

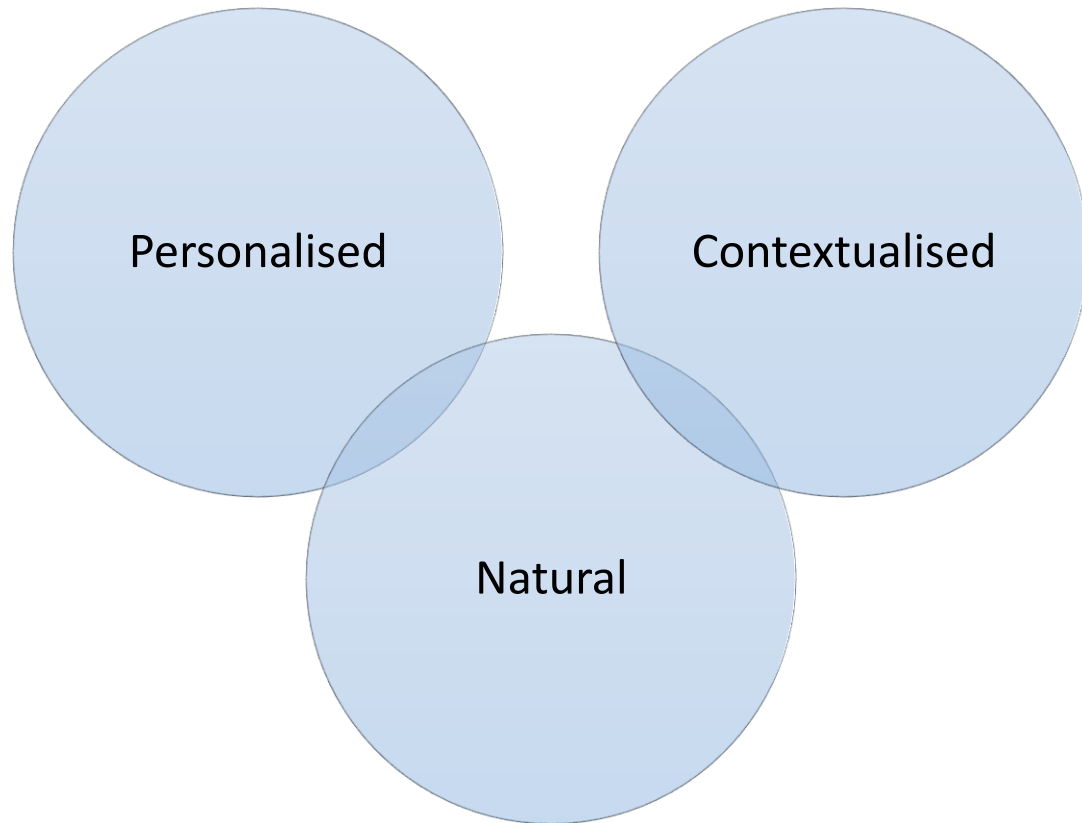


# Religious Affiliation and the Use of **Sacred Texts** in Social Research Interviews

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# Qualitative Interviews?



# Painting Houses!

“Would you agree to help your boss paint his house at the weekend if you didn’t want to?”

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2007: 87)



# A Transcultural text?

“there is **no hope** that such [nonhuman] instruments can expose anything not built into them by the instrument maker, and what he or she puts in cannot be determined in any other way than on the basis of a priori theory or personal predilection. Such instruments simply **cannot reflect the constructions of the respondents**, but only of the instrument maker.”

(Lincoln and Guba, 1985:239)

# What is needed?

- Smith and Bond (1993: 74) argue that

‘[w]hat is needed is a way of linking the two approaches – an emic way of being etic!’

# Sacred Texts ... Why?

- Authenticity
- Accessibility – Cognitive salience

“the greater the amount of processing involved in the formation of an assumption, and the more often it is accessed thereafter, the greater its accessibility.”

(Sperber and Wilson, 2004: 77)

- Familiarity with the form – ease of processing

One factor affecting the processing effort exerted by the hearer to interpret the utterance is “the form in which it is presented (audibility, legibility, dialect, register, syntactic complexity and familiarity of construction all affect processing effort).”

(Wilson and Sperber, 1998: 9)

# Sacred Texts ... Why?

- Authority – Subscribed to (either/or, exclusivity)
- Quality of translation
- Universal/Personal nature
- Covering a wide range of social issues
- Targeting audiences in all classes, genders, age groups, etc.
- Some similarities across holy books



So, in  
sampling:

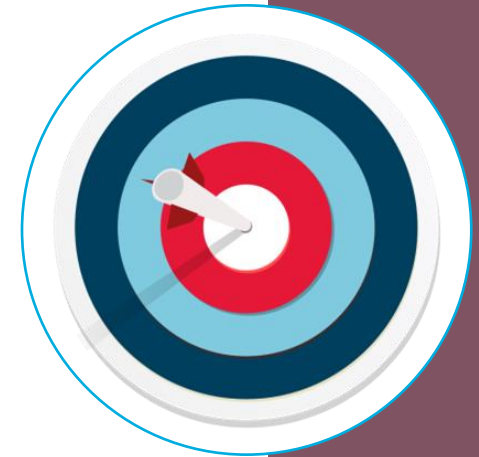
Could sampling based on religious affiliation be more 'accurate' (than sampling along national lines only)?

- A written code – a point of reference
- The voluntary subscription
- The exclusive nature of the subscription to one faith
- More credible linking of beliefs and behaviour



# Research Aims

This research aimed to examine this initial theoretical assumption, that sacred texts, if used with the relevant faith followers, can enhance interview dynamics (process), leading to a flowing contextualized discussion, which in turn can lead to credible and rich data (content).



# Research Objectives

- Examine the interview **dynamics** (including the interviewer-interviewee relationship) where sacred texts are used to start and sustain a discussion.
- Understand instances where the interviewee shows **empowerment** and ownership of the discussion.
- Assess the **richness**, nuances, and variety of the data gathered in the interviews.

# An Enhanced Interview aims at

... a flowing conversation that can produce rich and varied data, and, therefore, can be defined as an

**interviewee-centred**

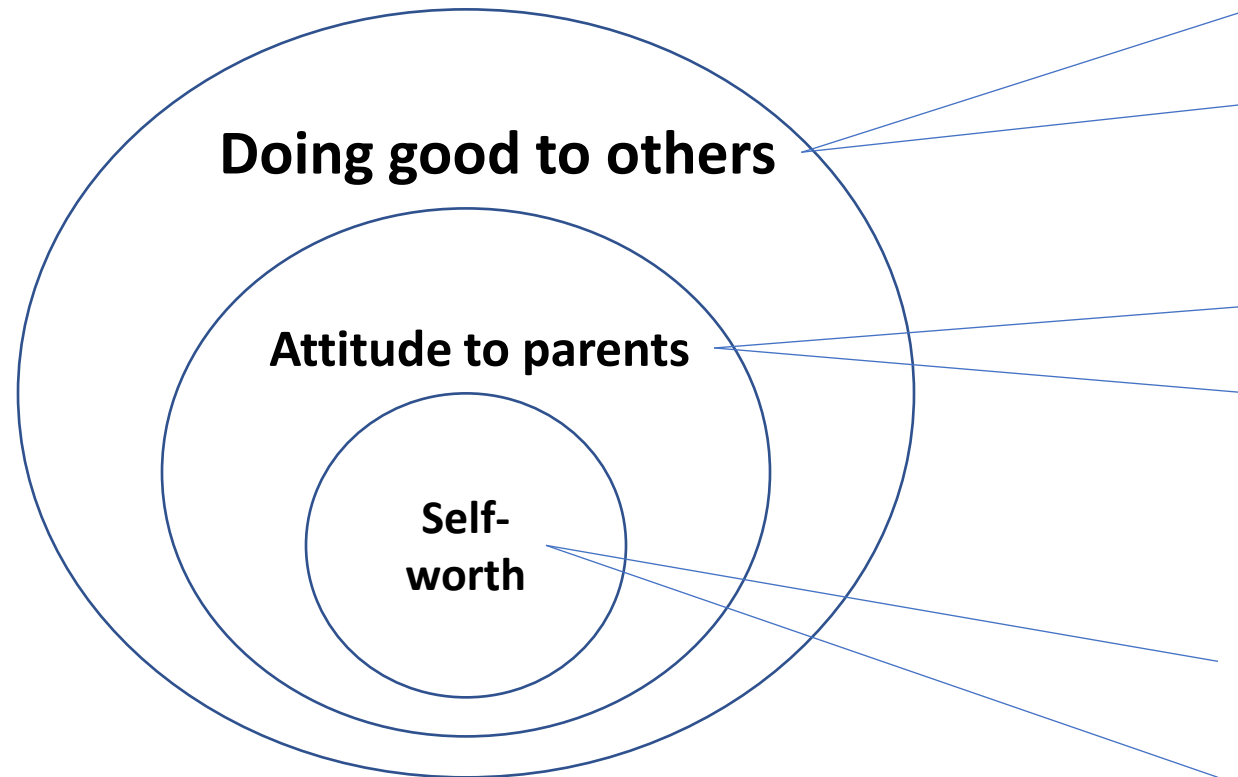
**interviewee-empowering dialogue**

**contextualised in interviewee-relevant themes.**

# Methodology

- 28 interviewees
- Muslim and Christian participants
- for an average of 83 minutes (a total of 38.8 hours of data)
- three sets of one-or-two-sentence-long verses from the participant's sacred book (the Bible or the Qur'an).
- around the social themes: doing good to others, attitudes towards parents, and self-worth.

# Design



# An Example

**Exodus 20:12** New International Version (NIV)

**Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.**

# An Example

**Matthew 10:37** New International Version (NIV)

**Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.**

# Some Insights

- **Familiarity with and knowledge of the sacred texts**
- **A Sense of Ownership and Pride**
- **Acknowledging the Role of Interviewer**



# An emic way of being etic?

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Can we argue that sacred texts  
can be added to the toolbox of  
social research interviews?



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Thanks 😊

- Keep in touch!

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