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‘Mussafirs of the 21st Century: British
South Asian Muslim women, higher
education and the changing notions of
‘Britishness’

MRes

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Abstract

The South Asian Muslim community in Britain is one that has become increasingly 'visible' with what it means to be 'British Muslim' remaining a pertinent issue. Given that the British South Asian community is set to grow, it is necessary to engage with this community in order to understand how discourses around gender, ethnicity and identity affect how this community develops. The aim of this research was to engage with specific members of the British South Asian Muslim community, that of women and mothers. In undertaking this research aspects of identity, belonging and citizenship were explored, with particular emphasis placed on discourses around 'identity'. Drawing on narratives expressed in focus groups and interviews this research analysed and explored the influences of higher education in shaping attitudes towards citizenship and belonging. Higher education was revealed to have a positive impact on Muslim women's lives, whilst identities and the notions of 'Britishness' were increasingly areas of intense negotiation.

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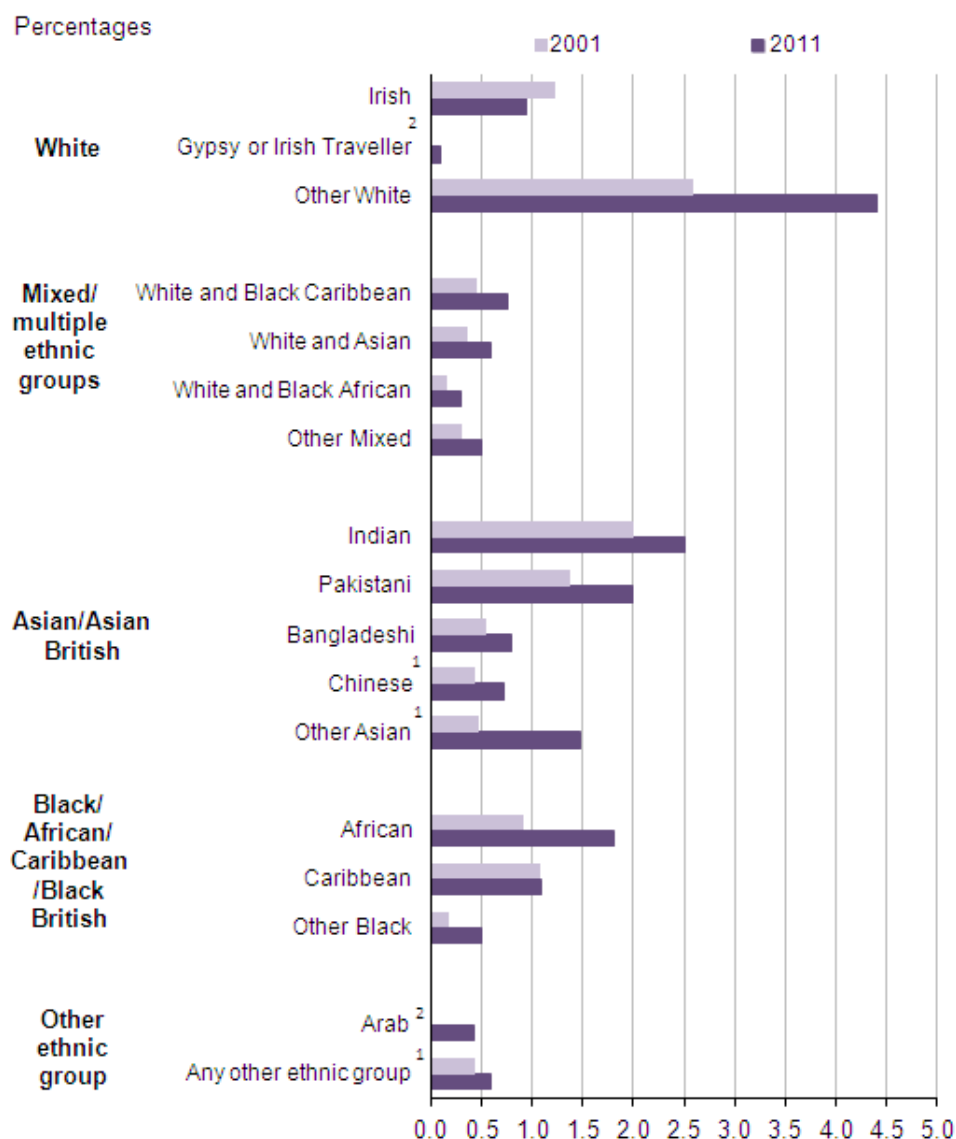
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Chapter 1- Introduction

1.1: Background

According to the 2011 UK Census 38% of the Muslim population in Britain is of Pakistani ethnic origin whilst the Bangladeshi proportion stands at 15%. Of the British Pakistani's more than half, approximately 55%, had been born in the UK, of the Bangladeshi population this figure stands at 46%. The table below shows the change in South Asian ethnic minority population over the last decade (ONS, 2011)



The term 'South Asian' can encompass varying ethnic groups and traditionally alludes to people of the Indian Sub-Continent; in an effort to clarify terms, in the

context of this research the term 'South Asian' will relate to Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim minority groups in Britain. For further specificity the term employed here with regards to research participants will be 'British South Asian Muslim' (BSA) women. Other researchers such as Mirza (2003), Dwyer (2005) and Phillips (2005) have used similar terms such as 'British Muslim women' to denote second and third generation Muslim women in Britain.

It is pertinent at this point to give a brief overview of the history of South Asian minorities in UK. Initial mass migration of Pakistanis to Britain in the 1960's involved predominantly young males entering the UK and gaining employment as manual labourers, as they were joined later by wives and children the South Asian population of Britain grew significantly. With this increasing number of Muslims in Britain 'a network of institutions was developed to meet the religious and cultural needs of their families' (Lewis, 2007, p.18). Communities developed relying on mutual interests, the notions of kinship and *birdari* (clan) politics that influenced daily lives in Britain. The Bangladeshi community was the youngest to develop; arriving to Britain as economic migrants at what was unfortunately the tail end of the textile industries, at the point in which demand for cheap labour was diminishing.

The second and third generation Muslims in contemporary Britain today have been brought up and educated in the UK yet their concepts of identity, belonging and citizenship are a source of increasing contention and scrutiny. Census data shows today's British Muslim community is young, rapidly growing, socio-economically depressed and categorised by low participation in the labour market along gender lines. Of the Pakistani women considered of working age only 27% were

economically active, only 22% of Bangladeshi women were considered economically active (Peach, 2005). This research will focus primarily on South Asian British Muslim women, studying inherently the attitudes and self identity of second and third generation British Pakistani and Bangladeshi women.

Undoubtedly these British Muslims face different challenges in British society today than their parents or grandparents. It is important however to avoid generalisations and to consider Britain's Muslim population as a singular, homogenous group would fail to appreciate the many nuances and distinctions between communities, individuals and society. What is common is the concept of plural identities, and the negotiation necessary to navigate a sense of 'self' in an ever changing British climate.

1.2: Research Focus

The concepts of 'identity', 'belonging' and 'citizenship' have become increasingly inherent to the lexicon of policies aimed at 'promoting integration' amongst Britain's minority population. Having developed from a standpoint of 'multiculturalism' to one that now progresses notions of 'social cohesion' and 'shared identities', David Blunkett (2005) spoke of an inclusive, overarching 'Britishness' that would allow for informed, robust and relevant challenges to current debates in British society. David Cameron (2011) further stated that multiculturalism had proved a failure and further '...encouraged different cultures to live separate lives apart from each other, and the mainstream...' and that a tolerance of separation had resulted in communities behaving in ways that were counter to 'our ways'. The notable retreat from 'multiculturalism' in mainstream British politics, to an increased emphasis on the

concept of ‘social cohesion’, integration and ‘citizenship’ has been noted by various commentators, suggesting that increased dissatisfaction with ‘multiculturalism’ is a reaction to various ‘Muslim-related’ pressures, in particular the events of the summer 2001 riots in Northern towns of Britain, and the terrorist attacks in London 2005 (Meer & Modood, 2009). Equally the term ‘citizen’ is often a contested one, and for Britain’s minority ethnic communities (BME) can often connote varied and contradictory meanings. In recent years the ‘citizen’ question has often been alluded to in conjunction with discourses on immigration, rights and ‘belonging.’ The concept of plural identities and citizenship amongst Britain’s minority populations has become an increasingly pertinent one in light of what has been deemed the ‘failure of multiculturalism’ (Cameron, 2011).

1.3: Research Aims and Objectives

Geographically a significant proportion of British Pakistani and Bangladeshi’s are resident in the North West, reflecting the initial settlement patterns of early migrants to mill towns in the North of England. It is one particular, former mill town that will form the basis of the case study in this research. According to the 2011 UK Census Oldham has a significant ethnic minority population, with a 10.1% Pakistani population and a 7.3% Bangladeshi population helping to make up the 22.5% ethnic minority population of Oldham. The non-white population share of Oldham increased significantly from 13.9% in 2001 to 22.5% in 2011, additionally 17.7% of Oldham’s

residents identified themselves as Muslim.

	Oldham (n)	Oldham (%)	GM (%)	North West (%)	England (%)
White	174,326	77.5	83.8	90.2	85.5
Pakistani	22,686	10.1	4.8	2.7	2.1
Bangladeshi	16,310	7.3	1.3	0.7	0.8
Indian	1,555	0.7	2	1.5	2.6
Black (African / Caribbean)	2,797	1.2	2.8	1.3	3.4
Mixed	4,057	1.8	2.3	1.6	2.2
Other ethnic groups	3,166	1.4	3.1	2.0	3.2
All Ethnic Minorities (non-white)	50,571	22.5	16.3	9.8	14.3

The table above shows the ethnic make-up of Oldham according to the 2011 UK Census (Source: ONS, 2011)

Oldham is also one of the most deprived towns in England, according to the 2007 Indices of Deprivation Oldham ranked as the 42nd most deprived local authority area in England. Multiple deprivation relates to a number of indices combined to determine the level of deprivation, these include; income, health, employment, crime, access to services and the living environment. Employment rates for Oldham are indicatively low with only 58.3% either in full-time employment or self-employed, this is lower than the national average of 62.1%. With regards to education Oldham lags behind again, those with degree level qualifications stands at 18.6% compared to the national average of 27.4%. An estimated 29.6% of Oldham's population has no qualifications (Oldham Anti-Poverty Strategy, 2010).

The aims of this research are to understand how notions of 'Britishness' and belonging have changed amongst second and third generation British Muslim women of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic origin living in Oldham. By analysing discourses

around citizenship, race and identity, this research aims to understand how intersections of race, gender and ethnicity work in the intricate lived experiences of British Muslim women. It is also the aim of this research to analyse the impact Higher education (HE) may have on understandings of belonging and plural identity, seeking to identify the ways in which mature British Muslim women access higher education, the impact this may have on their identity and the ways in which negotiations and understanding of plural identity are communicated to children.

Specifically the aims of this research are centred on an interrelated set of objectives which are as follows:

- 1) Explore the ways in which connections to and understandings of a 'homeland' have changed between first generation and second/third generation British Muslim women. The notion of a 'homeland' relates to a connection to an ancestral land, whereby cultures, traditions and language are inherited through generational links (Grosby, 2005).
- 2) Analyse the ways in which second/third generation British Muslim women manage plural identities
- 3) Identify ways in which Higher education may inform or impact on management of identities, and understandings of tradition, cultural and gender roles
- 4) Analyse the way in which British Muslim women are passing on understandings of being South Asian and Muslim to their children, and informing the ways in which the next of British Muslims are likely to understand identity and belonging.

Research objective 1 relates to self identification and locality, and generational attitudes towards a sense of 'belonging'. Research objective 2 and 3 relates to 'plural identities' ethnicity, race, religion and culture and if HE/FE has any affect on the management of these pluralities. Research objective 4 is linked with understandings of culture, gender and religion across generations. The interlinked objectives highlighted above involve exploring interconnected discourses surrounding immigration, citizenship, identity, gender and religion. This research aims to further understanding of British Muslim women firstly by providing a critical review of issues relevant to lived experiences such as culture, religion, access to education, employment and multiculturalism; secondly by obtaining the views of British Muslim women through empirical research will allow for a deeper understanding of current issues pertinent to this hitherto unexplored sub-section of the South Asian British Muslim community.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

It is the purpose of this literature review to examine and better understand the key issues surrounding the concept of plural identities, citizenship and ‘belonging’ and how these are affected by the intersectionality of race, gender and ethnicity. The works in the review focus on various aspects of South Asian Muslim women’s lives, including but not limited to; cultural determinants, diaspora, the notion of a ‘homeland’, the concept of community, educational and employment participation, and multiculturalism. This research intends to explore the concepts of marginalisation, gender roles and the notion of ‘belonging’ within the context of culture and community. This review will seek to evaluate literature in order to determine a conceptual framework and a critical understanding of the social, economic and cultural influences affecting second generation British South Asian Muslim women’s understanding of their place in contemporary Britain.

By the end of this chapter key issues within interconnected themes will be highlighted, allowing for a more thorough and critical understanding of the major influences in South Asian Muslim women’s lives. In doing so, the focus and drive for empirical research will become clearer and justified, showing the extent to which these women’s experiences as mothers, students, wives and daughters are likely to influence future generations of young British Muslims. It is pertinent at this point to offer a brief explanation of terms used in this literature review and through the research project as a whole. In social science terms it is widely understood that the concept of ‘race’ is a social construct, bound in misleading biological differentiation largely based on physical characteristics, ‘...the choices of physical markers assumed to be racial characteristics are historically and culturally variable...’ (Karner, 2007,

16). Hence to reflect this, the term 'race' will be used with this restriction in mind, however though 'race' has been discounted in biological terms, it is important to recognise that 'race' is still very much a reality in terms of social experience, and has often determined the lived experiences of ethnic minorities. The term 'ethnicity' is much more preferable, and relates to a group of people who share certain characteristics, it is '...widely associated with culture, descent, group memories/histories and language...' (Karner, 2007, p.17). This research will focus primarily on the Muslim communities in Britain, though it is important to recognise that Muslims are not a homogeneous entity, what may amount to being Muslim for one person may not be applicable for another, '...we cannot assume that being 'Muslim' means the same thing to all...' (Modood, 2010, p.3)

2.1: History, Migration, Culture and Religion- The South Asian Muslim

Presence in Britain

The presence of South Asian communities in Britain has largely been attributed to the UK's colonial links with the Indian Sub Continent, as Muslims of the British Empire and later the British Commonwealth arrived in significant numbers to take advantage of increased employment aspects in the late 1960's and early 70's. However historians such as Matar (1999) Lawless (1995) and Hellyer (2007) have chartered the presence of Muslims in Britain as far back as the 15th Century, citing historic architectural finds, documents and trade links to show interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims in Britain have a long standing history.

2.1.1: Diaspora

With issues of migration there is also the notion of diaspora; derived from the Greek 'disperse' diaspora relates to dispersal of a group of people. Historically diaspora has been linked to dispersal of the Jewish people; contemporary understandings have related the concept to communities who have been dispersed, through force or voluntary migration. Clifford (1994) asserts that the term 'diaspora' has developed slippage and as a theoretical concept can encompass discourses on belonging, borders, historical experiences and migration. Some of the features which apply to 'diasporic' communities include; migration from a homeland due to economic, trade or colonialism, the collective memory of a 'homeland' (Gregory et al. 2009), the idealisation of such a 'homeland' and a strong ethnic distinctiveness (Cohen, 1997). Communities involved in diaporas are intricately connected through shared language, history, culture or origin.

Shah and Iqbal (2011) present a valuable interpretation of diaspora and place it within the context of Pakistani and Bangladeshi diaspora communities in Britain. Citing a high level of adherence to certain cultures, traditions and values, a bond amongst those living in a diaspora existence can be created when communities cluster together to preserve particular cultural ideals. However diasporas are subject to reformulation, indeed the diaspora of Pakistanis to Britain may have begun with young, male migrants but by the late 1960's it also included women and children through family migration. For this research the concept of 'diaspora' is used to emphasise the fluctuating identities of minority communities, as a set of relations between culture, religion, history and generations, and pertaining to experiences of identity and self amongst British SA Muslims rather than a purely 'historical' concept of migration.

Diaspora is experienced differently between groups and certainly between members within that group; it can be an entirely different experience between different genders, ethnicities and class ‘...all diasporas are differentiated...’ further, ‘...they are lived and re-lived through multiple modalities: modalities, for example of gender, ‘race’, class, religion, language and generation...’(Brah, 1996, p.184). Diasporic experiences of minority Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are inherently different to those experienced even by males of the same ethnicity and community. Diaspora encompasses different meanings for second and third generation Pakistani/Bangladeshi minorities, similarly the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity work to form different experiences. The concept of ‘intersectionality’ emerging as it did out of critiques of first and second wave feminism, seeks to address the balance of looking at disadvantaged minority women purely through the lens of either feminism or anti-racism (Crenshaw, 1989). Instead ‘intersectionality’ focuses on a combination of subordinations, stating one area of subordination or source of disadvantage, i.e. gender, is varying in impact depending on the presence of other social disadvantage i.e. ethnicity (Denis, 2008). Rejecting feminism that is inherently ‘White Eurocentric’ or of ‘Western based ideology’ has been a key feature of black feminism, and a means of making black women and their experiences ‘visible’ by attaching significance to the way gender, race and ethnicity intersect in women’s everyday lived experiences (Amos & Parmar, 1984).

2.1.2: Izzat (honour) and baseti (shame)

For the first generation of immigrant Pakistani and Bangladeshi women life in Britain proved an unenviable struggle, where sentiments of loneliness, fear, and alienation prevailed and the much fractured lives of these women has been highlighted previously (Wilson, 1978, Choudry, 2001, Werbner, 2002). The general consensus amongst these first women was that they were never truly British; instead they were visitors to a foreign land. Isolation dominated their lives, this, although attributed at the time to lack of English language skills, was certainly much more than being unable to speak English. For these women coming to England from a rural background and experiences of extended family to end up stranded in a society that was strange and unknown, the isolation was a ‘...state of mind, one of shock and withdrawal...’(Wilson, 1978, p.21). The embedded racism and prejudice they found in this society only served to accentuate their loneliness. Wilson (1978) examines many aspects of South Asian women’s lives, including women of varying ethnic, religious minority groups she examines women’s sense of isolation, their lives outside the home, paid work, family and children. Overwhelmingly the lives of these South Asian women and their children are governed by strongly demarcated gender boundaries, patriarchal attitudes and behaviours. Notions of izzat (honour) cross boundaries of religion and culture to feature heavily and determine many aspects of South Asian women’s lives, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Indian.

The strong sense of autonomy and cultural control that was inherent to rural regions of Pakistan and Bangladesh from which the majority of these Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants originated was lessened upon arrival to Britain, just as the

religious, cultural and social structures constructed and implemented in relation to gender were weakened. As such with the arrival of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women and children to Britain, the nature of patriarchal domesticity and gender regimes saw the need for a renewed emphasis on morality and codes (Werbner, 2002). These codes relate to strict control of women's role in society; maintaining family honour or '*izzat*' can dictate many aspects of women's lives including dress, education and interaction with the opposite sex (Lloyd Evans & Bowlby, 2000). The concepts of *izzat*, (honour) *baseti* (dishonour) and *sharm* (shame) have been shown to be integral to both Pakistani and Bangladeshi culture with the belief that the *izzat* of a family lies with its women (Shaw, 2000).

Explored as a form of cultural and gender control, Khan (1999), ties the concept of *izzat* with its counterpart that of *purdah* (curtain). She details the history of *purdah* as being both metaphorical and literal, dividing the world of men and women, the curtain represents the unequal share apportioned to women. Contextualised in many forms and on different levels *purdah* defines socially and psychologically the limited spheres through which women may interact with wider society. Women carry the burden of stepping into a male determined arena; limiting their behaviours according to pre-defined 'social norms' plays an important part of their psyche, '...it prescribes the correct mode of behaviour for women, enjoining them to be modest and submissive...' (Kabeer, 1984, p.96). *Purdah* and *izzat* are used interchangeably as a means to ensure both chastity before marriage, and correct behaviour after. Women carry the burden of the family honour, their behaviour reflects the degree of control and strength of masculinity, women consequently become tools in displaying these hierarchies, '...responsibility for a daughter or sister's behaviour lies to a large extent

with her father and brothers, for the reputation of the men and of the family is at risk if doubts circulate about a girl's respectability...'(Shaw, 2000, p.169). Not maintaining to the ideals of izzat is to ignore the essentials of human dignity and the emotional bounds that tie into familial responsibility (Ballard, 1982). Women therefore become solely responsible for knowing their limits and maintaining izzat, as they have the means to endanger izzat in ways which their male counterparts could not. Though experiences of diaspora and identities differ amongst social, culture, and economic conditions, the notions of izzat are inherent across the tropes of Asian women; as Wilson (1978, p.103) states, '...the idea that a girl's reputation is important is almost universal, but for Asian girl's it is not just important; 'reputation' is the bane of their lives from adolescence to the early years of their marriage. It controls everything they do and adds a very tangible danger to any unconventional action...' This 'unconventional action' may be as innocuous as choosing to remain in higher education, reject an arranged marriage, or looking for paid work.

2.2: Culture and Religion

Considerable attention has been paid to the way British South Asians identify and construct their identities in light of the hybrid and intersectional space they inhabit (Modood et al. 1997, Ghuman, 1999, Robinson, 2009). The notion of ‘hybridity’ has been developed by Homi Bhabha (1994) in relation to ethnic minorities and details a hybridised space that is constantly renegotiated, ambiguous and filled with contradictions. Bhabha contends that culture is never fixed, or ‘pure’, rather it is fluid, constantly shifting and taking on multiple influences. The place where multiple cultures compete and co-exist is the ‘third space’, and cultural meanings created there Bhabha terms the ‘liminal’. The management of these multiple identities are increasingly important to understand, not least in order to gauge the everyday lived experiences of those with identities that are plural, malleable and repeatedly constructed. British South Asian Muslims at once inhabit identities that are British, Asian, Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Muslim. Within each differing and individual identities there are also intersections of gender, class, social structure and geography to consider; in all then, for the second/third generation immigrants of Britain, the range of identities embraced by them is vast (Werbner, 2002).

Early research into these multiplicities presents a young community stranded between ‘two-cultures’, children of Asian immigrants to Britain were a generation caught between two cultures, where the culture taught at home was distinctly different from that experienced in schools, wider society and work Anwar (1998). Later publications and subsequent research (Brah 1996, Dwyer 2000) have shown a degree of ‘acculturation’, taking up of the host communities norms, values and societies. Though there is trend of positive adaptations, political unrest, unique events and the

perception of demonisation can not only halt, but reverse these trends. Contemporary examples of this can be found in the terrorist attacks of September 11th, and the London 7/7 tube bombings. Such events can also lead to a reinforcement of a religious identity. Religious affiliation has shown to be increasingly important for second and third generation Pakistan/Bangladeshi immigrants, ‘...even those young Asian’s who do not practise their religion nevertheless recognise that religion as part of their distinctive heritage and ethnic identity...’(Modood et al., 1994, p.59). For British Pakistanis it seems it is the religion, and not the ethnic or cultural aspect of their identity that is of precedent (Jacobson, 1997).

The need to understand the process of identity as issues surrounding multiple identifications and hybridity are of vital importance to an increasingly multicultural Britain. Qualitative research has shown that British Muslims continually differentiate between culture and religion. Participating and identifying with a form of ‘revivalist Islam’ offers British Muslims new ways to manage and identify with their place in contemporary Britain, offering them distinct and positive means to assert a unique identity despite the marginalisation they may face in other aspects of society. This coming together across boundaries of ethnicity or culture has been noted as a form of ‘reactive solidarity’. Revivalist Islam has been defined as being a return to fundamental teachings, the core foundations of the religion by purging out innovation, and local customs (Jaspal, 2011). This revision to ‘core beliefs’ has been partly attributed to the stigmatisation of the Muslim community in a post 9/11, and 7/7 society; the response has been to develop an identity with pan-national groups and fostering connections overlooking boundaries of culture, language and ethnicity. Kibria (2011, p.2) observes return to religious identity as most strikingly noticeable

amongst young Muslim men and women, ‘...operating in an especially powerful way among Muslim youth-the children and grandchildren of Muslim migrants...’

There are variety of reasons why religion is important amongst a ‘hierarchy of identity’ including the need to maintain a personal and distinctiveness in an increasingly multicultural society as, ‘...religious dress, practises and organisational affiliations serve as important identity markers that help promote individual self-awareness and preserve group cohesion...’(Peek, 2005, p.219). Friends and peers play a strong role in constructing and reinforcing strong religious identities, the need to conform to a non-Muslim society subsides as groups with similar religious tenets and norms come together. The traumatic events of September 11th reinforced an Islamic identity, the need for a ‘spiritual anchor’ allowed for greater dependence on religion (Kunst, et al., 2012). Being labelled as the ‘other’, sparks feelings of exclusion from wider society, as such, one response is to look inwards and increased solidarity within groups, at the lower end of the social spectrum, feeling marginalised and excluded a religious identity is ‘...appealing because it offers a structure to individuals’ lives at a time when they feel their life chances are determined wholly by external forces over which they have no control...’(Akhtar, 2005, p.167). For some Muslim women, asserting an Islamic identity more than ever before was important despite fears of threats or violence in a post-9/11 society, consequently identities based on religion involve self-awareness, choices that are both individualistic and influenced by others, involving internal conflicts as well as external pressures (Peek, 2005).

Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are increasingly aligning themselves to a shared religious identity that spans globally rather than restricting to a particular ‘culture’ or

geographical heritage (Bhopal, 1998). This allows them to employ greater agency, using religion and religious texts in order to reject what they have come to identify as 'cultural constraints', Ramji(2007) has explored this use of religion by Muslim women.

The Rushdie affair, September 11 and the July London bombings resulted in a renewed interest in Islam, and consequently renewed interest in Muslim women. In these limited representations Muslim women have become contradictory and stereotypical; they are '...represented as both exotic and sensual and as passive, repressed victims of their patriarchal cultures...' (Ramji, 2003, p.229). Muslim women have been deemed to be outside and 'other' when juxtaposed alongside notions of Western femininity and the 'norms'. The intersections of racism, social class and sexism interact to influence the adoption of a religious identity, furthermore, Ramji (2007, p.1174) argues for a link between the 'Muslim boys in crisis' debate with increased perceptions of Muslim women's docility, stating, '...increasing public fears about Muslim masculinity directly contribute to stereotypical notions of passive, controlled, oppressed and exploited Asian femininity....' British SA Muslim women adapted a religious identity as a means to ensure greater 'cultural capital', and in an effort to enhance the position of Muslim women in the wider South Asian community. 'Cultural capital' as defined by refers to 'legitimate knowledge and behaviour' (Bourdieu, 1987) thus a Muslim woman who is able to obtain high levels of cultural knowledge, i.e. Islamic discourse, would then be able to convert and use this capital to gain wider access to social and economic capital (Ramji, 2007). Similarly a Muslim woman who was perceived to have high levels of religious knowledge and appropriate behaviours could gain cultural capital and status.

In conclusion the literature reviewed in this section shows that identities for British Muslim women involve varying aspects of religion and culture with the former expressed over the latter as means of adapting and accessing a transnational and global community. The seeming preference for religious identity over a cultural one has been attributed to rejection of what are considered 'cultural constraints', additionally following incidents such as 9/11, and the trauma of such an event for British Muslims may have led to the need for an increased solidarity as a spiritual anchor in an increasingly hostile and exclusionary environment. It is necessary to understand the negotiations of religion and culture for British Muslim women in order to understand how such negotiations feature in access to and participation in education, employment and within their own communities.

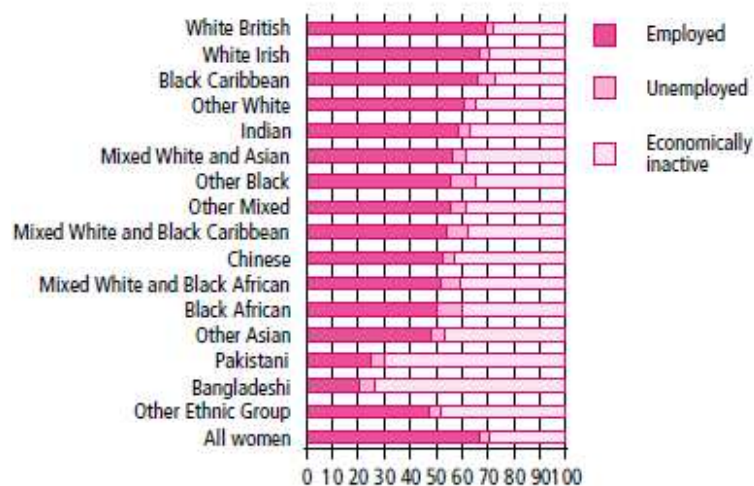
2.3: Education and Employment

This section of the literature review will focus on education and employment activity of South Asian minorities in general, before focusing particularly on Muslim women. According to the 2001 UK census, Bangladeshi and Pakistani women had decidedly lower employment participation rates than any other ethnic minority group. With regards to religious groups, Muslims had the lowest participation rate, and Muslim women were disproportionately represented, although there was some variation amongst ethnic groups, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women had the lowest rates across the ethnic groups. Similarly, the rate of economic inactivity amongst females was highest with Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, at 70 and 73% respectively; this is more than double of other ethnic groups. The table below shows the economic inactivity rates amongst ethnic minority groups in Britain.

Female economic activity status:¹ by ethnic group, April 2001

England and Wales

Percentages



¹ Working-age population (16–59).

Source: Census 2001, Office for National Statistics

This table from the official Census 2001 shows the high economic inactivity rate amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi women.

It is the purpose of this section to understand the reasons behind the low unemployment and economic participation rates amongst Pakistani women. This section will first focus on education participation amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, citing their experiences of schooling, post-16 education and higher education. Various literatures on education participation amongst minority populations will be examined to provide a conceptual framework of educational aspirations and economic prospects of South Asian Muslims in Britain.

2.3.1: Education- an overview

The high value placed on higher education by the majority of South Asian parents has been detailed by various authors (Modood et al., 1993; Anwar, 1998). South Asian students face difficulties throughout school that are not encountered by their white counterparts, exasperated by differing value systems between Asian homes and British schools which show discrepancies in the way individuality is emphasised in schools and the importance of '*birdari*' (clan) and extended family importance highlighted in the home. The differences in role ascriptions between boys and girls in the Asian in the home, as opposed to the concepts of gender equality stressed in a school environment, these as well the religious minded Asian home in contrast to the secular ethos in schools are cited as sources of conflict (Ghuman, 2002). South Asian students were also more likely stay on for post-compulsory education; vocational aspirations were the main reason for this, as education is widely perceived as a means for social mobility amongst South Asian students (Ogubu, 1995).

Abbas (2002) highlights home and schools influences on the educational achievements of students, contending that South Asian Muslims (Pakistani and Bangladeshi) are at a greater disadvantage not only compared to their white counterparts but also in relation to Hindus and Sikhs of South Asian origin. This is due to attendance at less effective schools, a negative religio-cultural effect at home, and perceptions of Muslims by the majority (Abbas, 2002). Racist stereotypes on the part of teachers negatively impacted on Muslim students (Gilbourn, 1995) and are to a significant extent indicative of the educational institutions they represent and can be influenced by wider societal issues. Negative perceptions of Muslims in a wider societal context negatively affect the perceptions of Muslim students in education particularly in the teaching of Pakistani and Bangladeshi girls, where negative perceptions of religion left students feeling isolated and insecure about their academic potential. The particular intersections of religion and culture are determined to affect South Asian Muslims, and particularly females than any other South Asian minority group. Domestically, Muslim females are subjected to a form of patriarchy which can be both excessive and restrictive; but underperformance of South Asian Muslim students can also be contributed in part to the negative views of Muslims in schools and UK as a whole (Abbas, 2002).

Shain (2003) has discussed the relevance in understanding how Muslim identities and associations with citizenship, nationality and belonging have become topics increasingly debated since September 11. In terms of education South Asian girls have been constructed as 'model' pupils, quiet, obedient and hard-working. However, Asian Muslim girls have often been described in the educational discourse as being a

‘cause for concern’ given their under-representation at post-compulsory education level, according to the 2001 UK Census only 22% Pakistani and 15% of Bangladeshi women obtain Higher Education qualifications. This low level of attainment by Muslim girls has been attributed largely on the assumption that the Asian family and community are responsible for either the successes or failures of Muslim girls. This assumes a cultural and ethnic essentialism, which as Rattansi (1992) has pointed out has hegemonised debate in this area, and fails to take into account the many nuances both within individuals and communities. Gilborn (1998) contends that research has traditionally relied on education surveys that fail to take into account differences within the South Asian population. Further, qualitative research has often demonstrated racist stereotyping that can work to restrict educational opportunities. Patronising and stereotypical attitudes in schools can lead to teachers lowering expectations of Asian students, especially young women, as teachers ‘...expect their lives to be restricted by overly protective families, the spectre of early marriage and the demands of home...’ (Gilborn, 1998, p.19).

Government rhetoric and policy have negatively stereotyped Asian girls and their families, Shain (2003) highlights the way in which racism, sexism and social class interact to influence and shape experiences of education. Through placing identities and their production at the forefront of analysis, South Asian girls can be shown to exercise agency when it comes to home and school life. It is necessary therefore to understand the many cultural, economic contexts, social class and history of migration to locate the intricacies that contribute to identities of south Asian girls (Shain, 2003).

However, access to education beyond secondary school, or further education level can prove a case of delicate negotiation and compromise for many South Asian girls.

Hussain and Bagguley (2007, p.3) explore issues of negotiation for Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi young women in Higher Education. They reject the use of concepts of social and cultural capital used by other researchers in the field (Dwyer 2006, Ramji, 2007), arguing that such approaches ‘...produce a list of the characteristics needed to be successful in education, often producing rather essentialised accounts of social and cultural groups....’ They argue that though cultural capital theories prove useful in analysing class inequality in education, their use in analysing young Asian women’s negotiations with parents and struggle in the education system proves limited, ‘...there is no singular South Asian social capital, cultural capital or habitus that is being expressed through the actions, choices and decisions in relation to higher education among South Asian women...’(Hussain & Bagguley, 2007, p.84). Instead it is necessary to look at wider social, cultural and political developments to understand how ethnic identities are a process of collective and individual identity formation, citing the differences of attainment between Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian women in terms of social class, income, education and labour market participation. In emphasising change and diversity and how these circumstances have changed since the early 1990’s, reflects the ‘...diverse circumstances of the different South Asian ethnic groups...’(Hussain & Bagguley, 2007, p.5).

Understanding and reflecting on the different backgrounds is essential to understanding the different rates of entry to University for Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. Hussain and Bagguley (2007) stress the need to examine the gendered dimension of ethnic minority students in representation at graduate level as

this allows for deeper analysis, for example in understanding why rates of entry to Universities for Indian men and women are quite similar, yet are significantly different for Bangladeshi and Pakistani men and women. Analysing the extent to which religion, ethnicity and identity intersect to affect the take-up of University placements by minorities is vital to understanding differing rates of entry at University level (Hussain and Bagguley, 2007).

The decision to attend university can be complex, and involve tense negotiations with parents and wider family. Support from parents was vitally important for many South Asian women, with Indian women citing expectations from home and Bangladeshi and Pakistani women emphasising parental support. The issue of parental support is framed within a discourse of religious and cultural expectations; Abbas (2002) states that South Asian women had supportive parents with regards to higher education, irrespective of religion. This certainly contradicts stereotypes regarding Asian girls and oppressive parents, particularly with young South Asian Muslim women, who, through stereotypes are perceived as, ‘...heavily oppressed, suffering from ‘wasted potential’ and prevented from continuing in education/employment because they are expected and/or ‘forced’ into arranged marriages on account of authoritarian, ‘alien’ cultural norms and practises...’ (Archer, 2002, p.361). However it is important to note that though the above scenario may indeed be a stereotype, that is not to say that such incidents do not occur, young Asian woman can be prevented from accessing higher education through restricted cultural practises.

In comparing accounts from Muslim, Hindu and Sikh South Asian women and parents views on education, Abbas (2002) argues that the manner in which second

generation Asian women ‘...rationalise their positions as English-born South Asians as well as being a Muslim, Sikh, or Hindu are important considerations in the study of their experiences of the education system...’(Abbas, 2002, p.414). For some Muslim communities in Britain Islam is of overriding importance than religion may be for Hindus and Sikhs, as such ‘...for some young women, religio-cultural norms and values infused with notions of patriarchy and community cause certain Muslim women to become marginalised in education...’(Abbas, 2002, p.423). These differences in religiosity materialise in the way religion is expressed and articulated, non-Muslim women are not as affected by religion and see it as an option to exercise or ignore, for young South Asian Muslim women however this is not the case, overwhelmingly religion was of utmost importance and commitment to religion was the highest priority (Abbas, 2002).

South Asian Muslim women contended that parents had confounded religion with cultural values and this teamed with patriarchal attitudes had led to impacting on the way Muslim women negotiated their educational aspirations in a manner that respected parents wishes (Basit, 1997). Young Muslim women ‘...actively questioned cultural tendencies observed in how their parents practised Islam wishing it was less patriarchal and contained a greater degree of Islam proper...’(Abbas, 2002, p.423). In contrast to Hindu and Sikh women who are generally encouraged to enter higher education, South Asian Muslim women are faced with tense negotiations with parents and intense scrutiny from the wider community (see Hussain & Bagguley, 2005, Wilson, 1978, Ballard, 1982). Though research has shown that parents attach a great deal of importance in having daughters in education (Ijaz and Abbas, 2010), apprehensions are still very much gender based with parents fearing daughters

encountering the ‘...corruptive influence of a largely secular society...’ (Basit, 1997, p.426). This once again returns us to the notion of izzat (honour), women are the sole bearers of responsibility for izzat, yet it adheres directly to male pride. Young Muslim women must be so very careful in engaging in behaviour that is deemed ‘acceptable’ by parents and the wider community. Young Muslim women in education must then be always vigilant regarding their action in relation to interaction with the opposite sex, dress and speech, because the actions of an individual can impinge on the honour of the family (Basit, 1997). Parents can be reluctant to allow daughters to seek education beyond secondary school or college, because although education is seen as a step towards upwards social mobility, there is the ever present threat of the ‘corrupting Western influence’ on young women. This belief is more prevalent amongst working class and poor South Asian parents, who, according to Abbas (2010, p.422), ‘...have a narrower view of their lives in the UK (because of racism and discrimination on the one hand and bonded solidarity on the other)...’ this, teamed with notions of patriarchy have led to some South Asian Muslim women fighting hard to remain in education.

However, it is important to note that Abbas’ range of interviewees for this research are limited, a point Abbas concedes, the question of South Asian women in education requires wider perspectives in terms of social class, localities and the range of South Asian ethnicities (Abbas, 2003). This work contends that it is necessary to widen those fields further; many of the works explored in this literature review with regards to education have overlooked mature students. These may be South Asian women who have returned to higher education at a later stage in life, taking a less traditional route to university, perhaps after marriage and having children.

Afshar (1989) states that traditional attitudes towards marriage and motherhood have done much to curtail the educational aspirations of Muslim women, obligations towards notions of izzat and upholding family morals, combined with racial discrimination in both schools and wider societal contexts have hindered the presence of South Asian Muslim women in education. Afshar (1989 p.271) contends ‘...that perhaps the relaxation of one or more of these factors could help to change the situation...’ but was pessimistic that any such change could occur any more quickly than it has done over the past twenty years she analysed as part of her research. As it is more than twenty years since Afshar wrote her article it is pertinent now to discuss how and in which ways attitude to education, family morals and community have changed or remained the same in the interceding years.

2.3.2: Employment- Barriers and Opportunities

The rate of economic inactivity amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in Britain is notably high. It is the purpose of this section of the literature review to understand and analyse some of the reasons for this high rate, assessing such factors as racial and religious discrimination, religio-cultural factors, marriage, motherhood and employment opportunities.

The term 'economic activity' is used as a measure of participation in the labour market, and indication of the potential size of the workforce. People are considered 'economically inactive' if they are over the age of 16 and are neither employed nor unemployed. Those who were, students, retired or too ill to work would also be considered economically inactive (Bradford & Forsyth, 2006). By charting changes in employment force from 1991 to 2001, and across ethnic minority and religious groups, official figures show large and significant differences in employment between ethnic groups. White British men had the lowest rate of economic inactivity across ethnic groups, whilst unemployment rates across many ethnic groups was double those of the white group; unemployment rates for white British women was the lowest out of the economic groups, whilst Pakistani and Bangladeshi women was the highest. Although official statistics showed the unemployment rates between 1991-2001 fell, nevertheless the employment rates for Black Africans, and Bangladeshi and Pakistani's of both sexes remained the lowest across any ethnic group (Bradford & Forsyth, 2006). Amongst the reasons of economic inactivity for ethnic minority men was that of being a student, reflecting the relatively young age profile of ethnic minorities. Amongst religious groups Muslims had the lowest employment rates, even

across different ethnic groups, the patterns for Muslim employment rates remained. For example, though Indian Muslim men may have the highest employment rates than other ethnic groups, compared to Indian Sikhs, Hindus and Christians the unemployment rate was also the highest. Again, Black African Muslims' unemployment rate was more than double that of their Black African Christian counterparts. For Muslim women, white British Muslim women had the highest employment rates, whilst in contrast Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim women had the lowest.

Exploring the reasons behind difference in ethnic minority employment rates involves assessing migratory patterns, cultural factors and qualifications. Dale et al.(2006) explain differences in economic activity by comparing and contrasting between white, Black Caribbean/Black other, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups; using a life course approach presents differences in economic activity that have much to do with cultural norms and family formation. For example, though employment patterns for Black Caribbean women are consistent with that culture's notion of motherhood encompassing dual roles of bread-winner and parent, in contrast Pakistanis and Bangladeshis '...patterns of economic activity reflect a strongly gendered division of labour where motherhood is associated with full-time care for children...' (Dale et al, 2006, p.2). Further, in relation to Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups particularly, there is a tendency to marry early and start families, 16-18% Pakistani/Bangladeshi women aged 19-60 had three or more children who were under the age of 16 in 2000-2, compared with 4% of white women and 4% of Indian women (Lindley et al, 2004). Differences in attitudes towards employment and motherhood between groups are also relevant; Black Caribbean mothers are more likely to see '...substantial hours in

employment as a built-in component of good mothering...’ (Duncan & Irwin, 2004, p.394), in South Asian families there are strongly demarcated gender roles, where the importance of family and the role of a mother in bringing up children is stringently reinforced (Dale et al, 2006). This belief is attributed to first generation migrants from South Asia, with the Pakistani and Bangladeshi population being recent migrants, many from the poor rural areas of Mirpur or Sylhet, societies that had ‘...few economic or educational resources...’ as such women who came to Britain as dependants, were ‘...from a culture where they were responsible for domestic life and men were the bread winners...’ (Dale et al, 2006, p.5). There are some expected changes with relation economic activity amongst second and third generation Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in part due to acculturation, qualifications and the changing nature of families in 21st Century Britain. However this is still a relatively marginal change, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women still lag behind significantly in terms of economic activity, especially when compared to other South Asian minorities, for example, though Indian women’s patterns of work show traditional links between marriage and child-bearing nevertheless economic activity rates in relation to life stages and qualifications is closer in resemblance to economic activity rates of white women with much higher rates of economic activity than Pakistani or Bangladeshi women (Dale et al, 2006).

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) report (2006) has identified five employment gaps which affect employment for ethnic minority women; participation, progression, unemployment, occupational segregation and pay. The issue of ethnic minority women becoming concentrated in certain sectors of employment; unemployment leading to young ethnic minority women and their families missing

out financially, as well as increasingly segregated communities along race and faith lines are also analysed. High unemployment rates propel the level of poverty experienced by children, rates of poverty amongst Black African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi children is more than double the rate than that of white children (Platt, 2007). Unemployment and single income households impact heavily on Pakistani and Bangladeshi families, for children from such families ‘...poverty is relatively long term or recurrent...’, (DWP, Platt, 2009, p.) with the majority remaining on the margins of poverty.

The EOC (2006) report shows higher proportions of ethnic minority women than white women are questioned regarding plans for marriage and children at interviews; suggesting stereotyped views of employers. Pakistani and Bangladeshi women relate they have experienced negative attitudes towards them because of religious dress. As over 90% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are Muslim, such women who seek employment may face additional stereotypes related to faith and culture. As religious dress can be interpreted as an outward display of faith, women who adopt the hijab (head covering) and choose to identify with faith over ethnicity face additional discrimination. Small-scale study research showed that respondents to a survey felt that they had been discriminated against and failed to find employment whilst wearing hijab (Kabeer & Ainsworth, 2012). In a separate survey respondents stated that once they had removed the hijab, all of them had found employment. Fifty percent of Muslim women in work who wore hijab felt they had been passed over for promotion or opportunities for advancement because of their religious dress (Bunlawala, 2008). Statistics for labour market participation show a distinct correlation between ethnicity and faith in employment rates, compared to other faith groups Muslims suffered the

greatest disadvantage. This seems to be indicative of a 'Muslim Penalty', inherent to the 'othering' of Muslims as outside the 'norm', particularly in a post 9/11 and 7/7 context.

Discrimination is a real and often crippling experience of ethnic minority women and their search for employment, research by the Department of Work and Pensions in 2009 found that discrimination against ethnic minorities crossed public, private and voluntary sectors. Having an Asian or African sounding name meant having to complete and send almost twice as many job applications as white British sounding names to even gain an interview, for every nine applications sent by a white applicant an ethnic minority applicant had to send sixteen applications to obtain a response (DWP, Platt, 2009). Empirical research by Bunglawala (2008) suggests that younger generation of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are eager to work, and for these the usual causes of inactivity such as limited language skills, poor educational attainment and lack of knowledge of the labour market do not apply. Of those aged 16-24, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black-Caribbean women are more than twice as likely to be unemployed; similarly Pakistani female graduates who are under 24 are four times more likely to be unemployed. Discrimination must therefore play a significant factor in employment inactivity; DWP (2008) estimates that nearly 25% of unemployment amongst ethnic minorities can be attributed to employer discrimination.

The EOC (2006) report stresses that it is wrong to focus primarily on cultural factors as the sole reason Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are not part of the labour force. Though lifestyle, level of education and culture do affect employment, equally disadvantage and discrimination in the labour market needs to be addressed, issues of

high unemployment rates, the slow progress of ethnic minority women into higher ranking jobs have to be analysed in a wider context. By understanding the constraints placed on ethnic minority women and accommodating for life factors such as marriage and children, opportunities exist for ethnic minority women to make significant inroads into the labour market leading to greater economic and social mobility with social cohesion and more inclusive communities. It is important to move away from generalisations regarding ethnic minority women, particularly with regards to Muslim women, each group, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean has differences within them, and as such it is necessary to ‘...unpick the complex interplay, not just between race and gender, but between those and other factors such as faith, geography, age, educational qualifications and becoming a mother...’ (EOC, 2006, p.10).

Ethnic minority women are more likely to be over concentrated in certain sectors of the labour market, whilst virtually absent in others, of Bangladeshi women 32% are represented in just five areas of occupation, and a quarter of employed Pakistani and Bangladeshi women work in wholesale and retail sectors (EOC, 2006). Faced with increasing difficulties in the labour market despite having the educational qualifications there is the increasing danger that ethnic minority women, particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi will retreat further from diversifying, and instead remain concentrated in traditional occupations of first-generation immigrants, that of ‘...small business, trade and hard work...’ (Afshar, 1989, p.271).

In conclusion, given that Muslims are amongst the youngest age structure of all faith groups and will account for a quarter of the workforce by 2018, the need to address

high levels of unemployment and inactivity amongst this religious group is paramount to offset further social exclusion and poverty (Census, 2011). As research has shown, it is necessary then to look beyond the stereotypical conclusions of religion and culture as a barrier to employment and wider the analysis further to consider lack of training, opportunity, discrimination and various life stages as some of the reasons behind the high unemployment rates amongst second and third generation British Muslim women.

2.4: From Multiculturalism to Community Cohesion- Identity, Integration, and the Muslim Question

Multiculturalism in Britain has had a varied history; emerging as it did as a means of accommodating the different minority groups due to post Second World War immigration. The historical and social origins of multiculturalism in Britain can be traced back to the 1970's, and rather than viewed as a political theory it can be described as imbuing a certain perspective or manner of viewing social life. At its heart is the doctrine that different cultures may coexist in a single society, protected by laws and policies preventing discrimination. In its broadest sense the term 'multiculturalism' has been used to refer to a '...recognition of group differences within the public sphere of laws, policies, democratic discourses...' (Modood, 2007, p.2). However, because differences relating to culture are not always welcome, multiculturalism can develop a relationship to modern society that is ambivalent (Parekh, 2006). Multiculturalism has been critiqued from both the left and right of the political spectrum, with criticisms regarding the nature paternalism that exists within 'multiculturalism' (Beckett & Macey, 2001), which can belie the actuality of discrimination and marginal social status faced by ethnic minorities (Modood, 2005). Preferences for an 'integration' model of society in Britain has also been voiced, with a national identity taking precedence over that of identities that are culturally based (Abbas, 2007).

The concept of plural identities and citizenship amongst Britain's minority populations has become an increasingly pertinent one in light of what has been deemed the 'failure of multiculturalism.' In a further emphasis on the need for a

‘shared identity’, David Blunkett (2005) spoke of an inclusive, overarching ‘Britishness’ that would allow for informed, robust and relevant challenges to current debates in British society. In an address to the Munich security conference in 2011, David Cameron stated that state multiculturalism had proved a failure and ‘...encouraged different cultures to live separate lives apart from each other, and the mainstream...’ and that a tolerance of separation had resulted in communities behaving in ways that were counter to ‘our ways’ (Cameron, 2011). Yet it is not only the diverse cultures in Britain that have been seen to prompt this return to a ‘singular’ national identity. The terms ‘Britishness’ and seeking to define a distinctly ‘British’ identity has been identified as a response to increasingly interacting global and national forces; devolution, increased migration and globalisation has led to ‘...dislocations in the way people see themselves, and in how they see the territorial, political and cultural space-‘Britain’-....’ (Parekh, 2000, p.2).

The ‘Parekh Report’ was published in 2000, from its outset the report asserted that Britain is a multicultural society, a ‘community of communities’ and though problems may sometimes arise, it is nonetheless necessary to treat each culture as unique, as ‘...equal treatment requires full account to be taken of their differences...’, and further, ‘...when equality ignores relevant difference and insists on uniformity of treatment, it leads to injustice and inequality...’ (Parekh, 2000, ix). The report called for reform on a political, social and national scale that placed responsibility not only on minority communities but on the host community, namely the indigenous population of Britain. ‘Britain’ had to reimagine itself and equally to recognise that minority communities were not ‘...separate, self-sufficient enclaves...’ (Parekh, 2000, p.26) but had significant internal differences. Rejecting ‘assimilation’, as too

high a price to pay in that it forces someone into a reduced form of being that may be false and distorted (Gutman & Thompson, 1997), the report addressed a wide variety of contemporary issues relevant to the future of multiculturalism and relations between communities in Britain such as education, policing, the Criminal Justice System, employment, immigration and asylum, religion and belief amongst others. Despite the wide variety of issues explored and disseminated in the Parekh report, the overriding issue seized upon by the British media, politician and various critics was the notion of 'Britishness' and connotations associated with history and Empire. Although in actuality very small part of the overall report, the questions raised by the report surrounded the notion that '...the concept of 'Britishness' as much as Englishness, has systematic, largely unspoken, racial connotations. Whiteness nowhere features as an explicit condition of being British, but it is widely understood that Englishness, and therefore by extension Britishness, is racially coded...' (Parekh, 2000. p.38). The report, rather than being disseminated as a policy formation for race relations in contemporary Britain, became a document that faced '...extraordinary hostility of the mainly right-wing newspapers...' (McLaughlin & Neal, 2004, p.160) reactions to and acceptance of the report's findings were tainted. However the report was never implicitly about nationalism or national identity and rather a discussion on how 'racism' or 'racisms' in the twenty-first century may be understood in order to reduce economic inequalities and achieve a cohesive society of equality and how (Richardson, 2000).

The detailed discussions prevalent in the report were all pointedly ignored in favour of intense defence of a national identity that must be protected from attacks of those it claimed had no basis to attack it. Media coverage of the report pointed to the fact that

multicultural citizenship in Britain is seemingly very much conditional. These conditions suggest that it is imperative on the minority or the 'foreign' to employ an identity that 'fits' into existing parameters of being British. Any suggestion that policies, institutions or perhaps even understanding of 'British' heritage and history should be malleable and open to critical interpretation is met with increasing hostility.

This apparent retreat from 'multiculturalism' in mainstream British politics, to an increased emphasis on the concept of 'social cohesion', 'integration' and 'citizenship' has been highlighted by social commentators. Meer and Modood (2009) have alleged the increased dissatisfaction with 'multiculturalism' is a reaction to various 'Muslim-related' pressures, in particular the events of the summer 2001 riots in Northern towns of Britain, and the terrorist attacks in London 2005. The authors suggest that 'multicultural' policies are subject to a 'productive critique' that seeks to address the way and extent to which individuals interact and engage with wider society. In Britain this has translated as inclusion in British society requiring greater commitment and qualification on behalf of ethnic minorities, in the form of citizenship tests, swearing of oaths at citizenship ceremonies, language requirements for new migrants and firm, repeated disavowal of 'radicalism' and 'extremism' particularly from the Muslim community (Jopke, 2004). The Muslim population in particular has been described as 'self-segregating' (Ouseley, 2001) adapting policies and cultures which are isolationist and contrary to individualism and liberal discourses inherent to Britain (Hanson, 2006, Hutton, 2007). Incidents such as the race riots in Northern towns of Britain, 9/11 and London bombings have contributed to negative perceptions and fears of Muslims as a security threat.

The civil unrest in towns and cities in the North of England during the summer of 2001 led to reports (Ouseley, 2001 & Cattle, 2001) which concentrated on the extent to which Asian and White communities were living seemingly parallel lives with increased segregation and very little interaction between the groups. The riots in towns such as Oldham, have been described as a 'watershed' moment in the policies of race relations, and marked as the beginning for a shift from policies of 'multiculturalism' towards rhetoric of 'community cohesion'. The term community cohesion has been notoriously difficult to define, but an official definition from Local Government Association (2002) states a 'cohesive community' is one where 'there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities, the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued ...'

In this sense multiculturalism as a discourse has been relegated in favour of 'integration' 'shared cultures' and 'active citizenship' (McGhee, 2008). In 2002 David Blunkett, the then home secretary, emphasised a 'shared identity', rather than '...unbridled multiculturalism which privileges difference over community cohesion...' The cohesive community therefore is one where, at least in the public realm, a 'shared identity' is one of uniformity, emphasising sameness rather than difference; with this shared identity 'difference' must be pushed into the private realm (Parekh, 2000), and where '...ethnic and religious alliances are 'eclipsed by a shared identity...' (Kivisto, 2005, p.14). Yet this 'shared identity' and 'cohesive community' is not without its questions; including the form this sense of 'belonging' should take, what common values should comprise this 'shared identity', who determines the concept of a 'cohesive community', how can a 'community' be defined, and where

does the individuals relationship to the community fit into this vision of 'cohesiveness'? (Berkeley, 2002) The 'community' in itself is equally an ill-defined term, Bauman (2001) states that the desire for a 'community' in the contemporary states is a desire for 'certainty', yet for each community that includes, others must then naturally exclude, what are the benchmarks for deciding if one community is more 'cohesive' than another?

The rhetoric of 'community cohesion' and 'national cohesion'; are terms that have become interchangeable, with a seemingly cohesive society indicative of an increasingly cohesive British identity. The use of the concept of 'community' counteracts racialised language and avoids 'identification' of the races and communities that must 'learn' to become a cohesive community and therefore part of the national identity of Britain (Worley 2005). Yet in highlighting some of the practises widely identified with South Asian Muslim communities, such as arranged marriages, and positing these as alien to a 'British culture', the 'problematic' community is inadvertently identified (Home Office, 2002) As Gedalof (2007, p.85) states, '...to heighten the definition of 'arranged marriage' as particularly problematic, as an instance of a difficult 'tradition' that needs to managed in the context of modernity...', works to position the definition of an 'arranged marriage' as outside 'particular norms'. Therefore the community that continues to practise such 'traditions' is equally placed as outside the process of integration and cohesiveness.

Though the language may have been de-racialised, it is evident that policies of 'community cohesion' are aimed at only certain communities. For community cohesion to work, it seems that it is inherent on the individual, the 'incomer' to adapt

values and cultural norms that are accepted by the majority. Community cohesion policies seem to problematise a community, placing the ‘...burden of acceptable cultural reproduction and representation...’ with them (Gedalof, 2007, p.81). Official policy documents may belie that community cohesion agenda’s focus on ‘race’ or ethnicity; however the policy agenda did arise in a climate that was post 2001 race riots and Sept 11. It is the Muslim communities in Britain that have been particularly targeted by policy shifts from multiculturalism to one of community, or social cohesion. This has been couched in rhetoric of ‘integration’ and ‘shared identity’; there is intense slippage in terms within official policy documents, with shifts between ‘cohesion’ and ‘integration’ (Worley, 2005). Critics of ‘community cohesion’ have argued that the cohesion and integrative concepts imitates earlier agendas of assimilation prevalent in 1960’s and 70’s (Lewis & Neal, 2005; Shukra et.al, 2004). Government policies of ‘community cohesion’ and ‘shared identity’ seem to fixate on a single identity, whilst ignoring the notion that identity is rarely fixed and instead is subject to multiple influences, beliefs or gender.

Primarily in this push for ‘community cohesion’ as a policy, it is the Asian, overwhelmingly Muslim community that has been pinpointed as problematic. From the right of politics arguments emerge include the growth of the Asian population, the prevalence of criminality which is then transferred as endemic to Asian communities. From the left, arguments arise regarding segregation and lack of social cohesion, pressing the need for Asians to speak English at home, the poor performance of Asian boys in schools, and for Asians to marry within the Asian community of Britain (Bunting, 2005) These arguments, seemingly from the opposite ends of the political spectrum tend towards a similar conclusion, that it is the Asian community that is the

problem, consequently ‘...little attention is given to challenging the hegemonic construction of white identities which simultaneously reinforce boundaries of community, belonging and notions of ‘us’ and ‘them’...’(Worley, 2005, p.490). By singling out a community and positioning them as ‘problematic’ the blame for segregation and social breakdown is placed with them, which in turn requires targeted interventions to bring them more ‘culturally in line with ‘mainstream’ British values. It becomes ‘clear’ then that this can only be done by espousing a ‘shared identity’, with ‘...explicit emphasis on British values and on loyalty to the nation...’ (Gifford,et.al, 2013). Thus community cohesion in light of the political policies where ‘community cohesion’ has come to mean the creation of new identities and ‘shared values’ over multicultural identities, there is a danger that communities will continue to be excluded and treated as problematic. In belying the lived experiences of the British Muslim community, with large-scale economic inequality, institutional racism and increasingly hostility towards these communities as the ‘enemy within’ it is impossible to have a cohesive society that is meaningful rather than just rhetoric (Kundnani, 2005).

However Thomas (2011) states the shift of discourses from multiculturalism to community cohesion is not all that drastic, nor entirely centred on race or ethnicity and that although some critics have considered the shift of rhetoric from ‘multiculturalism’ to ‘community cohesion’ as a step backward, the changed language and priorities of community cohesion are in fact a continuation of governments commitment to ethnic diversity and social justice. In assessing the policy rhetoric of community cohesion, Thomas (2011, p.69) concludes that themes inherent to community cohesion are in fact strongly linked to multiculturalism, and present ‘...a

new and refocused form of multiculturalism, not a rejection of it...’ The focus on commonality, and ‘shared values’ instead of distinct ethnic differences has fuelled discourses on the ‘end of multiculturalism’, yet community cohesion is accepting of diversity and enables relationship building between communities. Community cohesion seems to reject one form of multiculturalism, that of anti-racism, shifting away from a focus on just ethnicity as a marker of difference and instead favours a ‘...more complex and holistic multiculturalism...’ which seeks to highlight not only the complexity of multiple identities, but impresses the ‘...shared ones that cut across ethnic and religious divides...’ (Thomas, 2011, p.73)

However, if policies and rhetoric within community cohesion continue to be seen to be targeting a particular community with interventionist approaches, it is possible that the community itself will become increasingly insular. The ‘white backlash’ over what could be mistaken for preferential treatment will continue to grow, where the ‘Muslim’ will become the key feature of discontent for the white majority leading to a rise in support for far-right movements (Lentin & Titley, 2011). Instead community cohesion and ‘cohesive societies’ as integrative policies ought to be adapted nation wide, in recognition of how ‘...minority identities will interact with wider, social identities such as- ‘woman’, ‘working class’, ‘Londoner’...’ (Modood, 2011). If the aims of community cohesion are to be ‘integrated societies’ then it is necessary to promote such policies amongst the majority groups. Shifting focus of multiculturalism towards policies that produce more restrictive definitions of national integration (Gifford, et al. 2013) seems to be at odds with the ever increasingly plural and diverse nature of contemporary British society.

In conclusion the shift in discourse from ‘multiculturalism’ towards ‘community cohesion’ has been noted by various social commentators. The term and policies surrounding community cohesion have been espoused alongside a notion of integrated identity lending itself to an integrated society. However in identifying some communities as problematic due to certain practises, such communities can become increasingly isolated and positioned outside the ‘norm’ of accepted British majority values and society. Such categorisations of the British Muslim community as ‘isolationist’ and failing to integrate into society suggests that British Muslims are unable to commit to an identity that is both accepting of their British and Muslim identities or that these are in fact incompatible. Such assumptions belie the concept that identities are rarely fixed and in fact influenced by intersections of race, ethnicity, gender as well as issues of social exclusion, poverty and inequality. It is necessary therefore to understand identities as multiple, intersectional and in flux, as well as understanding the complexities of a ‘community’ in order to understand how social policies and rhetoric of ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘community cohesion’ affect British South Asian Muslims.

2.4.1: Citizenship- Becoming a Citizen, Learning to be Muslim and British

The term ‘citizen’ is often a contested one, and for Britain’s minority ethnic communities (BME) can connote varied and contradictory meanings. In recent years the ‘citizen’ question has often been alluded to in conjunction with discourses on immigration, rights and ‘belonging.’ This section of the literature review will seek to understand the historical significance of the term ‘citizen’, what it means to be a ‘citizen’ and how the notion of ‘citizenship’ can figure differently given varied intersections of community, identity, age, gender and ethnicity.

The notion of citizenship has a long history, with its beginnings in ancient Greece and Rome, modern notions of citizenship have been built on these ancient origins. These early forms of ‘citizenship’ were a mode of exclusivity, and ‘...citizenship was valued in part because of its exclusive nature and as a mark of superiority over non-citizens...’ (Faulks, 2000, p.18). The term ‘citizen’ was adapted by French revolutionaries as a symbol of equality and opposition to aristocracy, however though in its contemporary concept the status of citizenship may be held by many, the process of equality as an ‘equal citizen’ is not necessarily experienced by all.

Citizenship is a complex concept, it is bound up in notions of rights and duties, and belonging; the multicultural and multiracial nature of states can affect how citizenship is linked with a national identity (Heater, 1999). Modern notions of citizenship are equally ambiguous, though deriving from a liberal ideology, and that of individual rights, since the eighteenth century citizenship has been increasingly linked to the ‘nation’, this embodies the notion of ‘belonging’, having a certain nationality means that a person has membership or ‘belongs’ to a state, and thus ‘citizenship’ of that

state (Lewis, p.2004, p.9). However 'citizenship' can be experienced as a form of exclusion; racial, cultural and gender exclusion means that individuals within a state '...can be perceived as 'outsiders' or second-class citizens by the dominant culture...' (Faulks, 2000, p.29). Citizenship is experienced differently across ethnicities, gender, race and nationalities, for example, a white British man is likely to have a very different experience of and relationship with the notion of citizenship than a white British woman. The experiences of a South Asian Muslim minority woman and 'citizenship' are likely to be very different still, and as Yuval Davis (1997) points out women's relationship to national discourses is not only very different from men, it is often unequal.

2.4.2: Citizenship- Questions of Race and Gender

Citizenship in Britain was constructed on a model in which people gradually gained citizenship rights, something that would be earned, Marshall (1950) referred to the British context of citizenship as comprising of three elements; the civil, political and social. The civil element ensures rights for individual freedom of person, speech, thought and faith. The political element refers to the political process, voting and elections, the social element comprises of '...the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security...' (Marshall, 1950, p.8) Yet for women, attaining an equal level of citizenship within a deeply patriarchal society was difficult, for example single women who had acquired certain citizenship rights would lose these rights when they married (Vogel, 1989). Similarly, different groups of women could in effect have different citizenship rights, when the 1981 British Nationality Law was passed, many women gained the right to transfer British Citizenship to their children wherever they

are born (a right that had hitherto been reserved for British fathers), however children of other women, immigrant or ethnic minority women living in Britain lost that right, even if their children were born in Britain (Yuval-Davis, 1992).

Citizenship can be an inherently personal and lived experience, therefore to understand just how the personal is affected by social policy; (such as those that intend to promote 'community cohesion', and a single identity affect citizenship) it is necessary to understand just how social policy interacts with personal lives and lived experiences. Lewis (2004) states that the question of citizenship as being top of political, social cultural agendas in the UK have been partly due to a reassertion of national identities in the context of globalisation and increased migration challenging national sovereignties. In order to understand some of the nuances of citizenship in the UK it is necessary to view citizenship as something that is malleable and fluid, and not as an absolute. Citizenship should be approached as something that is a 'relation' - not something that one does or does not have, but as a series of interlinked processes between the state and citizen, between citizens themselves and between citizens and non-citizens. By relocating the notion of 'citizenship' within the personal allows us to '...individually and collectively, challenge normative ideas about what it means to be a citizen...' (Lewis, 2004, p.4). Social policies that seek to provide a 'normative' citizenship often make 'normative' assumptions about personal lives, without taking into context social, historical and cultural constructions that may influence the ways in which citizenship is experienced and understood.

Increasingly, citizenship and consequently nationhood is one in which an increasingly romantic and sanitised version of an English/British past is being recreated (Samuel,

1988). This 'England' is one that must be learned and accepted, evident by the restructuring of 'citizenship tests' that focus on English history and culture, as well as embedding educational reforms that promote a return to 'traditional standards' in English and History as part of the core curriculum (Solomos, 2001). Evident in this restructuring of policy and rhetoric is the attempt to promote culture, nation and patriotism alongside a citizenship that is deracialised; yet at the heart of discourses pertaining to citizenship and 'belonging' questions arise over what it means to 'belong' or be excluded from the collective identity of citizenship. Solomos (2001) contends that policy debates in Britain have failed to understand the nature of citizenship and rights for migrants and their descendants, yet there is growing evidence that attitudes towards citizenship, inclusion and 'belonging' can be negatively affected by restrictive economic and social rights of minorities due to discrimination. Furthermore policy papers, and speeches by prominent politicians (Blunkett 2004, Brown 2005) have attempted to attribute certain human values with as particularly inherent to the nature of 'British Citizenship'; these core 'British values' that are necessary for all British children and immigrants to learn include 'belief in human dignity and equality', 'civility and respect for rule of law' amongst others. Though this may be seen as progressive, in moving away from culture or religion as the unifying principle of British citizenship, nonetheless conflating such values and attributing them with only certain particular ethnic communities, suggests that the 'other', either ethnic or national groups, lack similar values and such must be excluded (Solomos, 2004).

It is necessary instead to understand that citizenship, much like identity is multi-layered, that an individual can and will have different, 'intersectional' notions of

citizenship, homogenising the term 'British citizen' is problematic as it devalues diversity and places multiple citizenships experienced by minorities as 'contradictory' instead '...any genuine anti-racist vision of citizenship in Britain would need to get away from the normativity that British citizens should be only, or even primarily, British citizens...' (Yuval-Davis, 2007, p.571).

The discourse of citizenship must also include the intersectionality of gender and race if it is to provide meaningful analysis of the lived experiences of ethnic minority women in Britain. Citizenship has often been evoked with discourses of 'belonging', yet as Crowley (1999) contends, 'belonging' is a 'deeper' concept than just citizenship, it resounds deeper than rights, duties and membership; 'belonging' relates also to emotions an individual has towards a nation. Thus when, practises and cultures of ethnic minorities are deemed as not 'belonging' in a 'cohesive' society, the 'belonging' to the polity and citizenship becomes instead a process of exclusion. An example of this is the continually restrictive and punitive immigration controls in Britain. As Brah (1996, p.22) notes women are ideologically constructed as '...privileged bearers of their race and culture...' as such ethnic minority women have been 'differentially positioned' with regards to their citizenship and the discourses surrounding the need to maintain a citizenship that is in line with the majority. Ethnic minority women have been considered a serious problem for state as they can often constitute the source of primary immigration through marriages; hence policies and papers that recommend arranged marriages within communities already settled in Britain (Brah, 1996). Citizenship then becomes a source of tense negotiation women, who, through policy are redefined through their gender and race as a threat to a nation's borders and majority.

Muslim women, as other ethnic minority women, have been distinctly positioned in regards to the intersections and interactions of nationhood, citizenship, gender and identity, especially in relation to a post 9/11 and post 7/7 context. One way such interactions have become politicised in the wearing of the face veil, or niqaab, by some Muslim women, the veil has become interpreted as ‘...visible statement of separation and difference...’(Meer et al, 2010, p.89). Discourses surrounding the veil have been used to represent conflicting views of national identity, community and belonging. The contemporary resurgence of national identity and British citizenship are seen to be reacting to what are visible ‘Muslim differences’ such as ‘veiling’, as such discourses on national identity, rather than proving unifying can in fact ‘...potentially force ethnic minorities into a predicament not of their making...’ (Meer, et al, 2010, p.93) because where minority ‘differences’ such as veiling may become negatively conceived, those who carry out such practises are equally posited as unwilling or unable to integrate.

Varying media interpretations of the niqab (Moore, 2006, Pearson, 2006, Alahi-Brown, 2013) have posited the practise as anti-British, often evoking the notion of female submission, as the intersections of race and gender work to ‘other’ women who veil as outside ‘normal’ citizenship. The niqaab has become a metaphor for ‘Muslim differences’, by participating in a ‘culture of separateness’ Muslim minorities risk forfeiting their citizenship. Muslim women in particular have been cast as victims of Islamic patriarchy, with the veil only becoming a sign of female subordination and separateness, and further ethnic dress is seen ‘... as a failure of integration...’(Lewis, 2013, p.69). The discourse of Muslim women in relation to citizenship places them at the forefront of integration but also as victims of

integration, as such, contemplations of women who choose to wear a niqaab consider them to be committing a greater offence against British values and citizenship, ‘...veiled women are considered to be ungrateful subjects who have failed to assimilate and are deemed to threaten the British way of life...’(Khibany and Williamson, 2008, p.69).

Gender and citizenship has proved a contentious intersection. Ethnic minority women and Muslim women in particular have been portrayed as both victims and perpetrators of a culture that refuses to assimilate, choosing instead to participate in a citizenship considered out of the acceptable ‘norm’ by the majority in Britain. Gender becomes an important political tool in the discourses of citizenship, ethnic minority women embody both a threat to the ‘nation’ as bearers of the ‘other’, as well as being victims of an oppressive culture that breeds ‘separateness’ and denies them full citizenship. As has been shown the concept of citizenship is by no means gender-neutral, further the intersections of race and gender work to posit women further outside discourses of citizenship. For nations and citizenship discourses to be truly inclusive, the approach to theory and practise surrounding such discourses should work to recognise women’s agency and not simply see them as ‘...victims of oppressive, male-dominated patriarchal political, social and cultural institutions...’(Lister, 2003, p.6).

Chapter 3- Methodology

3.1- Introduction

This research has a set of inter-related objectives and aims intended to understand the ways in which plural identities are managed by second and third generation Muslim women of Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage, and if Higher Education affects this management of plural identities in any way. These are described as the following:

To explore whether second and third generation Muslim SA (South Asian) women have a ‘differing’ connection to a ‘homeland’ than their parents or grandparents might have done. Further aims include exploring the extent to which understandings of culture, tradition, gender roles and religion may have been shaped or changed by experiences of HE/FE, analysing the ways in which identities are being shaped and passed by SA Muslim women to their children.

This chapter provides a coherent framework to the methodology, theoretical and reflective process involved in the empirical research employed in this dissertation.

3.2- Theoretical Approach

Research theories or strategies should involve careful thought in order to employ a method that is both appropriate and suited to the research being undertaken. Social research can be described as process of questions and discovery; whereby questions are asked in order to explore social phenomena, discover social implications and challenge preconceived notions. The aims and objectives highlighted above and earlier in this work can be identified as research problems which require collection of information and investigation. The aims identified are interlinked and as such must be approached in a manner that recognises that, ‘...social research does not exist in a

bubble...’ (Bryman, 2001, p.4), consequently the theoretical approach adapted in this research, that of ‘feminist methodology’ sought to adapt the principles of social research as connections between lived experiences as well as wider social contexts. It was felt that this theoretical approach was the most appropriate as the research involved ethnic minority women and related to their experiences of gender, motherhood and culture.

Social science research is necessarily underpinned by ‘ontological’ and ‘epistemological’ questions, the understanding and exploration of such questions often lends itself to the research process, and methods favoured. Briefly, ontology relates to the study of what exists, and how these can be understood or categorised, epistemology relates to how we reach legitimate knowledge of the world, and how our rules for knowing this are formed. The foundations of such have traditionally lied in paradigms that include ‘realism’ (the external world exists independent of perception) and ‘positivism’ (the notion that all knowledge is scientific in nature and best understood through scientific methods). However a ‘post-positivist’ view has developed in later decades, one that favours alternative epistemologies and paradigms; emphasising uncertainty, plurality and diversity, ‘post-positivist’ paradigms include ‘social constructionism’ (the notion that the world is constructed by human interactions) and ‘subjectivism’ (emphasising personal experiences as the basis for factual knowledge) (O’Leary, 2010). The difference in ontological and epistemological considerations lends itself to the debate between quantitative and qualitative research and the best research methods to choose when deciding on implementing a research focus. The epistemological approach favoured in this research will be one of largely a feminist paradigm; in order to understand and

challenge the theories of current knowledge regarding ethnic minority women a feminist methodology to research will be adopted. Feminist epistemologies seek to explore and challenge the relationship between power and knowledge, are grounded in women's experiences and emotions and should recognise the diversity within women's experiences and interconnections of power relating to race, gender, ethnicity and social class (Ramazanoglu, & Holland, 2002). Similarly, Harding (1987) argues for a post-modern epistemological standpoint one that rejects grand narratives, instead focusing on the plurality and fragmented nature of self.

Feminist research and methodology is therefore primarily concerned with empowerment and emancipation, and argue a conscious effort must be made with regards to social research in order to avoid replicating and espousing biased gender relations in society (Harding, 1987, Stanley and Wise 1983, Reinharz 1992). This research on adapting a feminist perspective sought to adapt these principles of providing a voice to the marginalised group of SA Muslim women, who have, in traditional discourse been overlooked, or else, discursively framed as having little autonomy or agency. If gender inequalities and differences are to be explored and researched in any meaningful way it is necessary to recognise that ethnic minority women are 'holistic individuals' with complex, multiple identities, their varying experiences in terms of age, ethnicity, religious and cultural differences means they have different stories to tell. These 'stories' are subject to fluid and evolving, to the everyday lived experiences subject to the racial and gendered encounters that feature in their social relations (Mirza, 2003). Providing a platform within which these stories can be told is vital, Mies (1983, p.69) describes this process as '...replacing the view from above...' with the '...view from below...'; by giving voice to the

views of SA Muslim women and employing feminist methodologies to do places women's experiences at the heart of this research. Key to understanding plural identities and how they are managed is by gaining the perspective and experiences of BSA Muslim women in their own words.

3.3- Qualitative and Quantitative Approach

Distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative distinctions of social research is important as it presents a useful way to classify different methods of social research and the issues surrounding such methods (Bryman, 2004). Quantitative research has been described research that employs numerical data, statistical analysis or content analysis, and typically uses methods that can include surveys, government records and observations over strict time periods. Quantitative data collection methods gather data that can be analysed using structures and strict criteria, lending it to the positivist characteristic of research. In quantitative research data collection is strictly demarcated, and data in quantitative studies is '...treated as isolated measurements of facts...' (Henn, et al. 2006, p.185). Qualitative data in contrast favours words, and uses these as a measure rather than numbers. Its collection and analysis of data collected is based on constructivist and subjectivist paradigms, and data gathered usually expresses feelings, values, attitudes and emotions (David & Sutton, 2004). Where quantitative data is built on positivism and scientific measures, qualitative data can be described as critiquing positivism as a dominant epistemology, seeking to explore and produce alternative means of producing knowledge about the world (O'Leary, 2010). The ontological position of qualitative research, understanding what

exists in the world, is constructionist, and that social interactions are intrinsically linked to the construction of the social world (Bryman, 2004).

Qualitative research and methodology is particularly relevant to feminism and feminist researchers amidst contentions that quantitative research has historically suppressed the voice of women by burying their experiences in statistics and facts (Mies, 1983). Qualitative research allows for one of the fundamental tenets of feminism to be achieved, by giving voice to women and allowing them to actively partake in research and the creation of knowledge (Skeggs, 2001). Feminist approaches to research often employ methodologies that aim to remove or at least lessen the barriers that can exist between researchers and those who are being researched. Traditional ‘male approaches’ to research relied on and emphasised hierarchical relationships and clear detachments between researchers/researched, however for researchers committed to feminist methodologies it is essential that their own personal lives are connected to their work as a researcher. By bringing personal experiences to the research process it is argued that feminist researchers can better empathise, draw out and share experiences with the researched (Henn et al. 2006). The methodologies used in this research such as the case study approach and semi-structured interviews were chosen primarily as a result of feminist epistemological standpoints; those of disrupting the hierarchical relationships in traditional ‘male’ centred research, rendering the intricate and often ‘invisible’ lives of British SA Muslim women as ‘visible’. Recognising difference between women themselves with regards to intersections of race, ethnicity, class etc. and providing marginalised groups with a ‘voice’.

Empirical research that is approached from a feminist standpoint necessarily favours qualitative methods of social research, again these understandings formed the basis for the qualitative research methods employed in this project, as Maynard (1998, p.128) notes ‘... qualitative studies maximise understandings of women’s activities and beliefs and the processes through which these are structured. Such research tends to be oriented towards the interior of women’s lives, focusing on meanings and interpretations...’ Quantitative methodologies of data collection on the other hand do not usually favour the individual, and experiences are subsumed within statistics; traditional ‘positivist’ approaches to social research and sociology often ignore meanings and interpretations of events for individuals (Shipman, 1997). The qualitative methodologies employed in this research were a means of gathering ‘hidden’ data in order to highlight and explore the situational, lived, everyday experiences of second generation SA British Muslim women.

However the role of a researcher is one that requires reflexive thinking and as such the dichotomies between qualitative and quantitative research should not be strictly maintained. Choosing research methods should be governed by a desire to gathering the best possible data to meet aims and objectives (Henn et al, 2006). As such it can become necessary to use a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods of research; this is called ‘multi-strategy’. It should not be assumed that only qualitative data collection methods can be assumed or counted towards feminist methodologies of collecting data. The use of statistics and survey data analysis can provide critical frameworks for wider analysis of particular social phenomena (Stanley and Wise, 1993). This research made use of statistical data such as the 2001/2011 UK Census, the Labour Force Survey, Oldham Anti-Poverty strategy

reports as well as varying reports on employment and education participation levels. Dismissing quantitative data as not compatible with feminist standpoints of social research ignores the valuable contribution such research can make towards understanding women's experiences, similarly strictly polarising quantitative and qualitative research can impoverish research (Maynard, 1994). The use of both qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches to this research was used to adapt a flexible and holistic approach to the research problem, using a mixed method approach allows for a wider grasp of the research problem as well as a multi-faceted approach to findings. Although combining methods is not without its problems nevertheless conclusions drawn from a variety of research methods are likely to produce more credible findings (Henn et al, 2006). Similarly, Jayartne (1993, p.120) argues for a mixed method approach to social research stating '...to evaluate my theories as accurately as possible, I use some traditional research procedures and quantitative methods. Using these methods does not lessen in any way my strong commitments to feminism or my appreciation of the value of qualitative research...'

Mixed method approaches to research have been used by Rex & Moore (1967) who used case studies, informal interviews, questionnaires and quantitative methods in the accounts of Sparkbrook. Kelly, Burton and Regan (1994) successfully used quantitative methods of data collection of questionnaires and surveys to explore levels of sexual abuse. This research employs a similar mixture of qualitative research, in the use of semi structured interviews, focus group and case study methods. The quantitative aspect of the research is relatively simple and formed through statistical and population census data in order to gauge an understanding of geographical,

cultural, economic and social make-up of Oldham. The research methods are detailed further:

3.4.1: Case Study- Oldham

In 2001 Oldham was hit by civil disturbances or as the media termed them ‘race riots’. Social exclusion, segregated communities and poor employment prospects were recognised as contributing factors to the disturbances (Ritchie, 2001). As such rhetoric regarding ‘community cohesion’ became the policy of choice with regards to Oldham’s future; however crucially such policies have been intrinsically gender biased. By ignoring differences linked to age and gender to focus primarily on race and ethnicity as causes of division, ‘community cohesions’ policies have repeatedly failed to understand how gender and lived experiences of Oldham’s women affect their sense of identity and sense of ‘community’ (Worley, 2005; Gill & Worley, 2013). Given the ethnicity of the community this research is focused on it is important to highlight the necessity for research into ethnic minority communities. Gathering and using data that highlights ‘differences’ between varying minority groups in Britain provides vital insight into the needs of communities that may not otherwise be represented, however such data should be used with careful consideration in order to avoid stereotyping and racialisation (Ahmad & Sheldon, 1993).

It was precisely for the reasons highlighted above that Oldham was chosen as a case study, ‘...the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events, such as individual life cycles, small group behaviour...’(Yin, 2008, p.4). By employing a case study approach the nature

and intrinsic lived experiences of Oldham's British SA Muslim women was brought to the fore as well as their real-life occurrences and understandings of their own identity. The use of case studies have been shown to be effective in previous research in Oldham, Dale et al. (2002) conducted an intense case study into employment rates amongst Oldham Bangladeshi/Pakistani Muslim women. Halsall (2013) conducted an intense study into the policies of community cohesion following the 2001 civil disturbances in Oldham. Phillips et al. (2008) compared the attitudes and community amongst British SA Muslim minorities in Oldham, considering the notions of social and spatial mixing amongst the ethnic minority communities of Oldham. As these studies show the case study approach allows for in-depth, structured and detailed analysis of individuals, settings, groups or localities.

3.4.2: Focus Groups

Focus group discussions typically involve six to eight participants engaging in an interactive discussion using prompts or suggestions by a moderator. They are intended to garner a wide range of views on a specific subject; the group environment can help identify norms, behaviour and views allowing for greater insights into research issues (Hennik, et al. 2011). It was decided early on in designing this research methodology that focus groups could be an important method of data collection. As the research topic involved gaining insight into British Muslim women's attitudes towards community and belonging the focus group was ideal, as it allowed for the bringing together of a range of women, from Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic origins and of different ages. Focus group research is not intended to gather in depth narratives, but to collect opinions from participants in a broad sense. The group environment does

not illicit personal stories from participants, instead the group interacts with each other and opinions are offered as a response to other participants. Focus groups allow for individuals to react to each others viewpoints allowing for a conversational type of discussion, participants can express views, motives and opinions in a group situation they may not feel comfortable expressing in an individual interview situation (Punch, 2005).

3.4.3: Individual In-depth Interviews

Individual, in-depth semi-structured interviews were also used in conjunction with focus groups as it was felt that further exploration of themes and topics would be beneficial. Interviews have been described as a ‘social interaction’, in which both parties involved play a role (David and Sutton, 2004). Individual, semi-structured interviews allowed for a structured, yet informative method of gathering data they ‘...follow the natural flow of conversation...’ giving the advantage of gathering data intended but also any ‘...interesting and unexpected data that emerges...’ (O’Leary, 2010, p.195). These types of interviews require practise in order to ensure the interviewer avoids leading the conversation, and that the interviewee doesn’t sway too far from the topic. Qualitative interviewing can yield rich and complex data that may not be possible with quantitative methods, such as surveys or questionnaires.

Qualitative in-depth interviews have been favoured by feminist researchers as a methodology that is particular effective in providing a voice to ‘hidden’ aspects of women’s lives. In utilising interviews as a form of gathering data Oakley (1981, p.47) states that a feminist perspective on the interview should reject the traditional ‘text-book’ methodology of interviews in creating distance and hierarchy between the researcher and interviewee in order to reduce the danger of ‘biased’ research. Instead

the interview works best ‘...when the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship...’ Building up a relationship and rapport is vital and is achieved through open, honest asking and answering of questions. Rejecting traditional sociological methods of interviewing was a means of giving ‘greater visibility’ to the subjective, every day lived situations of women, a manner to give voice to women and allow them to document their commentary on ‘...the very personal business of being female in a patriarchal capitalist society...’ (Oakley, 1981, p.48).

3.5: Sample Size

Having established the objectives and research methodologies needed to gather data, the next step was to determine a sample size of participants for the focus groups as well as individual interviews. One of the key issues was access to participants and gateway facilitator for access to groups. In order to recruit participants for the Pakistani/Bangladeshi women focus group the local school was approached, and it was established that access could be gained to an already established group who used the local school as a meeting point. This was the ‘Chai (Tea) Morning’ ladies, a group of around 20 women of varying ages and ethnic origin that meet regularly on a Friday morning for two hours. The organiser of this group proved effective as a gateway facilitator, and on approaching the ladies about participating in the research 12 women agreed to take part. With regards to recruiting participants from those groups that had had higher education it was decided that a mass email distributed to the local University campus would encourage participants to agree to participate. Unfortunately this email generated very little responses to form a focus group and so it was decided

the research focus required modification, instead the few responses to the email were invited to participate in in-depth interviews. Of the focus group in the local school, it was decided that longitudinal focus group sessions would be best, and that the session should consist of 6 people, with two sessions held over a two week period. The sessions would be held in the school where the Chai morning group would usually meet, this allowed for ease of location and a familiar setting. In order to do this it was necessary to gain approval and consent from the local school (see Appendix A). The individual in depth interviews were similarly carried out in an informal setting, in a local café.

3.6- Ethics

As with any research, qualitative or quantitative, ethics throughout the research process is paramount. There are a number of key principles that must be adhered to in order to ensure proper conduct of research and safety of participants. These include; providing participants with adequate information about the nature of the research so that they may provide informed consent to take part, participants should be able to withdraw from the research study at any point without fear of negative consequences (See Appendix B, Appendix E, SREP consent form). Other principles include; minimising risk to participants, protecting participants' rights to anonymity at all times and confidentiality and ensuring that any data collected is kept secure (Hennik et al. 2011) (see Appendix D). This research study, as with any other, was reviewed by the ethics board of the University of Huddersfield. The first form submitted for the ethics panel required some modifications before the research could be approved. The changes included clarifying both the confidentiality and anonymity aspects of the research, including stating how data would be stored and informing participants of not

sharing issues discussed outside of the focus group (see SREP Application form, consent form and amendments form). With regards to anonymity, the ethics panel felt that the research study needed to express to participants that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time, though their contributions to the study may still be used unless they explicitly asked for it not to, in which case the data would be deleted. Having made the amendments the ethics panel approved the research.

3.7- Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is largely reflective endeavour and should follow a structure that refers back to the initial aims and objectives identified earlier in the research study. Though qualitative analysis may seem to lack rules and specific texts within which to operate, nevertheless Tesch (1990) has acknowledged four basic groupings that can apply to data analysis, these are; language characteristics, finding regularities in data, semiotics, that is understanding the meanings of words and actions, and reflection.

This research employed the interpretive approach in analysing the data gathered. Interpretive approaches to analysis seek to understand motivations, ideas and intentions of people and their reactions to the social world they inhabit. Rather than developing and testing theories about human behaviour, researchers using interpretive analysis aim to understand the meanings and emphasis people place on their social worlds, using their attitudes and perspectives to analyse responses to questions (Henn at al., 2006). Interpretative paradigms of analysis see people, the way they interpret and make meanings and understandings of social interactions as the primary source of data, people's perceptions are the 'insider' view and interpretive analysis emphasises

the value of individual and collective meanings attributed to everyday experiences (Mason, 2002). Within this research transcripts of data were highlighted and colour coordinated according to themes such as identity, religion, culture and homeland. Using this thematic framework, answers to questions were analysed using an interpretive approach to relate answers, attitudes and responses to the social phenomena experienced everyday by BSA Muslim women.

3.8- Reflection

The research process was indeed a challenging one for me personally, as this was the first instance in which I was carrying out empirical research, using methods I had never encountered before as I did not have a background in social sciences. However, though my position as a hijab wearing Muslim woman, of Pakistani ethnic origin, actively working and living in the community I was able to build rapport and trust relatively easily with the women who agreed to be part of the focus groups and interview process. There were instances during the focus group sessions where women would talk about intrinsically painful and very personal experiences that I felt should not be recorded and transcribed, but which nonetheless showed the level of trust between researcher and research participant. I was seen as an insider, a part of the community, and my research was met with curiosity and interest. As Bhopal (2008, p.188) notes regarding our roles as researchers, ‘...our status as insiders and outsiders is a role that we as researchers have to recognise and address; it can enable us to be both powerful and powerless within the research process...’ This was certainly my experience as I felt that although my position as a Muslim woman from the community afforded me more trust than perhaps a researcher of a different

gender/ethnicity and outside of the community, nevertheless all women were aware that my presence amongst them was primarily as a researcher. I was Muslim and British born, yet I was not a mother and could not relate to their experiences with regards to children or parenthood. However, the women participating in this research were keen to engage with debates on identity, their sense of Britishness and how those experiences may be passed to their children. They became enthused when I told them that I was undertaking the research from a feminist standpoint and that I wished to understand how British Muslim women and especially mothers experienced Britishness and identity in contemporary Britain.

My approach to the research methodology and analysis within this project was largely informed by the feminist literature regarding social research and the positioning of gender and power relations within a patriarchal society. Reading the work of Oakley (1981) Finch (1993), Maynard (1994), Phoenix (1990) has shown the necessity of restructuring traditional methodological approaches of social research in order to provide a voice to the diversity of women's experiences, emotions and understandings of social phenomena that can affect their lives. It was uncovering these 'hidden' experiences that proved the aim and drive behind this research, giving 'voice' to the social structures and lived experiences of the women of Oldham. In asking questions relating to identity, citizenship and multiculturalism of the women and mothers of Oldham, this research sought to provide a feminist standpoint to what has traditionally been a 'male-centred' 'public' approach to community cohesion and integration. Further the intersections of race and gender with regards to those participating in this research and the researcher cannot be overlooked.

Recognising differences between the women participating in the focus groups and the interviewer/interviewee is to recognise how the intersection of race, gender and social class can highlight relations of power/powerlessness between those participating in and conducting the research. As Phoenix (1994, p.59) states ‘...the intersection of ‘race’ and social class with gender leads to a dynamic situation of shifting similarities and difference...’ It is not enough to contend that women of the same ethnic background who participate in research will share the same views, or that sharing the same ethnicity with the researcher will produce ‘better’ or more salient data (Bhopal, 2010). Rather in such cases the interviewer/researcher is required to understand and recognise different power relations in the research process, further it is imperative on the researcher to ‘...continually struggle to make connections between the micro-interactions of the interview and the wider social context in which it is situated, and to develop understanding at several different levels...’ (Gunaratman, 2003, p.90). Though feminist research espouses challenging power relations between researchers and research participants nonetheless a hierarchy will persist, given the different social positioning of researchers/participants; it is better then to ‘...argue for an acknowledgement of power and differences between women...’(Skeggs, 1994, p.80).

My ethnicity, race and cultural background may be ones that I shared with the researchers, though these were similarities, differences persisted in that I was younger than most of the participants, I was not a mother nor married. I was also a student which further positioned me differently economically and in terms of education. Similarly sharing the same religious background as the participants it was further necessary to be aware of the potential power dynamics when scrutinising the social, political and educational understandings of Muslim women (Abbas, 2010). The

analytical standpoint I chose to adapt was that of a post-structuralist, post-modern feminist, as this allowed for analysis of how experiences come into being and are understood within specific social contexts. Post structural approaches towards the categories of race, gender, ethnicity and class shows how disrupting the ‘essentialism’ of such categories can generate greater insights within empirical research. Through recognising social discourses such as ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ as embedded within and influenced by lived experiences (Brah, 1996, Hall, 1996) as well as taking into account the ‘intersectionality’ of the lives British SA Muslim women in Oldham.

3.9- Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to highlight the research process, to understand the ethics inherent to good, ethical research, and how analysis of data can be used to construct arguments and form hypotheses. The theoretical approach and methodologies used in research have been discussed, and how triangulation of methods can allow for thorough and informed research conclusions. The importance of the literature consulted in the process of arriving at a suitable methodological and epistemological paradigm has been highlighted; the necessity of choosing a feminist standpoint with relation to the lives of British SA Muslim women in Oldham was discussed as well as the difficulties faced in implementing the research process. This chapter has examined the differences in qualitative and quantitative analysis, shown the advantage of using a ‘mixed methods’ approach to data collection and the method used to analyse empirical data. The next chapters will present findings and analysis of the empirical data using thematic and interpretive analysis.

Chapter 4. Research Findings- Analysis and Discussion

4.1: Introduction

This chapter will highlight, analyse and review the data gathered using the research methods discussed in chapter 3. The research findings here concentrate on the focus group discussions and individual interviews carried out with second/third generation British Muslim women of Pakistani/Bangladeshi ethnic origin. The data from the focus groups sessions and interviews is approached in a structured way with transcripts and comments from the women related to themes already identified earlier in this project. The themes include religion and culture, education and employment, identity, 'homeland' and multiculturalism.

4.2: The Case Study of Oldham

The issues of identity and belonging amongst Britain's Muslim community are increasingly relevant in contemporary society and within a post 9/11 and 7/7 context (Peach, 2005). At around 3% of Britain's ethnic minority population, Muslim's form the second largest religious group (UK Census, 2011), with South Asian Muslims accounting for a significant quota of the ethnic minority population of Britain. Muslim communities in Britain have become an increasingly visible minority given global events, such as the war in Iraq, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 7/7. As such Muslim communities have increasingly become the focus of policies aiming to counter segregation, promote social cohesion and integration, in order to do so such communities have become increasingly visible (Spalek, 2008).

Oldham is one such community, geographically located in the North West of England; Oldham is a former mill town with a significant South Asian population,

with 1 in every 9 person being Muslim. The Bangladeshi community of Oldham's ethnic minority population stands at 49%, the highest significant Bangladeshi minority community outside London; similarly the Pakistani population of Oldham is nearly 14,000 (UK census, 2011). In the summer of 2001 Oldham was hit by civil disturbances. The reports and policies that followed the disturbances centred on the issue of segregation amongst Oldham's white and ethnic minority communities as one of the core reasons for the unrest. Two reports considered vital in understanding the disturbances are the Cattle (2005) report and the more immediate following the riots, the Ritchie (2001) report. Both reports highlighted the polarisation of the communities in Oldham; with separate schools, places of worship and social/cultural networks leading to communities operating '...on the basis of a series of parallel lives' (Cattle, 2005, p.9) Oldham was perceived as '...a community more polarised on racial lines than anything seen before in the UK...' (Ritchie, 2001, p.2), Suggestions from both reports focused on building community relations and cohesion, with emphasis on creating spaces where meaningful exchanges and cross cultural contact could take place.

Community and community relations became a central tenet of policy implication and implementation, yet the term 'community' is itself an ambiguous and amorphous term. The term can represent spaces that may be gendered, virtual spaces, identities, geographical locations or sense and emotions, they are '...fluid and constantly changing entities...' differing in meaning and importance from generation to generation (Dominelli, 2008, p.3). The term community and its differing implications with regards to gender, ethnicity and class were discussed earlier in the Literature review.

4.1 Identity: Culture and Religion, Making the Distinctions

Weeks (1990, p.88) contends that identity is about belonging and although identity is inherently individual it also relates to traits people may have in common. Identity is also ‘...about our social relationships, your complex involvement with others, and in the modern world these have become ever more complex and confusing. Each of us live with a variety of potentially contradictory identities...’ The complex interplay of identities, shaped by social relationships, history, culture and religion will be the focus of this first section.

Questions asked of both the focus groups and individual interviews included understanding ‘Asian culture’ and ‘British culture.’ However questions regarding aspects of identity that distinguish between religion and culture required no prompting, as the participants themselves were keen to distinguish between culture and religion. Respondents emphasised this difference and stated:

‘Are you talking about culture or religion, because they’re two different things?’ (Focus group member Nazmeen)

‘Yeah, because we kind of stereotype the other one don’t we...?’ (Focus group member Shamila)

Participants were aware of stereotypical and negative connotations associated with cultural and cultural expectations. Culture was linked with family gatherings, Eid festivals and khathams (religious gatherings) and discussed as being a matter of tradition, upbringing and family rules, specific to ethnicity and history. Though not all cultural traditions were seen as negative, nevertheless culture was associated with restrictions and control often along gender lines.

‘...I just imagine bright colours, *and families together and stuff...* I sort of see the *positive side of it...but there is a negative side to it as well*’ (Focus group participant, Nazmeen)

‘...*we’re still stuck in our ways, through our elders...*’ (Focus group participant, Anna)

Conflation of religion with culture was seen as due to erosion of Islamic values, especially amongst the focus group sessions, and distinctions between the two were seen as an important aspect of identity. Culture was rooted in notions of ethnicity, yet religion was linked to a universal appeal and geographically inclined. Such strict delineation between cultural/religious identities was noted in the literature review and is examined by Jacobson (1997, p.240) who states, ‘...one should distinguish between the universal applicability of religious teachings and the limited relevance or usefulness of ‘culture’.... Furthermore culture is denoted as being linked to disparate customs and traditions from a particular region and carried on by older generations of South Asian immigrants. As the focus group participants were keen to emphasise, culture was the way parents had brought them up, both Pakistani/Bangladeshi respondents felt the need to repeatedly emphasise distinctions between culture and religion, particularly with behaviours associated with culture, such as arranged marriages and honour killings. With culture viewed negatively, research (Jacobson, 1997; Ramji 2007, Dwyer 1999) has shown that British Muslims employ religious identity and understanding as a means to solidify one aspect of identity. As Jaspal (2011, p.242) notes, ‘...in order to safeguard coherence, the identities in question will be attributed positive and negative values...’; this was certainly the case with this research and echoes earlier qualitative research into the complexities of identity process amongst second/third generation British Muslims. Culture was attributed almost exclusively negative values, however religion was attributed positive values

that encompassed gender equality and empowerment. Indeed experiences of the negative aspects of culture were identified as to be almost certainly dependant on gender, with young girls and women carrying the burden for maintaining correct behaviour, domestic chores and prospective education. This negative identification of culture by the majority of the Muslim women situates culture as a gendered experience, and cultural reproductions reinforce such gendered restrictions. The shifting of identities, from one that is culturally rooted to one that emphasises religious identity is often subconsciously done and points to the fluid and fluctuating nature of identities. As Ahmed (2005, p.201) states this fluid nature of identity and sense of ‘self’ is not fixed or solidified, but is a process of ‘...negotiation with oneself and others as to what is comfortable and right for one at that particular time...’ The distinctions between cultural and religious identities relates to objectives highlighted in the introduction of this research regarding management of plural identities.

However the negative aspect of culture was not a consensus amongst all participants, culture as an aspect of identity was not entirely dismissed, as one respondent stated:

‘...I’m still proud of my heritage, I’m still proud of being Pakistani, I wouldn’t ever say I’m not Pakistani because those are my roots...But I’m a Muslim first before I’m a Pakistani.’(Focus group participant, Amna)

For other respondents the separation between culture and religion was not necessary, nor strictly delineated, as the following respondent stated:

‘Well, my culture is basically, just I...er...I look at my religion that has a lot to do with what I do and how I run my house and bring up my children and how I live my life.... But as with culture, I just...er...as a human I just take whatever good values I find in our culture, and in our religion and I try to adopt them and live by them...’
(Interview, Shamila)

Such quotes highlight the varying cultural identities and formations inherent to British South Asian Muslim women on an individual basis. Not all felt that culture was something that ought to be devalued, and as one Bengali respondent stated, some even felt that culture had been increasingly eroded and stereotyped;

... 'You know with cultural, there's right and wrong, but you know with us, like nowadays, you know, we've been westernised to think culture's bad...' (Focus group participant, Kiran)

Such insights show that British Muslim women were aware that identities are not fixed and can be subjected to social construction and wider societal influences. Following 9/11, the Iraq wars and 2007 bombings in London the term 'Asian' has been subsumed and the term 'Muslim' has taken prominence 'racialising' religion so that 'Muslimness' becomes synonymous with a South Asian ethnicity. As Ahmad and Evergeti (2010, p.1698) point out '...communities characterised by differences of denomination, regional background, ethnicity and linguistic heritage are increasingly presented as homogenous, undifferentiated mass...' Such homogenisation is difficult for British Muslims, as their identities are singularly and stereotypically constructed, leaving little room for adapting or resisting such identities.

Respondents were keenly aware that their multiple identities could become areas which political and social settings could shape, and ultimately frame; this particular aspect of framing and identity is highlighted by Ikhlas (2006, p.71) '...Some members of the minority communities, especially the young people born in England believe that identity is imposed on them and they have little say in the matter....' When participants were asked how they would describe themselves in relation to ethnic, religious and cultural identity, overwhelmingly respondents reiterated they defined

themselves as British Muslim women, but were aware that this form of identity was what had been promoted and encouraged, as the following exchanges between respondents shows;

Nazmeen: *'British Muslim women...'*

Amna: *'I think British Muslim women...'*

Kiran: *'British Muslim... definitely...I would say I'm British Bengali.'*

Nazmeen: *(laughs) 'It doesn't sound right to say Muslim British, it has to be in a certain order, British Muslim...It's cause it's everywhere, British Muslim...'*

Shabnam: *'That's how it's been promoted...British Muslim... an official sort of thing...'*

Complex overlaps of multiple identities amongst British South Asian women is recognised as being indicative of the changing nature of 'self' and 'belonging' in contemporary Britain, as Benn & Jawad (2003, p.1) note, historically multiple identities of diasporic women '...add complex overlapping layers of ethnicity, gender and religion, to interpretation and understanding of attitudes and behaviours encountered by Muslim women...' These 'encounters' in a Muslim woman's life regarding attitudes towards cultural and religious identity can be found in everyday activities. One respondent felt that 'forms' which required acknowledging a certain ethnicity or ethnic background were particularly troubling;

'...I'm given this form and it says 'what is your...ethnicity?' I have to stop and think about it...what is my ethnicity? On the boxes it doesn't say 'British Asian' it says Pakistani, Bengali, Mirpuri, Indian...it'll say British white, African... ...I don't know which box to tick... I don't think anyone of them fits me...I am Asian, but I am also British... I've lived here...all my life...I've done everything here, you know it makes me feel like I'm not...I'm not British, it really disturbs me...' (Interview, Shamila)

The above quotes shows how multiple identities can often be a source of identity challenge and crisis for second and third generation British South Asian women. As

Ikhlas (2006, p.71) notes that ‘...individuals and communities choose to describe themselves in different ways. For some this becomes a problem when their preferred description does not fit in with predefined categories....’ Participants multiple identities were seen as a source of tension and confusion, and constant micro management was necessary to balance concepts of social, religious and cultural belonging, as the following comments show;

Nazmeen: *‘I think sometimes, you know I feel really sorry for...erm...for Muslim people...because...we’re torn in all sorts of directions ...you know, Pakistani and Bangladeshi because we’ve got our heritage... our culture...our religion... the British culture...it’s like...woah!’*

Amna: *‘And we’ve got to keep everybody happy...!’*

Nazmeen: *‘Yeah...and what’s our identity...? It comes back to our identity...who are we?’*

Shabnam: *‘Yeah...’*

(Ladies pause)

Nazmeen: *‘Do you know what I mean? We neither belong there, we neither belong here...’*

This ‘belonging’ or in between space has been characterised by Homi Bhaba as a ‘third space’ (1994). Within this ‘third space’ ethnic minorities occupy is one filled with contradiction and ambiguity as ‘...no culture if full unto itself, no culture is plainly plenitudinous, not only because there are other cultures which contradict its authority...’(Bhabha, 1994, p.210). Khan (1998, p.464) applies the ‘hybridised’ nature of existence to the ‘Muslim woman’ who is ideologically determined through racial, religious social, political and economic discourses. In this space ‘Muslim women’ are in ‘...hybridised states, where dialectic polarities demand the subject’s allegiance at the same moment. Hybridised individuals, caught in the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation, erasing any claims for inherent cultural purity,

inhabit the rim of an “in-between reality”...’ This can be seen in the case of the Muslim women participating in this research who felt their multiple identities placed competing and challenging demands on the individual, this diasporic condition is one that presents Muslim women with difficulties.

Internal worlds are linked to external environments and minority women continually structure, restructure inhabit and move between different groups (Haw, 2010), as such issues of identity and actualisation for second/third generation SA Muslim women are altered from those identities that were held by first generation migrant parents as the following quote from a respondent shows;

‘...my dad used to talk a lot (laughs), ‘we do this, this is the way’, he was trying to install in me that I have to keep the values that he grew up with, he didn’t want me to become westernised too much...’ (Interview, Shamila)

Subsequent generations of British SA women have adapted and as discussed in the Literature review a degree of acculturation has taken place, allowing for the reconfiguration of understandings of culture. A number of participants expressed this amalgamation with regards to clothes and dress. As some focus group participants stated;

‘I like to adopt both you see, when it comes to fashion, I’ve got an English top on, this is English (points to long, baggy shirt), this is English, but it looks ethnic. I’ve got a sort of scarf on...which sort of gives me that ethnic identity...’ (Focus group participant, Naila)

‘...when I used to go to school and wear school uniform...soon as I came home it used to be Pakistani capray (clothes), shalwar kameez...that’s what my father liked to see me in...But with my children ...it’s trousers and t-shirts, and even now, even though my daughter is 17 next month they wear trousers and t-shirts because they feel comfortable in them...’ (Interview, Maryam)

Although participants saw this as testament to their balancing of identity and culture, nevertheless they were also aware of cultural sensitivity and dressing appropriately for visits to parents, or occasions with inherently religious or cultural associations, which included gathams (religious gatherings), weddings, or Eid festivals. Here dress was interpreted as a form of ‘modesty’, this is related to both culture and religion, as there is general ‘...Islamic consensus that there are certain parts of the body that must be concealed in order to avoid shame and preserve modesty...’ (Maumoon, 1999, p.272). The comments also show that diasporic identifications have gender implications, gender roles and ideas can be reinforced through the process of migration, they can be repeated and passed from generation to generation without being challenged (Dwyer, 2000). Respondents felt it was both necessary and respectful to be aware of and maintain such boundaries:

‘... You know at weddings at stuff they wear shalwar kameez...*well you can’t wear English clothes at a Pakistani wedding...it just wouldn’t look good....*’ (Interview, Shamim)

‘... *we kind of adapt fashion, day to day... I might have a jilbab on some days... some days I might have a top and a trouser on...that’s just my day to day life, but...when I go to a ghatam I wouldn’t wear English clothes, I know I would wear my own, you know shalwar kameez...*’ (Focus group participant, Kiran)

‘... *It’s like when I go to my parents house I make sure I have not got on like a shirt, I wouldn’t go like this, the way I’m dressed now... it’s not because I know I’m gonna get in trouble with my dad... (laughs), I’m 37... ‘it’s just out of respect for my dad... I respect their culture...*’ (Focus group participant, Suria).

The above quote shows that adherence to particular forms of dress, whether deemed for religious or cultural affiliation can be a matter of negotiation. Lewis (2009, p.73) states that ‘Muslim dress codes’ whether involving the veil, hijab/niqab or shalwar kameez, emphasise and highlight ‘...varying degrees of ‘choice’ in different contexts...’ Muslim women in moving through different social settings such as

'home', weddings, or parents homes '...exercise a series of cultural and subcultural competencies....' The women in this research moved through various contexts and social settings throughout the day, actively engaging with and negotiating the spaces they encountered. As Zubair et al. (2012, p.9) notes, that wearing 'appropriate dress' in relation to cultural and religious obligations can ensure that the women were allowed to merge into social and cultural by displaying that they share '...the same cultural values, beliefs and identities...' Dress then becomes a performative aspect of identity that is a 'situated bodily practise' in everyday lives and within which identities are expressed and judged through clothes. The dress codes adhered to by these women show how gender roles and behaviour is modified and contained in relation to dress and religious or cultural gatherings such as weddings, Eid or ghatams, as Entwistle (2000, p.33) notes '...what constitutes 'dress' varies from culture to culture and also within a culture since what is considered appropriate dress will vary according to the situation or occasion...' Thus the women in this research were aware that particular modes of dress were suited to particular occasions, to defy codes or modifications of dress to suit situations such as Eid or weddings would mean flouting the conventions of their culture and being seen as '...subversive of the most basic social codes and risk[ing] exclusion, scorn or ridicule....'

Participants in the research although holding varying degrees of understanding for a culture attributed to South Asian ethnicity and heritage, answers and remarks regarding 'British culture' often focused on stereotypical notions that were generally negative. A number of participants spoke of British culture as focusing on drinking and 'clubbing';

Begum: '*... there's certain things in the British culture that we don't want to accept as well...*'

Nazmeen: *...Or to encourage...like... I wouldn't want or encourage my daughter to go clubbing...'*

However, participants were aware of the stereotypes regarding British culture and when discussing what they considered positive about 'British culture' focused on the financial independence in relation to gender, and Britain's general acceptability towards minority cultures:

'...But you know the British culture is quite good in a lot of ways... I think most of them are....do accept people... they do have a real interest in other cultures...'
(Interview, Shamila)

Suria: *'...we see...erm... the British women are much stronger probably.'*

Kiran: *'Yeah...'*

Amna: *'Much more independent...'*

Nazmeen: *'Working as well...'*

Seeking to identify both negative and positive aspects of British culture, as well as adapting clothing and food as noted in this response from this participant;

'...we've taken on the clothes and food as well, we have a nice mixture in our house...we have what I would call English food, like fish and chips...lots of pasta...and even roast chicken...and then we will have curry, or rice...Asian food totally...' (Focus group, Begum)

This shows a degree of acculturation and adaptation, as Andreouli (2013, p.165) notes discussed British culture is perceived in a '...polyphasic way incorporating both positive and negative values....' In this sense the research carried out in this work also shows how acculturation, that is adaptation of host communities cultures and norms, is often linked to societal contexts, and individual experience. This adaptation of

varying cultures and behaviours shows that culture is not static, that ‘diasporic’ identities such as those of second/third generation British SA Muslim women are ones in constant translation, construction and re-construction is an ongoing process through which identities ‘...simultaneously assert a sense of belonging to the locality in which they have grown up, as well as proclaiming a ‘difference’...(Brah, 1996, p.176).

Though acculturation, ie dress and food may take some place in family and home, the extent to which this is practised is always limited according to context. As quotes from participants show British culture and life was associated drinking and lax morality and ‘...posed an identity threat for some respondents, a threat to their value system and moral integrity...’ (Andreouli, 2013, p. 172). Such behaviour was generally attributed to youths in Britain, and the women in this research were keen to ensure that such behaviour should not influence or taken up by their children. This process of identity formation, both adapting certain cultural practises whilst rejecting others shows that identity ‘... is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’...’ (Hall, 1990, p.225) identity formation then is a fluid process, balancing within and outside, that of the ‘other’.

When participants were asked if they emphasised religion over culture with their children at home, overwhelmingly the response was affirmative. The women asserted they consciously made an effort to emphasise Islamic values in the home, over values that may be attributed to British or South Asian culture. As the comments below show:

‘...I do, definitely. I consciously make an effort to talk about it at home.’ (Focus group participant...’ (Kiran)

'Yes...I would because we live by the guidelines, not so much about the culture, more religious ...' (Interview, Shamila)

Participants felt that a strong religious identity would help their children negotiate societal and peer pressure, as well as gain an understanding of religious duties and obligations. South Asian Muslim women are keen to emphasise religious identity and values, as well as emphasising such values with their children and consequently the next generation. By emphasising religion over ethnicity over culture, and actively seeking to self identify with religion shows that identity is a fluid and evolving process. In emphasising certain religious principles over cultural or societal expectations the women participating in this research seemed to be passing onto their children a strong religious identity, one that valued 'humanity' and 'acceptance':

'...what I'm teaching them...what part of...how I'm teaching them Islam is to be good humans.... Of course that should help them fit in and accept other religions and cultures, but our place in society is something we discuss a lot, like we...we are not white, most people don't look at us as...as equals....' (Individual interview, Shamila)

As shown by the above quote a strong religious identity was one that would allow children to manoeuvre through society where racial and ethnic difference was apparent; a religious identity may be one that allows a strong and distinctive identity where there may be marginalisation and discrimination (Kibria, 2008). A perception of not being 'equal', marginalised and socially excluded by wider society lends itself to identifying with being 'Muslim' as '...the notion of exclusion dominates explanations of a return to religion amongst minority populations...'(Akhtar, 2005, p.167).

The extent to which parents can influence a sense of identity or belonging amongst children was perceived as substantial, with the women in this research feeling that mothers in particular played an important role in shaping the sense of ‘Britishness’ and identity:

‘...I think mothers obviously play a big part in this, how they influence, I mean if I was always slagging people off, or trying to scare the kids about the environment *they’re growing up in, their neighbours or their friends or something obviously from a young age I can have a great deal of influence. I think women, and mothers have more influence than fathers do...*’ (Focus group, Nazmeen)

As the above quote shows remaining positive about the environment or society within which the third and fourth generation of British Muslims live in is likely to, according to this participant, reinforce a strong sense of identity. The influence is additionally considered to be gendered, with women and mothers being considered as having more influence than fathers. The gendered role of mothers and women as a more prominent influence on children was further highlighted by the remarks from the following participant who reiterates the ‘nurturing’ role of a mother:

‘...*Asian fathers don’t usually spend that much time or you know they just hug and kiss them and provide shelter and food, which I think is so important but as a mother we have more influence on the character building of children, because we nurture them so I think it’s very important the way a mother she can influence them in every way, with society, you know she can teach them to love them, be scared of them, or hate them, whatever, so yeah I think a mother influences a very great deal...*’ (Focus group, Shabnam)

The demarcated gender roles within household and familial duties are also highlighted, with a father as the provider whilst the mother is the primary carer. This perhaps reflects the traditional framework of a Pakistani/Bangladeshi family.

Additionally a strong religious identity can also be used as a form of empowerment especially in relation to gender. As one participant in the focus group commented:

'... I think religion makes you stronger, 20 years ago I couldn't stand up to in-laws they didn't approve of me working, or going for further education ... then I started doing my own research and that made me stronger...I stood up to them and I used the Islam word ...and they couldn't fight it...' (Focus group, Shabnam)

The use of religion and religious knowledge as a means to access education and wider society has been discussed previously and concurs with Ramji's (2007, p.1183) work on Muslim femininities, who states that through reading religious texts women claimed '...that they could get better insight into the gender equality advocated by the Quran...' and further that '...religious knowledge, like knowledge more generally, constitutes a potential power resource that can sometimes be drawn on to achieve particular purposes....' In this case the purpose of gaining Islamic knowledge was to access education and then employment. Modood (2010, p.73) states Islam appeals to and is used by Muslim women to '...negotiate educational and career opportunities...' The issue of education, attitudes towards and access to such will be discussed further in the next part of this chapter.

Overall, responses from participants show that religion and culture as an aspect of identity can be both difficult and confusing, yet ultimately a matter of individual narratives. Though for some participants' religion and culture was a matter of strict delineation as culture had been imbibed with negative values, whereas religion was identified as being a universal and empowering force, other participants did not feel the need to separate religion and culture, and felt that both had value and place in contemporary British society. With regards to emphasising religion and culture with children, participants felt religion was able to empower children in a society that was perceived as unequal towards minorities. However culture was also seen as enriching and a mixture of religion and culture was ideal, participants felt that culture had

positive aspects, ones relating to weddings and traditions were worth preserving and passing onto children. The influence of mothers with regards to identity and belonging were repeatedly emphasised by the women in this research who felt that any views held regarding a society, whether positive or negative, could profoundly affect the way the next generation of BSA Muslims understood their place in British society.

In conclusion, this part of this chapter has shown how identity is still matter of involved and intense process for British Muslim SA women in Britain today, distinctions between religion and culture were made by nearly all the women in this research. The next part analyses attitudes towards education and employment.

4.4 Education: ‘Empowerment and Duty...’

The under representation of South Asian Pakistani and Bangladeshi minority women in higher education has been discussed previously, highlighting the tense negotiation undertaken by Muslim girls in education with regards to parental expectations, the notion of izzat (honour) and regulation of behaviour especially with regards to interaction in a mixed gender environment. In higher educations the rates of entry for Muslim girls is increasing, yet still lag behind the national average. Chapter 2 also highlighted the fact that the experiences of mature South Asian women in Higher Education has been largely undocumented, with little to no literature on their expectations, experiences or motivations behind returning to higher education at a later stage in life. The Muslim women participating in this research were keen to talk about their own experiences in education as well as their hopes and expectations for their children in schools and beyond to further education.

Research comparing the attitudes towards education for daughters between first generation and second/third generation Muslim women showed, ‘...on the whole, there was no difference between first- and second-generation mothers and fathers as they unanimously agreed that there was no reason why women should not acquire education...’(Ijaz and Abbas, 2010, p.318). Education was further seen as a manner of gaining confidence, independence and crucially not just as a means of entering the labour market but, as the following comments from participants’ show, to garner social cohesion, interaction and the ability to contribute and participate in society (Ijaz & Abbas, 2010). Participants agreed that education was a means of empowerment for

Muslim women and financial security should life issues such as divorce or single parenthood emerge.

'...I think it's really, really important, a lot of women are doing it. It is about empowering yourself...' (Focus group participant, Kiran)

'...when my marriage broke down...I had to survive with 2 kids I realised how important my education, my degree wasit sort of like hit me then, and my mum always used to say 'puthar(child) one day it's gonna come in use...' (Focus group participant, Nazmeen)

The following response from one particular respondent further illustrates the inter-generational attitude towards education:

'...for as long as I can remember when I was growing up I wanted to learn, to educate myself and my mum always encouraged us...' (Focus group participant, Shabnam)

Issues around gender and the notion of daughters maintaining the izzat of families outside the home was an attitude that had persisted to some extent with second/third generation Muslim women. When commenting on her daughter's prospect of University education one focus group participant hinted at the perceived danger posed by contemporary society and University environment to morality and religious upbringing:

'..., it's like my daughter and university, with the zamana (times) being the way that it is my husband always says to my daughter, puthar(child)...you're not going to study...because ...we work in Manchester and we see the girls there, you know...' (Focus group participant, Amna)

Such concerns are noted in literature by Afshar (1989, p.267) who comments that although education may be seen as 'a means of upward social mobility' it is also seen as '...potential threat to prepubescent daughters...' This apprehension and patriarchal

nature of restricting Muslim girls education is demonstrated where intersectionality of religion and culture work to constrain the choices of British Muslim girls and their educational prospects first by fathers and then by prospective husbands (Abbas, 2002). Opinions on education and the prospect of further education for daughters was a source of continuous tension amongst some of the women participating in this study. Though education can be seen as empowering and valuable in terms of future security, nonetheless the prospect of izzat being compromised through daughter's behaviours was a prevalent concern. Significantly, none of the women expressed concerns for sons entering or participating in higher education, which indicate the very different manner in which culture and religion is experienced with regards to gender.

One of the significant aims of this research was to understand what, if any affect HE/FE may have on the nature of plural identities amongst Muslim South Asian women, and if HE/FE changes or shapes the experiences of culture, tradition and gender roles. Amongst the women interviewed regarding their University experiences the general consensus emerged that HE was indeed a positive, and life changing experience. As one participant stated, attending University gave her the opportunity to understand new ways of thinking, meeting people of different culture and backgrounds:

'...It made me think, I mean about coming to University, the different people you meet, your tutors, what you hear and what you read and what you see, obviously you start to question, you start to think a lot more about how other people think...'
(Interview, Jasmine)

Education for women interviewed in this research was seen as a form of empowerment, a means of gaining self-esteem and confidence. When asked if education had helped with their own sense of 'identity' and self-assurance, those

women who had undertaken higher education agreed that the process had helped them become more confident, able to participate more fully in society and most importantly help their children:

'...Yeah...yeah...definitely. I would say it's made me stronger...erm...it's made me...I'm a lot more aware of the society, I feel that if I was just a mother sat at home I wouldn't be able to push my kids as much as I can...' (Focus group participant, Nazmeen)

'...Yeah, I think I'm a stronger person, I'm not as nervous...I think I'm more confident, like if I have to talk to someone...It has affected me in a lot of ways, in every way actually....' (Interview, Maryam)

From these quotes it becomes clear then that if access to and participation in Higher education can lead to a positive and reinforced notion of identity and 'self', leading to a more active participation in British society and citizenship, then naturally extending the process by which more British Muslim women are able to access Higher education could only be beneficial not only for the women themselves, but for their wider communities and British society.

Higher education undertaken as a 'mature' student presented different difficulties and negotiations than those that would perhaps encountered by younger students taking a 'traditional' route through education. For these mature students evolving relationships with children, partners and wider society were influenced and impacted upon in a variety of ways. Accessing education and manoeuvring through the process of studying as well as balancing very much gendered expectations of these women as mothers, housewives, parents and partners involved at times intense negotiation and dedication. Speaking of experiences before entering HE, one participant highlighted the restrictions imposed by wider family:

'...I mean I got married really young and then I stayed with the in-laws for seven years and my self-esteem and my confidence was rock bottom...there were so many restrictions on education and stuff, which I kind of abided by because of my parents and ... for their sake and for their respect and ... the community and whatever....' (Focus group, Shabnam)

Similarly responses from another participant highlighted the extent to which negotiations regarding education and the impact on family had to be exercised in order to not only access education, but to maintain that access. Minimising impact on family life was paramount, even to the extent of restricting choices of subjects studied to prevent disruption to partners:

'...I didn't even used to talk to my husband about it at all ...he works nights...he didn't used to wake up until about 2 o'clock in the afternoon so I kept my classes in the morning... I didn't pick the subjects that I wanted to, or would have done better in, or would have enjoyed... I would choose the subjects that were available in the morning because...because my husband was willing to let me carry on ...I was grateful for that...but I didn't want it to interfere in his life in any way...or me as a wife not performing my duties...I didn't want it to affect...because the family always came first, even though Uni was a very important part of my life...' (Interview, Shamila)

'...I'd go home from Uni and the housework would need doing and the washing ...I'd have ... cook... tidy up...help the children with their homework and then do my own assignments and be up until two or three in the morning...it wasn't an easy life but I'm so grateful for experience...I'd do it again actually, cause I think I could do it better....' (Interview, Maryam)

Whereas young ethnic minority women in studies by Hussain & Bagguley (2007) were negotiating the prospect of marriage, staying at home or on campus and parental support for their studies, mature South Asian Muslim women in HE/FE had to negotiate with partners and family commitments in terms of ensuring that studies did not impinge on 'family duties'. The challenges in their personal lives faced by female mature students are different than those experienced by male students (O'Shea & Stone, 2011). It can be contended that due to the deeply patriarchal nature of these, for

Muslim South Asian women the challenges of education can be much harder. As Shaikh (2011, p.50) notes, ‘...the lack of participation of British Muslim women in education is often attributed to a variety of cultural, economic and religious factors...’ and as such the way to encourage participation amongst this subsection of the ethnic minority community is to enable Muslim women to understand the value of education in relation to religion, culture and as an investment in future prospects (Sardar, 2007). However it is to be noted that patriarchal attitudes influencing women’s ability to access and complete Higher education is one that is shared across ethnic, cultural or religious groups, the notion of motherhood and academia as incompatible has been noted before, ‘...while men find it easy and socially acceptable to combine family and career...’ (Leonard & Malina, 1994, p.29) the same cannot be said for women of all ethnicities with regards to mothers accessing and remaining in Higher education, where a culture of silence and isolation regarding motherhood exists. Female mature students face additional challenges, as they often have to balance studying with responsibilities in the home and caring for children (Edwards, 1993). Patriarchal attitudes towards as a barrier to access and progression of women in Higher Education remain a commonality amongst women of different ethnicities, as Jakobsh, D. (2004) summarises current value systems purport the idea that it is better if fathers are employed and take care of financial affairs whilst mothers should employ a supportive role and assume parental responsibilities instead. Further, attitudes from family, friends or partners that are unsupportive can have a detrimental and lasting effect on women’s uptake of Higher Education.

The women in this study were uniquely placed as mature, ethnic minority Muslim women, who were also mothers, wives, community members and students. Their

identities intersected in this way presented new challenges in order to balance religious, cultural and gender expectations as well as fulfilling roles in higher education. Overwhelmingly the attitude of participants towards education and participation in higher education was positive one, with many feeling that education provided women with a means of independence, both financial and social that would help secure against future problems. Education, according to the views of the participants, was valuable, in terms of personal and social development. When asked if education affected women's sense of identity and wider societal development, the views were affirmative with one participant stating:

'...education doesn't just help with identity it helps in every sense...' (Focus group, Suria)

For one participant experiencing higher education allowed for better understanding of history and the context of society, in particular her position as an ethnic minority woman in contemporary Britain:

'...it really did help me understand it all better ...I don't regret it at all, I think understand how the world works much better after that, obviously having more education and knowledge...' (Individual interview, Maryam)

Further, the experience of education was viewed as a positive effect that was seen as both empowering and enriching for family life:

'...in so many ways ...it is enriching, you grow and understand and... question more as well...sometimes you feel more ...you want to find out more about things... things you never even questioned before... it was fantastic and it was an experience I want my children to have because they will have a better understanding of the world around them...' (Individual interview, Shamila)

Nonetheless, difficulties faced by mature British Muslim women in education were very much related to cultural, religious and gender expectation; these will be discussed further in the following chapters.

4.5 Employment: ‘Just a brown face...’

The high rate of economic poverty amongst ethnic minority communities has been discussed previously in Chapter 2. The rate of economic inactivity for Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic minority women is more than double that of other ethnic minority groups. Additionally the Labour Force Survey (2011) diagram below shows that employment rates amongst Pakistani/Bangladeshi women nationally is at the lowest amongst ethnic minority groups, whilst the inactivity rates are highest.

PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC GROUP IN EMPLOYMENT						
	Employment Rate		Unemployment Rate		Inactivity Rate	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
White	76.6%	67.6%	8.3%	6.8%	16.4%	27.5%
Mixed or Multiple	64.3%	55.3%	15.7%	15.8%	23.7%	34.3%
Black	61.4%	55.6%	21.7%	17.7%	21.6%	32.4%
Indian	77.0%	60.6%	8.2%	11.1%	16.2%	31.9%
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	68.7%	28.9%	12.8%	20.5%	21.3%	63.6%
Chinese & Other	67.0%	51.8%	10.3%	10.6%	25.3%	42.1%
Ethnic Minority	68.2%	50.8%	13.2%	14.3%	21.5%	40.8%
All	75.6%	65.6%	8.9%	7.5%	17.0%	29.1%

Figure 1: Source: Labour Force Survey 2011 (http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/2012/labour_market_status_by_ethnicity.xls)

According to the 2011 UK census statistics relating to economic activity the rate for Oldham stood at 40.3%, this figure includes those who are retired, students and long term sick or disabled. Amongst the reasons for economic inactivity amongst the female population in Oldham, 10.1% was due to ‘looking after home and family’ (ONS, 2011). Though the rate of economic inactivity had not been scrutinised according to ethnic minority groups as of yet, it is widely accepted that Pakistani and Bangladeshi minority women will be once again disproportionately represented in the statistics for economic inactivity. The fact that a high percentage of female economic activity in Oldham is due to reasons involving family commitments seems to reinforce

Dale et al. (2006) findings, which include the strongly gendered nature of motherhood and housekeeping amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic minority families. This was reinforced by comments from the women participating in this research; they highlighted the cultural and patriarchal nature of families that can prevent ethnic minority women from entering the labour market:

'...sometimes if you have in-laws... some husbands they don't want to give women that freedom because they think if they go out and they hear about all of the other things they will come home and they'll want more independence, and then they'll ...you know, they won't be able to control them....the elders like to have the respect and the values.... they think that if they go outside 'ey zahda ushar hoh jandi eh' (become more aware) and then they won't be able to control them or keep them at home...' (Individual interview, Shamila)

'...the husbands might disapprove ...you've got in-laws as well. The mother in law... (laughs)...it's true, they want to keep hold of money, control the household, their sons and daughter in-laws...' (Focus group, Amna)

Such cultural attitudes towards ethnic minority women in work was highlighted in a report commissioned by the All Parliamentary Group on Race and Community, and carried out by the Runnymede Trust (APPG) (2012, p.18), which states that research carried out amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities had found that part of the economic inactivity rate was due to 'cultural preferences, expectations around childcare and women's role in the home...' For some female participants in this research who were currently employed the issue of cultural expectations played a factor in their choices regarding employment:

'...people used to say to me...when I started work people used to say, 'oh, it's not the wife's job to work, her husband's working what's the need?' (Focus group participant, Shabnam)

Although the women participating in this research did indeed mention cultural factors and patriarchy as an issue as a factor in the high rate of unemployment, nonetheless

other factors such as perceived discrimination based on ethnicity or religion, lack of opportunity, training and skills were all seen to be more prominent in economic inactivity rates amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. Indeed, as identified by Ram (2012) and Bunglawala (2008) culture and religion as issues are less likely to impact on second and third generation Pakistani and Bangladeshi women taking up employment. Quantitative data shows that for white and black women having a partner had a positive effect on economic activity rates, for Indian women there appeared to be no significant effect. However, perhaps significantly, there seems to be little difference in economic activity rates amongst first generation or second and third generation women with partners, thus showing that there is little evidence of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women born and brought up in the UK moving towards white cultural norms with regards to family roles and employment (Dale et al, 2006).

The issue of discrimination was one many participants in this research highlighted, both perceived and experienced as a barrier to finding employment. The following comment from a participant who had completed a degree as a mature student was struggling to attain the necessary skills, and feared wearing the hijab as a Muslim woman may lead employers to discriminate against her:

'...well that does worry me, wearing a scarf to work and how will they treat me and with me being Asian... I think there will be some people who are very kind and encouraging and there will be some people who will not be happy or will not accept me at all....' (Individual interview, Maryam)

'...I've faced so much racism in the workplace ...but then I've been supported by a lot of white counterparts as well ...' (Focus group participant, Kiran)

The experiences of racism in the workplace and perceptions of discrimination were also highlighted and coincide with the literature view, and in particular with the EOC

report (2006, p.5) which highlighted the levels of discrimination faced by Muslim ethnic minority women, with evidence showing that on average ‘...compared to their white counterparts Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women under 35 are three times more likely to be often asked about plans for marriage and children at an interview...’ and further were ‘much more likely to experience negative attitudes because of their religious dress...’ Questions regarding marriage plans and attitudes towards religious dress suggested that employers were engaged in stereotypes, this is true across the range of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, despite high levels of qualifications. The APPG (2012) report found racial discrimination to be a factor in the reason for high unemployment, with discrimination faced at the application process as well as in interviews.

For those women participating in this research who were employed issues of pay gaps and lack of ethnic minorities in a wide range of jobs were highlighted. British Muslim women in employment felt unappreciated and undervalued at work.

Shabnam: You know what annoys me, when they have these big massive council meetings, the few BME people that are invited are only there...not...not because they're in a position of power... Because they're a brown face...!

Amna: 'Just to show they're including people...'

Nazmeen: '...I was at a meeting at work once where they wanted to put on an event for BME children...a music event...in Ramadan...I told them no BME kids will come...the response was...basically they didn't know or care...'

Given the above exchange, employed participants in this research felt they were not given the opportunity to progress in the employment sector as their white counterparts. Some felt they were there to simply ‘make up the numbers’ as ethnic

minorities and had continually been passed up for promotion despite being better qualified than a white colleague:

'You know you hit a dead end... they don't empower BME staff, there's not enough training or promotion...so people end up stuck in certain jobs...' (Focus group participant, Jasmine)

'...you know someone I worked with once told me they left that job because...although they were better qualified, but they were being paid less than a white lady doing the same job...' (Focus group participant, Nazmeen)

Lack of promotion, wider pay gaps and unequal opportunities to train and progress were all highlighted by women in this research, who if were not employed themselves, knew of family members and friends who struggled to gain employment or progress in the work place. Additionally as one participant commented, qualifications did not necessarily convert to well paid or even employment that matched their level of qualifications:

'... a lot of our Pakistani men who are qualified with degrees and everything...but...they're working as taxi drivers and in takeaways, because they just can't get a job, there's nothing out there for them...' (Focus group participant, Amna)

A significant gap between qualifications and pay is also true for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, who although are gaining higher qualifications still earn proportionately less and are more likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts. Specifically, research has found that only 37% of Pakistani women and 35% of Bangladeshi women were able to find work one year after leaving full time education compared to 54% of white women (Kerr, 2010).

Chapter 2 also highlighted the over concentration and virtual absence of ethnic minority women in particular jobs. The problems that arise with an over-concentration or lack of ethnic minority in certain professions were succinctly highlighted by one of the participants in this research who stated:

'...a while ago I needed a counsellor... I really wanted to speak to someone... an Asian woman so they'd understand my culture and where I was coming from...because you know, others, like white counsellors they're qualified and stuff...but... someone Pakistani would have made a lot more difference...' (Focus group participant, Nazmeen)

According to the 2001 Census Black and Asian ethnic minority women were more likely to be concentrated in a few occupations, with a quarter of Bangladeshi and a quarter of Pakistani women employed in the retail and wholesale sectors. The nature of racial discrimination and lack of opportunity in the labour market presents a certain 'sameness' amongst ethnic minority women in Britain, yet the reasons behind over concentration or lack of representation in the labour market shows that there are differences amongst ethnic minority women. There is a danger of assuming that all ethnic minority women face the same boundaries or difficulties in the labour market, Mirza (2003, p.126) notes that 'normative' assumptions are made when talking about women's employment, this means that '...under this blanket term, black and minority ethnic women's specific circumstances remain hidden.' This shows the necessity to understand 'intersectionality' amongst minority women, acknowledging the matrix of power relations and analysing the multiple intersections of subordination concurrent to race, ethnicity, gender and religion is vital to understanding the nature of social inequality and how it can affect various minority groups (Bilge and Denis, 2010). Government policies aimed at increasing the numbers of ethnic minority women in work, through training schemes, tax incentives and support mechanisms can only be

correctly targeted by moving beyond generalities, and exploring the labour market position with regards to the different sections and sub-sections of the ethnic minority population (Dale, 2008).

Participants in this research overwhelmingly agreed that employment prospects for ethnic minorities were severely limited in the labour force. Perceived and experienced incidents of racism in the workplace meant British Muslim women were reluctant to apply for some jobs and felt they were discriminated against in terms of pay and promotion. Though entry into higher education is rapidly increasing amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, and that these women are likely to be more economically active in the labour market (Dale, et al, 2006) nonetheless the negative impacts on economic activity amongst women, such as family commitments and childcare, are more profoundly marked for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. Even amongst the better qualified women, levels of economic activity are on average 30% lower amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi women than white women.

4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion this findings and analysis chapter has looked at how British Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim women interpret and understand notions of culture and religion. Responses from research participants showed that a degree of acculturations has taken place, with comments regarding clothes and food showing the extent to which British Muslim women understood and balanced their British and 'Asian' cultures; distinctions between culture and religion were not all that clear indicating the individualised nature within which identity is understood and shaped; additionally gender roles and ideas regarding gendered identities were seen to be passed from generation to generation. Micro-management with regards to identity was an ongoing process for Muslim women, with internal processes of identity formation linked to outside influences and experiences.

Attitudes towards education were largely positive, yet reservations with regards to gender and education for daughters still remained even amongst second and third generation mothers. Access to education was seen as vital to improving prospects of individual women and wider communities; improving access would require classes provided in schools, classes at times that would help women balance family duties, such as school runs, as well as tutors that developed greater understanding of mature students responsibilities and needs as a negative experience in further or higher education can lead to setbacks in confidence. The fact that ethnic minority students are overrepresented in certain degree subjects such as law, a subject taken up by 11.8% Pakistanis and 8.8% Bangladeshi's indicates that this absence and over-concentration will continue. The reason why Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim

ethnic minority students are over represented in studying law as a subject is certainly worthy of further research.

Chapter 5: Research Findings: Analysis and discussion

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined negotiations between religion and culture undertaken by British Muslim women of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic origin, degrees of acculturation and wider societal contexts were discussed with regards to plural identities and how such identities are managed. Access to and experiences of education were also discussed, with higher education being noted as positive and lasting influence on the lives of ethnic minority women, affording them with greater confidence and ability. Though reservations on the basis of gender and daughters in education still remained, indicating the notion of izzat and shame were still primary concerns for the South Asian Muslim women of Oldham. Within employment participants recognised the need for greater training opportunities, and better understanding of the support needed for ethnic minority women, especially older women in finding employment. The perceptions and experiences of discrimination in employment due to religion and veiling were also discussed.

This chapter intends to focus on the changing notion of a perceived ‘homeland’ for second and third generation South Asian British Muslim women, attitudes towards ‘Britishness’, citizenship and community will also be explored in an attempt to understand how attitudes are shaped and passed onto children. A key aspect of this research is to understand what participants in this research understood about multiculturalism, identity and integration and what it meant to be a South Asian Muslim woman in contemporary Britain. This chapter will explore what factors can affect sense of ‘belonging’, including incidents of racism, terrorism and government policies. Lewis (2004, p.8) differentiates and defines between ‘citizenship’ and

‘belonging’, stating that citizenship in its most formal concept can refer to a legal status. ‘Belonging’ however points to a more relational status between individuals and the state, ‘...it points both to the claims to and exclusions from national belonging and identity...’, and further, such claims and exclusions can indicate the complexity of ‘citizenship’ when interrelations between class, gender, race and sexuality work to inform particular aspects and forms of belonging. Similarly ‘belonging’ is intrinsically related to identity and ways in which people define ‘self’ and ‘other’ (Yuval-Davis, et al, 2006). As such although these forms of ‘belonging’ may be fluid and changing, nonetheless they can be constructed around such boundaries as ‘them’ and ‘us’, and can be related to political processes (Martin, 1995).

5.2: Changing notions of the ‘homeland’, going back ‘home’ and finding a place

In looking at the life stories of first generation South Asian migrant women to Britain Amrit Wilson (1978) found that living in Britain very much a fractured existence for these women, coping with loneliness, the challenge of maintaining kinship links with family in the country of origin, as well as language barriers and cultural adjustments proved some of the difficulties in the lives of these first immigrant Muslim women (Benn and Jawad, 2003).

This research has sought to engage with second and third generation British Muslim women in order to understand the nature of their links to a ‘homeland’. The notion of ‘home’ is a source of contention for those of dual and plural identities, as noted by Buietlaar and Stock (2010, p.163) ‘...creating homes that incorporate various sites of belonging, especially when one does not find one’s home culture represented in mainstream host culture, is an ongoing process of negotiation...’ Exploring the various nature of ‘roots’ and ‘home’ enable us to understand the ways in which second/third generation British Muslim women understand their own sense of belonging in a contemporary British society. The concept of ‘home’ is one that is multi-layered and complex, and has ‘...variably been described as conflated with or related to house, haven, self, gender or journeying...’(Mallet, 2004, p.65). In this research ‘homeland’ was associated with a geographical and historical link with the country the parents or grandparents of these second and third generation Muslim women had migrated from, namely Pakistan or Bangladesh.

As Bhimji (2008, p.414) notes, ‘Contrary to the dominant paradigm, British Muslim women do not view ‘...home’ and ‘host’ nations in binary terms....’ Rather in part

due to bridari connections and familial ties, and the connection to ancestral lands, British Muslim women were connected to the homeland of their parents', as the following comments show:

'...There was some things I really, really loved..seeing relatives, shopping for clothes, seeing my extended family, sitting with them and talking to them was fantastic, but I never felt like I wanted to stay there... it wasn't because...they were different ...it was...I don't know...' (Individual interview, Shamila)

'...I just call it a holiday destination...and just having a few roots there...' (Focus group participant, Kiran)

'I love to go for a holiday, but that's it...I mean it's a slower pace of life and I feel more connected religiously there...erm...here life is fast paced and stuff...there, it can be a whole different world...' (Focus group participant, Amna)

The notion of 'belonging' then is not fixed, and in understanding 'belonging' whether in a material, social, emotional or geographical context must then lend to the idea that the identities of these women and their sense of 'belonging' should not be strictly linear but understood in a fluid, global and arching context (Bhimji 2008). For a vast majority of the women interviewed the 'homeland' was a strange place that involved short visits and holidays, with links that were inherently different from those of their parents' as the following comments show:

'...when I go back I'm treated like a visitor...I think most people are now. They ask how long we're staying... how much time we've got off work...how long we're staying. They come and look at us, come and see us, how we look and how we've aged, how we've grown up...! (Focus group participant, Begum)

In this sense 'belonging' is a form of transnational identity where emotional attachments are formed to countries of ethnic origin (Yuval Davis, 2006), thus whilst the majority of participants felt they could not locate to Pakistan/Bangladesh permanently nevertheless the loss of a connection to a 'homeland' was seen as sad

when participants considered the yet ‘weakened’ links their children are likely to have with their country of ethnic origin:

‘...my mum and dad had very strong links with Pakistan, but me...and my kids now not so much...’ (Focus group participant, Nazmeen)

‘Mine are really weak considering that we haven’t got any grandparents left there, those were our only links really and now that they’re passed away...so I don’t think I would go back there ...’ (Focus group, Shabnam)

Language was intrinsically linked to an ethnic identity, and as such loss of a ‘mother language’ meant loss of culture and heritage. The loss of language was deemed particularly poignant as it prevented intergenerational communication, children could not communicate effectively with grandparents, thus perhaps further missing a ‘link’ with their ethnic origin:

‘It’s sad...they can’t communicate with their grandparents properly, my kids stay over there sometimes, but when they’re trying to tell my mum something... it hurts, because it’s like my mum’s trying to understand...she doesn’t... I mean not that well, but then I think when I went to school, when I went to University I managed to remember my language and keep hold of that...but I didn’t speak urdu with my kids, so they’ve lost that and I’m to blame for that...’ (Focus group participant, Nazmeen)

‘My mum says that to me sometimes about my kids not knowing our own language and I feel guilty...’ (Focus group participant, Kiran)

Significantly, the majority of the woman involved in this research did not feel at ‘home’ in Pakistan or Bangladesh, rather they were acutely aware of their ‘outsider’ tropes and the fact that they were not seen to be returning ‘home’, as the following comment shows:

‘....Everything’s different, we do consider ourselves as Pakistani but I think the only similarities we have is that we adapt some of the fashion of Pakistan...It’s true, I mean if they don’t like something you don’t want to do it. And it’s the same, we adapt

the Pakistan fashion but then when we go to Pakistan they don't see us as Pakistanis.... (Individual interview, Maryam)

Not being seen as 'Pakistani' or 'Bangladeshi' is significant in 'othering' these women in the country of ethnic origin, they are acutely aware of their outsider status, conceding that the differences between their lives in Britain and Pakistan or Bangladesh ensures they can never fully 'belong' to the 'homeland' of their parents. The women self-identified with Britain as their 'home' significantly more than they did with their parents' homeland.

'Yeah, you're a guest...you're treated differently, you're perceived differently...you've got different ideas to them...different way of living...I think we're very much different to the Bangladeshi people if you go to Bangladesh. Our food taste is different, our dress sense is different...erm...I think our upbringing is different...our ideas...and I think our education is different...' (Focus group participant, Jameela)

The narratives related by the women in this research point to the highly individualistic nature of 'belonging' and sense of 'home', although for some women the links to Pakistan or Bangladesh were cursory with what they described as 'weak' links. For others 'homeland' was imbued with significant emotional and historical attachment, as the following comment shows:

'...you know for me...Bangladesh...I mean I'm still really connected to my Bangladeshi roots, even though I'm British born, if there was an option for me... to go live in Bangladesh permanently I would probably go. The culture...everything...it's your way, it's your country...I feel I can fit in more there...' (Individual interview, Naila)

In this sense it is the country of origin that is seen as culturally desirable, a place of familiarity, even though the participant was British born and had lived primarily in Britain cultural belonging was displaced to Bangladesh, the country of ethnic origin. Although in simplistic terms the notion of 'home' may relate to a fixed and stable

place, in the diasporic setting social and cultural belongings are less stable, and may in fact compete against each other (Buietlaar and Stock, 2010). The above comment highlights the desire for a 'home' where one can 'fit in' and feel they 'belong', and can be interpreted as relating to an idealised and imagined nation. Brah (1996) locates this feeling as one of a 'homing desire', whereby the conception of 'home' is located in historical and cultural roots.

To conclude then, the notion of 'homeland' has changed significantly for second/third generation ethnic minority Muslim women. The majority of participants in this research did not consider the country of ethnic origin as 'home', rather a place for temporary visits and distant family connections. The country of ethnic origin was not considered a 'homeland' but rather a historical region that although held emotional and historical significance, did not hold the same attachment or significance as it did for their mothers or grandparents. 'Home' then is a matter of inherently personal narratives where 'belonging' is linked or at least influenced on many levels including local, national, social and emotional attachments.

5.3: Muslim women and citizenship; gender, politics and the notion of 'Britishness'

Inherent to this research has been to understand the ways British Muslim women experience being 'British' and Britishness. This section of the findings and analysis chapter will focus on concepts such as multiculturalism, community cohesion, citizenship and nation. This section intends to analyse the ways in which politics, both local and national, seeks to include and exclude communities based on cultural and religious differences.

Understanding the nature of citizenship and applying its framework to diasporic communities, such as the South Asian community in Britain it is necessary to recognise that just as diasporic identities are multi faceted, multi layered and diverse, citizenship and belonging in itself is highly complex. As Geaves (2005, p.66) notes British Muslims have '...had to discover how to be Muslim in a secular society and to develop the appropriate strategies for living as a minority in a non-Muslim society...'. Events such as the Rushdie affair, the 2001 civil disturbances in Northern towns of Britain, the September 11 attacks and the Iraq war have further placed the 'Muslim presence' in Britain under a scrutinising lens with the question of what it means to 'belong' to a nation. With ethnic minority communities the notions of 'ethnicity' and 'identity' also become important, cultural and religious differences can be seen as 'othered' from the 'norm' of the host nation. The way in women experience nation is different from that experienced by men, the intersectionality of race; religion and ethnicity further differentiate these experiences (Yuval-Davis, 2007).

Women have been historically absent from discourses on ‘citizenship’ and the notion has been seen as a White male domain, yet citizenship is not ‘gender neutral’ and is fact deeply gendered (Lister, 2003). One of the central reasons for resurgence of ‘citizenship’ and ‘belonging’ as a concept within social and political forums is the increase of migration, the multi-ethnic and multicultural face of society and the increased fluidity of nation boundaries due to globalisation. Within this context of migration and immigration ethnic minority women are uniquely placed as threatening to the wider majority’s expectations and notions of citizenship, given that they are often cast the biological reproducers of the nation, and as such contribute to the ethnic, cultural and identity politics in their reproduction of the next generation of citizens.

There is a vital need to rethink the many multi-layered ways in which ‘belonging’ and ‘citizenship’ are experienced by ethnic minority women, the intersectionality of race, gender, ethnicity, race and class as impacting on an individual’s sense of citizenship, as well as the need to understand the ‘public-private’ spheres in the construction of ‘citizenship’. The need to understand the latter is vital if the social, political and economic implication of policy practises on communities and especially future generations of British Muslims is to be effective; as Abraham et al. (2010, p.1) state, ‘...ongoing globalisation, migration, identity politics, intersectionality, as well as changes in the nature of the private, continue to challenge the notions of the separation of the public and private’ That policy and policy implementation regarding citizenship has historically been couched in ‘male’ privileged and public tones has been noted by feminist scholars (Yuval-Davis, 2007, Yeatman, 2001, Lewis, 2004).

Lister (2003) emphasises the particular notion that political theory on citizenship has long shown a 'male bias' with preoccupation with the public sphere and dismissal of the domestic sphere as irrelevant. It is precisely the voices of ethnic minority Muslim women in Britain that has hitherto been obscured into irrelevance, yet understanding how these Pakistani and Bangladeshi women and mothers makes sense of their own 'citizenship' in the 'private domestic sphere' is vital to knowing how attitudes towards 'citizenship' and 'belonging' are being taught to and passed onto children.

As a locality that has a sizeable population of British Muslims of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origins, Oldham has a special and evolving relationship with national discourses on 'citizenship' and 'belonging' (Phillips, 2006). In the case of Oldham the division between public and private spheres was brought into sharp focus following the 2001 civil disturbances. Reports into why the disturbances took place and how to prevent further disturbances included the Ritchie report (2001) and Cattle report (2001). Both reports featured issues of segregation and lack of interaction between separate ethnic groups. 'Residential, social and cultural mixing' were recommended, and though the Ritchie (2001, p.7) report briefly alludes to the fact that '...children's attitudes are heavily influenced by adults...' little mention is made of the way that mothers and the 'private sphere' of the home can influence children in shaping their understanding of being a citizen in Britain. Ethnic minority women have not been part of the discussion on racial equality and community cohesion, as Mirza (2003, p.121) notes '...the 'new language' of racial equality and inclusion, in the context of the liberal democratic discourse on equality and anti-discrimination, has been constructed around the dominant masculine agenda of objectives and targets...'

It was the purpose of this research to give voice to these understandings of ‘citizenship’ and ‘belonging’ in the private sphere. The women participating in this research, the majority of whom self-identified with Britain as ‘home’ offered varied understandings of their understanding of ‘citizenship’ and the ways in which such understandings are passed onto children. External politics and reactions to global and national events can affect profoundly the notion of ‘belonging’ and feeling valued as a ‘citizen’. The understanding of a ‘citizen’ was bound up in notions of rights and responsibilities, where an attachment to Britain was emotional, with the acknowledgement that they were afforded rights and opportunities they may not have in other countries, as the comment below shows:

‘...I think of myself as a British citizen, I live in this country, I work in this country, I contribute...you know ... this is my home...I give a lot as well and this country gives me a lot... It gives me a lot of rights...I mean, I don’t know...if being a single parent back home would I be able to work, would I be able to supports my kids...?’ (Focus group, Nazmeen)

From this comment it is clear that ‘citizenship’ and belonging to a nation involves a form of contract whereby contribution to and expectation from the nation are a two way process. It shows the dynamic process by which the individual forms a relationship to the nation, considering themselves as an active citizen based on the individual contribution they make to the nation, such as working and paying taxes. Other participants offered a similar interpretation of the responsibilities of a ‘good’ citizen:

Naima: *‘Yeah, contributing to the society...’*

Kiran: *‘Voting, stuff like that...being active in the community...’*

In this sense then, for these women, it is clear that citizenship, if considered as something that is practised in everyday lives, is framed within discourses of the

socially responsible adult, where participation in public life, ‘voting’ and being ‘active in the community’ was necessary in order to be seen as a responsible citizen.

Yet as has been previously discussed in the literature review, citizenship as a concept and a process can be multi layered, uneven and involves aspects of inclusion as well as exclusion. The notion of ‘the Muslim’ is portrayed as outside that of the national configuration of Britishness, principally due to the racialised notion of an inherent English identity. This in turn is historically linked to the concept of migration from the Caribbean and Subcontinent and the ‘...previously external ‘non-white’ presence which threatened the imagined British way of life from within’ (Kyriakides et al. 2009). For the participants in this research awareness of the ways in which citizenship was bound up in issues of race and ethnicity, where skin colour was intrinsically bound up in an inherently ‘British’ identity became apparent in the following comments:

‘...people have problem with ‘pakis’ ... they look different...they stand out... we’ve got so many people coming in from Europe now...you only realise they’re foreigners when they start talking...otherwise they look British... that’s the advantage they have, if a white man saw him they’d be quite comfortable and accept him much better... they wear the same clothes as well... with me, I would still be an alien...’ (Individual interview, Shamila)

From the comment above it is clear that the participant feels that her racial and ethnic markers as a Pakistani position her ‘outside’ the historical and traditional ‘norm’ of a white British identity. ‘Looking different’ and ‘standing out’ ensures that this participant is not ever fully allowed to feel ‘British’. According to the participant recent arrivals to Britain, especially European migrants, find greater acceptance in British communities, given that there are less outward differences in terms of dress and ethnicity. Such racial markers work as ‘differing’ and ‘othering’ minorities; if citizenship and the notion of ‘Britishness’ is grounded in a particular identity, ie a

predominately white identity, then the notion of belonging and being an active citizen becomes problematic for ethnic minorities. 'Englishness' becomes a racialised concept and Britishness a political construct, with connotations of Empire and colonial history (Cesarani, 1996). For ethnic minorities however citizenship and national identity are not simplistic, citizenship and national identity processes undergo multiple revisions and redefinitions, where making sense of national identity relies not on ethnic markers, but on accommodating various aspects of multiple identities, ie British/Muslim/Pakistani (Hussain & Bagguley, 2005). This multi-layered aspect of citizenship is discussed at length in the work of Yuval-Davis (2007, p.562) who states '...people's citizenships are also affected by their locations within each polity, as they are constructed (often in unstable and contested ways) by other intersecting social divisions, such as gender, class, stage in life cycle...' Although claims regarding the socio-economic difficulties, religious and cultural self segregation suggest a negative impact on British national identification for Muslims, rather discrimination and perceptions of discrimination have a greater and lasting impact suggesting (Maxwell, 2006).

As a religious group Muslims have been further placed outside the 'norm' and as such constructed as the 'other', recently due to the terrorist threat posed by Islamic extremists. The spate of security policies and consequent reaction in media following incidents such as the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks have further brought into question the notion of loyalty and belonging to the host nation. Abbas (2001, p.253) contends that '...negative representation of Islam and British Muslims in newspapers is not a new phenomenon; rather it is a variant of existing discourses and narratives...' such narratives include the notion of Muslims as self-segregating, isolationist and

dangerous. The South Asian Muslim community in Britain was particularly targeted for anti-Islamic attacks on the basis of religion as well as race, following the 9/11 attacks South Asian communities were presenting as an increasing threat to the 'British way of life' (Allen, 2005, p.52). The representation of Muslims in media has led to what Archer (2009, p.75) calls 'hypervisibility', whereby Muslims have been deemed the archetypal outsider, whose loyalty and value towards 'Britishness' is always to be distrusted. As such British Muslims are forced into narrow discourses of self where national identity and belonging must be situated within simplistic and restrictive frameworks. Within popular representation Muslims are presented only in terms of their 'Muslimness' and as such '...do not appear as 'normal' members of British society and the 'British public...'. Categorisations regarding Muslim women as submissive and subjugated and Muslim men as violent fanatics are homogenised, overarching and drawn from 'moral panics' and belie the individual, personal and private spheres of identity formation. The consequences of this 'hypervisibility' are profound negative impacts on the British Muslim sense of 'self' and consequently their 'belonging' and national identity (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010).

With regards to the slew of contradictory policies following the civil disturbances and terrorist outrages intended to both 'control and monitor' the Muslim presence in Britain, as well as to ensure greater 'participation and integration' have done little to further the deep understanding needed of Muslim communities, especially the dynamics and intersections present in lives of Muslim women and mothers. Both the Cantle (2001) and Ritchie (2001) report focused heavily on socio-economic factors, lack of integration and participation suggesting these were particular to the Muslim community and a direct contributory factor to the civil disturbances in Oldham. The

Ritchie report highlighted aspects of cultural practises and ethnic identities as contributory factors to a breakdown in social cohesion, citing extended holidays in Pakistan and Bangladesh, the lack of English language in the home. Yet as this research has shown mothers in Oldham are anxious regarding the loss of second languages such as Urdu, Bengali or Punjabi amongst their children, as it indicates difficulties when interacting with older generations and maintaining transnational kinships. Furthermore, Cattle (2001, p.44) points to gender inequalities, ‘...the perceived lesser status of women...’ in Pakistani/Bangladeshi communities, which perhaps exist to a certain extent in South Asian communities, is nevertheless presented in racialised terms (Hussain & Bagguley, 2005) This denies the change, diversity and resistance to gender inequalities present in the lived realities of Muslim women, and shown in the narratives presented in this research.

Muslim women in post race riots, 9/11, 7/7 context have been constructed overwhelmingly as victims, as Ahmad (2013, p.14) notes ‘despite interventions by articulate and devout Muslim women across a range of contexts, attempting to make their voices heard, they are met with hostility, disbelief, disrespect and criticism’ Such views have resulted in further marginalisation of Muslim women simultaneously promoting both Muslim women’s ‘victimhood’ as well as the threat to ‘British values’ they pose in transmitting religion and identity to the next generation of British Muslims.

Although the lived experiences of Muslim women, certainly in this research and research carried out by others (Hussain & Bagguley, 2005; Ahmad, 2010; Werbner, 2010) show that the majority have an overwhelming sense of feeling ‘British’ and belonging in Britain nevertheless particular incidents that are racist or Islamophobic

in nature prove a severe strain on this notion of 'Britishness'. As the following comments show such incidents can involve children, and reveal uncertainty about the acceptance and representation of future generations of British Muslims:

Kiran: *'The racism...sometimes I worry about my kids, because that's never really going to go away is it?'*

Shabnam: *'I agree...even though...you know I'm British...I feel British, but I'm Muslim as well you know, I wear the hijab and my daughters do as well...and sometimes it's like we're not allowed to...erm...how can we fit in?'*

'...one time I was picking up my daughter from secondary school, I was sat in my car watching her come to the gates ...she's wearing a scarf...anyway all of a sudden these white girls come up to her and pull her scarf down! That really shocked and upset me...I told the school about it but you know you could tell they didn't really care...' (Individual interview, Maryam)

Incidents involving acts of physical altercations such as pulling off the hijab can have a marked impact on an individual's sense of identity, the narrative regarding their sense of belonging and their wellbeing. Islamophobic incidents can hinder and seriously undermine the nature of inclusion in British society. Public harassment such as that witnessed by this mother has a profound negative effect, placing Muslims further in the social margins. Islamophobia and incidents of public harassment render Muslims as 'outside' the nation, yet as has been shown by comments from the women participating in this research, though they may have been excluded from belonging to the 'British nation' nonetheless the majority of the women continued to identify themselves as British citizens.

Incidents such as the race riots and terrorist outrages added to the discourse surrounding the failure of multiculturalism. They also signalled the retreat from

multiculturalism to increased emphasis on ‘community cohesion’ and shared identities. For individuals the shift in policy and rhetoric has brought about new challenges in understanding what it means to belong to a nation that is multi-ethnic. As the following comment shows, multiculturalism seemed to be a way to legitimise and express hybrid identities; ‘belonging’ to a multicultural Britain could be expressed through clothes, culture and religion as well as being ‘British’.

‘I’ll tell when I thought I was a proper British citizen, when we had multiculturalism...that was fantastic...it made me feel good...I felt I was part of that. I thought I could be a Pakistani...from my parents ...I felt I could be a Muslim as well and I could be British at the same time. I could live by the values of Islam... ...I felt I belonged here. And what’s disturbed me over the last few years...they’ve taken that away. I really feel that has come from, right from the government to the people, because they don’t talk about multiculturalism anymore...they want to take it out because...you know what happened? That 9/11, I don’t think anybody has any idea how it affected every single one of us, because suddenly we were Muslims...we were Asians, we were not British...we were a danger, we might be making bombs in the kitchen...’ (Individual interview, Shamila)

The participant points to the events of 9/11 as signalling a shift away from multicultural discourse and general acceptance of minority identities, to an atmosphere of suspicion and intolerance. That this shift in policy has been led from central government is something that is keenly felt by this participant; it is the ‘Muslim’ and ‘Asian’ aspect of their identity that was pushed forward becoming ‘hypervisible’, with the terms associated with danger and violence.

The concept of ‘community cohesion’ and ‘shared identity’ as increasingly promoted by policy and government rhetoric, was met with suspicion and confusion by the participants in this research who felt that a ‘shared identity’ was problematic as racism, culture and religion would always be seen as methods for differing and

excluding minorities. As the following comments show a common identity would not be needed if greater tolerance and acceptance was practised by all:

'...I think like everybody can be a different religion, have a different culture and they can all still work together. I don't know about a common identity, I don't think that's necessary...if everybody was tolerant it would be great...like I say if everybody just accepted the ways...and celebrated it...' (Interview, Jasmine)

Rather for the majority of participants in this research 'human values', those that transcended religion, culture and nation were what ought to be promoted and certainly values they were keen to impart to their children; additionally the nature of being able to show 'Britishness' was seen as a measure against which levels of 'belonging' would be gauged. The women in this research felt that citizenship had become a performative measure whereby the extent of your display of 'Britishness' was measured in the ways in which you showed 'loyalty' to the nation, which was problematic in itself and carried racial undertones:

'...some government policies you have to show... 'Britishness', ...how the hell are you supposed to do that? Some people say... wave flags, show we are proud to be British. But...do the British do all of that, wave flags and stuff? Do you remember when they did the citizenship test and they did it on the British people and not many of them got them right...does that mean they're not British? Maybe they should call them foreigners' (Individual interview, Maryam)

The participant's response here suggests that it is only ethnic minorities that are required to 'show they are proud to be British'. The same performative nationality is not asked of their white British counterparts. The citizenship test is mentioned as a measure of proving 'Britishness', yet here it is aligned with a tool for exclusion and control of immigration.

The fears regarding identity, sense of place and belonging were prevalent even for those women who had undertaken higher education, if anything their fears, given

knowledge of social policies were more articulate and immediate. This is reflected in the comments by a participant, who had completed an undergraduate degree, whom when asked about the future indication of identity and belonging for her children was pessimistic:

'I'll always be seen as a 'paki' woman, no matter how British I try to be, and sometimes ...I wish my father had never come here, sincerely....After all you'll always be a 'paki', even if you have degrees and education...but that really hurts...it does...and when you have children you feel it more...what is my identity, what is theirs? The best thing is to be sure of yourself, pahle apna apna tund diya (first find yourself) and then have children...that does bother me, about my children's identity...seriously...I don't know what to tell them when it comes up...I wish I had that sense of belonging...(Interview, Shamila)

5.4: Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the changing notions of belonging and citizenship amongst British Muslim women. The majority of women participating in this research self-identified with Britain as 'home', thereby suggesting a marked difference between first and second generation ethnic minority Muslim women. The gendered nature of citizenship was examined, as well how the politics of belonging places ethnic minority groups 'outside' the nation. Local, national and global politics have also shown to negatively affect perceptions of belonging and citizenship, both for Muslim minority women and the non-Muslim majority of Britain. The responses of British Muslim women in this research showed how incidents of racism and Islamophobia impacted on their narratives of self and identity. The participants felt that transnational kinship and connections were no longer prevalent for the next generation and the loss of Urdu, Punjabi or Bengali as a second language was regrettable. Racism was still predicted to be a significant aspect of their children's lives and the extent to which they would be allowed to 'belong' to or feel British.

Chapter 6- Conclusion

6.1: Introduction

The overall aim of this research was to advance an understanding of plural identities and contemporary notions of Britishness amongst second/third generation British Muslim women of South Asian (SA) ethnic origin. The purpose of this research was to understand the connections to a 'homeland' for British Muslim SA women and how these may differ from the connection their parents or grandparents might have. It was also the aim of this research to analyse what, if any effect Higher education (HE) might have on understandings of culture, religion and gender roles for British SA Muslim women.

As there were two findings and analysis chapters it is necessary to summarise the findings analysed in each and collate findings. Implications and recommendations for the direction future research may take are presented, as well as a section reflecting on the research process and limitations encountered within this process.

6.2: Summary of Findings

The literature review chapter provided a conceptual framework within which to situate and contextualise the lived experiences of British South Asian Muslim women, explore the history of the SA community in Britain and intersections of race and gender on diasporic identities. Experiences of employment with regards to the impact of culture and religion, the notions of izzat and badnami (dishonour) as constraints were also explored. Though the notions of izzat were shown to have weakened for second generation SA Muslim women in this research, nonetheless gendered concerns

with regards to daughters' access to education and participation still remained. The differing impacts of culture and religion for second generation SA Muslim women were also noted, citing work by Ramji (2005) and Peek (2007) who examined the preference of an identity based and greatly influenced by religion rather than culture. The empirical findings in this research concurred with this observation, culture was deemed to be problematic, whereas religion offered a universalistic approach to understanding identity. Religion was also shown to be used by some of the women in this research as a form of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1987), in order to access further education, training and employment. With regards to education and employment, the research carried out within this work suggests that negative experiences in educational establishments can have a powerfully negative effect on women's choice of educational courses.

Women who had undertaken higher education needed to balance gendered cultural and familial expectations as mothers, partners and members of the wider Muslim community; each of these aspects of their identities were tested and prioritised sometimes to the detriment of the women's educational choices. As such, the overlapping spheres of education, motherhood, religion and culture in relation to mature Muslim women's experiences of HE certainly warrants further in depth research. Researching the motivation, barriers and difficulties faced by mature Muslim women in undertaking higher education, would certainly allow for greater understanding and initiatives to enable wider participation. With regards to encouraging participation in education the participants in this research felt that greater appreciation and understanding of Muslim women's roles as primary carers was needed amongst education and training providers. Classes held in community centres

and local schools, being sensitive to timing of classes in relation to the 'school run' was also noted as well as ease of access to localised University campuses would encourage greater participation.

Attitudes towards paid employment amongst ethnic minority groups particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi showed strong demarcated gender roles, where mothers were primary carers and responsible for raising children in the home (Dale, et al.2006). This was reiterated by Muslim women participating in this research, who felt that patriarchal and cultural restraints meant some SA families felt a woman engaged in paid employment was detrimental to the masculinity of husbands or male relatives. However, a significant proportion of the women participating felt this was no longer the case and paid employment was a necessity, especially with regards to offsetting economic hardships. Of those women actively seeking employment lack of training, opportunities and perceptions of racial and religious discrimination were regarded as barriers to employment. Of those women participating in this research that were currently employed, issues of promotion, discrimination and insensitivity towards religious practises was noted. The women felt underappreciated and devalued, with incidents of cultural and religious insensitivity having a profound effect on experiences of finding and maintaining employment.

Identity amongst second generation British Muslim women was a prime focus of this research, relating to narratives of identity, citizenship, 'Britishness', multiculturalism of 'belonging'. Such questions have shown to be increasingly relevant in a post 9/11 and post 7/7 context. For the British Muslim community of Oldham and its history of 'race riots', questions of identity and 'belonging' carry further impetus. As discussed

in the literature review 'citizenship' can be a gendered process, narratives of belonging and identity can be situated differently in relation to gender and race. The Cattle (2001) and Ritchie (2001) reports following the 'race riots' in Oldham demonstrated that policy initiatives were based on a male centred, public notion of belonging and being 'British'. The lived experiences of British Muslim women and mothers in Oldham were not explored in either reports; citizenship as experienced in the 'home' did not feature in the reports and yet it is precisely this sub section of the Muslim community that will most likely influence experiences of the next generation of British Muslims. The majority of women participating in this research self identified as being 'British', their concepts of citizenship involved multi-layered narratives, influenced by both perceptions of self and others. 'Belonging' was identified as a 'performative' process, whereby degrees of belonging could fluctuate in relation to global, national and local politics. Though the women self identified as British, incidents which were racist or Islamophobic in nature made the women feel like 'outsiders' unable to 'belong' to the nation. For British Muslim women the 'hypervisibility' of Muslims within media and politics has placed them within a simultaneous discourse of both 'threat' to British culture and 'victim' of homogenous, crippling patriarchy. British Muslim women responded positively to the notion of multiculturalism, considering the concept within which differences within minority communities could be celebrated rather than subsumed under a single identity.

It was the intention of this research to understand how HE may affect notions of identity, culture and religion amongst those British Muslim women who had undertaken HE courses. From the empirical evidence gathered from this research the advantages of HE are numerous. Higher levels of confidence, both in the sense of

‘self’ as well as in a wider context, interacting in an environment with a range of people from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, understanding the history and culture of Britain, as well as being better aware of the rights and responsibilities were seen to be positive outcomes of HE. In terms of relating to children HE was seen as advantageous as it allowed for a greater degree of communication, mutual respect and interaction. The women felt their children respected and valued their opinions; saw them as inspirational role models and their experiences in HE as a positive life course to aspire to. As the women partaking in this research reiterated the influence of mothers with regards to reinforcing a positive sense of identity and ‘belonging’ could not be overestimated. Though these influences were rooted in a gendered sphere, with fathers seen as providers and mothers as ‘nurturers’ nonetheless it was noted that if HE reinforced a positive sense of identity for mothers then naturally that could be passed onto children.

With regards to management of plural identities women who had experienced HE presented a positive change in their sense of self and their place in contemporary Britain. The women were certainly more aware of the restrictions that may be imposed by cultural expectations and sometimes used religion as a means to access education and employment. However, issues of identity still remained even amongst those who had HE, with the women citing multiple expectations in their roles as ‘Muslim’, Pakistani/Bangladeshi and ‘British’ as difficult to manage, presenting conflicting questions within relation to ‘belonging’, ethnicity, nationality, loyalty and citizenship. For this reason the need to engage with British Muslim women, especially mothers, in public discourses on ‘citizenship’ and ‘belonging’ is essential in order to

correlate between the private and public understandings on what it means to be 'British'.

6.3: Limitations

It should be noted that the conclusions drawn in this research are dependant on an extensive literature review and a singular case study, that of women living, working and studying in Oldham. For these reasons the conclusions can only relate to these sources, though the recommendations may be far reaching it is important to avoid over generalising, the views expressed by the British Muslim women in Oldham cannot be assumed to be representative of British Muslim women in general. This research would benefit from engaging in multiple case studies across varying geographical locations in order to assess if there is any consensus amongst the opinions expressed in this research. Further research would benefit in engaging with both British Muslim mothers and their children simultaneously, in order to understand the process in which identity and belonging is passed between generations and if anxieties relating to race and religion are, however inadvertently, passed onto children. Though gaining these perspectives may further enrich understandings of 'belonging' and 'nation' amongst Britain's South Asian community the focus of this research would have become unmanageable in terms of recruiting participants to engage in focus groups and interviews.

6.4: Self Reflection

This research work began with a degree of trepidation and anticipation. Social sciences was an area of study I was unfamiliar with, the process of learning the

discourses of social sciences was daunting as my understandings of social research methods, epistemologies and transcript analysis was perfunctory at best. The topics at the heart of this research are vitally important to me on a personal level, as a second generation British Muslim women of Pakistani ethnic origin who entered Higher education as a mature student, I was able to relate to many of the issues discussed including access to education, cultural and religious influences, as well as the impact of racism and Islamophobia on a sense of ‘belonging’. It was being able to relate to and empathise with the opinions expressed by women partaking in this research that sustained my passion for this project over the course of the year.

This project was by no means an easy process, difficulties in finding participants willing to engage with the research, running focus groups and conducting interviews were all very much learning curves. Though I had conducted extensive reading into the mechanics involved in conducting empirical research, the reality of actually conducting and then transcribing the data collected provided many difficulties including ensuring participants didn’t stray to far from the topic, and the sheer time scale needed in transcribing data. Though the interviews had involved careful planning nonetheless unexpected problems did occur, at one point during an interview the batteries of the digital recorder failed, meaning part of the responses were not recorded. Although spare batteries were taken along to the interview and subsequently used, I was forced to rely on notes I had taken to make up for the gap in recording.

It is worth noting that completing a dissertation at Master’s level is an in depth process requiring deep levels of commitment and a profound interest in the topic. The experience, although at times would prove inevitably exhausting, was a uniquely

enriching one; this view was certainly enforced when the women participating in this research told me they were glad someone was finally asking their opinions on the issues I wanted to discuss with them. This reinforced my sentiments that this research was important in giving voice to those women of Oldham whose opinions had not featured in public discourse on ‘citizenship’ and British Muslims. Writing up this research was by no means an easy process, with chapters written out of linear fashion and topics touching on inherently personal notions of ‘self’, writing required hard work, discipline and profound emotional investment. At times the writing process stalled, and analysis proved elusive; in these moments it was difficult to gather the motivation required to complete this project, this is however inevitably an integral part of writing. Personally, the importance of researching and writing about the way ethnic minority Muslim women experience the notion of racial equality and ‘Britishness’ was driven by the following observation by Mirza (2003, p.121) who notes that the policies of racial equality seem to suggest that ‘...gender is still seen as a white woman’s issue, while it is taken for granted that ‘race’ is still a black male issue...’ Ethnic minority women in Britain seem to have become invisible in policy and research studies on gender and ethnicity; it was the purpose of giving these women a voice from the invisible margins that was the impetus for this project.

Appendices

List of Participants

Shamila, female, Pakistani, 45, mother of 5, University graduate, looking for employment, 7th May 2013

Nazmeen, female, Pakistani, 36, University graduate, employed, 15/22nd March 2013

Amna, female, Pakistani, 22, unemployed, 15th March 2013

Saima, female, Pakistani, 25, unemployed, 15/22nd March 2013

Kiran, female, Bengali, 30, unemployed, 15/22nd March 2013

Shabnam, female, Pakistani, University graduate, 35, employed, 15/22nd March 2013

Naila, female, Bengali, 27, unemployed, 2nd June 2013

Jasmine, female, Pakistani, 26, University graduate, employed, 15th May 2013

Begum, female, Bengali, 31, employed, 15th March 2013

Suria, female, Bengali, 28, unemployed, 15/22nd March 2013

Maryam, female, Pakistani, University graduate, unemployed, 30th April 2013

Jameela, female, Bengali, unemployed, 22nd March 2013

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