack of connections, financial resources and familiarity with the internet and social media) which currently limit the centres' ability to provide Iraqis with social empowerment and greater integration with those from other communities, ages and backgrounds.

However, as I have outlined in earlier chapters of my thesis, relying on the greater involvement of younger age groups does not seem to be a realistic option as they have a different cultural habitus from the first generation of Iraqi-British citizens who attend the centres' events. Instead, my study indicated that greater community support from local and national authorities would help in this respect. Most respondents noted that the centres had limited financial resources, and that British authorities and organisations could be more proactive in supporting these cultural centres to foster integration. This is examined in further detail below.

Social empowerment through learning:
Community engagement and the challenges of social integration

The findings of my study highlight the differences between the resources and opportunities for community engagement available to BISI, HDF and AISC. BISI hold a socioeconomically advantaged position over the other centres; they have the financial resources to reach out to other communities, to facilitate outreach events in

partnership with other organisations, and to make use of available technologies to advertise their events. Their central London venue is based at the British Academy, with all its historic connections with academia, both in the UK and around the world. BISI thereby stands apart from the other centres and constitutes what Bourdieu (1984) would describe as a cultural elite, and their venue and events act as gathering places for this cultural elite to reproduce their habitus, cultural and social capital.

In comparison, the other centres occupy a position of socioeconomic disadvantage and have more limited financial resources and academic connections. This negatively impacts their opportunities to reach out to other communities and to many British organisations and authorities. Limited funds mean that the centres have a limited scope to expand their programmes of learning events to include a greater variety of subject areas and topics, as this requires connections with "quality speakers" from other countries in the first place, and also to have the means to pay for their travel to and from London, and their accommodation in London, if they come from other parts of the UK or abroad. However, this limitation is now in a process of change due to many events being moved online, particularly via Zoom, due to the social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Organisations such as BISI have been allocated a central London venue, but the other centres have had to find office space outside of central London which is somewhat small and not designed to cater for large audiences. Their limited financial resources also present them with issues accessing technologies that would make

presenting information in pictorial and graph form easier and more accessible for facilitators and participants.

These constitute what Martinez (2022) describes as direct power blocks to the Iraqi community's advancement and integration with mainstream society through learning and social activities. Some respondents suggested that to overcome this, British authorities could reach out to these centres and encourage them to engage more with other communities, by inviting them to meet representatives from other communities such as London's Latin, Asian, African and Afro-Caribbean communities.

Looking to the Iraqi Ministry of Culture for financial support is not currently an option. As mentioned in the first chapter of my thesis the Iraqi Cultural Centre (ICC), which closed in 2015, was funded by the Iraqi Ministry of Culture. Unfortunately, after the events of 2014 (Daesh occupation of Mosul) and the collapse of global oil prices, the Iraqi government stopped funding cultural centres and activities outside of Iraq. A scheme to fund scholarships for Iraqi students to graduate from European universities, including British universities, was also stopped. In short, the Iraqi government are dealing with cultural issues as a luxury and not a necessity at this time.

However, British authorities and organisations could offer practical support to these centres by means of regular meetings with them and putting them in touch with other communities. This would help the centres to expand their outreach work, meaning that they could then hold more events in other organisations' offices and outside of

London. More outreach events across UK, with pedagogies that might attract wider audiences, has the potential to integrate Iraqis more closely with others.

Local authorities and other organisations can also offer their support by providing help with website design and linguistic content, and with the use of social media to advertise events further in advance. All of this can provide centres with opportunities to increase participants' bridging social capital with those from other communities, age groups and backgrounds, plus what Woolcock (1998) describes as their linking social capital with institutions such as universities and councils, and imagined social capital through shared cultural activities which appeal to a more diverse range of participants.

Limitations of my research project and its findings

Researching Iraqi communities in diaspora: Demographic issues

The UK's Iraqi community is dispersed between many major cities, including London, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and Cardiff (IOM, 2007). However, London has the largest Iraqi community and this is reflected in the large number of cultural and community organisations established to cater for their social and cultural needs. When I was at the stage of negotiating access, I approached around 40 people and informed them about my study, and it proved somewhat challenging to accommodate their availability for research interviews within the study's timeframe. This was reflected in the study's data collection phase. I conducted 10 interviews in

person prior to the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions in March 2020, and 10 interviews remotely once the UK had entered lockdown. This is examined in further detail below.

Researching Iraqi communities in diaspora: The onset of Covid-19 restrictions

The fact that I had to complete the study's data collection phase whilst living under Covid-19 social distancing restrictions adds another dimension to my study of non-formal education within communities, which was not present in any previous research into education within minority communities (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974; Morrice, 2007; Baratz & Kalnisky, 2017).

Researching Iraqi communities in diaspora: Sampling, positionality and reflexivity

I conducted 20 research interviews to concentrate on qualitative (interpretive) data. It will always be challenging to ensure that such a sample of 20 is representative. However, I believe that it succeeds in showing the sections of the Iraqi community who participate in non-formal learning activities within these cultural centres.

Throughout the course of this research journey, I became increasingly aware of my position and role as a member of London's Iraqi community and as somebody who actively participates in, and also sometimes delivers, learning within these centres. This shaped my interest in researching the Iraqi community's participation in non-

formal learning events within cultural centres, and gave me the status of an insider-researcher (Costley et al, 2010), who most of my respondents knew personally. I was aware that this may lead to respondents providing me with answers they thought I would want to receive, owing to a perceived researcher effect (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006).

To offset this, I provided my respondents with transcripts of my interviews with them once they had been written up. This gave respondents the opportunity to correct my understanding in cases where I may have misheard or misinterpreted them, which highlights the reflexivity and reflective practices I employed continuously whilst carrying out the study's data collection phase. Whilst the insider-researcher effect was present, it also gave me the advantages of being familiar with London's Iraqi cultural centres, the pressures these centres faced in continuing to operate and serve their communities, and also familiarity with the life experiences of respondents who had relocated to the UK after spending their formative years in Iraq. I consider that this made respondents feel more comfortable with me than they may have been with a researcher from outside the Iraqi community, who would not have been as familiar as myself with their culture, traditions, beliefs and ways of life. This also made it easier when, halfway through the study's fieldwork phase, I had to switch abruptly from holding in-person interviews to holding them remotely by telephone and through social media applications. My practice of asking respondents to review transcripts of our conversations became even more important.

Turning to the structure of my interviews, the semi-structured interview schedule reads, to some extent, more like a questionnaire. This is because my respondents

asked to see what questions I wanted to ask, and to send them beforehand. In the end, all of my respondents felt that to conduct semi-structured interviews was a better option than asking them to answer the questions on paper. I had designed the interview questions to be open-ended, to give the Iraqi community a voice that has until now remained unheard in the sphere of non-formal education. I believe that when they realised the depth of the questioning involved, they understood that the best mechanism to ensure their voices were heard and correctly interpreted was via semi-structured interviews conducted in an environment of their choice.

I came to understand the importance of my own positionality in terms of the research question underpinning my study, and the ways in which my research findings counteracted my initial expectations and assumptions. I believed that non-formal education had the potential to empower learners, both individually and collectively. However, I am talking as a person who values facilitating learning activities and presenting new knowledge to audiences.

I found that my respondents valued lifelong learning, and I acknowledge that they are drawn to this due to their social and cultural capital, their cultural habitus and professional backgrounds. However, I found that they considered their participation in the centres' learning activities more empowering in terms of developing their bonding and bridging social capital with their peers, and other Iraqis around the world, than in terms of gaining new knowledge. This appeared to be because they were drawn to lifelong learning as part of their everyday lives. The empowerment came from reinforcing their social capital connections with their peers and those they

would not otherwise meet, such as Iraqis around the world, due to the events being live-streamed.

This highlights the need for reflexivity and awareness of one's own positionality when conducting social research of this nature, and how it affects our perceptions and preconceived assumptions; and of the ways in which this can be offset through researcher-respondent interaction processes of conducting interviews, writing up transcripts and verifying the meanings my respondents attached to their participation in the cultural centres' learning activities.

Researching Iraqi communities in diaspora:
Issues of representativeness, social empowerment and integration

Despite the challenges of the sample size and the timeframe to complete this study, and the onset of Covid-19 restrictions in March 2020, my study's findings help to illuminate the role played by non-formal learning events in the lives of Iraqis who engage in these learning activities through community education, both in person and in cyberspace (Riel & Polin, 2004).

The questions raised are more about who does not participate in these centres' learning activities and the possible reasons for this, and what actions the centres can take to widen participation to those from other communities, a more diverse range of social backgrounds, more women and younger age groups in their educational and cultural activities.

I also recognise that the positioning, cultural capital, habitus and social status of London's Iraqi community impacted on the findings of this study. I recognise that more affluent centres and groups of respondents would have provided somewhat different answers to those which I received from my sample. This raises the issue of whether formal education is more likely to attract diverse groups of learners, and whether the experiences of Iraqis involved in education with more academic and quasi-academic organisations would differ significantly from those of Iraqis participating in, and facilitating, learning activities within community and cultural centres.

Similarly, if I had conducted research with centres that serve less settled and well educated members of the Iraqi community their educational needs and practices could have been very different. Further research into the educational experiences of Iraqis living in diaspora, taking account of formal, informal and non-formal education settings, is needed to establish the types of education they participate in, the social backgrounds of those participating in particular types of education, and how this compares to the educational experiences of other communities worldwide.

The implications of my study for further educational research

Iraqi communities and their learning experiences:
Demography, age and social status

The findings derived from my study show that communities' experiences of non-formal education vary in accordance with demographic and ontological factors.

These include locations, and the ages, cultural capital, habitus and social backgrounds of those who form part of learning communities.

In the case of London's Iraqi community, it appears that the learning activities offered by these cultural centres generally appeal to the middle classes; those who are educated to degree level or higher and who have worked in professional occupations. They also appeal mainly to first-generation Iraqi-British citizens who spent their formative years in Iraq and relocated to the UK and other Western countries later in life.

Iraqi communities and their learning experiences:
Intergenerational issues, cultural and technical habitus and pedagogical choices

Further studies could address the issue of widening participation among young people raised by my research. Such a study, conducted in London or similar cities with large Iraqi communities, would be key to establishing what differences may exist between the subject areas and topics which interest this generation and their parents and grandparents. As many of these younger Iraqi-British citizens are still undergoing formal education at universities, I would suggest a general study regarding the subject areas and topics they are interested to know more about and what has motivated their interest in these areas.

It may transpire that younger people are more likely than older generations to refer to their home environment and familial influences, as opposed to their professional backgrounds alone, when discussing what triggers their interest in particular issues,

subject areas and topics. This would shine a stronger light on the role played by social stratification, habitus and status in reproducing culture (Bourdieu, 1984; Jenks, 1993; Jenkins, 2004).

Such a study should also ask younger, second-generation Iraqi-British citizens what they see as "good practice" in terms of educational pedagogy. In turn, this would establish the extent to which they could transfer the "good practice" they have witnessed in school, college and university to the centres and their potential for identifying subject areas and topics of interest to a wider range of learners. To determine this, I would also suggest questions based on whether younger people mainly mix with other Iraqi-British citizens, whether they mainly mix with Iraqi-British and Arab-British citizens, or whether they mainly attend events with, and mix with, people from all communities and all walks of life. This, in turn, will establish how likely younger Iraqi-British citizens are to attract those from other communities and from all age groups to join these centres' learning communities.

The extent to which younger Iraqi-British citizens are more familiar with information technology should also be a focus for such a study. If they find it easier to post information on social media, and are more confident with this and other things such as designing and amending the content of websites, this will indicate that their parents' and grandparents' expectations of them being able to help the centres improve their advertising and wider appeal are founded. Once such a study of younger Iraqi-British citizens is complete, it can be compared with my own study to determine whether greater involvement of the younger generation in the cultural centres' operational activities is likely to bring Iraqis a greater degree of bridging

social capital, thereby helping them to integrate further with other communities and the wider society.

Iraqi communities and their learning experiences:
Focusing on Iraqis in diaspora globally

Studies of other countries with large Iraqi communities, such as Iraqis in Germany, Sweden, Canada, Australia and the USA, would also shine a light on these Iraqi communities' experiences of non-formal learning activities within community and cultural centres. This would help educational researchers to determine what demographic and ontological factors may differ in other countries. One of my respondents – Wisam – pointed out that in European countries, he has noticed Iraqis attending learning events with more people from other communities. For this reason, a study of other countries with large Iraqi communities would help to determine whether Iraqis in the UK are uniquely isolated from other communities and the wider society, or whether this is a characteristic of Iraqi communities in diaspora globally.

Further studies could also be carried out inside Iraq, asking Iraqis how often they engage in non-formal learning events virtually through live-streaming. Although the results of my own study indicate that tens of thousands of Iraqis living in Iraq participate in the centres' activities due to live-streaming, this would also shine a light on the types of learning they prefer to engage with and the subject areas and topics of interest to them. I believe that a triangulation of further studies, encompassing Iraqis inside Iraq, Iraqis in countries with large Iraqi diaspora communities and younger, second-generation Iraqi-British citizens would be invaluable in guiding

educationalists to determine how non-formal education can help Iraqis, and other communities, to increase their collective bridging social capital as well as their collective bonding social capital, and integrate further with other communities and the wider society on a global scale.

<p style="text-align:center">Barriers to social empowerment and integration:
Limited cultural diversity, social capital and cultural habitus</p>

I return here to my research question, which focuses on the extent to which non-formal education empowers Iraqis, individually and collectively. The results of my study showed that respondents feel empowered in terms of bonding and bridging social capital with their peers. This sense of empowerment, in terms of what Bourdieu (1984) describes as enhanced social capital, applies at both an individual and community level. However, they still seek further social empowerment in terms of bridging social capital between themselves, other communities and the wider society in general.

Empowerment in this sense would integrate the Iraqi community further into mainstream society, and the centres aspire to this as it has the potential to end the Iraqi community's current marginalisation within British society. Unfortunately, due to the direct and indirect power blocks Martinez has highlighted – the centres' limited financial resources and limited connections with those outside of the Iraqi community and the UK – the centres currently find it difficult to do this without the support of national authorities, who unfortunately also have little time or resources available for such engagement with migrant communities. As highlighted earlier in this chapter,

the Iraqi government are no longer funding cultural centres and activities outside of Iraq due to Iraq's challenging security and economic situation. The findings of this study indicate a clear need for the UK's national authorities to help minority communities overcome the direct and indirect power blocks holding them back (in this case, the Iraqi community's limited resources and connections with other communities) to empower them further; not only in terms of increased bonding social capital with their peers, but in terms of enhanced bridging social capital between themselves and other communities.

However, support from national authorities for the cultural centres to overcome the limitations of socioeconomic disadvantage and to establish connections with those from other communities is not the only issue here. The cultural capital and habitus of those who attend the Iraqi cultural centres, and how this excludes those who do not share their "group-habitus" (Hunter et al, 2015, p.12) is challenging in itself. This is because as Bourdieu argues, habitus functions to insulate itself from new information that represents challenges to its established preconceptions and ways of knowing:

> *The habitus tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information, if exposed to it accidentally or by force, and especially by avoiding exposure to such information.* *(Bourdieu 1990: pp. 60-61)*

For all the reasons outlined above, the conclusion of this study indicates that the Iraqi community's participation in the centres' activities empowers them in terms of their social connections with others. However, further social empowerment in the form of bridging social capital with other communities is sought and highly desired by those participating in the centres' learning activities. My study of their participation in

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the centres' learning activities is likely to assist them in this respect; I believed, and still do having completed the study, that the main positive impact will be an increased awareness in mainstream society of the Iraqi community's cultural, educational and social needs and characteristics.

This study also shines a somewhat unique light on well educated and settled migrants; this group is not widely addressed in existing literature on migration or on non-formal education more widely. As such, this study makes important and insightful contributions to wider academic debates on non-formal education, migration, postcolonialism and social integration. The Iraqi community's engagement with the learning activities offered within these cultural centres shows that non-formal learning activities can be academic in nature, and the events held at these centres between 2016 and 2019 (as shown in the Appendices) highlights this.

As I have highlighted throughout my thesis, I found that the focus of most educational research tends to be on non-formal learning within migrant groups to include learning basic English, numeracy and information technology skills, cooking traditional cuisine or designing traditional jewellery, clothing and hairstyles. However, I argue that this unfairly portrays minority communities' non-formal learning activities within such centres within these categories only and gives the impression that minority communities' abilities are limited to this extent. The findings of my study challenge what I view as being a patronisation and stereotyping of minority communities; they highlight that those within migrant groups who are well educated and settled actively participate in learning that resembles formal academic education more closely. As such, I argue that my study brings new ways of thinking and

knowing to the fields of migration and non-formal education and our understanding of these areas.

In addition, the findings of this study have the potential to challenge our preconceptions and stereotypes of migrant communities in the light of postcolonialism and post-colonial tensions and understandings. By doing so, this study has the potential to transform and enrich our understanding of the Iraqi community and the ways in which their social integration can be realised with the help of national authorities and other communities. This has the potential to lead to a greater sense of belonging within mainstream society and in turn, enhanced levels of bridging social capital and social empowerment among the UK's Iraqi community.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:

BLANK SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Questionnaire & Semi Structured Interview Schedule
Participants (Attendees of the centres)

Our Ref: NA/204293/PhD.Ed/(participant number)

***The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens:
A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how non-formal
education transforms individuals and communities***

Questionnaire (quantitative data)
Answers to all questions below are optional

1. Gender: Male____   Female ___

2. Age Range: 18-39   40-59 ___   60+ ___

3. Highest qualification obtained**:** _____

4. What kind of professions have you worked in: _____

5. How long have you been involved in attending non-formal education? ___

6. At which institution(s) do you attend non-formal learning?

    BISI*_____HDF*_____AISC*_____Other____(if multiple, tick each box)

    (* BISI = British Institute for the Study of Iraq; HDF = Humanitarian Dialogue
    Foundation; AISC = Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre)

7. Which topics/subjects have you mainly attended knowledge events for, in the
    Iraqi-British cultural centres?

    _____

8. How often do you engage in non-formal learning with these centres and why? (eg, once/twice a week, month etc)

_____

Questionnaire & Semi Structured Interview Schedule
Participants (Attendees of the centres)

Our Ref: NA/204293/PhD.Ed/(participant number)

The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens:
A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how
non-formal education transforms individuals and communities

Semi-structured interview schedule (qualitative data)
(Answers to all questions are optional)

1. What types of non-formal education/learning do you participate in at the Iraqi-British cultural centres?

    ● Cultural/knowledge presentations in person _____

    ● Workshops in the centres _____

    ● Advice sessions in the centres _____

    ● Watching these centres broadcast events online _____

    ● Watching these centres' TV reports, interviews and events _____

    ● Borrowing books and getting advice on books from the centres _____

    ● Other _____

2. What are your main reasons for participating in non-formal learning with these centres? (eg, personal interest, motivation, occupation-related, etc)

3. Can you tell me more about the activities that particularly interest you, and the reasons for this?

4. What do you find most rewarding about your participation in non-formal education? For instance

   - a greater knowledge of a subject area or topic presented? In what way?
   - a greater sense of belonging to a learning community? In what way?
   - increased sense of social cohesion/individual or cultural identity? In what way?
   - increased sense of integration into a community and wider society? In what way?
   - any other factors? In what way?

5. What would you say are your preferred methods of learning:

   - Teacher-led, such as attending a knowledge presentation (this is known as didactic learning)
   - Self-directed study (eg, learning by yourself by visiting websites/centres' websites/social media pages etc)
   - Learning in small groups and workshops (such as attending workshops and/or advice sessions)
   - Other (please state)

   What are your main reasons for preferring any of the learning methods listed above? Does it depend on the subject matter or topic?

6. What are the main positive outcomes of non-formal learning for you?

7. Do you engage in any or all of the centres' non-formal learning activities with your parents and/or your children? This is known as the intergenerational factor. If so, please give some examples.

8. What challenges have you faced whilst participating in non-formal learning? (eg, accommodating it with your time, family and work commitments)

9. Are there any ways in which the non-formal learning these centres provide to the community can be changed to widen participation to include people from all ages and backgrounds?

10. In what ways do you feel that the non-formal learning these centres provide to participants could be enhanced or improved?

Our Ref: NA/204293/PhD.Ed/(respondent number)

The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens:
A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how non-formal education transforms individuals and communities

Questionnaire (quantitative data)
Answers to all questions below are optional

1.   Gender: Male____   Female ____

2. Age Range: 18-39 __   40-59 ____   60+ ____

3. Highest qualification obtained**:** _____

4. What kind of professions have you worked in: _____

5. How long have you been involved in facilitating non-formal education?

6. At which institution(s) do you facilitate non-formal learning?

    BISI*____HDF*____AISC*____Other____(if multiple, tick each box)

    (* BISI = British Institute for the Study of Iraq; HDF = Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation; AISC = Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre)

7. Which topics/subjects have you mainly facilitated knowledge events for, in the Iraqi-British cultural centres?

8. How often do you facilitate non-formal learning events with these centres and why? (eg, once/twice a week, month etc)

Semi-structured interview schedule (qualitative data)
(Answers to all questions are optional)

1. What are the methods of non-formal education/learning you use at the Iraqi-British cultural centres?

   ● Cultural/knowledge presentations _____

   ● Workshops _____

   ● Advice sessions _____

   ● Livestream broadcasting of my activities _____

   ● TV reports, interviews and events relating to my activities _____

   ● Gave advice on learning materials to the centres' participants _____

   ● Other _____

2. Which of the above learning methods (in Question 1 above) do you consider particularly helpful for participants? What are the main reasons for this?

3. What topics have you presented to participants? What particularly interests you in presenting these topics? Which learning methods do you use to present these topics?

4. Are your participants mainly of Iraqi origin, or are they also drawn from other ethnic/national backgrounds?

5. Do participants bring their family members (such as their children who were born in the UK) to your centre's events? This is known as the inter-generational factor.

6. What prompted you to become involved with the delivery of this particular type/subject of non-formal learning? (eg personal interest, professional background or anything else)

7. In what ways do you feel that your participants benefit from your presentations/facilitations (please provide examples):

   ● on an intellectual level (eg, greater understanding of subject area or a topic);

   ● encouraging them to pursue certain careers, hobbies or interests

8. How do you see non-formal learning changing/transforming the lives of your learning participants, on an individual level and in their wider community? Can you give examples of, for instance:

   ● a greater sense of belonging to a learning community
   ● increased sense of social cohesion/individual or cultural identity
   ● increased sense of integration into a community and wider society
   ● any other factors

9. Are there any ways in which the non-formal learning you provide to the community can be changed to widen participation to include people from all ages and social backgrounds?

10. In what ways do you feel that the non-formal learning these centres provide to participants could be enhanced or improved?

APPENDIX 2:

TRANSCRIPTS OF A SELECTION OF COMPLETED INTERVIEWS WITH RESPONDENTS

Questionnaire & Semi Structured
Interview Schedule Participants (Attendees of
the centres)

Our Ref: NA/204293/PhD.Ed/Resp 012

Date: 28 March 2020

Interview: Remote (Whatsapp)

The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens:
A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how non-formal education transforms individuals and communities

Questionnaire (quantitative data)
Answers to all questions below are optional

1. Gender: Male X   Female _____

2. Age Range: 18-39 ____ 40-59 X   60+ ____

3. Highest qualification obtained**: Diploma, Iraqi Institute of Music** _____

4. What kind of professions have you worked in: Music field, music teaching (many institutions)

5. How long have you been involved in attending non-formal education? Over 20 yrs

6. At which institution(s) do you attend non-formal learning?

    BISI* X HDF* X AISC* X Other X (if multiple, tick each box)

    (* BISI = British Institute for the Study of Iraq; HDF = Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation; AISC = Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre)

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In addition to the above centres, I've participated in and delivered many cultural/musical events, lectures and concerts in many centres and institutions:

- Kufa Gallery
- Iraqi Association
- Awlad Al-Taraf Forum (Iraqi Jewish Cultural Forum)
- Arabian Oud School
- SOAS, University of London
- Iraqi Cultural Centre
- Iraqi Cultural Café

7. Which topics/subjects have you mainly attended knowledge events for, in the Iraqi-British cultural centres?

I mainly go to cultural subjects, musical subjects, art, literature, painting. However, also I attend events on other subjects if they are related to prominent current affairs in Iraq.

8. How often do you engage in non-formal learning with these centres and why? (eg, once/twice a week, month etc)

Once a week, I'll attend an event in some cultural centre.

QUESTION 1:

What types of non-formal education/learning do you participate in at the Iraqi- British cultural centres?

- **Cultural/knowledge presentations in person _X_**

- **Workshops in the centres _X_**

- **Advice sessions in the centres _X_**

- **Watching these centres broadcast events online _X_**

- **Watching these centres' TV reports, interviews and events _X_**

- **Borrowing books and getting advice on books from the centres _X_**

- **Other _X_**

ANSWER:

I've engaged in all of the above types of non-formal learning. However, I prefer to attend and deliver the cultural/knowledge/musical events, where I can meet others in person, play music, listen to a presenter or a musical performance. This gives a horizon of human interaction and leads to intellectual discussions.

Regarding workshops, I've delivered and attended many musical events at SOAS (University of London), the Iraqi Cultural Centre and others.

I also deliver many events such as music and poetry (eg, I'll play music whilst the other person recites poetry) in many centres.

Due to my involvement with many centres, institutions and universities like SOAS (University of London) in musical courses and teaching, I often find myself giving advice to many individuals who are seeking to pursue their careers, their talent and their studies in this field of Arab music.

In many cases, I do follow live-streamed events when I can't to attend them in person, and I believe this technology is very helpful. I also watch many TV reports related to such cultural events, whether delivered by me or others (as many Iraqi and Arab TV channels have their correspondents who attend these cultural events).

I've also participated in and helped to deliver events with womens' groups, such as the Iraqi Womens' Forum in London (Rabitat Al-Marra).

QUESTION 2:

What are your main reasons for participating in non-formal learning with these centres? (eg, personal interest, motivation, occupation-related, etc)

ANSWER:

In addition to events which I regularly attend and deliver related to music (my occupation and career), I also go to other cultural events for personal interest and to keep up-to-date in many fields, such as literature, art and history. These events keep me updated with the latest information and many speakers.

QUESTION 3:

Can you tell me more about the activities that particularly interest you, and the reasons for this?

ANSWER:

I do my best to attend any event that furthers my knowledge in a subject area that's of interest.

QUESTION 4:

What do you find most rewarding about your participation in non-formal education? For instance

- **a greater knowledge of a subject area or topic presented? In what way?**
- **a greater sense of belonging to a learning community? In what way?**
- **increased sense of social cohesion/individual or cultural identity? In what way?**
- **increased sense of integration into a community and wider society? In what way?**
- **any other factors? In what way?**

ANSWER:

Yes, I go to these events to further his knowledge in a specific subject area or topic.

Also, when I see many colleagues who attend the same events regularly, this makes me feel that I am part of these centres' learning communities.

I've got no doubt that such events by these centres, leading to a gathering of many individuals and groups from the Iraqi community, many discussions and dialogues, increases social cohesion and if the subject is related to Iraqi issues, history or music (I deliver many musical events related to Iraqi music between the 1940s and 1970s, which people like as it combines knowledge and music), such events strengthen their sense of cultural identity. Most of these events end with participants going to cafes afterwards together, and having further discussions about the event or current affairs.

Events relating to arts, theatre and music play a significant role to integrate communities further within the wider society. Music is a cultural language in itself and does not need a translator. From my experience with many events, I've found that the British and Western community are very interested in knowing more about my instrument (the Arabian oud) which is closer to the Spanish lute. They always ask questions related to the techniques and history of this instrument, and the music it produces.

QUESTION 5:

What would you say are your preferred methods of learning:

- ***Teacher-led, such as attending a knowledge presentation (this is known as didactic learning)***
- ***Self-directed study (eg, learning by yourself by visiting websites/centres' websites/social media pages etc)***
- ***Learning in small groups and workshops (such as attending workshops and/or advice sessions)***
- ***Other (please state)***

What are your main reasons for preferring any of the learning methods listed above? Does it depend on the subject matter or topic?

ANSWER:

I still believe in the importance of the role played by teacher-led events (teacher, lecturer, main speaker etc) to deliver knowledge and information to participants, and to be responsible for the quality and

intellectual content of the event. However, a great part of these events is allowing sufficient time for intellectual questions and interaction between a presenter and participants. This applies to events that I attend and/or deliver.

QUESTION 6:

What are the main positive outcomes of non-formal learning for you?

ANSWER:

The main thing is to obtain new knowledge or information, on the intellectual side, from attending these events.

Another positive outcome for me is that going to tens of events, in tens of different centres and venues across London and the UK, lets me discover new parts of London and new cities in the UK. Without invitations to these events, I wouldn't be there. This adds touristic knowledge and cultural experiences, including visiting museums, city landmarks and knowing more about the lives of others. All of these are types of non-formal education.

QUESTION 7:

Do you engage in any or all of the centres' non-formal learning activities with your parents and/or your children? This is known as the intergenerational factor. If so, please give some examples.

ANSWER:

In my experience, when I deliver musical events and concerts, my wife and daughter normally come with me to these events.

If the parents work hard to make a subject enjoyable for children, such as in my case, generally music is liked. My daughter accompanies me to these events because she likes my music, and I don't force her or any other family member to attend them.

Yes, in general second-generation Iraqi-British citizens do not attend the events at these centres for many reasons (they have their own lives and interests). Parents and centres should play a bigger role to address this issue, and find solutions for it.

QUESTION 8:

What challenges have you faced whilst participating in non-formal learning? (eg, accommodating it with your time, family and work commitments)

ANSWER:

It depends on my schedule and commitments and the timing of other events. If I've got the time to attend an event and it's of interest to me I will attend.

Family commitments also play a role in allowing me to attend some events.

QUESTION 9:

Are there any ways in which the non-formal learning these centres provide to the community can be changed to widen participation to include people from all ages and backgrounds?

ANSWER:

The centres should take steps to include second-generation Iraqi-British citizens to be part of the decision-making processes, and to be responsible for organizing and delivering events related to their way of thinking and topics of interest. We have to be prepared for the coming decade, in which the first-generation's topics of interest will fade into the past to some extent.

We shouldn't keep telling the second generation that they have different interests or live in a different world, instead we should invite them to the centres to deliver presentations and events on the areas of interest to them and in their chosen language.

Many centres, over the last ten years, always have the same people attending these events. However, a large section of the Iraqi community are not involved in attending them. The centres should make attempts to address this and the ways to interest the wider community.

QUESTION 10:

In what ways do you feel that the non-formal learning these centres provide to participants could be enhanced or improved?

ANSWER:

To enhance the non-formal learning at these centres, they should:

- Allow the younger generation (second-generation Iraqi-British citizens) to be part of the decision-making in managing these centres, presenting events, delivering events, using modern

technology in presentations.
- Choose attractive subject areas, topics and presenters closer to younger peoples' interest areas, to include them within the centres.
- Centres should invite more English speakers and British academics to present some more events related to Anglo-Iraqi issues, or any issues which interest the Iraqi community or communities in the UK. This will help the Iraqi community to integrate further, culturally and linguistically, into the wider society. The number of English language events are not sufficient, and need to be increased significantly.
- Increase the variety of subject areas and topics for cultural events and knowledge presentations.
- Advertise the events earlier and more widely, with information about the speakers and topics, and also to invite TV correspondents to attend, as they will make TV reports about the events and the topics will become known as educating people in a non-formal way.
- Centres should always do their best to keep their events and activities multi-lingual and multi-cultural, to be broad and not narrowly focused on ethnic or faith groups, and to be mindful of their duty to provide non-formal learning for the wider society.

**Questionnaire & Semi Structured
Interview Schedule Participants (Attendees of
the centres)**

Our Ref: NA/204293/PhD.Ed/Resp 013

Date: 30 March 2020

Interview: Remote

*The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British
citizens:*
*A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how non-
formal education transforms individuals and communities*

Questionnaire (quantitative data)
Answers to all questions below are optional

1. Gender: Male_____   Female _X___

2. Age Range: 18-39 ____ 40-59 _____   60+ _X__

3. Highest qualification obtained**: B.Sc Accountancy & Business Management**

4. What kind of professions have you worked in: _Chairperson, Iraqi Association_

                                   Accountant in Iraq and Syria

              Welfare Officer/Outreach Officer with Iraqi Association

5. How long have you been involved in attending non-formal education? _20+ years_

6. At which institution(s) do you attend non-formal learning?

BISI*__X___HDF*__X___AISC*__X___Other__X___(if multiple, tick each box)

(* BISI = British Institute for the Study of Iraq; HDF = Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation; AISC = Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre)

In my capacity and roles working with the Iraqi Association, and later as their Chairperson, this led me to attend events at most of the Iraqi-British centres in London, in addition to her interest in many topics discussed at these events. Some of these centres include:

- Iraqi Association events
- Iraqi Cultural Centre
- Iraqi Cultural Café
- Iraqi Womens' Forum
- Iraqi Medical Association
- Al-Kindy Association for Iraqi Engineers
- Iraqi Supplementary Arabic Schools Association
- Iraqi Academic Association
- Iraqi Fine Arts Association

7. Which topics/subjects have you mainly attended knowledge events for, in the Iraqi-British cultural centres?

I try to attend any type of conference by Iraqi-British groups.

I also attend many events at Iraqi-British centres. My interest is mainly in cultural events, including monthly events at the Iraqi Cinema Club (a project of the Iraqi Association) where more than 60 international films were screened and reviewed in the last 6 years.

I also go to most of the Iraqi-British art exhibitions and events displaying artworks, photography and paintings.

In addition to my other interests in events related to health and many scientific events, I go to events related to the current situation in Iraq.

8. How often do you engage in non-formal learning with these centres and why? (eg, once/twice a week, month etc)

At least once a week (1-2 events weekly on average)

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QUESTION 1:

What types of non-formal education/learning do you participate in at the Iraqi- British cultural centres?

- **Cultural/knowledge presentations in person _X_**

- **Workshops in the centres _X_**

- **Advice sessions in the centres _X_**

- **Watching these centres broadcast events online _X_**

- **Watching these centres' TV reports, interviews and events _X_**

- **Borrowing books and getting advice on books from the centres _X_**

- **Other _X_**

ANSWER:

I mainly attend cultural and knowledge presentations, as this is the main type of non-formal learning offered by these Iraqi cultural centres.

I also go to many workshops and seminars related to the Iraqi community and their needs and welfare. The Iraqi Association where I work hosted an art and painting workshop for children led by the Iraqi artist Sadeq Karim Toma.

QUESTION 2:

What are your main reasons for participating in non-formal learning with these centres? (eg, personal interest, motivation, occupation-related, etc)

ANSWER:

In addition to my personal interest in this field of activities and events, I enjoy furthering her knowledge and intellect. Also, as part of my work role with the Iraqi Association, I have to attend events at other Iraqi-British cultural centres to keep networking, to keep up-to-date with them, and also to know what events, topics and subject areas are of interest to their participants and to adopt the positive aspects of them for Iraqi Association events.

QUESTION 3:

Can you tell me more about the activities that particularly interest you, and the reasons for this?

ANSWER:

Conferences – any conference run by the Iraqi Association or by other Iraqi-British centres – I do try to attend these events.

Community events including parties, which I try to attend regularly.

Regular cultural events with different topics and subject areas, I'll go to as many of these as I can.

QUESTION 4:

What do you find most rewarding about your participation in non-formal education? For instance

- *a greater knowledge of a subject area or topic presented? In what way?*
- *a greater sense of belonging to a learning community? In what way?*
- *increased sense of social cohesion/individual or cultural identity? In what way?*
- *increased sense of integration into a community and wider society? In what way?*
- *any other factors? In what way?*

ANSWER:
All these factors, I feel them and they are there.

For the first one, a greater knowledge of a subject area or topic, yes it is there in most of the knowledge events I go to. For instance, if I go to an event about health led by a medical expert, I come away knowing more about the subject and this reflects on my health awareness. Otherwise, there is no point in attending an event if I won't increase my knowledge through it, and this is the case with many events I don't attend.

Regarding the learning community, yes there is that feeling of being part of a learning community, although there is no subscription or membership to belong to it. I feel the sense of being part of a learning community through the Iraqi Association's events and the events at HDF.

Regarding social cohesion, yes these events are helpful to build a sense of social cohesion. You would not meet such a variety of people from the Iraqi community, and socialize with them in one place and through one event, if it wasn't for them attending these events in the Iraqi-British centres. Without such events, your contacts will be limited to your immediate social group, but these events help you forge new friendships and social connections.

Regarding the cultural identity issue, yes, I do feel a great sense of identity and belonging particularly if the events' subjects are related to Iraq (Iraqi arts, archaeology, history etc). An example of cultural identity building was an event I attended at the offices of the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC), featuring a knowledge presentation by Emily Porter about her British father and Iraqi mother. It was more a family's story through a country's story in the 20th century and the history of Anglo-Iraqi issues. Such topics strengthen the sense of the Iraqi cultural identity.

Regarding the integration of Iraqis into the wider British society, in my role with the Iraqi Association I go to many events with British establishments focusing on Iraqi-British issues, such as the Foreign Office and the Houses of Parliament. However, the efforts of the Iraqi-British centres in integrating Iraqis into the wider British society are not sufficient. Most of the events are in Arabic, and do not include English speakers or English participants.

However, there is a sense of integration into the wider society which emerges from attending events with English speakers, talking about Iraqi-British subjects (eg, archaeology, arts, history etc). These events are helpful in promoting a sense of integration, but unfortunately they are not held regularly.

QUESTION 5:
What would you say are your preferred methods of learning:

● **Teacher-led, such as attending a knowledge presentation (this is known as didactic learning)**
● **Self-directed study (eg, learning by yourself by visiting websites/centres' websites/social media pages etc)**
● **Learning in small groups and workshops (such as attending workshops and/or advice sessions)**
● **Other (please state)**

What are your main reasons for preferring any of the learning methods listed above? Does it depend on the subject matter or topic?

ANSWER:
I prefer to attend knowledge presentations which are led by a main speaker or speakers. However, I feel that I benefit more from participating in events with an element of participant discussion with the speaker. In other words, it is not only about one person.

Also, I prefer the small group learning, which suits workshops and seminars, in which sessions are divided into different groups and they work on different themes. They gather their efforts to promote group learning.

On the question of self-directed study, if this means only giving materials to people to go away and read, this is not my preferred non-formal learning method!

QUESTION 6:
What are the main positive outcomes of non-formal learning for you?

ANSWER:
The first positive outcome is increasing my knowledge about specific topics or subject areas. This can inspire further reading, or to seek out a book referred to by the main speaker at that event.

Also, when I go to events at other centres featuring topics that are particularly important, this can spur me on to explore them further and for my centre, the Iraqi Association, to host their own events on these topics.

The other positive outcome is the social side – meeting others, keeping up to date with them, continual networking etc.

QUESTION 7:

Do you engage in any or all of the centres' non-formal learning activities with your parents and/or your children? This is known as the intergenerational factor. If so, please give some examples.

ANSWER:

Yes, I attend some of the centres' events with my children. The events I attend with my son are those run by the Iraqi Association and other centres for second-generation Iraqi-British citizens, and those events which are conducted in English rather than Arabic.

Whilst the events above are specifically designed for second-generation Iraqi-British citizens, there is a general lack of participation among this age group. This is due to many reasons – different lives, different interests, not interested in the centres' topics. For instance, my two children can be described as young people, a boy who is living and working in Europe who is busy with his commitments and musical work. My daughter is married and has children of her own.

QUESTION 8:

What challenges have you faced whilst participating in non-formal learning? (eg, accommodating it with your time, family and work commitments)

ANSWER:

All these factors play a role and are challenging. For instance, the timing of events can be a barrier to attending. Some events, particularly in winter, are delayed until the evening.

Also, as Chairperson of the Iraqi Association I have to devote a great part of my time to their operation and activities, and this sometimes impacts on the time available for me to attend the events at other centres.

Regarding family commitments, I don't have immediate responsibilities for my children as they are now grown up and have their own lives. However, this factor still has its influence on my level of participation.

There are also health issues (mental and physical) which prevent many participants from attending between time to another, particularly after major events in Iraq which can affect people positively or negatively in regards to attending these events.

QUESTION 9:

Are there any ways in which the non-formal learning these centres provide to the community can be changed to widen participation to include people from all ages and backgrounds?

ANSWER:

The centres should make efforts to widen participation by doing the following:

- Choosing a wider variety of subject areas, which are of interest to more people including second-generation Iraqi-British citizens.
- The centres should not only be run by first-generation Iraqi-British citizens with their mentality and way of thinking. They should include second-generation Iraqi-British citizens in their decision-making processes and their choice of events and seminars, which these young people should also be encouraged to present.
- The linguistic issue needs addressing. More events should be held in the English language, whether by an Iraqi or British speaker. Currently, the majority of these events are in Arabic. Adding more events in English would encourage second-generation Iraqi-British citizens to attend, particularly as their Arabic language ability is not as strong as their English language ability. For instance, at the monthly Iraqi Cinema Club film screenings, many young people ask if these international film screenings have English subtitles. When the answer is yes, many more attend the events.
- The outreach issues also play a role in limiting participation if the centres are not in accessible locations for many Iraqis.
- Centres should also ensure they are inclusive of all sectors of the community.

QUESTION 10:

In what ways do you feel that the non-formal learning these centres provide to participants could be enhanced or improved?

ANSWER:

To enhance and improve the non-formal offering these centres provide, the following issues need to be addressed:

- Funding issues. Sufficient levels of funding will be reflected in the quality of non-formal learning provided to the community (eg, better venues, better facilities, ability to invite more distinguished speakers from different parts of the UK and abroad, ability to provide more outreach events at different locations across London or the UK, employing more staff such as good administrators, this will reflect on the operational effectiveness of the organisation). All of this requires financial support.
- Lack of funds, with the new era of transforming to digital communications, led the Iraqi Association to stop producing print versions of our newspaper (Al-Muntada Al-Iraqi). We used to print thousands of copies and post them to Iraqi community members on our mailing list (with 4,000 people), and it was well read by many Iraqis. However, now it is entirely online. When I ask many community members over 60, many of them are no longer reading it as they are unfamiliar with websites, website addresses, internet technology and social media sites. We also need to take into account any physical impairments such as sight issues, which would affect their ability to read online.
- The Iraqi Association run three support groups (clubs) for elderly people. One of them has been run in Hammersmith for 22 years and we run another club in Camden, the third group is a weekly club for women in Shepherd's Bush. From working with them, I know that many of those group members are not in a situation to read online newspapers. In these senior clubs, the members get help from medical and health experts, health exercises (eg, yoga, Zumba). The Iraqi Association try to continue bringing these support mechanisms to these club members.
- Other issues which would enhance the centres' offering of non-formal learning is to bring a wider variety of topics and subject areas in presentations, and approach more distinguished speakers.
- The Iraqi-British centres are also predominantly based in west London. They have no presence in south London or east London. Many Iraqi-British citizens who are living there are finding the centres are too far away from them to attend regularly. This is why there is the need for outreach services by the centres, or new centres in these areas of London.

**Questionnaire & Semi Structured
Interview Schedule Participants (Attendees of
the centres)**

Our Ref: NA/204293/PhD.Ed/Resp 019

Date: 30 May 2020

Interview: Remote

*The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British
citizens:*
*A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how non-
formal education transforms individuals and communities*

Questionnaire (quantitative data)
Answers to all questions below are optional

1. Gender: Male X   Female _____

2. Age Range: 18-39 ____ 40-59 _____   60+ X

3. Highest qualification obtained: **B.Sc Economics & Administration**

4. What kind of professions have you worked in: Administrator – Al-Hayat News
                                                  Administrator, Translation & Consultancy Bureau

5. How long have you been involved in attending non-formal education? 30 years

6. At which institution(s) do you attend non-formal learning?

   BISI* X   HDF* X   AISC* X   Other X   (if multiple, tick each box)

   (* BISI = British Institute for the Study of Iraq; HDF = Humanitarian Dialogue
   Foundation; AISC = Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre)

I go to all of the above centres and many others, including:

- Iraqi Cultural Centre (closed 2015)
- Iraqi Cultural Café
- Iraqi Association
- Iraqi Cinema Club (part of the Iraqi Association)
- Iraqi Academic Association
- Iraqi Environment & Health Association
- Iraqi Womens' Forum

7. Which topics/subjects have you mainly attended knowledge events for, in the Iraqi-British cultural centres?

I'm interested to attend events relating to culture, history, literature and Anglo-Iraqi issues.

I'm well known in the Iraqi community for my extensive efforts to live-stream the events which I'm able to attend. I started this live-streaming via mobile phone to people, and I've live-streamed over 200 events since October 2016.

My first live-streamed event was broadcast to 1,000 viewers within 3 days. Later, some event live-streams reached 40,000 viewers. A record of these live-streamed events can be seen on my Facebook page.

8. How often do you engage in non-formal learning with these centres and why? (eg, once/twice a week, month etc)

One to two times a week

QUESTION 1:

What types of non-formal education/learning do you participate in at the Iraqi- British cultural centres?

- ***Cultural/knowledge presentations in person X***

- ***Workshops in the centres X***

- ***Advice sessions in the centres X***

- ***Watching these centres broadcast events online X***

- ***Watching these centres' TV reports, interviews and events X***

- ***Borrowing books and getting advice on books from the centres X***

- ***Other X***

ANSWER:

Cultural and knowledge presentations are the main non-formal learning event in London. As such, this is mainly what I attend (and I live-stream them through my mobile phone to thousands of viewers).

To some extent, I also attend and broadcasts workshops, conferences and seminars.

Advice sessions – yes, but to a lesser extent than the above, and mainly in a personal capacity.

Regarding livestreaming, I've seen many of them at home and I broadcast tens of them myself, which I've been doing since October 2016.

QUESTION 2:

What are your main reasons for participating in non-formal learning with these centres? (eg, personal interest, motivation, occupation-related, etc)

ANSWER:

It is all of the above, but mainly for personal interest.

Also I want to further my knowledge, as this is part of my personality, and I like to socialize with others by attending these events.

Many things motivate me participating in this non-formal learning. I'm passionate about developing and enhancing the reach of non-formal education within these communities via live-streaming, enhancing the values of human rights and bringing people closer together.

QUESTION 3:

Can you tell me more about the activities that particularly interest you, and the reasons for this?

ANSWER:

I go to events on topics that I'm interested in to further my knowledge, particularly if they are given by distinguished, well-known speakers.

QUESTION 4:

What do you find most rewarding about your participation in non-formal education? For instance

- *a greater knowledge of a subject area or topic presented? In what way?*
- *a greater sense of belonging to a learning community? In what way?*
- *increased sense of social cohesion/individual or cultural identity? In what way?*
- *increased sense of integration into a community and wider society? In what way?*
- *any other factors? In what way?*

ANSWER:

Yes, all of the above are there. I go to these events to further my knowledge of particular topics and subject areas, with good, specialist speakers about these subject areas.

As for the learning community issue, I go to non-formal learning events at many centres and yes, there is that feeling of being part of a learning community there.

Regarding social cohesion, yes, this is a major factor for me attending these events. It is about meeting other people, socializing with them, exchanging knowledge with them, networking with them and updating about what is going on in London's Iraqi community and in Iraq.

In many events you feel a kind of cultural identity and how the Iraqi cultural identity can be part of a global identity and the world's impact on it, and vice versa. This can be seen in Iraqi/Arab topics, particularly if it is approached as a part of multi-cultural, global identity and how it contributes to a global culture rather than as an isolated Iraqi cultural identity.

I strongly believe that these events help to integrate the community within the wider society in Britain, as exchanging knowledge between communities is very helpful. This sense of integration can clearly be seen in the events conducted in English, with British and European speakers and academics who have researched many aspects of Iraq's history and culture. This feeling is that all humans are in one unit – the oneness of humanity.

As I go to many non-formal learning events at many centres, I've noticed that it's not only about Iraqi cultural identity, It can be about the cultural identities of other communities in Britain. Most Iraqi-British centres mainly focus on Iraqi, Arab, or Iraqi-British and Arab-British subjects, however there is a great lack of approaching other communities in Britain or to give a presentation about them, their culture, arts and literature (whether Asian, Latin American, etc), with the exception of a few musical events which were multi-cultural. Britain is now a multicultural society and this issue should be reflected within these cultural centres. It is not only about integrating into British society, but about integrating into a multicultural society.

What would you say are your preferred methods of learning:

- *Teacher-led, such as attending a knowledge presentation (this is known as didactic learning)*
- *Self-directed study (eg, learning by yourself by visiting websites/centres' websites/social media pages etc)*
- *Learning in small groups and workshops (such as attending workshops and/or advice sessions)*
- *Other (please state)*

What are your main reasons for preferring any of the learning methods listed above? Does it depend on the subject matter or topic?

ANSWER:

I've mainly been to knowledge presentations, which are led by a main speaker. They're useful, but they should be followed up with sufficient time for audience discussion.

Also, I like going to events with more than one main speaker, such as seminar discussions about one topic with many speakers.

I've been in a few workshops, and these can be useful depending on the nature of the subject area.

Regarding self-directed study, it is already there as a follow-up to the knowledge presentations as speakers refer you to further study materials such as books, websites. Sometimes, speakers hand you written material to read. This has happened to me many times, and in one event led by the British archaeologist Jane Moon, she referred me to more materials which I found useful to commence a kind of self-directed study.

QUESTION 6:
What are the main positive outcomes of non-formal learning for you?

ANSWER:
Many positive outcomes, including:
- Furthering my knowledge and intellectual ability on topics and subject areas, particularly if it came from expert speakers
- Improved relations between individuals, communities and society, making them closer to each other
- Making new friendships with people you would never meet without attending such events

QUESTION 7:
Do you engage in any or all of the centres' non-formal learning activities with your parents and/or your children? This is known as the intergenerational factor. If so, please give some examples.

ANSWER:
There is an issue of second-generation Iraqi-British citizens not participating in events at these Iraqi cultural centres. This is a serious issue, and I'm involved in discussions with the centres about ways to overcome this.

I've been to a few events with younger family members (nieces and nephews), I've accompanied them to events that interest them, particularly those held in the English language.

Younger people have their own interests which are different from those of the first generation, in addition to their education and cultural backgrounds in the UK being different from those of their parents. It means that their social, cultural and literary interests are not the same as those of the first generation.

Also, the linguistic factor plays a role. They speak English and most of these events are held in Arabic. Although many of them speak Arabic, they do not have the same reach of vocabulary and understanding of it. Their English language ability is stronger.

Talking about a solution for this issue, many events have taken place to discuss this, including one event held in English and organised by the younger generation. This event was well attended by younger people to find ways to resolve this issue. However, the issue is still there and cannot be resolved by just a few events held in English by youngsters.

The best way to resolve this is for the centres to hold more events in English, aimed at younger people. The centres should also encourage younger, good speakers to give presentations in English, and to invite their peers to these events (there are many stories of young Iraqi-British individuals who have some experience, knowledge and success stories to share with others).

Also, centres should include younger people in their decision-making processes as they are closer to the wider UK society, its culture and customs.

QUESTION 8:
What challenges have you faced whilst participating in non-formal learning? (eg, accommodating it with your time, family and work commitments)

ANSWER:
The timing of some events can affect my schedule and availability to attend them.

Also, the location of the venue may be an issue if it's some distance away and would take a long time to get there. This sometimes stops me attending events that I'm interested in.

The event topics, and the speakers, also play a role for me to decide if I want to attend and broadcast the event to people. If the speaker tends not to be inclusive or has some controversial views against mainstream society or communities, I don't not attend (for instance if they have hidden sectarian agendas). However, if the lecture and speaker is good, and the timing is convenient, I'll try to attend and broadcast it.

QUESTION 9:
Are there any ways in which the non-formal learning these centres provide to the community can be changed to widen participation to include people from all ages and backgrounds?

ANSWER:
The centres can widen participation in non-formal learning by:
- Having modern facilities for presentations, including venue requirements (such as suitable halls for large audiences and art exhibitions).
- Using technology to broadcast the events live. Before live-streaming of these events came in over the last decade, they were attended by less than 100 people on average. However, in my experience, live-streaming the events takes the participation rate up to between 1,000 – 5,000 people all watching the same event with those attending it in London, and at the same time.
- I myself understand the importance of this live-streaming in widening participation, and I started to do this voluntarily in October 2016. This is something free for participants, which can be used to its best abilities, and I've broadcast over 200 live events including cultural events, conferences and seminars in the last four years from most of London's Iraqi-British centres. Most of them have more than 2,000 viewers and one of them even reached 40,000 viewers. I usually broadcast the events through my Facebook page, which is then shared by another 20 to 100 other individuals.
- In the last event I live-streamed in April 2020, at the height of the coronavirus peak, which was an event by the Iraqi Medical Association to hail the sacrifices of Iraqi medical personnel who died of coronavirus, and the other virus victims in the Iraqi community and wider society, this broadcast was followed by 8,000 viewers. A more recent event, last week, which I broadcast about education had 4,000 viewers.
- Live-streaming these events has been a great experience for me, as hundreds of people write their comments and write for me from inside Iraq, or from Iraqi communities in other countries such as Australia, America, Canada and other Arab countries. Even Iraqi viewers living in Thailand have contacted me regarding these events. All of these events can be seen on my Facebook page.
- The technology needed to live-stream events is not expensive. All you need is a good mobile phone and a stand to broadcast from your Facebook page, you do not need TV cameras, you do

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not need cinematic cameras. All these events can be recorded with an acceptable level of quality, and can be kept as documents for the speakers and the topics and subject areas under discussion.

- Live-streaming events is part of 21st century digital culture, as it has that touch of life and is more attractive to people than watching recorded events afterwards. Media journalism is always about the latest thing and about live things and what is happening in "real-time". As a result there is a need for the live-streaming in real-time, as I've noticed that many centres prefer to only record their events for others to watch afterwards on their websites. They should make more use of modern technology (for instance, Facebook pages, especially when they knock at your door and tell you that this page is showing a live event). In other words they are following you, not you following them.

QUESTION 10:

In what ways do you feel that the non-formal learning these centres provide to participants could be enhanced or improved?

ANSWER:

As a start, these centres with their non-formal learning opportunities play a great role in forming and transforming the knowledge attitudes of people. To improve and enhance this non-formal learning, the centres should:

- Invest and improve in the technical side of delivering events (venues, halls, equipment, datashows, sound technology and other facilities).
- The timing of events is important, as is keeping to standard times in terms of the event length. Any speaker giving presentations should keep to the original stated time given in the event's advertisement.
- Presentations should be slick and concise and straight to the point, with a good way of presenting the facts, not to be lengthy and boring without substantiated facts and evidence.
- All centres should be inclusive and have an open doors policy. They should have a friendly and welcoming environment for all, irrespective of religious beliefs, ethnicity, nationality, social and cultural background, or even any bias within communities. They should aim to serve the best of humanity, and not to promote any sectarian or discriminatory hate speech against any individuals or communities.

Our Ref: NA/204293/PhD.Ed/Resp 010

Date: 15 March 2020

Interview: In person

The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens:
A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how non-formal education transforms individuals and communities

Questionnaire (quantitative data)
Answers to all questions below are optional

1. Gender: Male__X__ Female _____

2. Age Range: 18-39 ____ 40-59 __X__ 60+ ____

3. Highest qualification obtained: **MA Economy & History**

4. What kind of professions have you worked in: Journalism, media,
TV channel correspondent, poet, co-ordinator of Al-Kalima Club (The Word Club)

5. How long have you been involved in attending non-formal education? Over 20 yrs

6. At which institution(s) do you attend non-formal learning?

BISI*_____HDF*_X___AISC*_X___Other_X___(if multiple, tick each box)

(* BISI = British Institute for the Study of Iraq; HDF = Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation; AISC = Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre)

Apart from the centres above, others include:

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● Iraqi Cultural Centre (closed in 2015)
● Iraqi Association
● Palestinian Cultural Centre
● Libyan Studies Centre
● Al-Gad Palestinian Forum
● Various think-tanks

7. Which topics/subjects have you mainly attended knowledge events for, in the Iraqi-British cultural centres?

Facilitated/attended many events relating to culture, literature, media and politics.

_____

8. How often do you engage in non-formal learning with these centres and why? (eg, once/twice a week, month etc)

Once a week

_____

QUESTION 1:

What types of non-formal education/learning do you participate in at the Iraqi- British cultural centres?

- **Cultural/knowledge presentations in person** _____X_____

- **Workshops in the centres** ___X_____

- **Advice sessions in the centres** __X_____

- **Watching these centres' TV reports, interviews and events** _X_____

- **Borrowing books and getting advice on books from the centres** _X_____

- **Other** __X_____

ANSWER:
I've mainly facilitated and attended cultural/knowledge presentations.

Also, I've participated in many workshops and advice sessions.

I don't normally follow events via live-stream as I would prefer to be there in person. However, as a TV correspondent I have made many TV reports and interviews regarding cultural events by London's Iraqi-British centres, so I watch many TV reports made by others about Iraqi-British cultural events.

Also, being a journalist and editor of my organisation's website, I've written many cultural articles and I read tens of other articles and publications relating to the Iraqi-British cultural scene.

I've got my own library at home with many books. However, I do borrow books from public libraries and in a few cases, I've borrowed some books from Iraqi-British centres (HDF and AISC).

QUESTION 2:
What are your main reasons for participating in non-formal learning with these centres? (eg, personal interest, motivation, occupation-related, etc)

ANSWER:
All of these are applicable, as it is part of my work and occupation to attend these events and to cover cultural and political events in media and TV. I also go to keep up to date with other presenters and cultural activities.

QUESTION 3:
Can you tell me more about the activities that particularly interest you, and the reasons for this?

ANSWER:
Because of my background and occupation, I'm generally interested in attending political events, cultural events, literary and arts events.

QUESTION 4:
What do you find most rewarding about your participation in non-formal education? For instance

- **a greater knowledge of a subject area or topic presented? In what way?**
- **a greater sense of belonging to a learning community? In what way?**
- **increased sense of social cohesion/individual or cultural identity? In what way?**
- **increased sense of integration into a community and wider society? In what way?**
- **any other factors? In what way?**

ANSWER:
Firstly, I go to these events for knowledge and intellectual reasons – to know more about a specific subject.

Also, there is an element of social cohesion that you don't want to be isolated from other Iraqi community members, you want to be part of their community.

I wouldn't define myself as part of any learning community of these centres, but I know and understand the meaning of "learning community" through my organisation, the Al-Kalima Club.

The most rewarding part of attending these events is to exchange knowledge, thoughts and information with others. It's possible that someone's presentation, or the follow-up discussion, opens horizons for further research and to know more. As a writer and a TV reporter, this can lead you to write articles or make a TV report regarding a subject area needing more research and awareness, which is originally derived from attending these events.

QUESTION 5:

What would you say are your preferred methods of learning:

- *Teacher-led, such as attending a knowledge presentation (this is known as didactic learning)*
- *Self-directed study (eg, learning by yourself by visiting websites/centres' websites/social media pages etc)*
- *Learning in small groups and workshops (such as attending workshops and/or advice sessions)*
- *Other (please state)*

What are your main reasons for preferring any of the learning methods listed above? Does it depend on the subject matter or topic?

ANSWER:

There is a need for speakers or facilitators at events. However, I'm not keen on the idea that the speaker talks for most of the time.

I prefer if speakers are given a time period to deliver their topic, and more time for discussions and exchanging thoughts with the audience, as many of them are also experts in that field or other subject areas.

In his words, this amounts to open dialogue, meaning the speaker gives the idea or main thoughts and the audience expand on it further, taking into account the fact these centres are not schools with teachers who teach students. Instead it is a venue which gathers ideas from many experts from a diverse range of professional backgrounds.

Workshops – this is definitely not for cultural events, it is more applicable for conferences, courses etc.

QUESTION 6:

What are the main positive outcomes of non-formal learning for you?

ANSWER:

The main positive outcome is to further your knowledge on specific subjects and topics.

The events can also trigger you to investigate something further and to deliver a TV report or write an article relating to some new aspects you have researched and discovered.

In my professional work as a journalist and TV reporter, attending these events helps me to meet, connect and network with other professionals and experts, speakers and politicians. This can take more time and effort to get to know them without attending such events.

QUESTION 7:

Do you engage in any or all of the centres' non-formal learning activities with your parents and/or your children? This is known as the intergenerational factor. If so, please give some examples.

ANSWER:

I mainly attend these events by myself, although I do go to some events with my wife.

I don't attend many cultural events at Iraqi-British centres with my children (who are second-generation Iraqi-British citizens), mainly because their first language is English more than Arabic. In addition, second-generation children have their own lives and interests and they do not generally attend events at these centres.

However, I've attended many English-speaking events with my son at several British institutions, including LSE and Kings College London. One of these events was about Iraq's economic investments.

QUESTION 8:
What challenges have you faced whilst participating in non-formal learning? (eg, accommodating it with your time, family and work commitments)

ANSWER:
The main challenge is fitting it in with work commitments, as I'm sometimes attending TV interviews. In many cases, this clashes with the timing of the events being held at the cultural centres.

Also, sometimes if I've got deadlines to meet for finishing articles or preparing TV reports, this prevents me from attending them.

Commitments with my family and children also stop me from attending some events. However, I do try to attend events that interest me as much as possible.

QUESTION 9:
Are there any ways in which the non-formal learning these centres provide to the community can be changed to widen participation to include people from all ages and backgrounds?

ANSWER:
Generally, non-formal education in these cultural centres is needed in a world of more "universal communities" with multicultural values.

The centres can improve their events and their non-formal learning opportunities by:

● Choosing useful and interesting topics to be delivered by speakers.
● Not to choose overly detailed subject areas and topics which are very Iraqi or very British, related to specific details. Instead, the subject area should be broad and garner more interest.
● To choose topics and subject areas related to community members' daily lives or the wider society (eg, Brexit and its effects on the Iraqi community or how they perceive it, or other subjects like Islamophobia and its impacts on various communities).
● To bring subjects and topics, with speakers who can present success stories in their professional and public lives, with the intention of inspiring audiences.
● The centres' facilitators and speakers should design events with questions in mind such as – how will participants benefit from this? What will they get out of it? Why should they attend?

QUESTION 10:

In what ways do you feel that the non-formal learning these centres provide to participants could be enhanced or improved?

<u>ANSWER:</u>

They can enhance and improve their offering of non-formal learning and events to communities by:

- Choosing a wider variety of subject areas and topics.
- Including different cultural horizons and atmospheres, ie make it more multicultural.
- There is a great need for these centres to target more multicultural subject areas, especially as an Iraqi community living in the UK. There is a need for the Anglo-Iraqi studies and although AISC covers part of this, the Anglo-Iraqi body of knowledge is too great and needs a lot of work. It is not only about war books written in the time of the British Army's Mesopotamia Campaign, it is about many books in literature, economy, geology, zoology, etc. These subjects need to be uncovered and addressed in many public events and researches.
- Centres should also think about having informal open days where community members can go in and talk, like an open cultural café environment (what we call a cultural salon) which can trigger many ideas by an exchange of information.
- For centres to improve their non-formal learning experiences and their services, they need suitable financial, community and media support to have good venues with good facilities, with the flexibility to invite a diverse range of speakers from many countries (not only the UK) to deliver quality presentations and workshops that engage the audience.

Questionnaire & Semi Structured Interview Schedule
Facilitators/managers of the centres

Our Ref: NA/204293/PhD.Ed/Resp 003

Date: 23 January 2020

Interview conducted: In person

The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens:
A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how non-formal education
transforms individuals and communities

Questionnaire (quantitative data)

Answers to all questions below are optional

1.   *Gender:*   Male X   Female _____

2.   *Age Range:*   18-39 _____   40-59 X   60+ _____

3.   *Highest qualification obtained:* _____**PhD Mesopotamian Archaeology**_____

4.   *What kind of professions have you worked in:* ___Museum Curator at
                              Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University

     Chair of Council at the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI)

5.   *How long have you been involved in facilitating non-formal education?*

     ANSWER: 30 years.

6. *At which institution(s) do you facilitate non-formal learning?*

BISI* X   HDF*   AISC*   Other X   (if multiple, tick each box)

(* BISI = British Institute for the Study of Iraq; HDF = Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation; AISC = Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre)

ANSWER:
I'm heavily involved in the facilitation and management of events at the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI). However, through my work at BISI I've become involved in facilitating non-formal learning in other educational environments, both in London and outside, such as in Oxford. BISI do this by working in partnership with other organisations, such as the Iraqi Cultural Centre (ICC) which closed in 2015.

I'm always actively seeking out opportunities to do something together with organisations such as the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC), and other Iraqi community organisations in the UK and Iraq.

7. *Which topics/subjects have you mainly facilitated knowledge events for, in the Iraqi-British cultural centres?*

ANSWER:
Archaeology/heritage, my specialist area of expertise is ancient Mesopotamia.

8. *How often do you facilitate non-formal learning events with these centres and why? (eg, once/twice a week, month etc)*

ANSWER: Every two months, I engage with the Iraqi community on archaeological subjects to explain the latest information to as wide an audience as possible.

Also, BISI as an institution holds 3-4 formal lectures each year on a range of subjects related to archaeology, arts, humanities and social sciences related to Iraq.

Semi-structured interview schedule (qualitative data)
(Answers to all questions are optional)

QUESTION 1:

What are the methods of non-formal education/learning you use at the Iraqi- British cultural centres?

- *Cultural/knowledge presentations   X*
- *Workshops   X*
- *TV reports, interviews and events relating to my activities   X*
- *Gave advice on learning materials to the centres' participants   X*

ANSWER:

BISI runs its own events, mainly lectures, which are held hold 3 times a year.

These are mainly for BISI members, but also for the wider community. Generally, we find that different people attend with different interests every time. In other words, the subject attracts people if they're interested in it.

One of BISI's main challenges is that we try to explore Iraq in all its diversity – antiquity to the present – and as such, our lectures seek to cover the ancient world, mediaeval world and modern world of Iraq. We try to offer a range of lectures offering something to people across that range every year.

At BISI we actively seek to make our knowledge more widely available to the general public, with a particular interest in trying to engage with Iraqis in the UK.

Another challenge is that BISI are based in London – our lectures are always held at the British Academy near Trafalgar Square. To expand our reach and widen participation, we look for outreach visit opportunities with other organisations such as the Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF) and AISC.

BISI's historical background is all about archaeology, as we were born as "The Gertrude Bell Memorial; British Institute of Archaeology" in 1932. However, in 1990 with the Gulf War and its aftermath, it was no longer possible to go to Iraq to carry out excavations. This meant that the government's funds for BISI stopped, as their funding was for the institute to carry out excavations inside Iraq.

BISI then had a choice – to either come to an end or reinvent ourselves to be more relevant. This led to us renaming the institute as the "British Institute for the Study of Iraq" in 2007, widening our remit from archaeology alone to include arts, humanities and social sciences, with the principal aim of engaging with Iraqis. We share the commitment of the UK's educational establishments to widening participation among communities.

QUESTION 2:
Which of the above learning methods (in Question 1 above) do you consider particularly helpful for participants? What are the main reasons for this?

ANSWER:
BISI host major conferences every 2 years, with speakers from Iraq, and workshops form a key part of these conferences. We look to raise our profile so more people and organisations are aware of our existence and the services and knowledge we can offer. In turn this enables our organisation's outreach work and for us to enable and facilitate non-formal learning in other community organisations.

BISI would like to hold some conferences inside Iraq. It's our ultimate aim, but the main challenge is getting funding there (in Iraq) in the first place to enable these conferences to be held.

BISI had a permanent base in Iraq – the British School of Archaeology in Iraq – until it closed in 1990. Now, we're looking to re-establish a base in Iraq but not to have a permanent presence there in the same way that we did before. An example of this is our extensive work with the Basra Museum, to re-open it and re-present its collection of antiquities to the public.

BISI also offer advice sessions and advice on learning materials to participants in non-formal learning. We have one full-time employee who filters incoming enquiries, and because of our status as a specialist centre of knowledge about Iraq in the UK, we do get several enquiries. Our administrator sends these to BISI trustees, managers and facilitators who then answer these enquiries. These trustees, managers and facilitators are drawn from a community of high-ranking academics with expertise in their fields.

BISI don't live-stream their events right now, but at our recent strategy meeting we decided to look into ways of doing this. Our administrator is now looking to set this up in the coming months, so it is on the way.

BISI have several TV reports, interviews and events and so on which cover our activities. They are uploaded onto the BISI website and our social media pages (Twitter and Facebook). We are generally the first port of call for the media, due to our status as experts on Iraq in the UK. Media representatives do attend BISI's conferences but not as much as we would like, which again highlights why we need to raise our profile.

In this respect, BISI run the "Iraqi Scholars Programme" providing funding for Iraqi scholars to come to the UK and work with us, and the university museum engagement programme, which offers grants for university students and groups to do projects on subjects related to Iraq. I'm hoping that this will lead to a map of the UK on the wall, on which we'll see activities relating to Iraq that we've funded, enabled and facilitated throughout the UK.

We would like to facilitate more non-formal learning of this nature, but we're limited by our size and funding constraints at the present time.

As for which learning methods are particularly helpful for participants, public lectures are BISI's main focus. However, going beyond this we want to engage with wider communities, enable and facilitate non-formal learning within these community organisations, rather than just offering non-formal learning ourselves.

QUESTION 3:
What topics have you presented to participants? What particularly interests you in presenting these topics? Which learning methods do you use to present these topics?

ANSWER:
Topics presented include anything that touches on the arts, humanities and social sciences of Iraq. Outreach work, meaning that we pass our knowledge on through community engagement, is a key focus for us not just holding lectures and conferences.

A recent example of this is BISI's work with the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) in Russell Square. In March 2019, SOAS held a series of lectures under the theme of "The Jews in Iraq" which BISI's staff and facilitators participated in and contributed to.

The main challenge BISI faces is getting people to know that we exist!

I trained as a history teacher and as such, I'm interested in education. As part of this, I have been involved in publishing a children's book (Key Stage 2) about the history of ancient Mesopotamia, written in both English and Arabic. This involves working with children. Also, I facilitate study days and adult education which focuses on my areas of expertise, which are ancient Assyria and Sumeria. Speaking as a museum curator, I would highlight that the role played by museums is all about engagement with the public, and facilitating their learning and development.

QUESTION 4:
Are your participants mainly of Iraqi origin, or are they also drawn from other ethnic/national backgrounds?

ANSWER:
We see this as one of our main challenges. We have a largely British base and despite our extensive efforts to reach out to Iraqi communities in the UK, we've found there isn't much interest among Iraqis in getting involved in BISI and participating in our activities. I think this is because we've come out of this tradition of being a British learned society and as such, this isn't surprising. We're continually trying to reinvent ourselves and make Iraqis feel that this is a place for them. However, right now we're finding that the Iraqi community in the UK will not engage with us, in common with other institutions like BISI which have their origins in the colonial era.

QUESTION 5:

Do participants bring their family members (such as their children who were born in the UK) to your centre's events? This is known as the inter-generational factor.

ANSWER:

No, generally this does not happen. I believe this is largely due to the location of BISI lectures and other events, in central London near Trafalgar Square. It's a grand old building which is not child-friendly and also, most lectures are held in the evenings and this restricts who can come along to them. I see greater community engagement and partnering with community organisations as the way to overcome this. Again, as BISI are a relatively small organization, this limits our reach to the wider community.

There are known issues with second-generation Iraqis in the UK not wanting to attend non-formal learning events with their parents. However, I'll refer to BISI's work in partnership with the Iraqi Cultural Centre (ICC) which closed in 2015. Our work with the ICC was very successful, with parents and children attending events together and this facilitated intra-generational learning.

Sadly, the UK's Iraqi community are heavily dependent upon the Iraqi government providing them with funds and venues for these kinds of partnerships and non-formal learning to take place at all. For many reasons, the Iraqi government is unable to provide this kind of support to the Iraqi community in the UK at present which led to ICC's closure in 2015.

QUESTION 6:

What prompted you to become involved with the delivery of this particular type/subject of non-formal learning?(eg personal interest, professional background or anything else)

ANSWER:

I feel that I'm in a position to guide others with my expertise on Iraq, particularly in archaeology and ancient Mesopotamia, so this is very much a personal interest motivation for me. Through my work in museums, I've developed the desire to transmit my knowledge to others and facilitate their personal development through learning.

As the governments in the UK and Iraq are targeting their funding at the formal education sector, we need to continue building our relationships with other organisations to secure sufficient funding to facilitate non-formal learning and to transmit our knowledge further through these partnerships.

QUESTION 7:
In what ways do you feel that your participants benefit from your presentations/facilitations (please provide examples):

- *on an intellectual level (eg, greater understanding of subject area or a topic);*
- *encouraging them to pursue certain careers, hobbies or interests*

ANSWER:
BISI's range of activities should offer something for everyone, at least this is what we aim to do.

As an example, we held a very successful lecture about the music of Iraq in the 1940s and 1950s which was facilitated by a British library musical curator. This music was played at the lecture, and was sung by Iraqi stars of the era. I remember that the audience were in tears remembering their past and their heritage, and that this generated a lot of interest after the event. This has led to BISI expanding its community engagement, public awareness and so on.

There's little evidence to show that participating in BISI's non-formal learning helps people to "choose a career", it's more helpful to enhance the self-development of individuals and communities.

QUESTION 8:
How do you see non-formal learning changing/transforming the lives of your learning participants, on an individual level and in their wider community? Can you give examples of, for instance:

- *a greater sense of belonging to a learning community*
- *increased sense of social cohesion/individual or cultural identity*
- *increased sense of integration into a community and wider society*
- *any other factors*

ANSWER:
BISI's methods of learning delivery are changing. Live-streaming is in development and BISI is aiming to deliver this to participants in the coming months. Also, BISI's facilitators and volunteers can travel to Iraq more easily now than in the past and this has made a difference. I believe that the key to expanding people's knowledge is to collaborate and facilitate, not to dictate knowledge to them, for effective learning to take place.

If more Iraqis participated in BISI's non-formal learning activities, they'd probably gain a stronger sense of identity and social integration. The main issue is that they're not aware BISI exists, which again, I would say is due to Iraqis having anti-Colonial attitudes.

We hope that once we can live-stream events, this will result in greater community engagement from the Iraqi community who can watch them at home or online if they're unable to come to the events in person.

QUESTION 9:
Are there any ways in which the non-formal learning you provide to the community can be changed to widen participation to include people from all ages and social backgrounds?

ANSWER:
Again, this can only happen with us reaching out to more community organisations and groups to widen participation. The barriers to this are the issues we have with organization size, funding constraints and so on.

QUESTION 10:
In what ways do you feel that the non-formal learning these centres provide to participants could be enhanced or improved?

ANSWER:
We need to expand beyond London and hold non-formal learning in more places where people feel comfortable. I get the feeling that many Iraqis don't feel comfortable attending events in the British Academy, which highlights the importance of the venues, their location and atmosphere in general. If people don't feel comfortable there, they won't attend events and get involved with BISI.

Facilitators/managers of the centres

Our Ref: NA/204293/PhD.Ed/Resp 004

Date: 9 February 2020

Interview: In person

The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens:
A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how non-formal education transforms individuals and communities

Questionnaire (quantitative data)
Answers to all questions below are optional

1.   Gender: Male X   Female _____

2.   Age Range: 18-39 _____   40-59 _ 60+ X_

3.   Highest qualification obtained: **PhD in Computing Science**

4.   What kind of professions have you worked in: University professor
                                                                    Iraqi government spokesperson
                                                                        Deputy minister (Iraq)

5.   How long have you been involved in facilitating non-formal education?
     35 years (Iraq/UK/other countries)

6.   At which institution(s) do you facilitate non-formal learning?

     BISI* X   HDF* X   AISC* X   Other X (if multiple, tick each box)

     (* BISI = British Institute for the Study of Iraq; HDF = Humanitarian Dialogue
     Foundation; AISC = Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre)

7. Which topics/subjects have you mainly facilitated knowledge events for, in the Iraqi-British cultural centres?

    I've given presentations at many cultural centres, mainly HDF. They include:

    education in the digital age;

    the impact of the digital technology;

    future and digital age;

    the future of human beings;

    political challenges facing Iraq

8. How often do you facilitate non-formal learning events with these centres and why? (eg, once/twice a week, month etc)

    I give knowledge presentations once every two months on average

QUESTION 1:

What are the methods of non-formal education/learning you use at the Iraqi-British cultural centres?

- Cultural/knowledge presentations __X_____
- Workshops __X_____
- Advice sessions __X_____
- Livestream broadcasting of my activities _____
- TV reports, interviews and events relating to my activities __X_____
- Gave advice on learning materials to the centres' participants __X_____
- Other _____

ANSWER:

I mainly facilitate cultural/knowledge presentations.

Also, I've facilitated two workshops with two British institutions (not related to Iraqi-British centres).

I don't broadcast my own events, but the institutions which I present at have done this.

I'm involved with advice sessions with many institutions, including the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC).

I've been invited to appear on many TV interviews, including Sky News Arabia, BBC Arabic and many others.

I've also given advice on learning materials (theses, dissertations) for tens of students coming from Iraq to study in the UK.

At many meetings and conferences, the non-formal sessions and discussions can also be helpful and can be part of non-formal and informal education (ie, learning by networking with others outside of conferences, workshops and cultural events).

QUESTION 2:

Which of the above learning methods (in Question 1 above) do you consider particularly helpful for participants? What are the main reasons for this?

ANSWER:

I believe that cultural events and knowledge presentations are the best learning methods.

QUESTION 3:

What topics have you presented to participants? What particularly interests you in presenting these topics? Which learning methods do you use to present these topics?

ANSWER:

Most of the topics I've presented are about the digital age. Other topics which I've presented were related to political issues based on my previous experience and expertise.

I've mainly given knowledge presentations.

I always try to maintain a level of interaction and discussion between myself as the presenter and the audience.

QUESTION 4:

Are your participants mainly of Iraqi origin, or are they also drawn from other ethnic/national backgrounds?

ANSWER:

Most of those attending my events are of Iraqi origin.

QUESTION 5:

Do participants bring their family members (such as their children who were born in the UK) to your centre's events? This is known as the inter-generational factor.

ANSWER:

In some of the presentations which I've given, I have noticed the presence of some second-generation Iraqi-British citizens, attending with their parents or with a group of family members.

QUESTION 6:

What prompted you to become involved with the delivery of this particular

type/subject of non-formal learning?(eg personal interest, professional background or anything else)

ANSWER:

My professional background has allowed me to give knowledge presentations and lectures in the fields of information technology and politics.

It is also a personal interest issue for me to educate others about these subjects.

This is also an opportunity for me to pass my knowledge and experience onto others.

QUESTION 7:

In what ways do you feel that your participants benefit from your presentations/facilitations (please provide examples):

- *on an intellectual level (eg, greater understanding of subject area or a topic);*
- *encouraging them to pursue certain careers, hobbies or interests*

ANSWER:

Both factors are beneficial for participants.

I always assess the outcomes of my presentations from the feedback which I receive from many individuals, and they have confirmed that they've benefited on an intellectual level and in terms of pursuing careers, hobbies or interests.

The main thing is that also, many people have asked me for advice regarding pursuing their MAs and PhDs in the UK, particularly in the fields of information technology and software engineering.

In some cases, I've given advice on specific information technology subjects or topics for individuals to pursue. For instance, I advised an Iraqi student in Brunel University to write about big data, as this is an important subject for future digital development.

Also, I've given advice to hundreds of his previous students in Iraqi universities, who are now completing their studies in Europe, America and Australia.

However, despite my own advice, my son decided to pursue another career area!

QUESTION 8:

How do you see non-formal learning changing/transforming the lives of your

learning participants, on an individual level and in their wider community? Can you give *examples of, for instance:*

- **a greater sense of belonging to a learning community**
- **increased sense of social cohesion/individual or cultural identity**
- **increased sense of integration into a community and wider society**
- **any other factors**

ANSWER:

Yes, it definitely provides them with a sense of belonging to something.

However, I'm not sure if this can help transform people negatively or positively and also I am not sure to what extent this transformation can take place.

There are two types of people who attend these non-formal learning events – to spend time as a social event, taking photos with others etc, and others who attend to learn from networking opportunities and presentations.

There are also people who attend because of the social connections, and as a kind of compliment to the presenter.

The three centres that your project studies focus their presentations on a varied range of topics – history, Iraq, politics, medicine, religion and so on. However, you see the same people attending all the time. I'm really not sure which of these subjects are the most beneficial for individuals.

That said, these events have played the role of being social gatherings, and usually many of those attending these events then socialize in cafes and restaurants. This in turn helps to integrate communities and to strengthen individual relationships. It is a kind of supplementary step to help them integrate into the wider society.

Regarding the transformative factor in learning, I believe that such questions will probably be answered more fully by participants and not facilitators.

QUESTION 9:

Are there any ways in which the non-formal learning you provide to the community can be changed to widen participation to include people from all ages and social backgrounds?

ANSWER:

Yes, of course there are many ways to do this.

I've noticed that after I've given knowledge presentations, many people ask me to give further events and presentations related to that topic or something similar to it.

In some cases, I have been asked to give my information technology presentations to younger age groups.

For instance, when I gave a presentation on education in one of the Iraqi-British centres, I was then asked to give similar presentations to individuals teaching Arabic in supplementary schools. As such, one event in any place can lead to more events being held in a more diverse range of settings.

Regarding the issue of intergenerationality, there is a general lack of second-generation Iraqi-British citizens attending these centres and this has been identified. I've noticed that when the subject of the presentation is of interest to participants, they make more effort to get involved. This is what happened with the younger generation when they asked me to give a presentation on information technology. Even when I worked at Kingston University, I presented this for the Arab community.

QUESTION 10:

In what ways do you feel that the non-formal learning these centres provide to participants could be enhanced or improved?

ANSWER:

My own perspective on non-formal education is that it enhances people's knowledge, rather than improving them in some way. The concept of "improvement" relates more closely to formal education.

However, non-formal education enhances individuals by encouraging them to read something about something. Maybe this will raise questions about some subjects, which participants are then encouraged to research further to find answers. This in turn opens up new horizons for them.

Our Ref: NA/204293/PhD.Ed/Resp 006

Date: 9 February 2020

Interview: In person

The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens:
A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how non-formal education transforms individuals and communities

Questionnaire (quantitative data)
Answers to all questions below are optional

1.   Gender: Male X   Female _____

2.   Age Range: 18-39 ___   40-59 X   60+

3.   Highest qualification obtained**:   PhD Sports Medicine, Tokyo University**

4.   What kind of professions have you worked in: University professor
                        Academy director (Academy of Scientific Research & Training, London)
                        International lecturer on the subject of sports medicine in many countries

5.   How long have you been involved in facilitating non-formal education?

     About 28 years (both formal and non-formal education)

6.   At which institution(s) do you facilitate non-formal learning?

     BISI*_____HDF* X   AISC*_____Other_____(if multiple, tick each box)

     (* BISI = British Institute for the Study of Iraq; HDF = Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation; AISC = Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre)
     I gave events at HDF and attended events at many other centres

7.   Which topics/subjects have you mainly facilitated knowledge events for, in the Iraqi-

331

British cultural centres?

Sports medicine

Sport subjects in general

8. How often do you facilitate non-formal learning events with these centres and why? (eg, once/twice a week, month etc)

Once a month

Semi-structured interview schedule (qualitative data)
(Answers to all questions are optional)

QUESTION 1:
What are the methods of non-formal education/learning you use at the Iraqi-British cultural centres?

- Cultural/knowledge presentations X
- Workshops X
- Advice sessions
- Livestream broadcasting of my activities X
- TV reports, interviews and events relating to my activities
- Gave advice on learning materials to the centres' participants
- Other Social media video-calling facilities

ANSWER:
I've used all the above methods of non-formal education with participants. Live-streaming events is very important to expand non-formal education and widen participation.

In addition, I've done:
- personal training on a one-to-one basis with clients, in person or online using video-call facilities
- group training with clients, in person or online using video-call facilities
- advice sessions for individuals and groups, in person or online using video-call facilities

QUESTION 2:
Which of the above learning methods (in Question 1 above) do you consider particularly helpful for participants? What are the main reasons for this?

ANSWER:
I mainly use these learning methods:
- workshops with clients, both one-to-one and group sessions
- social media video-calling facilities (WhatsApp, Messenger, Skype)

I've managed to deliver 120 events and conferences related to my area of expertise, and I've participated in over 600 workshops in the last 20 years.

QUESTION 3:
What topics have you presented to participants? What particularly interests you in presenting these topics? Which learning methods do you use to present these topics?

ANSWER:
Sports medicine, nutrition, dealing with injuries, anti-doping bodies.

I'm interested in delivering these topics as it's very important for individuals to keep healthy and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

QUESTION 4:
Are your participants mainly of Iraqi origin, or are they also drawn from other ethnic/national backgrounds?

ANSWER:
Participants are mainly of Iraqi origin in the UK's Iraqi-British centres.

Participants are mainly of that country's origin in their own countries (eg, Egyptians in Egypt, Moroccans in Morocco).

Participants are from more diverse ethnic and national backgrounds (Europeans and Arabs) in the events and lectures that I've given in European countries such as Sweden.

QUESTION 5:
Do participants bring their family members (such as their children who were born in the UK) to your centre's events? This is known as the inter-generational factor.

ANSWER:
In my presentations, whether I deliver them in the UK or abroad, I find that many young people attend, whether on their own or with parents and other family members.

I believe this is because my subjects, about sports and staying healthy and active, are of interest to young people and this is why they attend.

QUESTION 6:

What prompted you to become involved with the delivery of this particular

type/subject of non-formal learning? (eg personal interest, professional background or anything else)

ANSWER:

It is mainly because of my professional background and my work.

Also, I do it for personal interest.

My networking activities in London and Europe, with the latest international knowledge, methods and theories in sports medicine, enable me to deliver information on the latest modern theories, knowledge and methods to participants at the events which I deliver in the Arab world.

QUESTION 7:

In what ways do you feel that your participants benefit from your presentations/facilitations (please provide examples):

- **on an intellectual level (eg, greater understanding of subject area or a topic);**
- **encouraging them to pursue certain careers, hobbies or interests**

ANSWER:

Both points are applicable to my events, as I believe that they help participants to develop and improve their knowledge about this subject, and also to further their interests in the subject.

Regarding encouraging others, my presentations and sessions always include advice to participants, whether it's related to the subject area or on a different scale, such as advising somebody coming to the UK what university courses to take, and to help some MA and PhD students coming to the UK and Europe fit their interests to particular study areas and topics of research in the sports medicine field.

QUESTION 8:

How do you see non-formal learning changing/transforming the lives of your

learning participants, on an individual level and in their wider community? Can you give examples of, for instance:

- **a greater sense of belonging to a learning community**
- **increased sense of social cohesion/individual or cultural identity**
- **increased sense of integration into a community and wider society**
- **any other factors**

ANSWER:

Yes, I believe that these types of events and non-formal education give individuals a greater sense of belonging to a learning community.

Also, they aid social cohesion and strengthen participants' sense of individual and group identity.

For instance, many Iraqis attend events at the Iraqi-British centres, but their numbers at events held in other Arab-British centres are lower. This definitely comes down to a kind of sense of belonging and identity.

Regarding a sense of integration into a community and wider society, I think my events help with this to a great extent. For instance, if an Iraqi-British citizen attends a specific event on a specific subject and we assume that he likes the subject and wants to know more about it, this will lead them to research it further and maybe watch many videos on this subject in the English language, and possibly attend similar events with British centres. This means that my event has opened many horizons for the participant, and helps them to further their knowledge and to integrate into the wider academic society and community.

Any presenter should know the participants' cultural backgrounds, in order to accommodate his/her knowledge with them. Not all Iraqi-British centres take steps to do this. It is always the traditional way of a teacher-led knowledge presentation.

QUESTION 9:

Are there any ways in which the non-formal learning you provide to the community can be changed to widen participation to include people from all ages and social backgrounds?

ANSWER:

There is a general issue of the second-generation Iraqi-British citizens not attending events at these cultural centres.

My suggestions for resolving this are to:

- offer a variety of topics and subject areas
- make the events and their topics/subject areas more appealing to the second generation
- Iraqi-British centres should plan their events in advance, for instance 6 months ahead, not to arrange things at short notice (eg, an advert for an event in 2 weeks' time), as people like me have many scheduled commitments and they cannot attend at short notice
- Most of the Iraqi-British centres need to engage more closely with social media technology with adverts for events, event summaries, broadcasting of events etc

QUESTION 10:

In what ways do you feel that the non-formal learning these centres provide to participants could be enhanced or improved?

ANSWER:

Iraqi-British centres should compile statistics and databases showing their learning community's characteristics. For instance, how many engineers? How many doctors? What are their occupations?

This is because the centres' events should fit the needs, interests and knowledge of their main learning community. Presenting on a subject with limited interest among the learning community leads to low levels of participation.

Questionnaire & Semi Structured Interview Schedule

Facilitators/managers of the centres

Our Ref: NA/204293/PhD.Ed/Resp 011

Date: 26 March 2020

Interview: Remote

The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens:
A study of three Iraqi-British cultural institutions and how non-formal education transforms individuals and communities

Questionnaire (quantitative data)
Answers to all questions below are optional

1.   Gender: Male X   Female _____

2.   Age Range: 18-39 _____ 40-59 X 60+

3. Highest qualification obtained: **B.Sc Engineering, Baghdad Uni**
   BA Social Science, Baghdad Uni , MA Anthropology, Cairo Uni
   PGDip Immigration Studies, University of East London

4.   What kind of professions have you worked in: **Executive manager, Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF) / journalism and research in human sciences / worked in engineering in Iraq**

5.   How long have you been involved in facilitating non-formal education?
   Over 15 years facilitating events (Cairo and London) / more than 6 years in current position facilitating weekly events at HDF / monthly film shows with the Iraqi Cinema Club at the Iraqi Association

6. At which institution(s) do you facilitate non-formal learning?

BISI*_____HDF*__X__AISC*__X__Other__X__(if multiple, tick each box)

(* BISI = British Institute for the Study of Iraq; HDF = Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation; AISC = Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre)

I've attended events at the above centres, and events with most of the Iraqi and Arab cultural centres in London.

Also, I have facilitated, managed and organised events at:

- Weekly events co-ordination at HDF (introducing presenters, managing the events) as Executive Manager and co-ordinator
- Monthly film shows and reviews as the founder and co-ordinator of the Iraqi Cinema Club at the Iraqi Association
- Facilitating events at the Iraqi Cultural Café
- Facilitating events at the Iraqi Democratic Movement
- Facilitating events at the Al-Kindy Engineering Association
- Member of the judging panel at the MENA (Middle East & North Africa) Film Festival in Holland, and the events manager

7. Which topics/subjects have you mainly facilitated knowledge events for, in the Iraqi-British cultural centres?

With the Iraqi Cinema Club, which is part of the Iraqi Association, I've facilitated more than 60 monthly international film shows in the last 6 years.

As the executive manager and co-ordinator with the Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation (HDF) – Salam House – I manage the weekly events and introduce presenters with a bio and an introduction to their subject area. I have facilitated and managed over 200 of these events in the last 6 years.

My scientific and social science background helps me to accommodate all the presenters and to give a brief introduction to their subjects to the audience. Subjects covered include culture, literature, arts, economy, science, and many others.

8. How often do you facilitate non-formal learning events with these centres and why? (eg, once/twice a week, month etc)

I facilitate weekly events at HDF as Executive Manager & Co-Ordinator (average of 40 a year).

Also I facilitate monthly events of the Iraqi Cinema Club, part of the Iraqi Association (average of 12 a year).

I facilitate and deliver an average of 6 events a year with other organizations.

Semi-structured interview schedule (qualitative data)
(Answers to all questions are optional)

QUESTION 1:

What are the methods of non-formal education/learning you use at the Iraqi-British cultural centres?

● Cultural/knowledge presentations X

● Workshops X

● Advice sessions X

● Livestream broadcasting of my activities X

● TV reports, interviews and events relating to my activities X

● Gave advice on learning materials to the centres' participants X

● Other X

ANSWER:

In my work with the HDF and Iraqi Cinema Club, I mainly use the cultural and knowledge presentation method (so I introduce presenters and some brief information about their topics to the audience, and with the Cinema Club I'll introduce the film and give brief information about it, and then I'll manage a discussion following the film screening.

Regarding live-streaming at HDF (Salam House), HDF's events are live-streamed on their Facebook page and many individuals' pages. Most of these events are recorded, and uploaded to HDF's website and Youtube channel.

Salam TV, which is broadcast from Baghdad in Arabic, also made some short TV reports about these events and broadcast them. In some cases they have broadcast the whole event. In addition, many other TV correspondents (mainly from Iraqi TV channels) attend the events to report on them to the wider Iraqi community, depending on the channels' level of interest in the subject areas.

Regarding workshops, most of my events are closer to knowledge presentations (nearly 240 with HDF, 60 with the Iraqi Cinema Club). However, less than 10 of the events I have run with HDF were closer to what you can define as workshops (eg, an event about body language awareness). Another workshop was about the younger generation in the UK, and was mainly based on group interactions.

Outside of HDF's weekly events, they also had a workshop about film making. This was attended by some media students, who learned the techniques of making short films over a few sessions run by the Iraqi film director Jamal Amin. Each participant made a short film, and these films were subsequently screened in an event at HDF (Salam House) held to highlight their work.

Also, HDF organise art exhibitions which can be another type of non-formal learning. These art exhibitions, held at HDF's offices, showcase photography, paintings and portraits, sometimes by one artist or an exhibition by many artists. Around 12 art exhibitions have been held at HDF (Salam House) over the last 6 years.

Regarding advice sessions, in many cases and mainly due to personal enquiries, many academics (including British academics) contact me and HDF for information about Iraq, Iraqi politics, culture, faith groups, Islamic groups, Islamic sectarianism. This happens a lot and I have to respond to them, but this amounts to informal advice sessions.

In HDF's reception area, visitors will find free copies of newsletters and magazines issued by other Iraqi and British community and cultural centres. This can keep the Iraqi community aware of activities by other organisations, both in their own community (Iraqi-British; Arab-British) or the wider society.

HDF also have a table for authors and writers who have presented events in their offices to display copies of their books and publications, which they can distribute free of charge or sell to interested community members, without any charge by HDF.

For about 3 years, HDF ran weekly senior citizen sessions for elderly Iraqi-British citizens, in which they came to the office and had a café environment, where they could discuss any issues of interest to them. These sessions were managed by an Iraqi medical doctor and poet, Dr Sabah Jamal Adin.

As HDF own their own building in London, which is accessible and well known by London's Iraqi community, many organisations (cultural and political groups) approach HDF to use their venue for their organisations' events and activities. However, HDF usually apologise and decline political groups and parties from using their venue, as this goes against HDF's commitments and mission statement, although HDF offer their venue free of charge for many other organisations to run cultural events (eg, Awlad Al-Taraf Forum – the Iraqi Association – and the Al-Kindy Engineering Association made many cultural events in HDF's offices).

Many organisations approach HDF to run events and training courses in HDF's offices (which participants would pay to attend). However, as HDF is a registered non-profit organisation and charity, most of their own activities are run without charge. As these kinds of training courses and events can be classified as more commercial, HDF tend to decline their requests to use their offices for payable courses.

QUESTION 2:

Which of the above learning methods (in Question 1 above) do you consider particularly helpful for participants? What are the main reasons for this?

ANSWER:

The cultural events, knowledge presentations and lectures are particularly helpful for participants. These tend to suit the audience, particularly if the presentation is followed up with a question and answer session and time for discussion. This constitutes nearly 90% of HDF events.

Some of these knowledge presentations, especially about medical and psychological issues, were more interactive involving frequent dialogue between the speaker and his/her audience during the knowledge presentation rather than after he/she finished talking.

Workshops tend to be a better non-formal learning method for practical things such as sessions about body language awareness, the integration of second-generation Iraqi-British citizens and new immigrants into the wider society (different groups, different questions and different approaches).

QUESTION 3:

What topics have you presented to participants? What particularly interests you in presenting these topics? Which learning methods do you use to present these topics?

ANSWER:

I mainly manage events at HDF and introduces speakers and their subjects, which I've done nearly 240 times in the last 6 years.

However, I was the main speaker and I've delivered presentations on 6 occasions at HDF myself. Most of my presentations were related to the social sciences (eg, an event about the Iraqi Mindaee group, their social and anthropological history etc, which was part of my MA at Cairo University). Another event I presented was an anthropological approach to the annual Assura event, a study in the traditions of faith communities. I've presented other events relating to social aspects of literary characters in Iraqi culture, such as an event on the Iraqi cultural and social scene in 1990s Iraq under international sanctions.

The other events which I manage and run are for the Iraqi Cinema Club's monthly film shows and film presentations (a brief review of the film, why he chose it, its distinguishing features, then watching the film itself and followed up with audience discussion) which I've delivered over 60 times in the last six years. The main criteria for selecting films is the knowledge and information the film

can add for viewers and to share the film with others, whether viewers will enjoy watching the film, and whether they will participate in discussion following a film screening. This includes all cinematic genres (French, Italian, Spanish, British, American, Iranian, Korean, African, South African and Arab films). Regarding the Arab films, they invited some Arab and Iraqi film directors and film-makers to speak about their films at the club's events (eg, on one occasion they screened a Tunisian film and invited the film's music composer, who was a young Iraqi musician named Khiyam Al-Lami, who won an award for this film's music, to talk about the film). One of their recent events was a screening of this year's Oscar-winning film, "Parasite" which won the Best Film and Best Director awards at this year's Oscars.

QUESTION 4:

Are your participants mainly of Iraqi origin, or are they also drawn from other ethnic/national backgrounds?

ANSWER:

In my roles with HDF and the Iraqi Cinema Club, yes I do find that participants are mainly of Iraqi origin.

However, when HDF invite British academics to give presentations (eg, on archaeological finds), there is a greater presence among the audience of British people and participants from other Arab communities, in addition to the Iraqi community. This happened with nearly 6 events about archaeology and the history of Iraq/Mesopotamia in the last few years.

QUESTION 5:

Do participants bring their family members (such as their children who were born in the UK) to your centre's events? This is known as the inter-generational factor.

ANSWER:

Yes, this is an important issue which highlights the gap between the generations of the Iraqi-British community.

From my anthropological studies and experience in community work I've seen that the first generation of any immigrant community, including Iraqis in the UK, usually tend to keep their connections, their culture, their language, and all aspects of their original heritage strongly.

However, the second generation who were born in the UK or who emigrated here at a young age find themselves torn between the two identities and the traditions of their parents and the wider society.

They find themselves distributing their interests between their parents' expectations and culture, and that of themselves among their peers in their new homeland.

By the time the third generation arrive, they are, in general, no longer connected to their grandparents' heritage and culture (ie, the third generation of Iraqi-British citizens will have similar interests and views, customs and values of the society they were born into). This is well known in the social sciences.

HDF, and other Iraqi cultural centres, have not yet succeeded to attract second-generation Iraqi-British citizens to be an essential part of their activities and events. They have discussed this issue many times and they have tried to set in motion initiatives to address this.

In these discussions about why younger people don't participate in the centres' activities, some explanations said it was because:

- The topics and subject areas being chosen are not of interest to them. These subjects are typical ones for first-generation Iraqi-British citizens.
- The interests of these younger Iraqi-British citizens are different to those of their parents, and simply they are closer to the interests of any other young British person.
- In my role with the Iraqi Cinema Club, I've tried to find ways to encourage younger Iraqi-British citizens to participate. When they screen non-English speaking films, I'll try my best to include English subtitles as well as Arabic subtitles to encourage the younger generation to attend and watch these films, and read the English subtitles. I'm the father of two younger children, and I've seen that they find it easier to follow the English subtitles than the Arabic subtitles for non-English speaking films. This led me to try and include English subtitles for most of the non-English speaking films screened at the club, and yes, this has encouraged many younger people to attend, in addition to the passion for the film itself, which usually attracts more people than cultural events do.

QUESTION 6:

What prompted you to become involved with the delivery of this particular

type/subject of non-formal learning? (eg personal interest, professional background or anything else)

ANSWER:

As a lecturer or main speaker for the events which I deliver, I try to transmit the knowledge and factual information I've gathered through academic studies and years of experience. Most of these knowledge presentations were related to social sciences and anthropology. As such, this is because of my academic background and my wish to present academic and intellectual facts in an easy-to-follow way which participants can build on to further their knowledge. This applies to the 6 events I've delivered myself at HDF, and the 60 film screenings and introductions I've delivered in the Iraqi Cinema Club.

This also applies to my freelance journalism work. I write many articles about subjects that interest me, and part of this is to write regular film reviews and book reviews. Such writings are always used with the events I deliver.

QUESTION 7:

In what ways do you feel that your participants benefit from your presentations/facilitations (please provide examples):

- **on an intellectual level (eg, greater understanding of subject area or a topic);**
- **encouraging them to pursue certain careers, hobbies or interests**

ANSWER:

Yes, there is the benefit on an intellectual level, in that participants increase their knowledge and understanding of topics and subject areas.

However, a great benefit to participants from attending these events is the sense of belonging to their community and social cohesion, meeting their peers and socializing with them. Usually after the events, at both HDF and the Iraqi Cinema Club, individuals gather together in cafes after the events and continue their discussions among themselves.

When I'm co-ordinating the Iraqi Cinema Club events, I'll find that people attend them for leisure as a day out kind of event, when families, parents and children and couples attend the film screenings so they get the fun part and information part and the day out on top. As such, it is all about the combination of knowledge, community contact and leisure.

How do you see non-formal learning changing/transforming the lives of your

learning participants, on an individual level and in their wider community? Can you give examples of, for instance:

- *a greater sense of belonging to a learning community*
- *increased sense of social cohesion/individual or cultural identity*
- *increased sense of integration into a community and wider society*
- *any other factors*

ANSWER:

Regarding the first point about belonging to a learning community, I can't apply this academic concept to the participants because I've not conducted a survey of them or any questionnaires about people who attend events at HDF and the Iraqi Cinema Club.

However, yes there are many familiar faces who regularly attend events at HDF, and the Iraqi Cinema Club. So if we want to describe this group of people as a learning community, yes this is correct to some extent although we do not have club membership or subscription or membership forms for these centres and groups. This is applicable to most Iraqi-British centres, except for BISI (British Institute for the Study of Iraq) and the Iraqi Academic Association.

As we have previously discussed, yes, there is a great sense of social cohesion as participants attend together, have discussions together and socialize together, both in the events and afterwards in cafes.

There is no doubt that such community gatherings and associations are part of their efforts to maintain their cultural identity. This can be clearly seen in some events of the Iraqi Cinema Club, when they screen Iraqi films and invite one of the film-makers (10% of the club's events screen Iraqi films). A large number of participants from the Iraqi community attend them, and this is usually double the number of participants attending their other film screenings. This is all about cultural identity; people want to know what is going on in Iraq's cultural scene and its film industry.

With these Iraqi films, which are accompanied by English subtitles, I've noticed that they also attract the younger generation.

As for the transformative aspect, and the change of some ideological beliefs after 60 years of being in a country blocked from the world's healthy political knowledge and ideas, it's hard to say that one event could succeed to transform an adult. Our aim from these events is to highlight the facts, logical thinking, critical thinking, and it is then up to individuals to absorb this information. The

transformative element (change) can take a longer time to happen, but the centres concentrate on presenting the academic facts to the average person in an easy-to-understand way.

For example, HDF ran a series of five events relating to financial corruption in Iraq, with the co-operation of an Iraqi think tank. I've submitted a paper on this subject and discussed it during the events. Many people attended these events, as they had already heard a lot about this financial corruption. The question is; do these events change peoples' views on the issue of financial corruption, or will everyone continue to believe their own internalized version of events based on their ideological and faith beliefs?

QUESTION 9:

Are there any ways in which the non-formal learning you provide to the community can be changed to widen participation to include people from all ages and social backgrounds?

ANSWER:

There is no doubt that to widen participation, the centres should include more topics and more variety of subject areas, and invite respected academics and speakers from around the world to give a talk and tell the audience about their experiences and knowledge.

As the Executive Manager of HDF, I'd like to take these steps to widen participation and expand the centre's remit. However, HDF is an organisation with limited financial resources and so we can't afford to invite speakers from abroad and to pay for their flights and accommodation in London. As such, we're limited to the speakers and academics based in London and the UK. To get around this, HDF try to accommodate speakers from abroad, to present events at HDF while they are in London for whatever reason.

In many cases, a lot of academics live in Europe and other parts of the world, who are interested to make events at HDF. So they can contact me and arrange their event before they arrive in the UK on their planned visits.

Generally, HDF tries to invite quality speakers who can engage the audience and maintain their level of interest. However, this can sometimes be difficult to achieve. Definitely, not all the 40 events in one year can be of equal quality. Sometimes, individuals are good at writing books, but they are not so shiny in giving presentations.

Regarding the impact of these events on the Iraqi community and the level of change or influence on their attitudes, many Iraqis who I see on a daily basis give me positive feedback about HDF and their events. Last week, I was at my regular Iraqi supermarket and the business owner came to me and he said "I know you work at HDF" and that whilst he hadn't attended the events, he has seen their events via livestreaming facilities and on Youtube and was very impressed with many speakers and their subject areas.

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On another occasion, I went to my regular Iraqi barbers' shop. A new assistant was there and approached me, and he asked if I had a brother in London who looked like me. So I said no, I has no brothers here in London. After two minutes, the young man clicked on Youtube and showed him a video of an event, with a person giving a presentation about the Iraqi Mindaee community. I said "that's me". The boy laughed and said "but this is a very knowledgeable and brainy person who knew everything about my community, the Iraqi Mindaees". I smiled and said "yes, that's me".

The lesson to be drawn from this is that ordinary people, even with a lower level of education, will embrace information and knowledge and respect the presenter if it is given in an easy-to-understand way, so that it can be understood by all.

Even in the last few years, when HDF started to broadcast their events many Iraqis in Baghdad and other cities began following their events and joining in the discussions via live-stream. This connected Iraqis in London with their peers in Iraq.

QUESTION 10:

In what ways do you feel that the non-formal learning these centres provide to participants could be enhanced or improved?

ANSWER:

Regarding ways to enhance or improve the non-formal learning provided by these centres, I've lived in the UK less than ten years. However, I know from other Iraqi community members who have lived in the UK for longer that in the past, such community organisations and centres had greater financial support from the local and national authorities.

In other words, the financial issue is important to keep the level of quality to deliver good services, good events and good speakers for any centre. For example, a great part of my work with Iraqi communities and groups is voluntary as I wish to help my community, just to help them to survive and to continually support the community. This can be seen through my involvement with the Iraqi Cinema Club, part of the Iraqi Association, and also I participate in editing the newsletter of the Iraqi Association and I do this voluntarily).

So financial support is important to keep the centres. Regarding venues, although HDF own their building, many centres and groups do not have venues or halls for their events and activities (eg, the Iraqi Cinema Club have to rent a suitable venue to screen their films). They screen their films in the Ravenscourt Park Methodist Church, which is a nice, cosy location suitable for film screenings and this type of event. This venue is also used by the Iraqi Association and Iraqi Cultural Café for events.

It is clear that there is a lack of financial and practical support from local authorities for these Iraqi centres and events. I think this is due to funding cuts by local and national authorities for such centres and community organisations. Also, the Iraqi community in London, and its centres, have expanded dramatically in the last 30 years. This is in addition to the impact of political changes in Britain and Europe by successive governments, as every administration has a different approach to dealing with communities.

From experience and my time studying immigrant communities for my PGDip, I've concluded that many of these community groups and cultural centres are not connected to the wider British society. This is an issue which needs addressing and the local authorities should be part of the wider society's efforts to embrace these centres and to integrate them further into British life.

In addition, wealthy Iraqi businesses in the UK generally have no desire to help these Iraqi cultural centres or to promote them. They do not attend these centres' events and they do not enhance or raise the aspirations of successful individuals in the community by supporting them financially. They are not looking at ways to turn this community into a lobbying power in the British political or cultural scene.

For instance, I spent six months voluntarily editing the London Lifestyle magazine, which is an Iraqi-Arabic magazine with English parts based on adverts for London businesses and great articles about the community and the Arab-British social scene. Many Iraqi businesses were not interested to place paid adverts to support this voluntary work by the London Lifestyle magazine.

However, at the same time we should not forget the contribution of many Iraqi individuals in establishing or supporting these centres, including HDF which has been founded and is financed by an Iraqi body for the last ten years and which managed to survive with all these events during this time.

This can also be applied to many other Iraqi cultural centres, which are based on their own efforts and their own means of financial support.

APPENDIX 3:

RESEARCH ETHICS PROTOCOL

The role played by non-formal education in the lives of Iraqi-British citizens

Introduction

This semi-structured interview forms part of my PhD Education thesis, in which I seek to examine the non-formal learning offered by Iraqi-British cultural centres in London. Thank you for giving me your time to complete this interview, this will be a great help in my studies.

Ethics Protocol

If you have any questions about the research, or the questions in this interview, please feel free to ask them at any time. I will keep you fully informed regarding my research and a copy of this interview transcript will be available for your information once I have produced a transcript of this interview. At that time, please let me know if anything should be omitted to ensure that you or your university cannot be identified in any way, to enable me to make the necessary omissions prior to my final submission of this research study for assessment.

You do not have to answer any of the questions contained in this interview schedule unless you wish to do so, and should you wish to withdraw from my research study you may do so at any time. In the instance that you wish to withdraw, I will ensure that no records of your involvement in this study are kept; all such records will be destroyed prior to submission of my final research.

I will ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times, and that the content of our discussion today will only be used for the purposes of my research into non-formal learning among the Iraqi-British community. Please let me know if any information passed in the course of today's interview should be omitted from my final write-up. Once my research is completed, you will receive a copy of my final research study for your information, unless you inform me that you do not wish to receive a copy.

The completed research will pass to my PhD director of studies for safe-keeping once complete, where it will be secured storely for the purposes of assessment. I will keep a copy for myself, but this will also be securely stored by me.

APPENDIX 4:

LIST OF CULTURAL EVENTS AT BISI/HDF/AISC

2016 - 2019

1
British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI)
www.bisi.ac.uk

This centre was established in London in 1932 and was known as the "British School of Archaeology in Iraq" until 2007. It was set up to honour the life of the British political diplomat Gertrude Bell (1868-1926) and the great role she played in establishing Iraq as a new political entity in the 1920s. In the 19th and 20th centuries, until the late 1950s, British archaeologists were heavily involved with the excavation of ancient Mesopotamian cities and city-states. These included Babylon, Nineveh, Nimrud and Ur. Most of BISI's activities were, and continue to be, concerned with archaeology and the role of British archaeologists in excavating ancient Mesopotamia.

BISI's management committee is made up of British academics, including university professors, lecturers and readers, from some of London's most prestigious universities. These include the University of London and the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS). Their activities include facilitating knowledge presentations on academic subjects relating to archaeology and Iraq's ancient and modern history. Between 2016 and 2019, BISI hosted 21 knowledge presentations on a range of academic issues relating to Iraq. These presentations were given by subject matter experts from universities and related institutions. In addition, they are involved with some outreach activities in Iraq and hosting visiting professors from Iraq in London. When they visit Iraq, it is to engage in continued archaeological excavations, and to collaborate with Iraqis in several projects. BISI have worked closely with Iraq to reopen the Basra Museum, something they achieved in 2016. All of BISI's past and future events, including knowledge presentations, outreach work and their projects can be found on their website at www.bisi.ac.uk.

It is also possible to become a member of BISI via their website. Although their knowledge presentations are open to both members and non-members, membership gives interested persons access to a wider range of knowledge presentations and information on a range of academic subjects. This includes access to, and a copy of, their annual journal, "Iraq" for most of their members. BISI's annual journal, "Iraq" is a comprehensive and detailed guide to the history of ancient Mesopotamia, excavations of these cities and city-states, what it reveals about their daily lives at the time and so on. Also, it gives information on BISI's outreach activities in Iraq, the Iraqi academics they work closely with and a range of issues which affect daily life in Iraq.

Although BISI's concern with Iraq is primarily academic, they also provide comprehensive and critically informed information about the stages of Iraq's political and diplomatic history, including life in Iraq under the Ottoman Empire, the monarchy which lasted from 1921 until 1958, up to the present day. Many renowned writers and archaeologists worked in Iraq, including the British author Agatha Christie (1890-1976) and her archaeologist husband Max Mallowan (1904-1978). Further information about Britain's historical ties to Iraq can be found in the body of my PhD thesis.

BRITISH INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF IRAQ
www.bisi.ac.uk
Knowledge Presentations Given by BISI: 2016 – 2019
Most events are held in the British Academy,
although some are given in other venues

Date	Title	Presenter(s)
24/2/2016	"Walking in Woolley's Footsteps" (British Academy)	Dr Birger Ekornasvag Helgestad & Dr Jon Taylor, British Museum
15/6/2016	"Traditional Music of Iraq" (British Academy)	Rolf Killius, musical historian
16/6/2016	"Letters from Baghdad" film screening (British Academy)	Zeva Oelbaum & Sabine Krayenbuhl, directors and producers of the film
16/11/2016	"Hatra: An Arab Kingdom" (British Academy)	Professor Wathiq Ismail Al-Sahili, archaeologist
16/1/2017	"Reopening of the Basra Museum" (UK Iraqi Ambassador's office)	Dr John Curtis & Dr Paul Collins, BISI committee
22/2/2017	"Neanderthals & Modern Humans in the Zagros: New Investigations at Shanidar Cave, Iraqi Kurdistan" (British Academy)	Professor Graeme Barker, archaeologist
14/6/2017	"Rethinking Iraq's Built Identity & Strategies" (British Academy)	Dr Caecilia Pieri, architect
22/11/2017	"The story of the Iraq Museum" (British Academy)	Dr Lamia Al-Gailani, archaeologist
6/12/2017	"Remember Baghdad" film screening (British Academy)	Fiona Murphy, director and producer of the film

Date	Title	Presenter(s)
14/2/2018	"The Italian Archaeological Mission at Abu Tbeirah in Southern Iraq" (British Academy)	Dr Franco D'Agostino and Dr Licia Romano, University of Rome
5/3/2018	"Remember Baghdad" film screening (British Academy)	Fiona Murphy, film director and producer & Edwin Shuker, Iraqi-British educational philanthropist
13/6/2018	"Antiquity, History & Heritage in the Middle East" (British Academy)	Professor Eleanor Robson, University College London
14/11/2018	"The Ark Reimagined: Navigating Iraqi Cultural Heritage" (British Academy)	Rashad Salim, Iraqi-British artist
26/2/2019 through to 6/1/2020	"Protest and Repress: issue politics, "militia-zation" and toxicity of everyday life in Iraq" (fieldwork in Iraq)	Dr Zahra Ali, London School of Economics (LSE)
27/2/2019	"The city of Charax Spasinou" (British Academy)	Dr Robert Killick, archaeologist
3/4/2019	"Memorial Event for Dr Lamia Al-Gallani Werr" (British Academy)	Dr Paul Collins, BISI Chair
May 2019	"Tourism in Iraq: Reading Modernity and Antiquity in the Thomas Cook Archives" (Thomas Cook HQ, Peterborough)	Laith Shakir, US Institute of Policy Studies
15/5/2019	"Letters from Baghdad" film screening (British Academy)	Dr Joan Porter Maciver, BISI Vice-Chair
12/6/2019	"Qadiri Sufi Shrines in Iraq" (British Academy)	Dr Noorah Al-Gailani, Glasgow Museum
16/9/2019	"Jews of Iraq Conference" (British Academy)	Dr Joan Porter Maciver, BISI Vice-Chair
13/11/2019	"Project Mosul" (British Academy)	Matthew Vincent & Chance Coughenour, archaeologists

2

Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation
www.hdf-iq.org

This is a non-governmental organisation, with a head office based in Baghdad. In 2010, they opened an office in London which is also known as "Salam House". This is significant because "salam", an Arabic word, means "peace". Also, the greeting word "salam" in Arabic means "peace be upon you".

As the centre's name suggests, they are established to facilitate *dialogue* on a range of academic and political issues which are of interest to the Iraqi community. This appendix shows that between 2016 and 2019, the foundation held almost 160 knowledge presentations on a range of subjects. Presenters include university professors, experts from the medical profession, journalists and writers, among others. This also highlights the educational level of many Iraqis resident in London and the UK.

The centre holds weekly events (an average of 40 events per year). Details of these knowledge presentations, presentation dates and facilitators can be found in this document. Also, the details of their activities can be found on the centre's website at: www.hdf-iq.org. In addition to holding regular knowledge presentations, the centre also facilitates daily and weekly workshops for Iraqis to attend and discuss a range of academic, political and social issues such as health, education, international relations and so on.

Due to the current political and security situation in Iraq, the foundation do not normally facilitate knowledge presentations in Iraq or the Middle East. However, officials from their Baghdad office visit London at least once a year and their visits are usually publicised via the foundation's website and social media pages. Iraqis can attend workshops featuring visits from these officials, or "dialogue events" at which they update London's Iraqi community with the situation in Iraq, providing them with important links to their native land and culture.

The foundation not only publicise this information on their website, but also on their social media pages. They have accounts with Twitter and Facebook, both of which are used extensivey by the Iraqi community who "follow" them and by doing so, are kept updated regarding their activities and upcoming events.

Not all Iraqis interested in their events are able to attend in person, for a number of reasons. It is for this reason that the foundationhave media channels. They own the Salam TV media channel, which is broadcast in Arabic, and features debates and knowledge presentations about a range of issues. Also, the foundation have a media channel on Youtube from which all knowledge presentations from their London office are broadcast live. Full video footage of all knowledge presentations is also shared on their Youtube channel and their website after the event, so that Iraqis wishing to watch it in their own time can do so. By taking these steps, the foundation aim to create and maintain a knowledge community among Iraqis.

HUMANITARIAN DIALOGUE FOUNDATION
www.hdf-iq.org
Knowledge Presentations Given by HDF: 2016 – 2019
Most events are held in the centre, also known as Salam House

Date	Title	Presenter(s)
3/2/2016	"The low level of education in Iraq: The causes and consequences"	Dr Abdullah Al-Mousawi
10/2/2016	"Iraqi intellectuals and sectarianism"	Ibtisam Yousef Al-Taher
17/2/2016	"Political Islam & the crisis of state building and the democracy in Iraq"	Rafid Jabouri
24/2/2016	"Food & Cooking in the Middle East"	Professor Sami Zubaida
26/2/2016	"The prospects for renewal of the Islamic Hawza"	Professor Muhammad Ali Bahreloloom Professor Jafar Al-Hakim
2/3/2016	"Sacred culture of dreaming & its impact on the social thought"	Alaa Al-Khatib
9/3/2016	"Corruption in Iraq: The reasons and remedies"	Sadiq Al-Taai
16/3/2016	"Short Film Workshop"	Jamil Amin
23/3/2016	"Mental health in Iraq: Challenges & Aspiration"	Dr Mohammed Al-Uzri
30/3/2016	"Mohammed Saeed Al-Sakar"	Film screening about the life of the late Mohammed Saeed Al-Sakar, Iraqi poet
6/4/2016	"Political action of the late Islamic scholar, Mohammad Baqir Al-Sadr"	Fouad Jabir Kadhem
13/4/2016	"Cultural & academic achievements of Dr Ibrahim Al-Haidari"	Honorary event Many speakers
20/4/2016	"Legends in Iraqi heritage"	Dr Abdul Redha Ali
27/4/2016	"The popular movement and the Iraqi political crisis"	Sadiq Al-Jazairi
4/5/2016	"Semitic languages & their relationship & impact on Indo-European studies"	Professor Ali Faraj, linguist
11/5/2016	"Celebration evening of Dr Lamia Al-Gailani", Iraqi archaeologist	Honorary event Many speakers
14/5/2016	"Personal art exhibition of Saadi Dawood"	Saadi Dawood, artist
18/5/2016	"Energy Industries in Iraq"	Karim Majed Al-Sabaa

25/5/2016	"History of gynaecology & midwifery"	Professor Kais Kubba
1/6/2016	"Iraqi National Identity Formation"	Omar Al-Abadi
14/7/2016	"Science fiction & digital destiny"	Professor Tahseen Al-Shaikhli
27/7/2016	"Shi'a & Sunn'i in Iraq: Where to?"	Jawad Al-Khoei
3/8/2016	"Iraqi Armenians: History, culture & identity"	Dr Hamied Al-Hashimi, Sociologist
10/8/2016	"Colour – meaning & symbol"	Hussein Sakafi, photographer
17/8/2016	"The work of the Noor Orphans' Charity in London"	Noor Orphans' Fund Manager
24/8/2016	"A critical point of view: Iraqi constitution"	Professor Abdul Hassan Al-Saadi
31/8/2016	"Iraqi national reconciliation project"	Professor Akram Al-Hakim, former Iraqi minister
7/9/2016	"Infrastructure of Arabic language content in the age of information technology"	Adnan Idan Wali, linguist
21/9/2016	"The Rise of Right-Wing Parties in Europe"	Professor Majid Abdullah Jaber
28/9/2016	"Forming the state and disintegration of the nation in Iraq"	Professor Isam Al-Khafaji
5/10/2016	"An evening of Iraqi poetry"	Reem Kais Kubba, poet
19/10/2016	"Jews of Hejaz (Arabia) before Islam – Part 1"	Professor Jafar Hadi Hassan
26/10/2016	"Jews of Hejaz (Arabia) before Islam – Part 2"	Professor Jafar Hadi Hassan
2/11/2016	"Religion's purpose: The beauty & the meaning"	Dr Maytham Al-Hillo
9/11/2016	"Healthy sport as a lifestyle"	Professor Wisam Al-Shaikhli
23/11/2016	"Between the clinic & the pen"	Dr Sabah Jamal Al-Din
30/11/2016	"Protecting the diversity & the possibility of coexistence in Iraq after ISIS"	Father Nadher Zako
7/12/2016	"The real story of the Iraqi nuclear programme"	Professor Basil Saati
14/12/2016	"Electromagnetic effects on the organism"	Professor Adnan Regep
8/2/2017	"Islamic discourse crisis"	Modhar Al-Hilou, Islamic scholar

15/2/2017	"History of the Alliance Jewish school in Iraq"	Emile Cohen
8/3/2017	"An evening of Iraqi poetry"	Mustafa Al-Muhager, poet
15/3/2017	"The wealth curse"	Dr Husain Al-Chalabi
22/3/2017	"Forgotten intellectuals in Iraq"	Wadhi Al-Obeidi
29/3/2017	"History of religions from a scientific point of view"	Dr Khaza'al Al-Majidi
5/4/2017	"In memory of Islamic scholar, Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr"	Hafez Al-Moussawi
12/4/2017	"Celebration evening of Dr Abdullah Al-Mousawi"	Honorary event Many speakers
19/4/2017	"An evening of poetry, exhibition & book signing"	Jenny Lewis Adnan Al-Sayegh Frances Kiernan
26/4/2017	"Celebration evening of Professor Tahseen Al-Shaikhli"	Honorary event Many speakers
3/5/2017	"Culture – the sources, resources & impact on society & state"	Professor Khalid Al-Shafi
10/5/2017	"The Wisdom in Kurdish Poetry"	Gialas Khalifa
17/5/2017	"Celebration evening of Professor Ibrahim Al-Aati"	Honorary event Many speakers
24/5/2017	"History of Iraq – journey in the world of stamps"	Freddy Khalastchy
28/6/2017	"ISIS & the Khilafa dream"	Dr Faleh Abd Al-Jabbar, Sociologist
5/7/2017	"The hidden state of Iraq"	Mohammed Al-Daraji, former Iraqi minister
12/7/2017	"Iraqi Marshes in the English language publications – Western Vision, Iraqi Review"	Nadeem Al-Abdalla
19/7/2017	"Freedom of expression as a major field of conflict in Iraq"	Adnan Hussein, journalist
26/7/2017	"Iraq of conflict – observations of the individual & the community"	Abdul Moneim Al-Asaam
2/8/2017	"How disaster strikes"	Professor Basil Saadi
9/8/2017	"Role of financial regulatory bodies in combating corruption in Iraq"	Falah Shafi
16/8/2017	"Building and development of the state and social economy"	Omar Al-Ahsaadi
23/8/2017	"Contemporary Jewish groups"	Dr Jafar Hadi Hassan
30/8/2017	"Status of the Iraqi oil economy"	Dr Hussain Rabia

6/9/2017	"The argument of creativity & identity"	Salwa Jarrah
13/9/2017	"The phenomenon of divorce among Iraqi communities in Britain"	Lamia Al-Tahir
20/9/2017	"Means of assigning power, literacy & governance"	Dr Abdul Hassan Al-Saadi
27/9/2017	"The City of Mosul in History" (Honorary lecture on Mosul's liberation)	Aziz Abdul Nour Ismail Jalili
4/10/2017	"The martyrdom of Imam Hussain as a torch for liberation movements"	Sadad Al-Khazraji
11/10/2017	"Psychological aspects of social solidarity & attachment to the homeland"	Dr Adel Al-Moussawi
18/10/2017	"Educational curriculum & the making of extremism & terrorism"	Dr Abdullah Al-Moussawi
25/10/2017	"Religion & proof"	Dr Abbas Hassan Abdul Latif
1/11/2017	"Media & the formation of public opinion – the limits of freedom & responsibility"	Dr Abdul Hamied Al-Sayeh
8/11/2017	"Photography – from profession to art"	Hussain Sakafi
15/11/2017	"Shashoua Palace, Baghdad – journey in the memory of the palace"	Dr Fatina Al-Hakimi
22/11/2017	"Image of the modern terrorist and his motives"	Safan Soufi
29/11/2017	"Sectarianism in Iraq"	Dr Mohammed Juma
6/12/2017	"Honouring the novel by Luay Abdulilah, 'Divine Names'"	Luay Abdulilah
20/12/2017	"Iraqi heritage – where to?"	Noaman Muna
31/1/2018	"Energy Resources in Iraq"	Luay Al-Khateeb
7/2/2018	"House of the Snail" - Iraqi Poetry Event	Awad Nasser
21//2/2018	"Thursday's Speech" – book launch event	Hassan Al-Hadeethi
7/3/2018	Iraqi Poetry Event	Qais Al-Suhaili
14/3/2018	"Celebration Evening of Dr Abdul Hassan Al-Saadi"	Dr Abdul Hassan Al-Saadi
21/3/2018	"Iraq's Oil: Reality & Challenges"	Dr Mohammed Zainy
28/3/2018	"The Law of the National Oil Company"	Dr Hussain Rabia & Dr Imad Al-Wohaib

Date	Event	Speaker
4/4/2018	"Barking!" Film Discussion Event	Jamal Amin
7/4/2018	"Celebration of the Life of Faleh Abdul Jabbar"	Sadeq Al-Taee
11/4/2018	"In Memory of Abdul Baqr Al-Sadr"	Mohammed Issa Al-Khaqani
18/4/2018	"The reality and future of the oil and gas industry in Iraq"	Dr Falah Al-Ameri
25/4/2018	"Modern Iraqi Art –Dialogue Between the East & West"	Dr Ahmed Naji
2/5/2018	"Celebration of Dr Raouf Al-Ansari & Samira Al-Mani"	Dr Raouf Al-Ansari & Samira Al-Mani
20/6/2018	"The Future of Intelligence"	Dr Tahseen Al-Shaikhli
27/6/2018	"Sustainable Mega Projects & The Human Capital in Iraq"	Dr Husain Ahmad Al-Chalabi
4/7/2018	"Information Technology & Its Role in the National Economy"	Dr Adnan E Wall
11/7/2018	"Poetry Trip" event	Dr Sabah Jamal Al-Din
18/7/2018	"The Environmental Challenges in Iraq"	Dr Jehan Baban
25/7/2018	"The Status of Medical Higher Education in Iraq"	Dr Mohammed Al-Uzri
1/8/2018	"Najaf: The Memory & The City"	Zuhair Al-Jazairy
8/8/2018	"Physics Nobel Prize Winners" event	Dr Saad Mohammed Razin
15/8/2018	"Urban Identity Development Challenges in Iraq"	Akram Ogaily Al-Baghdad
29/8/2018	"Digital Wildfires & the Limits of Virtual Freedom"	Dr Tahseen Al-Shaikhli
5/9/2018	"The Role of Science & Faith in the Evolution of Citizens"	Dr Adel Sharif Al-Husseini
12/9/2018	"The status of education in the Arab World over the last decade"	Dania Archid
26/9/2018	"Historical & Doctrinal Readings & Contemporary Political Events"	Dr Hamzah Al-Hassan
3/10/2018	"A Journey with the Intellectual Achievements of Faleh Abdul Jabbar"	Dr Saad Abdul Razak Dr Hamied Al-Hashimi
10/10/2018	"The Contamination of Radioactive Materials in Iraq"	Professor Basil Assaati
17/10/2018	"The Formation of Modern Iraq"	Dr Sayyar Al-Jamil
24/10/2018	"Journey in the Creative Worlds"	Fawzi Karim
31/10/2018	"The Anthropological Approach of Ashura"	Sadeq Al-Taee

7/11/2018	"Education in Iraq"	Dr Mohammed Al-Rubaei
14/11/2018	"The Chimp Paradox: The Acclaimed Mind Management Programme"	Salaam Naji
21/11/2018	"Colour is a Cosmic Necessity"	Hussain Sakafi
28/11/2018	"The Iraqi Airways – Reality & Challenges for its advancement"	Namir Al-Qaisi
5/12/2018	"A Psychological Perspective on Change & Reform"	Professor Adil Al-Mousawi
12/12/2018	"A Creative Journey"	Fouad Mathieu Caswell
19/12/2018	"The Reformist Ideology of Ayatollah Sayyid Hussein Al-Sadr"	Ghanim Jawad
30/1/2019	"The Root of State Failure in Iraq"	Professor Mohammed Said Abdul Sahib Al-Shakarchi
6/2/2019	"Corruption in the Arab & Islamic World & how to confront it"	Dr Mohammed Haidar
13/2/2019	"Journey in the Creative Worlds"	Anwar Hamed
20/2/2019	"Bahrain: Geography & Human History"	Abbas Al-Murshed
27/2/2019	"Identity During the Battle for the Advancement & Development of Arab Societies"	Yehia Harb
6/3/2019	"The Consequences of the Brexit"	Dr Sadik Al-Rikabi
13/3/2019	"Economic Government Activity in Iraq – reality and horizons"	Dr Riadh Al-Zohairy
20/3/2019	"Iraqi Poetry Evening"	Worood Al-Mosawi
27/3/2019	"Social Enterprises in Iraq"	Haval Kadhem
3/4/2019	"The Martyr Muhammad Al-Baqr & His Enlightening Role in Iraq & the Arab World"	Dr Ibrahim Al-Ati
10/4/2019	"Celebration of Dr Sabah Jamal Al-Din"	Dr Sabah Jamal Al-Din
17/4/2019	"Celebration of Dr Mohammed Al-Mousawi"	Dr Mohammed Al-Mousawi
24/4/2019	"Celebration of Dr Abdul Azim Al-Sabti"	Dr Abdul Azim Al-Sabti
2/5/2019	"Iraqi Poets Memorial Event"	Dr Sayyar Al-Jamil
12/6/2019	"Alexandra's Lost City in Iraq"	Dr Jane Moon
19/6/2019	"Memorial Event for Fawzi Karim"	Sadeq Al-Taee

26/6/2019	"The religious institutions in Najaf"	Dr Ali Al-Hakim
3/7/2019	"Process of democratisation in Iraq"	Abdul Halim Rahimi
10/7/2019	"The Christians of Iraq"	Dr Kadhim Habib
17/7/2019	"The Low Educational Reality in Iraq"	Dr Abdullah Al-Mousawi
24/7/2019	"Literary & Cultural Gatherings in Baghdad"	Dr Fatna Al-Hashimi
31/7/2019	"Abutheia Poetry in Iraq"	Naji Soltan Al-Zohairy
7/8/2019	"Poetry Evening"	Mohammad Al-Amin
14/8/2019	"Future Vision & Urban Progress for the Reconstruction of Iraq"	Dr Abdul Hamid Al-Ashekir & Dr Sadiq Al-Rikabi
21/8/2019	"Iraqi Poetry Evening"	Dr Sijal Al-Rekabi
28/8/2019	"Cultural obstacles to the progress of society"	Dr Hamid Al-Kifaey
4/9/2019	"The position of Kufa Tribes from the Battle of Tuff"	Saad Al-Krazraji
11/9/2019	"Hussein's Discontent – Remembering a Revolution"	Professor Mohammed Issa Al-Khaqani
18/9/2019	"Lost Babylon Gardens"	Dr Stephanie Dalley
25/9/2019	"The Fourth Industrial Revolution"	Dr Alaa Alani
2/10/2019	"Aesthetics of Arabic Calligraphy"	Behnam Ekzer
9/10/2019	"Under the Palm Trees: Modern Iraqi Art with Mohamed Makiya & Jewad Selim"	Ahmed Naji
16/10/2019	"Forced Absence in Iraq"	Abdul Moneim Al-Aasm
23/10/2019	"The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People"	Salaam Naji
30/10/2019	"Sex Education in British Schools"	Jaafar Melani
6/11/2019	"International Sanctions on the Iraq Civil Aviation Authority"	Namir Al-Qaisi
13/11/2019	"The contribution of higher education in addressing the Iraqi situation"	Professor Karim Majid Zubaidi
20/11/2019	"The Gulf Exception – The New Wave of Arab Protests"	Abbas Busafwan
27/11/2019	"Our Screens" film evening	Jamal Amin

4/12/2019	"Poems for Love, Homeland & Revolution"	Ahmad Al-Mushatat
11/12/2019	"Engineering Education & Artificial Intelligence in the 21st Century"	Professor Bashir Al-Hashimi

<u>3</u>

Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre
www.angloiraqi.org

The Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre is part of the Anglo-Iraqi Dialogue Foundation, formerly known as the Al-Hakim Foundation. The centre was established in 2015 and opened to the community in early 2016, and it is now functioning and providing non-formal learning to Iraqis in London.

This centre, based in north London, opened to the community in January 2016, as part of the Anglo-Iraqi Dialogue Foundation, a registered UK charity and company which was previously known as the Al-Hakim Foundation. This centre is an academic and community project which aims to enhance knowledge and understanding of Iraq, Anglo-Iraqi studies and Iraqi-British connections. My work with this centre as a facilitator has given me a great opportunity to position myself within this research project and observe non-formal education as a facilitator/ manager and participant.

The centre's library holds more than 2,000 books and periodicals published in English about Iraq. This is a unique and specialised library, open to researchers and interested persons. The centre offers cultural events, knowledge presentations, workshops, studies and outreach visits to enhance public education and British/Iraqi communities, and to assist Iraqi citizens' further positive integration into UK society. Also, the centre publishes regular newsletters. Each edition includes detailed features on one or more of the publications held in their library, as well as information regarding cultural events held at the centre and their outreach activities with other community and cultural organisations. The centre's regular newsletters of 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 have been published in book form (Al-Abdalla, 2020) and give a flavour of the Iraqi cultural scene in London.

A list of the knowledge presentations hosted by the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre, at their offices or elsewhere, between 2016 and 2019 can be found below. During this time, AISC held a total of 25 knowledge events, seminars and presentations. These events and presentations are always related to Anglo-Iraqi involvement in Iraq, and are presented by British and Iraqi subject matter experts. The Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre also has links with British organisations such as the Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House), the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), and the Royal Society for Asian Affairs (RSAA). Information on the centre's work with these organisations, and outreach activities with them, is included in the centre's regular newsletters.

ANGLO-IRAQI STUDIES CENTRE (AISC)

www.angloiraqi.org

Knowledge Presentations Given by AISC: 2016 – 2019

Most events are held in the centre, although some are given in other venues

2016

Date	Title	Presenter(s)
9/2/2016	"Some aspects of Iraqi politics after 2003" (Outreach event, London)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla
19/2/2016	"Role of Media in Fighting Terrorism" (Outreach conference, Morocco)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla
27/3/2016	"Iraq in the Western Publications – Western Vision, Iraqi Review" (Outreach event, London)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla
30/4/2016	"Bittersweet Baghdad" film screening (AISC office)	Alia Hassan, film producer
21/5/2016	"Finding my father in Mesopotamia" (AISC office)	Jenny Lewis, British poet, Oxford University
24/5/2016	"Muslims in the West – foreign communities or Western citizens?" (AISC office)	Dr Ali Al-Hakim, Islamic scholar
29/5/2016	"The role of culture in facing the challenges of terrorism" (Outreach conference, Morocco)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla
24/9/2016	"Gold Lyre of Ur – Echoes of History, Sounds of Music" (AISC office)	Andy Lowings, researcher and musician
20/12/2016	"Intellectual legacy of Dr Ahmed Chalabi" (AISC office, group seminar)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla Ihsan Al-Hakim
27/12/2016	"Iraqi media in the face of international transformation" (AISC office, group seminar)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla Ihsan Al-Hakim

2017

Date	Title	Presenter(s)
16/2/2017	"Iraqi-British cultural centre representatives seminar" (AISC office, group seminar)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla Ihsan Al-Hakim
29/3/2017	"Creative Female Western Authors & Their Contribution to Arab Culture" (Outreach conference, Tunisia)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla
20/5/2017	"100 Years: British in Baghdad – Birth of a new Iraq" (AISC office)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla
27/6/2017	"Questions of Kurdistan, Identity & Governance" (Outreach event, London)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla
12/7/2017	"Iraqi Marshes in the English language publications – Western Vision, Iraqi Review" (Outreach event, London)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla
25/7/2017	"The Role of Rational Islamic Discourse in the West" (AISC office)	Dr Ali Al-Hakim, Islamic scholar
22/9/2017	"World Literature: From Sumerian Tablets to the Digital Era" (Outreach conference, Tunisia)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla
8/12/2017	"Iraq in the Arab World through the eyes of four Western female authors" (AISC office)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla

2018

Date	Title	Presenter(s)
15/4/2018	"Books written in English about Iraq: translation seminar" (AISC office, group seminar)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla Ihsan Al-Hakim Adnan Hussein Sadeq Al-Taee
20/4/2018	"World Literature: From Sumerian Tablets to the Digital Era" (Outreach conference, Morocco)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla
23/6/2018	"100 Years of Anglo-Iraqi Relations" (AISC office)	Dr Emily Porter, Iraqi-British art historian and researcher
25/8/2018	"Environmental Degradation in Iraq from British Perspectives" (AISC office)	Dr Jehan Baban, Iraqi Environment & Health Society

2019

Date	Title	Presenter(s)
8/2/2019	"Tunisia & Tunisian Women through the Eyes of Western Female Writers" (Outreach event, Tunisia)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla
28/9/2019	"Morocco in the English language films" (Outreach conference, Morocco)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla
29/11/2019	"Morocco in the English language films 1920-1980" (Outreach conference, Morocco)	Nadeem Al-Abdalla

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