Introduction
When I first started studying Islamophobia in Ireland, or (as I prefer to call it) anti-Muslim racism, it was 2010, and the Irish state and those residing therein were in the grip of recession. The Irish government, as with many others across the globe was engaged in a campaign of so-called ‘austerity’, embodied through large scale cuts to public expenditure. One of the first areas to face financial restrictions, indeed all out cuts to funding was the Irish human rights infrastructure. This included state agencies such as the Equality Authority and the semi-state body known as the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI). In the context of anti-Muslim racism, the NCCRI was unique in that it provided insights, albeit limited, on experiences of this pernicious phenomenon in Ireland. Qualitative information, ascertained through reports made to the NCCRI by civil society organisations (CSOs) and members of the public provided the only insights we had on anti-Muslim racism. The NCCRI did not capture data on rates of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination (Carr 2016a). While bodies such as the Equality Tribunal did have data on reports of religious discrimination vis-à-vis accessing goods and services, these were not disaggregated by faith identity and as such it was impossible to readily identify anti-Muslim sentiment in these contexts. Thus, with the loss of the NCCRI we lost the only, available insights on anti-Muslim racism in Ireland (ibid.).

The need to understand how anti-Muslim racism was ‘playing out’ in Ireland underpinned the rationale for the first of two studies that I will discuss here. Based on the aforementioned context, study one set out to provide nuanced statistical and qualitative insights on anti-Muslim racism in Ireland. Not only would doing so provide otherwise absent information of the experiences of Muslim communities here in Ireland; moreover, the data emerging from this study would provide a basis for an evidence based argument to be made to the Irish state of the need to systematically record experiences of anti-Muslim racism. A decision was made that study one would prioritise anti-Muslim hostility and as such, the evidence provided would be used to engage with recording practice by the Irish police. Interestingly, this research concluded in an era where the number of police stations in Ireland were being ‘rationalised’ and the then Minister for Justice repeatedly referred to the need for smarter policing (Merrion Street 2017; Quinlan 2013).
Study two was undertaken in partnership with two CSOs, the Immigrant Council of Ireland and the Open Society Foundations (Carr 2016b). As with study one, the focus was on providing insights on experiences of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination in Ireland. As opposed to having a national footprint, study two was focused and localised to Dublin City and immediate environs. Building on the approach to catalyse meaningful change vis-à-vis challenging anti-Muslim racism in Ireland, study two also set out to discover what Muslim men and women in Dublin felt would be the best ways to challenge this phenomenon; in other words, how could we challenge anti-Muslim racism from ‘below’, the ground up. While Muslim communities provided insights on experiences of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland in study one, their perspectives on how to challenge this phenomenon would be unique.

For both studies, the aim was to include as diverse a range of Muslim voices as possible from across the heterogeneous voices that make up Muslim communities in Ireland. Ireland’s Muslim communities have experienced positive, rapid growth in recent decades. In the late 1950s, the estimated number of Muslim men and women in Ireland, localised in Dublin, stood at around two-hundred individuals. From the mid-1990s onward the numbers of Muslims recorded in Ireland have grown from the low thousands over ten-times that amount (Scharbrodt et al. 2015). Data from the most recent Census put the number of Muslims in Ireland at just over sixty-three thousand, an increase by approximately fourteen-thousand on the previous Census; this places Islam as one of the fastest growing religions in Ireland (Central Statistics Office 2017a).

In addition to dynamic growth, Ireland’s Muslim communities are also very diverse and include a range of ethno-national backgrounds. As well as Irish, Muslim men and women in Ireland incorporate a range of identities including South Asian (largest representation), European, North and Sub-Saharan African, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian. When it comes to aspects of Islam, Muslim communities in Ireland are predominantly Sunni and there are also healthy Shi’a and Sufi communities and a smaller Ahmadiyya constituency (Carr 2017). In terms of national distribution, the area with the largest concentration of Muslims is Dublin, with various communities spread across the City. Outside of Dublin there are vibrant Muslim communities across the country with fairly even spread throughout; again the larger cities serve as an anchor for the communities. Demographically, Ireland’s Muslim communities reflect their UK counterparts when it comes to age with the majority of Muslims in Ireland falling in the under-forty-five age bracket (Central Statistics Office 2017b).

The following sections will focus first on evidencing anti-Muslim racism in Ireland by drawing on the experiences shared by participants in the two studies of interest here. These insights will be followed by perspectives of community representatives on the role being played by the Irish state when it comes to addressing anti-Muslim racism. After briefly arguing theoretically as to why the apparatuses of the Irish state engage (or not) with anti-Muslim racism, the final section of this chapter will present insights as to how Muslim communities in Ireland feel this pernicious phenomenon can be challenged; focusing, in particular, on four thematic areas that emerged in the research process. These include: recognition; inclusion; support and protection; suggestions rooted in the voices of Muslim participants themselves. But first, evidence of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland.

Evidencing anti-Muslim racism in Ireland

The first of the two studies discussed here commenced in 2010 (Carr 2016a). Given the paucity of data on experiences of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland, study one set out to provide insights derived through both statistical and qualitative data. This required a mixed methods research approach involving the distribution of a questionnaire to Muslim men and women.
across fourteen towns and cities in Ireland; this in turn was followed by focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews. Participants for the initial survey phase were sampled initially through respondent driven sampling and latterly using a conventional snowball sampling approach. Participants for the qualitative phase of the study were purposively sampled guided by insights from the survey component. In all, three-hundred and twenty-three Muslim men and women participated in the survey; twenty-two in the group discussions and interviews.

The findings from the survey phase of the study provided clear evidence of the presence of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland in the form of hostility and discrimination. Thirty-six per cent of participants indicated that they had experienced anti-Muslim hostility. This mainly manifested as verbal abuse (over eighty per cent) but there was also a significant percentage of physical abuse (over twenty per cent). In the case of the latter, Muslim women recalled having hijabs been torn from their heads, others detailed experiences of being spat at, being pushed, shoved and intimidated. When controlling for sex, statistical data revealed the differences in experiences of anti-Muslim hostility between men and women. While Muslim men reported a rate of anti-Muslim hostility of nearly one-in-four, Muslim women reported a higher percentage with almost one in two female participants indicating that they had experienced hostility.

A similar pattern emerged in relation to experiences of anti-Muslim discrimination. At a broad level, forty per cent of participants reported experiences of anti-Muslim discrimination; this predominantly manifested in and accessing employment; in and accessing education; shops, restaurants and using public transport. In the work space, participants referred to the hijab and beard as being problematic; others noted problems around prayer space and being facilitated around feasts such as Eid-al-Fitr. In public transport participants recalled negative treatment by bus drivers and fellow passengers; while in the education sphere, parents noted discriminatory barriers when enrolling their children in schools. As with hostility, Muslim women (40%) reported higher rate than men (22%) when the data were controlled for sex.

As noted elsewhere (Carr 2016a, 2018), while efforts were made but to generate a probability sample these were unsuccessful; as such, the findings here cannot claim to be generalisable to all Muslim communities in Ireland. However, the patterns emerging in the data, for example the higher rates of experiencing anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination for women over men resonating with international evidence (Collective Against Islamophobia in France 2016); the manner in which hostility manifests predominantly as verbal abuse, with a lower but significant rate of physical abuse, resonating with various researches on hate crime (Transgender Equality Network Ireland 2015), may indicate that the statistical findings presented here are indicative of the trends of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland. These findings are bolstered by the themes that emerged in the qualitative data, which again resonate with international experience. These themes co-located Muslims and Islam with terrorism, misogyny and ‘hyper-patriarchy’, Muslim women as lacking in agency and intellect, Muslims as ‘suspect communities’ (Hickman et al. 2011; Razack 2008). The following quote was taken from an open comment box included on the questionnaire and encapsulates the aforementioned themes:

Been called ‘filthy Arab’, hijab was pulled, drenched with beer . . . Followed home, pulled aside, asked if I was ‘open for business’ . . . Empty can thrown at me from moving car while yelling ‘f-in terrorist’ . . .

(Female Muslim, Arabic, Cork)

The presence of these themes and indeed the statistical data above make plain the realities of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland and the manner in which they resonate internationally. However, it is worth underscoring the importance of various racialising discourse of what it means to
belong in diverse national contexts. For example, anti-Muslim racism in Ireland is informed, not only by international discourses but notions that Muslimness and Irishness are mutually exclusive: to be Irish one must be Catholic/Christian. Similarly, researches undertaken in other national contexts also point to the importance of local inflections informing anti-Muslim racism (Open Society Institute 2011; van Nieuwkerk 2004).

Remaining on the topic of evidence of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland, but turning to study two, it is clear that anti-Muslim racism continues unabated (Carr 2016b). This second study, funded by the CSOs the Open Society Foundations and the Immigrant Council of Ireland, set out to: provide further evidence of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination specifically in Dublin. A further aim of this second study was to provide insights on how Muslim men and women in Dublin perceived would be the best way to challenge anti-Muslim racism in Ireland. This latter element was vital. Up to this, the little research that had been undertaken with Muslim communities in Ireland on this topic focussed on providing evidence and means to ameliorate the situation through the apparatuses of the Irish state. Study two utilised a qualitative methods approach to engage with Muslim communities across Dublin city. In all, sixty-six people took part, with an even split across the sexes. All participants were purposively sampled on the basis of location and Islamic diversity. Focus groups formed the majority of interactions but there were also a small number of interviews.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the findings from these discussions again brought home the realities of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland. Participants recalled experiences of verbal abuse, assault, graffiti, damage to property and intimidation. These spanned the city of Dublin. In the more sought after areas of South Dublin, two young Muslim women were subject to extremely intimidating verbal assault by three men at a fast-food drive through; in the city centre a young Muslim woman recalled hearing someone shout ‘Muzzie’ before a glass bottle shattered in her path; in the west of the city in a more working-class neighbourhood, a young Muslim refugee shared how she experienced five anti-Muslim incidents in one week despite never encountering this phenomenon before (Carr 2016b). The impact this had was make her wear a coat with a hood so that she could hide her hijab in future. While the experiences of anti-Muslim persist, the terms of opprobrium used by assailants have contemporised somewhat. Instead of being labelled ‘bin Laden’ or ‘bin Laden’s wife’, the more common refrain now for assailants was to refer to ISIS or specific instances of terrorist activity in mainland Europe (ibid.).

In terms of discrimination, participants in the second study again revealed the continued lived exclusions faced by Muslim men and women in Ireland on the basis of their racialised religious identity. Accessing education was again raised as an issue by parents of Muslim children and young adults. Participants also recalled experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment by peers and worryingly from teachers (ibid.). A young Muslim male recalled his teacher telling him to ‘shut up Allah’ when he disagreed about the content of a class discussion on Islam; a parent recalled how her hijabi daughter was told she would hear better ‘when you take off that stupid thing on your head’ when she asked a teacher to repeat a question. Participants again recalled experiences of discrimination in/looking for work, with the hijab again singled out for particular attention. Finally, discriminatory practices in shops, restaurants and public transport were also noted. Despite five years elapsing between these two studies it is clear that there is no real change in experiences of anti-Muslim discrimination (ibid.).

Little change

The fact that there has been little to no change should not be surprising. Very little has changed at the level of state practices in Ireland to challenge this phenomenon. Yes, since November
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2015, the Irish police have the facility to record ‘anti-Muslim’ crimes on their Police Using Leading Systems Effectively (PULSE) system (Cullen 2015). An action that speaks directly to the recommendations for the initial research discussed above. However, at time of writing data on experiences of ‘anti-Muslim’ crimes are not published. At best, interested parties can access data, presented in an annualised format, by making a special request to the Central Statistics Office. Limitations also remain in the manner in which the data are presented with the Central Statistics Office reluctant to provide information disaggregated across all of the hate crime categories (Irish Times 2016). In 2018 the Irish Police Service: An Garda Síochána published data on reported hate crime in Ireland in their 2017 Annual Report. While highlighting an increase in overall numbers of reported hate crime, these data are not disaggregated across targeted communities. Apart from these issues, questions remain as to the level of training Irish police staff receive vis-à-vis the recording of anti-Muslim crimes inter alia (see for example Carr 2016a; Clarke 2013; Michael 2017). While having the facility to record anti-Muslim crimes is a welcome point, the lack of published data and question marks around levels of in- and pre-service police training speak to a consistency in Irish state approaches to racism.

Kulvir, a Sikh participant in study one, summed up his perspective on the Irish state’s policies on anti-racism and diversity:

it’s just talk, talk, talk . . . nice catchy words . . . nice plans but nothing happening on the ground they have liaison officers but I don’t know what’s the use . . . I don’t know how many years they have been just talking about policies and nothing happening . . . no significant change on the ground.

(Kulvir, Sikh male)

Other participants such as Muslim community representative Azim used the term ‘superficial’ when referring to the approaches taken by the Irish state in this regard; Ahmad, another representative, referred to it as ‘a lot of talk . . . not much actions’. These findings resonate with others in the Irish context. For example Fanning et al. (2011, p. 12) refer to ‘some Irish anti-racism or diversity policies may in effect be “paper policies”; window dressing as opposed to meaningful, substantive change. These contributions reveal a shared perception across academic and community actors that very little if anything is happening to meaningfully challenge racism in Ireland, beyond the ticking of boxes. As I have argued elsewhere but will elaborate on further here, the reasons for this state inactivity can be explained in large part I argue, due to Ireland’s intoxication with neoliberalism and persistence in maintaining narrow notions of what it means to be Irish.

Ireland as a neoliberal racial state

Davis (2007) argues that any analysis of ‘race’ and racism needs to aware of the socio-political, economic and historic context it is being undertaken in. The fact that Ireland is beguiled by neoliberalism is well established in the literature (Allen 2009; Keohane and Kuhling 2014). This is unsurprising, Harvey (2005) argues that ‘almost all states . . . have embraced . . . some version of neoliberal theory and adjusted at least some policies and practices accordingly’. In this context, society is atomised; each individual is a ‘homo-œconomicus’ and entrepreneur of the self (Foucault 2010, p. 226). From this perspective one is a rational, responsible actor; responsible for their success and also for their failures in a meritocratic society that is blind to structural inequalities and their malign effects. In this context, issues related to ‘race’ and experiences of racism are denied through flawed ‘logics’ of colour blindness (Davis 2007; Lentin and Titley 2011). One’s racialised identity is not a barrier to success it goes, in a neoliberal society, only one’s
willingness to work hard to develop their human capital can come between them and success. Failure to succeed in the neoliberal society is not a result of structural barriers but one’s own personal failings (Davis 2007). Issues relating around ‘race’ are privatised, thus evacuating the state from taking any role in addressing racisms in their multifarious forms. Racism and engaging in racist activity are the outgrowth of a private pathology, unique to the individual, one rotten apple (Giroux 2003). Likewise, if one experiences racism and requires support, one should look to oneself or privatised purveyors of ‘care’ in the business of addressing integration and racism, CSOs and non-governmental organisations (Goldberg 2009). At best, discourses of diversity may proliferate as policies de jour in a ‘race’ blind setting while policy interventions that could meaningfully address racism are attenuated (Davis 2007).

Goldberg (2009, p. 334) argues that ‘the more robustly neoliberal the state . . . the more likely race would be rendered largely immune from state intervention’. At the same time though, while ‘race’ and notions of racialisation and their negative import are denied in Ireland, particular conceptions of what it means to be Irish prevail as is evident in the experiences of Muslim participants in the researches discussed above. Not only does ‘race’ denial serve a neoliberal purpose, it also permits the heretofore dominant group within Irish society to maintain its power in the face of dynamic social change. Discourses of diversity present the Irish state as a neutral actor, a mediator when it comes to the ‘us’ and the ‘other’. However, the lack of meaningful, substantive policies to challenge racism in reality serves to perpetuate the privilege, and dominance of those who ‘really’ belong, those who are ‘really’ Irish. Inaction in the face of racism allows the state to assert the boundaries of the nation; by not addressing those who engage racist activity, the state allows perpetrators of racism police who can ‘really’ belong in Ireland.

The effect of inactivity on the part of the state in the face of racism is very real for those members of Ireland’s Muslim communities who experience anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination; a point borne out above. That said, I argue that the Irish state is a key actor if we are to meaningfully challenge to anti-Muslim racism in Ireland. This may seem strange given what I have argued above. I have previously argued in favour of engaging in a Faustian pact with the neoliberal state in the fight against anti-Muslim racism (Carr 2016a); engaging the neoliberal state on neoliberal terms, encouraging it to take action on the basis of an instrumental cost benefit analysis of why it should challenge racisms. Here though I want to make the argument that the state is the key, arguably only actor that can support a sustained challenge to racism in its diverse guises, including anti-Muslim racism. I concur with Giroux (2003, p. 206), who argues that ‘any attempt to address the politics of the new racism . . . must begin by reclaiming the language of the social and affirming the project of an inclusive democracy’. We must place the state front and centre in our efforts to challenge anti-Muslim racism, to move beyond accepting the state as a bogey-man, ‘to imagine the state as a vehicle for democratic values and a proponent for social and racial justice’ (ibid., p. 207).

Giroux (2003) also argues the need for a widely dispersed ‘public pedagogy’ if we are to challenge racism and it is argued here that the state has a fundamental role to play in such a pedagogy. Moreover, Giroux’s argument for a public pedagogy strongly resonates with what members of Ireland’s Muslim communities themselves feel is required if we are to challenge anti-Muslim racism (ibid.). As noted above, a key aspect of study two was to illicit the views on Muslim men and women in Dublin as to how we can/should challenge anti-Muslim racism in Ireland. The insights derived from this second study were far ranging and are elaborated in their entirety elsewhere (Carr 2016b). For present purposes, in terms of responding to anti-Muslim racism participants insights can usefully be disaggregated around four macro-themes that emerged in the second study, including: recognition; inclusion; support and protection.
Challenging anti-Muslim racism: perspectives from ‘below’

The aforementioned four themes underpin and flow through ten specific recommendations that emanated from study two, vis-à-vis challenging anti-Muslim racism in Ireland. Each one of these recommendations can play an important role in producing the public pedagogy called for by Giroux (2003). For the purposes of this chapter, I am going to focus on key aspects of four of these recommendations in particular; namely, raising awareness; media, Islam and Muslims in Ireland; education and diversity; and hate crime legislation.

Raising awareness

There was consensus among the participants of study two that, given the ubiquity of anti-Muslim tropes, a counter-narrative be created that challenged the racialised imagery of Muslim communities. It was felt that such a counter-narrative would go some way toward challenging the all too pervasive negative stereotypes of Muslim communities, and importantly, their effects. Participants felt that an important manner in which to challenge such dehumanising discourses was to (re)humanise, to raise awareness of Muslim men and women as part and parcel of Irish society. For Salah the most important thing to do:

... first and foremost is to make the larger community kind of understand that [Muslim] people... are not different, they are them; they are part of this country, they are part of the community, they are Irish citizens ...

(Salah)

A central aspect of the public pedagogy manifest through public awareness campaigns to challenge anti-Muslim racism, from the perspective of participants, needs to focus on creating recognition that Muslim men and women are already a vibrant part of Irish society. Within this, participants were keen to bring the ‘normalcy’ of Muslimness in Ireland to the fore. In other words, campaigns that aim to raise awareness need not refer to Islam per se but focus more about Muslims as people; the otherwise mundane, for example the shared realities of being a parent, a student, being a football fan etc. multifarious activities and identities that are common in Irish society. Awareness raising campaigns with this focus would counter those racialising discourses that dehumanise Muslim communities by emphasising diversity as opposed to homogeneity, common humanity instead of difference. Zara and Maryam’s comments speak directly to the need to focus on ‘normalcy’:

... just normalise Muslims, we are not aliens (laughter) or monsters ... ‘so you are like us’ like that [was said] after a big conversation I have with colleagues, ‘so you are like us’ I said yeah we are ...

(Zara)

... I wouldn’t like to be promoted as someone who is: oh my God yeah, she is Muslim. I don’t want that. I’m human, I work, I, I live, I eat, I drink, I drive, I’m human. Just simply a different faith that’s all.

(Maryam)

Interestingly, when asked on their views, only one participant stated that he would be supportive of campaigns that explicitly target anti-Muslim racism in their content. Another spoke of the need to have campaigns that clearly speak to anti-Muslim racism specifically, as well as those
that function to humanise Muslim communities through the mundane. Racism needs to be called out for what it is; to fail to do so is to perpetuate ‘blindness’ emblematic of state practices towards racism: that racism is not a problem in our society. In the context of such awareness campaigns though, care must be taken so that anti-racism campaigns do not themselves act as a means to reinforce racist discourses. This was recognised by participants in study two, who while calling for a public pedagogy, argued that ‘retelling racism’ could be counterproductive, potentially making people, Muslim or members of groups targeted with racism, feel insecure through the sharing of other people’s experiences. As Perry (2001) argues, hate crime is a message crime. Anti-racism campaigns may be counterproductive if they essentially do the job of the racist assailant for them:

... if you are making campaign [retelling racism], people will feel ... if I have not experienced anything and people share this experience with me in the local [community] ... again I’m feeling insecure to be honest.

(Maria)

Moreover, as one Muslim woman put it, reflecting on a central trope in gendered, racialised discourses of Muslim women:

I don’t want to be promoted as someone who is vulnerable. Because when [you] show people that we’re vulnerable then they’ll treat us in a way ... It could be good and bad ... I don’t want to be treated like I’m someone special, because I’m not. I’m just a human, you know. And if we talk about our experiences, if I tell people, I don’t like telling people my experiences I’ve had simply because I don’t like people being sympathetic. I don’t want empathy, I just want to be treated as a normal person, simply, you know.

(Fatima)

**Media, Islam and Muslims in Ireland**

Participants in study two held predominantly negative perspectives towards the media in general to the extent that some believed there was an anti-Muslim agenda at work. In order for the public pedagogy to be disseminated across society, participants argued for greater media inclusion when it comes to Muslims and media in Ireland and also an engagement with media outlets vis-à-vis sensationalist reporting practices. In the case of the latter, a view was expressed that the voices, and indeed faces of ordinary Muslims in Ireland were sorely lacking. With the exception of some usual Muslim community ‘representatives’, there are very few Muslim voices in Irish mainstream media, indeed only two (Baz Ahmawy and recently Hajar Akl) spring to mind at the time of writing; unless the issue at hand relates directly to ‘Muslim issues’. The inclusion of Muslim voices and faces in the mainstream media on a range of topics would go some way towards humanising Muslim communities in Ireland in a highly accessible manner:

... you never see Muslims on TV if it’s not about Islam, or a documentary on Islam ... if you were to get a Muslim, or even just like a group of people to do some sort of a programme, it doesn’t have to be on the religion just to show that they’re normal people ...

(Rabia)

A final note on engagement with media outlets referred to reporting standards. Participants felt that media outlets used language that stigmatised Muslim communities. It was suggested that
efforts should be made to engage with media producers so that they would be sensitised to the impact of their reporting on Muslim men and women. Saad argues against the co-location of terrorist acts with Muslimness and the resultant ‘suspectification’ (Hickman et al. 2011):

... when there is a problem, say for example we don’t wish but happens against attack in Rome, London, Iraq, ISIS so the media would concentrate about Islam the Muslims doing that and every Muslim should be in suspicion. So I suggest that if someone comes to talk to the media to say they [e.g. ISIS] don’t represent everybody...

(Saad)

Education and diversity

As demonstrated above, Muslim parents and children face discrimination in and accessing the education system in Ireland. The issue of discrimination accessing the education system is currently under review in the Irish context (Department of Education and Skills 2017). In the classroom, students have had to experience anti-Muslim racism with aspects of their faith identity directly targeted from both staff and students. Furthermore, when students do experience anti-Muslim racism and seek support they find their reports falling on deaf ears with no ameliorative action being taken. A core aspect of any public pedagogy clearly needs to focus on the educational context engaging with the school peers but also with teachers. Participants suggested that civil society organisations work in partnership with education providers to develop and implement in- and pre-service teacher training modules that directly addressed anti-Muslim racism. In relation to young students, participants suggested the design and implementation of modules for the classroom that would engage with ideas around who Muslims in Ireland are; experiences of anti-Muslim racism; challenge stereotypes; and provide advice and support for those targeted. Interestingly, it was also suggested this need not necessarily be done in the context of religious education but instead where the focus is on diversity and indeed the ‘sameness’ of Muslims and non-Muslims.

...they have to put something... small subject to the kids you know in the schools... showing the good things, not just what they hear in the news because when you’re a kid, when they told you something it’s going to your head, you never forget it you know like... so I believe this is good idea if they bring something to put it in on the school and teach the kids, even the teacher as well most of the teacher they don’t know, they have to get more education...

(Moosa)

Hate crime legislation

A final area for discussion relates to the need for hate crime legislation in Ireland. As it stands, Ireland is without the legal means to challenge hate crime as a specific from other kinds of criminal activity. As such, those who engage in hostility targeting Muslims as well as other social groupings on the basis of their identity are unlikely to face any stiffer penalty for their crime. Relatedly, those who are the target of hate crime will find that the legislative supports they need are sadly lacking. Perry (2001) refers to hate crime as a message crime; an act(s) that communicate to those targeted that they are ‘other’, that they are not part of the dominant in-group in society. Hate crime legislation on the other hand, drawing on Iganski (2008) can serve a declaratory purpose, sending a message from society, through the state that hate crime is not acceptable, that those targeted are
not the ‘other’ but a core part of the ‘us’. Hate crime legislation is a fundamental aspect of any public pedagogy, making as it does a clear statement of what we will not tolerate in our society.

Conclusion

The evidence of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland is clear and resonates strongly with the international experience. Despite the publication and dissemination of this evidence at a range of fora, meaningful state engagement remains a chimera. The argument made here, building on Giroux’s (2003) calls for an engagement with a public pedagogy to challenge anti-Muslim racism in Ireland; a pedagogy that challenges dehumanising, racialised representations and discourses of Muslimness and informs popular perspectives on Islam and Muslim communities. That Ireland is a neoliberal racial state is firmly acknowledged above; however, drawing again on Giroux (ibid.) it is argued here that the state, its apparatuses and legislative powers have to be reclaimed in the fight against all racisms. As I have argued elsewhere this may require some form of Faustian pact with the neoliberal state if this challenge is to succeed. The experiences of Muslim men and women in Ireland behove us to at least try. The contributions of participants in both of the studies discussed above clearly point the way for those with at least some influence on the functions of the state to act. Those working to challenge anti-Muslim racism in the Irish context can and have learned a lot from the experiences from other contexts; similarly, the perspectives shared here can also transfer to other jurisdictions, point the way to challenge anti-Muslim racism ‘from below’.

Notes

1 I prefer the term anti-Muslim racism as it can serve as a tool to generate dialogue on the experiences of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination set to broader histories and knowledges of racisms; moreover, by engaging with the term racism, we go some way to raising questions about the processes of racialisation that underpin how communities are constructed as ‘other’ (see Carr 2016a for more in this regard). In addition, please see Claire Alexander’s submission to the Runnymede Trust report Islamophobia: Still a Challenge for Us All, which also points up the importance of recognising experiences of anti-Muslim racism as racism (Runnymede Trust 2017).

2 For more on sampling and other methodological issues please see Carr (2018).

3 Participants were initially asked if they had experienced hostility and/or discrimination in a general sense; this was followed by a verification question wherein participants were asked if they believed they were targeted on the basis of their Muslimness.

4 Muslim women (44%) reported a 1.6 times likelihood of experiencing anti-Muslim hostility when compared to their male (28%) co-religionists.

5 While at a broad level Muslim women reported higher experiences of discrimination when compared to men, this did vary across the locations where one may experience discrimination; for example, Muslim men reported higher rates of discrimination in and accessing work; Muslim women noted higher rates of discrimination than men in accessing public transport. This may be the result of Muslim men, who may otherwise be unidentifiably Muslim, becoming identifiable in the job application process (names) or in the work space.

6 I do not believe anti-Muslim racism to be a form of ‘new racism’ but one which has manifested for over a millennium, albeit shifting depending on the context wherein it was active see Carr (2016a) for more.

References


