

**Renegotiating the Past, Present and Possible:  
Identities in Transition of Female Pakistani  
Students in an English University**

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## Abstract

Internationalisation of education has brought multiple prospects to international students and UK Universities. However, in transitioning to UK higher education, students face numerous challenges. The reasons behind such challenges are varied for international students from across the world. In this regards, Pakistani female postgraduate students may face additional challenges due to transition from a traditional family system to independent life in the UK. Students' transitional experiences and their changing identities is a growing interest in the literature, therefore the current study addressed the question 'how do Pakistani female students narrate their identities, before, during and after transitioning to the UK University'? To address the research question, the study adopted a qualitative multiple case study research design. The cases are female Pakistani students who studied in the UK University in September 2014- August 2015. Data was collected longitudinally at four different data point of participants stay in the UK to help answer the question, "who am I at this moment in time and in a given context?" To facilitate participants' reflection on identity construction in transition, visual prompts (i.e. photos, timeline and relational maps) were used in the second, third and fourth interviews respectively.

Identity in the study is seen as multiple, ongoing and ever changing with time. Holland *et al.*'s (1998) concept of cultural models and positional identities informed the analysis and interpretation of the data.

The key findings include understanding the complex ongoing transformation of the female Pakistani students transitioning to UK higher education. The study found transition as projecting forward and identity as the story of the past (e.g. life in Pakistan), which individuals narrate continuously in the present (e.g. during this study at four data points), and in each present they change and fix their pasts in a particular way. The study has implications for Universities, policy makers and tutors to transcend an institutional focus on understanding international students' transition (in terms of transition both to UK and back) into a broader enculturated view. Further, tutors and supervisors need to consider international students' cultural norms for their smooth transition and better student–teacher understandings.

## **Declaration of Original Contribution**

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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## Abbreviations

CMs	Cultural Models
CAC	Chadar Aur Chardewari' (CAC) 'Veil and the four walls'
FB	FaceBook
FW	Figured World
LKK	Log Kya Kahengay (LKK) 'What will people say'?
P.E	Photo Elicitation
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education England, Wales and Northern Ireland, (QAA, 2008)
R.M	Relational Map
T.L	Timeline
SEED	School of Environment, Education and Development
IVF	In-Vitro Fertilisation
CFI	Coding Framework Insert

*Dedicated to my father Dr Mushtaq Ahmad Mian*

**A man who developed my love for education**

# **Introduction**

## **Motive**

My personal experience motivated me to explore the issue of international students' transition, which is central to this thesis. I joined the University of Manchester as a Pakistani female postgraduate student and struggled to meet the expectations of the sociocultural life of the university. The university expectation was that students would study in mixed gender groups and would have their own voice, which was hard to avoid, given the active learning methods/pedagogy employed. I therefore made some personal adjustments to facilitate my transition; however, I realised that some of my new practices were contrary to my Pakistani cultural norms of behaviour and expectation, e.g. sitting next to male students, planning in advance, timekeeping and meeting the deadlines in assignment writing, etc. My interest on the topic developed when I read that the UK University was the highest recruiter of international students. I felt most of these students might face the same problem, which inspired me to explore female Pakistani students' identity construction in their transition to UK university settings.

## **Rationale**

The research project was also stimulated by the internationalisation of education. That is on one hand the establishment of Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Pakistan and the allocation of HEC overseas scholarship schemes in 2013 provided the funds necessary for male and female students to join UK universities and study abroad (HEC, 2013). On the other hand, UK universities welcome international students for their cultural diversity, their enrichment of the academic environment and their positive impact on the country's economy. According to a BBC report, Coughlan (2018) stated that overseas students add '£20 billion' to the UK economy. However, the internationalisation of UK higher education, even though it promises future prospects for developing and developed countries, brings with it the challenges of transition for international students. Literature (Bakar, 2013; Tian, 2008) identified a gap in the understanding of context-specific female international students' identity construction in transition from the home to the host country at an individual level. Thus, there is a need to understand the process of international students' transitional identity construction on the epistemological level. In this regard, the transition to working in agentive ways within the UK university culture may be

challenging for Pakistani females, as they are typically used to taking on more passive roles due to the prevailing customs and traditions (See Chapter one)

### **Why Identity?**

In conducting my pilot study (The Impact of Social Networking on Changing Educational Identity: Case Studies of Pakistani Female Postgraduate Students in the UK University) I found that during transition to the UK, the participant's (Laila's) previous identity that is 'the king of language' (due to her strong communication skills in Pakistan) was challenged when she encountered those [in the UK] who told her 'you talk funny, I cannot understand a word you are saying'. This led her to question her position in relation to her presence, utility and productivity in the UK. She ultimately came to the realisation that her adaptation is not to the UK or Pakistani system; rather her adaptation is within herself, in her identity. She stated,

'I realised that your PhD is about yourself; it is not about the system. Now I accepted the fact that it is not me versus the system, it is me versus me. Me versus my barriers, the barriers I have in my own personality or in my own life, which are stopping me from my own self'.

Laila's quote, 'It's not me versus the system, it is me versus me', developed my interest to understand international students' identity construction in transition, rather than their use of social networking. My pilot study encouraged me to broaden my initial (pilot) focus and see social networking as just one part of a larger process of identity formation.

Moisander and Valtonen (2006) stated that the manner in which people see, represent and conceive of other people, things, the environment and situations is not a natural but a culturally constructed process. A huge body of literature (Williams *et al.*, 2015; Horobin & Thom, 2015) has identified that international students face cultural challenges in transition, which according to Ligorio *et al.* (2013) 'affects the way they [international students] perceive and present themselves' (p. 351). Binsahl *et al.*, (2015) and Seda (2009) reported that female students perceive themselves differently in cultural transition than males. In this regard, I view academic transition as weaving around other life transitions that are a change in relation to family, culture and location of the international student, as we understand one transition by understanding the other and we may not look at any of these transitions in isolation. Identity construction in transition is important to understand as according to Oikonomidou and Williams (2013) co-national female students tried hard to

find different ways to integrate together in the host country. Further, Cotterall (2011) reported that international students during transition develop changes in perception and ‘construct new identities’, (p. 57) which they sustain throughout their lives (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). Thus, I consider it important to understand the subjective, personal and gender specific identity construction of a female Pakistani student in transition to UK higher education.

My research is about the construction of identities during the time of change (transition), therefore my research questions are like a timeline, divided into the periods of the student beginning the UK university to study, and after three, six and nine months of studying in the UK. My study follows the journey of my participants’ transition to UK University during the period of one year.

- How do Pakistani female students narrate their identities, before, during and after transitioning to the UK University’?

In the research design I took some methodological decisions. I viewed transition as a longitudinal process and not a moment in the time, when students arrive at the UK University. Further I took a socio-cultural approach, which constitutes that reality is socially constructed and I therefore looked at cultural models as a key construct to understand change longitudinally (in the research questions, data collection and data analysis) that is to see how participants position themselves in relation to Pakistani cultural models (cultural beliefs that inform action) at various stages during socio cultural transition. Secondly, I used visual methods supplied or created by the participants, coupled with narrative interviews in data generation in order to gain access to participants’ subjective inner feelings. Thirdly, I used Bruner’s (1996) concept of ‘troubles’ in narrative analysis, which is similar to ‘conflict’ in my theoretical framework

My study is significant because it considers that transition to university is relational and that changes in the relationship between the individual in context (transition) is connected to wider changes beyond the institution. Beach (2007) states, ‘consequential transitions are not changes in the individual or social activity, per se, but rather changes in their relationship’ (p. 42). How participants’ identity (being students at the UK University) changes their relationship with other contexts e.g. family, friends, etc. Literature (Robson & Turner, 2007; Barron *et al.*, 2010; Wu & Hammond, 2011) states that students from

highly collectivistic cultures (Cultures that value family, society or group needs over individual, e.g. Asian) struggle more during transition . However, it fails to broach the collectivistic cultural aspect and only suggests logistical elements as support for the students. Thus, understanding how these multiple transitions intertwine requires a rich, deep and quite personal view of participants' lives within their cultural context.

Studies (Lombard, 2013) on identity construction have accepted that not all cultural expressions are easy to recall and put forward in verbal terms to a stranger. To understand participants' transitional processes, I identified myself as an insider researcher, and set out to build and achieve a strong relationship with them. Thus, to help understand the participants' point of view, I am using participants centred/ created visual methods; including photo elicitation, timelines and relational maps, in the data generation. These visual methods allowed me to capture my participants' reflections on their visuals by putting them into a situation where they narrated their inner subjective experiences in a particular way. Thus, in my research, the interview process is a co-construction whereby putting them into the interview situation, I perceive that I am introducing change in the participant (and having them reflect on that change) by bringing them to awareness through visual methods. The visual methods were a significant aspect of my methodology as they allowed me to gather deeper perspectives in an area that can be difficult for people to talk about it, if they have not had a chance to reflect on their experiences previously.

My research is built around a social practice conceptual framework that views cultural models are mediating identity in the contexts of practice, particularly using Gee's (1996) 'Discourse identities with an uppercase D... [Which, according to him] "is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and artefacts, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social network"' (p. 131).

Participants narrative interviews would be seen as their performance as a member of a particular network. I therefore would analyse the interview data and the timeline and relational map artefacts as participants' performance (practice) of their identity in the research. I interpret participants' identities as to how they position themselves in relation to the cultural models in their narratives. Gee's (1996) Discourse identities in my coding framework identify the identity statements, by pointing to where participants used the

words ‘thinking’, ‘feeling’ and ‘believing’ in the gathered interview data. I have not only looked at themes in the analysis of data, but I have looked at participants’ discourses (i.e., how they think, feel and believe) overtime. As such the data has been subjected to a rigorous and systematic process of fine grain analysis, using an identity framework that is discussed further in the Methodology Chapter.

Another seminal work that influenced my approach to my research was Holland *et al.* (1998) concepts of cultural models and positional identities (See 3.2.2). Further, I used ‘images supplied by participants’ as artefacts in data generation, as according to Holland *et al.*, selves ‘are socially constructed through the mediation of powerful discourses and their artefacts’ (1998, p. 26). I used Holland *et al.*’s (1998) book, *Identity and Agency in Cultural World* to understand transition as a process of change in identity.

My study identified two very important cultural models that are deeply embedded in Pakistani Society. These are ‘Log Kya Kahengay ’ translated as ‘what will people say?’ and ‘Chadar Aur Chardewari’ translated as ‘Veil and the four walls’. The first concept ‘Log Kya Kahengay’ relates to both the conservative nature and collectivist culture of Pakistani society and is a phrase with which every Pakistani is familiar. This also links to the second maxim ‘Chadar Aur Chardewari’ – which could be said to define the ideal position for a Pakistani woman, as being within the realms of domesticity. These underlying maxims or principles are socially shared and understood throughout Pakistani society, perpetuating socio-cultural discourses as well as maintaining restrictive structures of power. These cultural models may extend in meaningful ways in many practices in contexts well beyond Pakistan. For instance, in 1983, Indian Bollywood produced a film called ‘Log Kya Kahengay’ (Ashish & Paul, 1999). Having identified that these cultural models were important to my participants to the extent that their identification or negotiating of them influenced their decision-making, I have been able in my thesis to examine how these cultural models mediated participants’ identity in practice during their transition to become international students.

### **Summary of the Thesis**

The rest of this chapter will provide a brief summary outlining the thesis.

Chapter One – Research Context: discusses political instability in the history of Pakistan, and its impact on women empowerment and the education policies of the country. The

chapter reviews the emerging trends around the internationalisation of higher education in Pakistan, the launch of postgraduate scholarship schemes under HEC Pakistan and the desires of the individuals to avail those scholarships for future prospects. Finally, the chapter examines the issues of transitioning abroad with particular emphasis on the status of women in Pakistani culture

Chapter Two – Literature Review: begins in a traditional way. I initially scoped the literature on the topic. The results identified the gap that there was no literature specific to Pakistani students' transitioning abroad at a postgraduate level, thus I conducted the review on international and Asian students' transition to higher education when studying abroad. At this point, I structured the literature review by using the following four questions

- How does the present study view 'transition' and 'identity'?
- How the experiences of international students' transition are reflected in literature?
- How the support strategies for international students' transition have been researched?
- How identities of international students in transition have been researched?

The first question defined the terms 'transition' and 'identity' in accordance to the current study. The Chapter restricted transition to Hussey and Smith's (2010, p. 156) definition that is, transition is a, 'significant change in student's life, self-concept and learning: a shift from one state of understanding, development and maturity to another'. However, in my study, the shift is from national to international students and from graduate to postgraduate level of study. After conducting the literature review in the conclusion, I became aware of a gap in the literature concerning students' thinking, feeling and believing in the four dimensions (labelled as family, institution, recognition and social dimensions) of their life to understand their academic and non-academic self in transition. These four dimensions came from the careful consideration and coding of the literature (See page 75-80). I brought together various codes from the reviewed literature to present these four dimensions to the reader, with codes from the literature, definitions and also gaps. The review found that most of the literature is written on institutional and socio-cultural dimensions. Further literature on family dimension discusses the homesickness (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015) of international students, but does not discuss how individual students think, feel and believe about parents during their transition. Studies (Williams *et al.*, 2015;



Horobin & Thom, 2015) on institutional dimension is overly focused on moulding students into getting good grades rather than how students think, feel and believe during the process of transition. In recognition transition, some studies (Barron *et al.*, 2010) have recognised Asian students as ‘respectful’ and ‘passive’ but have generally ignored the aspect of how students think, feel and believe after acquiring the label ‘international student at a UK university’. In social dimension, the literature (Bakar, 2013; Tian, 2008) identified a gap in the understanding of context-specific female international students’ identity construction in transition from the home to the host country at an individual level. Thus, my study will not only help fill the gap in female Pakistani (not British Pakistani) students’ transition to UK universities, but will also conceptualise postgraduate students’ identity, agency and culture in transitioning abroad. The literature review added two sub-questions to this study

- How do female Pakistani postgraduate students narrate their family, institution, recognition and social dimension of life at the start of joining the UK University?
- How they define their family, institution, recognition and social dimension of life after three, six and nine months of transitioning to the UK University?

Chapter Three – Theoretical framework: initially discusses Gee’s (1996) Discourse identities (See 3.1.1) - the terms ‘thinking, feeling and believing’, which I look for across the data to gain original insight into the research problem. Secondly, I presented Holland *et al.*’s (1998) framework as an approach for identity construction i.e., their concept of cultural models (see 3.1.3) to monitor change in participants thinking, feeling and believing during transition. Finally, I gave an overview of Holland *et al.*’s book *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, which I used implicitly in my thesis to show that the philosophy of transitional identity construction lies in the projection of past, present and possible. That is, in my study, I found a pattern, where participants’ self-negotiation of the transitional narratives brought certain contradictions at each data point between past (who was I?) and present (‘who am I?’), which would enable them to project a new possible (imagined future).

Chapter Four – Methodology: discusses the methods to research the transitional identity construction of six female Pakistani students, who travelled to join a UK university in September 2014 at the postgraduate level. To monitor their identity construction, I collected data at four distinct points during participants’ stay in the UK, using visual

methods. In using visual methods, I considered the methodological question: ‘How can visual methods be used to reveal identity construction during transition to UK higher education? I used the thematic analysis method of Coffey and Atkinson (1996) to look for cultural models in my study. Moreover, I used Bruner's (1996) narrative analysis to look for ‘troubles’ and their resolution in transitional narratives. In my analysis, I used symbols and emoticons to develop a coding framework of past, present and possible, which represented participants thinking, feeling and believing, about who they were at a given moment in time and in a given context (See Coding Framework). In conducting the research, I recognise that my own cultural experience and life history, may be shaping the data not only in terms of the type of questions I asked in the interview but also in terms of the research relationships we developed in the study, because the participants recognised that I was part of the very same culture.

Chapter Five – Negotiating Narratives of Conflict around Past, Present and Possible: Present two participants’ (Sofia and Lena)’ conflicts and contradiction around their narratives of transition at various data points in the past, present and possible framework to unfold their perception while transitioning from Pakistan to UK higher education. I have chosen to present in depth Sofia and Lena’s narrative because Sofia was the only married participant and Lena was the youngest. In this chapter, I used Figured World (See 3.2.1) in order to show the extent to which transition has impacted participants’ identities.

Chapter Six – Transition across Participants: Bring together participants’ narratives around cultural models in a Figure (using mind view visual reference) to cross-reference participants’ quotes and pinpoint their transition. Chapter six encompasses data from all the six participants, and examines the emergence of themes across the cultural models to provide cross-case analysis to the reader.

Chapter Seven – Discussion of the Value of Using Visual Methods in this Thesis: addresses the methodological question ‘How can visual methods be used to reveal identity construction during transition to UK higher education?’

Chapter Eight: reflects on the thesis and further addresses the research questions. A new definition of international students’ identity construction in transition is discussed, as arising from the research reported here in this thesis.

Chapter Nine: concludes the thesis.

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## **Chapter One: Research Context**

This chapter provides a context for the current study in five parts. The first part provides a brief history of women's empowerment in Pakistan since 1947. The second part discusses the education system, its policies and the development of female higher education in Pakistan. The third part examines global trends of internationalisation in higher education and the attitudes of Pakistani society and the Pakistani government toward female higher education and studying abroad. The fourth part is about the female socio-cultural identity in Pakistan, and the fifth part discusses Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education England, Wales and Northern Ireland, (QAA, 2008) expectations of a postgraduate students studying at a UK higher education institution. Finally, the chapter concludes by discussing Pakistani female students' identity and the process of transitioning to a postgraduate student in a UK university.

### **Part 1.1: Women's Empowerment in Pakistan since 1947**

#### **1.1.1 Introduction to Pakistan**

Pakistan was founded in 1947 after the end of British colonial rule. Geographically, the country shares its borders with India, Afghanistan, Iran and China. According to the last official census from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (1998), the population of Pakistan is 186 million, with 96.28% Muslims. Internally, Pakistan has five provinces, including Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh, Gilgit-Baltistan and four federal territories (Mujtaba & Reiss, 2015). Education is provided in each province in three main streams: in public and private schools and in religious institutions. Predominantly the medium of instruction in public schools is Urdu, however it is 'English in elite private institutions' (Malik & Courtney 2011, p. 31).

#### **1.1.2 Female Education and Political History**

In 1947, the founder of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, highlighted the importance of education for both genders in building the new nation (Khan & Mehmood, 1997). However, unfortunately, at the time, Pakistan had little prospect for improvement in the area of female higher education (Chaudhary, 1975; Shaheed, 2010). This was for two reasons. First, Indian educational institutions were hardly prepared to cater to the educational needs of both men and women and second, the religious parties were

continuously speaking against female higher education in Pakistan (Alavi, 1988; Ahmad *et al.*, 2009, p. 614). The situation worsened with Jinnah's death, when political and religious parties tried to redefine Pakistan's purpose as 'the creation of a state for Muslims' into the creation of an 'Islamic state', due to which the country went through political instability and frequent military takeover.

Military leaders used religion to gain power in Pakistan. For example, in 1965, General Ayub Khan promulgated an anti-woman-head-of-state fatwa (religious opinion) against Fatima Jinnah (Shaheed, 2010). Similarly, in 1977, General Zia-ul-Haq formed the Federal Council of Islamic Ideology and implicated its verdicts with the call 'Islamisation' to segregate women at the political, legal and social levels. Zia's Islamisation policies negated article 25 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, which stated that 'there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone' (Kothari 2005; Shaheed 2010). Zia replaced the notion of a 'Pakistani woman' with that of an 'Islamic woman', explaining that her place was in the home, that her role was reproduction and motherhood, and that her status and rights were subservient to those of men (Shaheed, 2010). Zia's political slogan for a woman was 'chadar and char-deewari', translated in English as 'the veil and the four walls of one's house'. Zia propagated woman 'as an origin of corruption' who, for the satisfaction of her desires, invokes man toward social evils (Kothari, 2005). His Islamisation campaign encouraged men to intensify their control over women's lives (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987).

Even though military dictatorship severely affected female higher education in Pakistan, its aftermath brought new trends in female liberation and education. In the 1980s, various women's movements emerged in Pakistan, including 'Women's Action Forum', 'The Democratic Women's Association', 'The Sindhiani Tehrik', 'The Women's Front', and 'All Pakistan Women Association' (Kothari, 2005; Alavi, 1988). Women protested through every channel. Kothari (2005), for example, quoted the dialogue of Sahira Kazmi (TV producer and actor) saying, 'I will not cover my head with a dupatta [long scarf]! My honour lies in my convictions, not on my head!' Consequently, after 11 years of Zia's rule, in 1988, women emerged on the state level and Pakistan elected its first woman Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto. Bhutto's regime declared gender discrimination as contrary to the injunctions of Islam and in this regard passed various Constitutional Articles (Shaheed, 2010).

In 1989, Nawaz Sharif took over Bhutto's regime and became the prime minister. The new government did not give any preference to women's empowerment and education, which weakened the situation of women once again. In 2001, General Musharraf came into power with a liberal attitude toward women and he took into account several long-standing demands. He passed the 'Women Protection Act 2006' and allowed the presence of women in legislative bodies (Shaheed, 2010). Thus, from 1947 to 2001, conservative social values, poverty and the political situation did not encourage women to participate in shaping policy or making key decisions; still women struggled hard to gain empowerment (voice) in Pakistan (Kothari, 2005; Shaheed, 2010).

Musharraf's government gave rise to new trends in education. During his rule, women with exceptional talent broke various barriers and excelled in education, but being few, they could not bring about significant changes in the country (Malik & Courtney, 2011, p. 31). The government of Pakistan started working on female higher education at both the federal and provincial levels with the changing global trends. Consequently, the ratio of educated females has improved in almost every profession in Pakistan (Murtaza, 2013, p. 268).

The above discussion showed that since independence in 1947 till 1988, female higher education in Pakistan had to surpass considerable barriers. In 2001, institutional barriers diminished to some extent as Pakistani females were seen in higher education institution, particularly in General Musharraf's regime. However, but religious and cultural barriers still impeded their freedom.

## **Part 1.2: Education System in Pakistan**

### **1.2.1 The Structure of Education**

Due to the colonial impact, the structure of the education system in Pakistan is very similar to that in the United Kingdom. Mainstream education starts with primary school, leading to high and higher secondary schools. Tertiary education starts from Grade 12 and continues in university (Mujtaba & Reiss, 2015, p. 51). Table 1 shows the year-wise education system at different levels of study in the country.

Institutions	Level	Age in year	Degree
Elementary Education	Primary schools	Grade 1–5	Certificate
	Middle school	Grade 6–8	
Secondary Education	Secondary (High) school	Grade 8–10	SSC (Certificate)
	Higher secondary school	Grade 6–12	HSC (Certificate) FA
Degree Colleges	Bachelor's Degree	Grade 13–14	BA Degree
	Bachelor's honour Degree	Grade 13–16	BA Honour,
	Postgraduate Bachelor	Grade 13–17	MBBS, BDS etc.
University Education	Masters	1–3 years	MA, MSc, MSc honours Degree
	Masters of Philosophy	2–3 years	MPhil Degree
	Doctor of Philosophy	3 + years	Ph.D. Degree

**Table 1: Stages of Education in Pakistan**

The situation of education in Pakistan, according to the official Census (1998)<sup>1</sup>, is very discouraging. Table 2 shows that 30% of the total population stop their education at the primary level and less than 2% of them study at an MA/ MSc level. However, as seen in Table 2, there are variations in educated population across provinces.

Administrative Unit	Below Primary	Primary	Middle	Matric	BA	MA
<b>Pakistan</b>	18.30	30.14	20.98	17.29	4.38	1.58
<b>KPK</b>	19.78	29.64	19.94	18.61	3.43	1.56
<b>Punjab</b>	19.16	31.73	21.81	16.78	3.23	1.07
<b>Sindh</b>	15.56	27.13	19.20	17.84	7.43	2.65
<b>Baluchistan</b>	19.23	25.91	20.05	18.58	4.43	2.37
<b>Islamabad</b>	14.05	22.68	18.91	17.90	10.26	5.24

**Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 1998 Census**

**Table 2: Population by Educational Level in Pakistan**

The above statistics suggest that educational facilities in Pakistan have remained few, which shows deficits in educational planning. According to Qazi *et al.* (2014, p. 1652), failure in education programmes is due to inadequate funding from the government. Supportably Malik and Courtney (2010, p. 33) stated UNDP statistics, which shows that Pakistan is one of the 12 countries in the world that spend 2.3% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education, which is considerably below UNESCO's recommendation of

<sup>1</sup>. The last official census after 1998, was in 2015, however the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics has not yet published the details of the census in terms of education

4%. In addition to inadequate funding in education, the situation is worse for female education than male education. According to data from the Pakistan Integrated Household Survey (PIHS), ‘the literacy rate among females is half than that of males’ (Nasir & Nazli, 2000, p. 10). There is therefore a need to explore Pakistani education policy in general and female higher education policy in particular.

### 1.2.2 Higher Education Policies

During the past 64 years, higher education policy in Pakistan has gone through critical phases due to the poor administration of its ruling bureaucrats and governing authorities. Table 3 illustrates the dearth in implication of the national conferences and policies to establish the education system of Pakistan.

S.No	Policy	Implemented	Year
1	All Pakistan Education Conference	Not	1947
3	Six year Education Development Plan	Not	1951
4	First five year Education Plan	Partially	1954
5	Report on National Education	Not	1959
7	New Education Policy	Not	1970
8	Educational Policy	Yes	1972-1980
9	National Education Policy	Partially	1979
11	National Education Policy	Not	1992
12	National Education Policy	Yes	1998-2010

Table 3: National Education Policy of Pakistan 1947–present

The first National Educational Conference of Pakistan was held in November 1947, under the supervision of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. In this conference, Jinnah suggested a ‘women’s education committee’ with the view that every Pakistani man and woman has to be educated. However, the policy could not be implemented due to the large number of immigrants from India, administrative issues and the focus of government on industrialisation (Bengali, 1999; Asif *et al.*, 2013, p.106). Thus, the education system of the country continued to run on the system set up by the British colonial state.

The education policies of Pakistan were poorly implemented due to various reasons. In 1951, the ‘six-year Educational Development Plan’ was not implemented due to the limited financial resources of the country. Consequently, in 1954, a ‘Planning Board’ was set up to present the ‘First Five-Year Plan’, which was partially implemented and brought



improvement in Pakistan's education system (Bengali, 1999; Asif *et al.*, 2013, p. 106). In 1959, the 'National Commission' was established. The commission was keen on research at the university level and established the University Grants Commission (UGC). The commission presented its Report on National Education (1959), which unfortunately, once again was not implemented due to the lack of 'financial resources' accompanied by 'insurgencies among religious and secularist groups' in the country (Asif *et al.*, 2013, p. 106). In 1970, 'The New Education Policy', once again could not be implemented due to the conflict between East and West Pakistan. In 1979, the National Education Policy was partially implemented by the Zia government with the aim of harmonising the concepts of Islam and the ideology of Pakistan in education. In this policy, Urdu was considered as a medium of instruction and the education system was segregated. The curriculum was revised through merging madrassahs and traditional education. In the 1992 National Education Policy, emphasis was placed on improving female higher education, but the policy was not implemented due to political instability in the country. From 1947 until 1998, the lack of financial resources, unrealistic goals, poor planning, political instability, the national vision and religious propaganda were the reasons for the improper implementation of educational policies in Pakistan (Ahmed, 2009; Asif *et al.*, 2013, p. 107). However, in 1998, the 'National Education Policy' brought reforms in higher education, with equal opportunities for both men and women. The policy was fully implemented, which resulted in the beginning of new trends of prosperity in higher education, particularly for females (Asif *et al.*, 2013, p. 106).

The above discussion, even though it shows a history of poor planning and implementation of the national educational policies in Pakistan, still demonstrates a gradual increase of awareness among females. This transformation leads to the current advancement in the female higher education sector in Pakistan.

### **1.2.3 Current trends in Female Higher Education**

In 2002, the government of Pakistan replaced the UGC to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) with offices at both federal and provincial levels (Qazi *et al.*, 2014, p. 1652). Since then, the HEC has been responsible for the development of policy in education, infrastructure, technological reforms and scholarships for capacity building of the faculty, research culture and degree recognition (Qazi *et al.*, 2014, p. 1652; Asif *et al.*,

2013, p. 101). According to Qazi *et al.* (2014, p.1652), ‘in the last ten years, HEC has performed a leading role towards building a knowledge-based economy in Pakistan by producing more than 3,000 PhD scholars’.

The HEC reforms in female higher education are obvious from the fact that in 1947, Pakistan had only three universities for females, including the University of Punjab (1882), the Kinnaird College for Women (1913) and Lahore College for Women (1922) (Interface, 2012), whereas, as shown in Table 4, in 2014 there were 163 public and private universities in Pakistan (HEC, 2014).

Region	Public	Private	Total
Punjab	20	22	44
Sindh	17	30	47
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	19	10	29
Baluchistan	6	2	8
Federal	24	6	30
Azad-Jammu-Kashmir	4	2	6
Gilgit-Baltistan	1	0	1
Total	91	72	163

Source: Higher Education Commission, 2014

**Table 4: Number of Public and Private Sector Universities/DAI on 31.12. 2014**

The HEC established five all female universities to address the demands of those families which were not comfortable to allow their girls to study in co-educational settings. These universities were opened in different parts of Pakistan. They included Jinnah Women’s University in Karachi; Fatima Jinnah Women’s University in Rawalpindi; Sardar Bahadur Khan Women’s University in Quetta; Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women’s University in Peshawar and The Women University Multan in Multan (HEC, 2013). The role of female higher education is a powerful instrument and mediator of social change (Malik & Courtney 2011, p. 5). These women’s universities are playing a foundational role in producing future leaders of an educated, enlightened, ethical and prosperous Pakistan (Inayat 2014). Table 5 shows that after the independence of Pakistan in 1947, all women-only universities were established with effect from 1998 onward.

Women Universities	Established in	
Kinnaird College for Women University	1913	Public
Lahore College for Women University	1922	Public
Jinnah University for Women	1998	Private
Fatima Jinnah Women University	1998	Public
Women's Institute of Science & Humanities	2003	Private
Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University	2004	Public
Fatima Jinnah Women University Sialkot Campus	2007	Public
Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University	2009	Public
The Women University Multan	2013	Public

**Table 5: Women's Universities in Pakistan**

According to Mujtaba and Reiss (2015, p. 53) the government of Pakistan has shown commitment to the improvement of women by signing the Millennium Development Goals to remove gender inequality in education by 2015. To ensure female education, the government established specific institutions at various levels, e.g. The Ministry of Women's Development at the federal level; Women's Development Departments at the provincial level and the National Commission on the Status of Women at the national level (MOL, 2009). The aims of these institutions were to ensure women's participation in decision-making, policies and planning (MOWD, 2011). These aims will not only equip women with necessary skills and knowledge but will also provide them with employment opportunities (Malik & Courtney, 2011, p. 37–38).

### **Part 1.3: Internationalisation of Education**

#### **1.3.1. Higher Education Commission Pakistan**

The main focus of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) is to raise the standards of teaching, research and development in Pakistani Universities. In this regard, the Human Resource Development (HRD) of HEC initiated extensive faculty development programmes to meet international standards. According to HEC report (2013), a total of 6726 scholars have been sent abroad under various HRD programmes, including MSc/MA, PhD, Post-doc and IRSIP (International Research Support Initiative Programme). These scholarships are equally available to male and female students. Thus, the government's investment on the talents of its citizens through HEC has eliminated the gender gap in higher education (Asif *et al.*, 2013, p.101). These scholarships act as a positive step toward a prosperous and educated Pakistan in the future. The British Council report 'Going

Global' (2014, p. 36) applauded the HRD for improving the quality and quantity of research by mentioning the fact that over the past ten years, publications in high impact factor journals have increased by a factor of six. However, with the internationalisation of higher education, it is important to explore the transitional experiences of these students in going abroad.

Due to the reform of the HEC, the beginning of the twenty-first century brought tremendous changes in the lives of females in Pakistan. HEC created layers of healthy competition and gave new hopes to students, parents and society. Men and women strove hard to achieve fully-funded HEC scholarships and secure their futures (Dale *et al.*, 2002). Fortunately, people accepted and appreciated the education of women as a benefit to society. They heard, respected and understood educated women as a healthy medium in families and communities (Malik & Courtney, 2011, p. 38). Consequently, the new trends encouraged parents to educate their daughters. Soon it became a status symbol to have an educated female in a professional occupation (Dale *et al.*, 2002).

The above discussion suggested that female higher education improved in Pakistan at a threefold level: at a societal level, in the form of parental awareness to secure their daughters' future; at a governmental level, due to the HEC and at a global level due to economic pressure and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The current developments in education inspired female in Pakistan to study abroad in multiple fields of higher education.

### **1.3.2 Importance of Studying Abroad to Pakistani Students**

Internationalisation is fundamental in today's technological world. There has been a surge of interest in developing global society with cosmopolitan citizens, cultural diversity and interdependence (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015; Gibson *et al.*, 2008). However, the increase in population and limited opportunities made international education exceptionally competitive for students around the world. Furthermore, after the global economic crisis in 2008, unemployment became a serious concern among graduates in Pakistan. As a result, parents and students have become keen to explore international opportunities for obtaining a competitive edge over other graduates in employment market (Rienties, 2014).

A huge body of international students view universities in the UK as a potential destination to improve their research competence, skills and academic qualifications (Horobin & Thom, 2015; Rienties, 2014; Khan *et al.*, 2014). The statistics from the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) reported 428,225 international students' arrival to UK for higher studies in 2010–11. Education at a UK university is recognised and favoured at the national and international levels, particularly in developing countries such as Pakistan. Students view studying at a UK university as a source of personal and family security (Rienties, 2014; Khan *et al.*, 2014), whereas the British Council report 'Going Global' (2014 p. 1, 37) viewed the rationale of sponsoring Pakistani students study abroad as in the national interest. The report said, 'there will be a "multiplier effect" exerted by programme alumni, who return to their home countries to take up teaching, research and related knowledge-development activities'.

The discussion from the above studies demonstrates a strong and consistent positive impact of UK higher education on international students and the home country. However, it is equally important to explore the impact of international students on Britain.

### **1.3.3 The Importance of International Students to the UK**

There is a global competition of inviting international students in developed countries. A huge number of these students join UK universities and impact the country in many ways. According to the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFC, 2014), universities in the UK contributed £36.4 billion to the economy in 2011–12 through various services, including the commercialisation of new knowledge, the provision of professional training, international diplomacy and trade. International students come from different geographic locations and significantly contribute to the cultural diversity and enrichment of the academic environment on campus (Wu & Hammond 2011; Araujo, 2011). Cultural diversity enhances society's adaptability through understanding alternative ways of living and social context (Khan *et al.*, 2014; Horobin & Thom, 2015). The importance of the UK universities to international students and the significance of international students to the UK government made it essential to review the transition of international students to UK higher education.

### **1.3.4 International Student's Transition to the UK**

Many students struggle in the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate studies but international students have greater difficulty than home students because of the changes in the education system, acculturation and the need to assimilate into the multi-cultural expectations and practices (Horobin & Thom, 2015; Barron *et al.*, 2010; McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015; Wu & Hammond, 2011, p. 424). According to McKimm and Wilkinson (2015, p. 842) in the transitioning of international student 'the emphasis shifts from assessing how well someone adheres to strict codes and guidelines, or meets explicitly and implicitly defined standards of behaviour, to one which sees cultural transition as yet another step in the journey of becoming and being' a professional'. Consequently, international postgraduate students have to acquire linguistic skills, cope with research strategies, and embrace the values, norms and beliefs of the new academic society, which acts as an additional burden to academic achievements (Reintes *et al.*, 2014, p. 130).

The research literature view transition as particularly challenging for Asian international students. Robson and Turner (2007) reported that university staff divided postgraduate students into Asian, home and international student groups, based on Western participatory versus Asian passive and uncritical approaches to learning. Wu and Hammond (2011, p. 424) reported transition as a troubling area for Asian international students from collectivist cultures, due to their inability for self-disclosure and developing friendships with home students. Ye (2006) discussed the difficulty of Asian students in maintaining continuous emotional attachment with family and friends in their home countries during their stay in the UK. Thus, Asian students have to face additional sociocultural life challenges alongside meeting heavy academic responsibilities (Ryan, 2011).

The above discussion shows that even though internationalisation brought multiple prospects to international students and UK universities, still these students face numerous challenges during their transition to UK higher education. The reasons behind such challenges are varied for international students from across the world and therefore, it is important to research the transitional experiences of Asian international students from collectivist cultures.

### **1.3.5 Transition and Future Trends in Studying Abroad**

Transitional challenges are particularly important to address due to the future trends in the global higher education system. According to the British Council report ‘Going Global’ (2014, p. 37) the HEC Pakistan upcoming funding, ‘Overseas scholarship scheme 2006–2022’, focuses on split-PhD scholarships to cut down the costs of studying abroad. Similarly, Quan *et al.* (2013) reported that the UK introduced the International Direct Entry Programme for students from developing countries. They defined direct entrants as those students whose credits for an award are partly completed at one institution and are recognised by a second institution. ‘By doing so students are allowed to transfer from one institution to another at second or final year of a three-year degree’ (Quan *et al.*, 2013, p. 414). Hewish *et al.* (2014), in his research on the experiences of direct entry international students at UK universities, found various difficulties in their transition. Consequently, even though split-PhD or direct entry, being economical for developing countries, would increase the registration of international students in the UK universities, it would also accelerate pressure on students in terms of adjustment and on institutions and staff in terms of accommodating these students.

Thus, in the current age of internationalisation, global economic pressure encourages Pakistani students to join UK universities for higher education and better employment. These emerging trends in higher education come with issues of transition, particularly for Asian students from collectivistic cultures. The above-mentioned issues show that there is a dire need to investigate the transition of female Pakistani students to UK university settings.

#### **Part 1.4: Sociocultural Life of Pakistani Females**

Pakistani culture was not prefigured as the research context in my thesis, rather female Pakistani cultural norms were themes that emerged from the data; I therefore needed to unpack culture to the reader prior to the analysis to show the bigger picture. The socio-cultural life of Pakistan is not only the context of my research but also of huge importance to the topic ‘identity’ as my participants were culturally constructed beings, who, in order to adjust in the UK, had to pass through some culture-specific negotiations or self-understanding during the transition. Describing the importance of women in Pakistani culture will enable the reader to make sense of participants’ journey in terms of

transitioning from culturally constructed Pakistani females to UK students. In unfolding Pakistani family culture, I found that there was only a small body of literature that opens up about female culture in Pakistan. Most of the literature on Pakistani women was under the topic of ‘violence against women’. I ultimately chose to present female culture, with the available literature and justified my decision that even though the cultural intensity of Pakistani woman was mentioned at a higher degree in literature, in real life cultural intensity varies among people based upon family, education, and the location of the individual. The review on female culture in Pakistan brings to the reader, the cultural picture of what is perceived as an ‘ideal woman’ in Pakistan so that the reader can understand the degree of acceptance or resistance in their transitional narratives.

This part discusses Pakistani culture on a broader level. It talks about family norms, gender roles and woman’s hierarchal positions in the power structures of Pakistan. Finally, it discusses the female learning culture in Pakistan at the university level.

#### **1.4.1 Culture**

According to anthropologist Wade Davis, ‘the world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you; they are unique manifestations of the human spirit’ (May, 2015). Pakistani culture is an amalgam of Islamic and other contemporary South Asian cultures, and thus, it shares dominant cultural characteristics with other Asian countries (Stewart *et al.* 2006). The cultural value of Pakistan refers to the importance of collective or in-group needs and goals [e.g. family or community]; thus, the words of society are influential and every individual is concerned with ‘what will people think, what will people say about us’ (Ahmad *et al.* 2009, p. 617). An individual in Pakistan is known in society by his positive connection with others; his accomplishment is knitted into the social context, and his competence is seen in social norms, where by fulfilling social obligations he becomes part of the harmonious interpersonal relationships that make up society (Stewart *et al.* 2006). Every male and female are answerable or judged for their actions by society, failing which an individual loses face. The protection of one’s face (or, more accurately, honour) is highly valued in the society and ‘loss of face could be crippling if precautions are not taken’ (Ahmad *et al.* 2009, p. 619). However, men are dominant in the family culture, as according to the Population Crisis Committee (1988) ‘the status of women relative to men, is among the



lowest in the world' (Stewart *et al.* 2006; 230). Nevertheless, the sociocultural norms regarding male domination vary due to geographical location, economic condition, and education level (Ali *et al.*, 2014; Ali & Gavino, 2008).

#### **1.4.1.1 The Culturally Defined Ideal Woman**

The culturally defined ideal woman in Pakistan is submissive, silent, calm, quiet, shy, obedient, careful in addressing others, decent in dress, and most importantly, the one who accepts the advice of her husband and in-laws without reasoning (Zakar *et al.* 2013). Moreover, society expects the ideal woman to have restricted mobility for her family honour and to observe strict chastity. In addition, society views the ideal woman as one with the ability to mould her husband and kids to be successful (Ali *et al.* 2014; Zakar *et al.*, 2013; Ahmad *et al.*, 2009, pp 617; Shaheed, 2010). Thus, the woman is confined within the four walls of the house and is expected to be devoted to the development and care of her family (Ahmad *et al.*, 2009; 620). The crux of this argument is that, if a woman fails as a 'good mother' or 'good wife', her other achievements carry no social value and she is considered worthless (Zakar *et al.* 2013).

#### **1.4.2 Family**

In Pakistani culture, individuals are known by their families. The family is an integral unit, where close ties between parents and children continue throughout one's life and remains a central part of one's identity (Stewart *et al.* 2006). In the family, social values promote acceptance of the authority of elders and advocates the obedience to parents 'second only to God' (Ahmad *et al.* 2009; Ali *et al.* 2014). According to the power structures of Pakistan, the hierarchal head of the family is the man of the house, thus, a husband for a wife in Pakistan is termed as 'Majazi Khuda' [the personification of God] and is considered responsible for feeding the family (Ahmad *et al.*, 2009; Ali *et al.*, 2014; Zakar *et al.*, 2013). Society views the decision-making opportunities for men as outside the home and for women as 'inside' the home (Stewart *et al.* 2006). Still, it is a dictate of the culture that man is responsible for keeping the societal norms, by being dominant and commanding in the family. The cultural slogan for a husband is that he 'act like a man' otherwise, he will be labelled as 'run-mureed' [wife's subordinate], which is highly embarrassing and stigmatising. Thus, men do not give their wives, 'absolute liberty' or 'unchecked freedom' (Zakar *et al.*, 2013). The husband permits or restricts his wife's

deeds. A husband's permission to a wife is supported by the wife's immediate family and society at large and is viewed as a 'reformatory control' for the family's long-term benefit, welfare and reform (Ali *et al.*, 2014; Zakar *et al.*, 2013). In Pakistani culture, a wife – although considered as the guardian of the family honour and reputation – is in a subordinate role to the husband, which is criticised in the literature in different ways, including patriarchy, collectivism, familism, women being viewed as 'an object', 'special creatures of God', 'emotional, short tempered and short-sighted', etc. (Ahmad *et al.*, 2009; 619; Ali *et al.*, 2014; Zakar *et al.*, 2013).

Pakistani culture expects a wife to accept and promote her husband and her in-law's acts without questioning them. Moreover, it strictly discourages the wife to discuss marital affairs with close friends or family members because such discussions may bring a bad name or social stigma onto the family. Social stigma is deteriorating for the wife and the family, and cannot be cured by any external assessment, interventions, or policy change (Andersson *et al.*, 2010; Fikree & Bhatti, 1999; Mumtaz *et al.*, 2011; Ali *et al.*, 2014; Ahmad *et al.* 2009). Moreover, social stigma may lead to separation, which alienates the woman from her immediate family and from the wider community (Malik & Courtney, 2011). Consequently, women keep silence even in adversity and do not disclose family secrets unless they have a complete lack of hope in a healthy relationship with their husband, which is expressed in the idiom 'Pani sar se guzar jata he' or 'water crosses over their head' a complete drowning situation (Ahmad *et al.*, 2009, pp 619). The silence or submissiveness of the wife is practiced in the society to the extent that, if the wife takes a family matter to the lawyers or police, these agents try to act as mediators for resolving the conflict between couples by mentioning marriage obligations, societal gender roles and the consequences e.g. distress to woman and her maternal family, social stigma, separation, divorce, or losing access to children, etc. (Ali *et al.*, 2014; Andersson *et al.*, 2010; Ahmad *et al.*, 2009).

#### **1.4.2.1 Son and Future**

In Pakistan, sons are the focal part of the family; they stay with parents and ensure the continuity and protection of the family property, while daughters leave their parental home at marriage and become part of another family (Malik & Courtney, 2011). Furthermore, living in one's daughter's house is a stigma, while it is an obligation for the sons to host

the parents and take care of them with responsibility. Thus, the daughter's higher education is not preferred while any investment in that of the sons 'becomes a returned investment' (Mujtaba & Reiss, 2015, 56; Lloyd *et al.*, 2007). Thus, giving preference to sons over daughters is a deeply rooted practice in the value system of Pakistan (Malik & Courtney, 2011, p. 39).

#### **1.4.2.2 Girls and their Mothers**

In Pakistani culture, mothers prepare their girls for marital life after they complete their secondary education (Mujtaba & Reiss, 2015). Girls are considered as a source of restriction on the mother's autonomy. It is the duty of a mother to supervise her daughter against sexual relationships or sexual desire, which are taboo topics. Any suggestion of immodesty can bring shame to the family honour and jeopardise her chances of an appropriate marriage (Stewart *et al.* 2006, pp 230; Ali *et al.*, 2014). In order to construct a well-cultured girl, a Pakistani mother perceives her role as a trainer to teach her from childhood to be a silent, patient, submissive and selfless person for adjustment in her later life with her husband and in-laws (Ali *et al.* 2014; Stewart *et al.* 2006; Ahmad *et al.* 2009, pp 617). Society advocates the ultimate destiny of a girl as her husband's home. Thus, parents advise their daughters at their wedding ceremony never to leave the husband's home other than on their death because the daughter's unsuccessful marriage brings suffering and a loss of respect for both her and her parents (Ahmad *et al.* 2009, p. 617).

In Pakistan, the limits of women's role are strictly demarcated within the culturally defined red lines of wearing revealing clothing; undermining the husband's authority; arguing with or not looking after the in-laws; visiting their natal family, neighbours, or friends without permission; arguing over financial matters; using contraception without spousal permission; suspected sexual infidelity; neglect of household chores; arguments over child rearing and infertility or not having a son (Zakar *et al.*, 2013; Ali & Gavino, 2008; Zareen *et al.*, 2009; Ali *et al.*, 2014). It is important to consider the socially defined red lines, otherwise this can result in social stigma, which, according to Ahmad *et al.* (2009, p. 619), is 'perceived as "cancer" with its chronic and complex nature of being non-curable and life threatening'.

### **1.4.3 Marriage**

In Pakistan, marriage is the only socially acceptable way for two adults to live in an intimate relationship (Ali & Kramar, 2014). The society strongly believes that ‘boys create their own world while girls have their world created for them’ (Stewart *et al.*, 2006). Thus, a girl after marriage is in a bond. She tries to put her needs aside while adjusting in her husband’s created world. She submits to his views in her decisions, including education and future careers for pleasing him and her in-laws particularly mother-in-law (Mujtaba & Reiss, 2015; Ahmad *et al.*, 2009; Hamid *et al.*, 2010; Ali *et al.*, 2014; Stewart *et al.*, 2006). The mother-in-law makes many important decisions for the family, which reveals that woman’s autonomy in Pakistan is a life stage achievement and that women gain power and confidence with children and age (Stewart *et al.*, 2006; Ahmad *et al.*, 2009). Marital relations in Pakistan are seen as a strong bond; the act of divorce, although permitted by law, is generally considered taboo and stigmatising and is seen as an act of public defiance. In particular, a divorced woman is ridiculed and rejected by her in-laws, birth family and the whole society (Malik & Courtney, 2011; Khan *et al.*, 1996). The national survey of ‘Violence against women in Pakistan’, to which 23,430 women from across the country responded, reported a divorce rate of only 1% (Andersson *et al.*, 2010; Ali & Kramar, 2014). Thus, the traditional family system of the country has trapped the female student’s self-identity in terms of furthering education, vocation and empowerment.

### **1.4.4 Culture and Learning at the University Level**

Educational institutions in Pakistan, from primary to university, operate by a traditional teaching and learning system, where students learn through memorisation and cramming study material to pass their exams rather than understanding the underlying concepts (Mujtaba & Reiss, 2015). These institutes inculcate traditional socio-culture values, ‘through textbooks, curricula and teacher’s attitudes’ to shape boys and girls differently (Malik & Courtney, 2011, 32; Noureen, 2015). Girls are encouraged to study home economics, first aid, personal and family hygiene and cookery and nutrition, as these subjects are linked with successful motherhood (Chaudhary 1975). Female students are generally permitted by parents to study for simple BA or MA degrees instead of scientific and technical degrees, particularly mathematics and engineering, due to gender-specific

attitudes and their associated family structures (Khan & Mehmood, 1997; Mujtaba & Reiss, 2015).

The socio-culture life of universities in Pakistan controls male–female relationships and does not allow female students to participate in the social life of the university. Extracurricular activities – for example, dancing, sports and travelling overnight are all unacceptable activities for co-education groups of students, either as part of the campus programme or outside of it (Noureen 2015). Additionally, female mobility in public transport is viewed as a stigma in society and ‘is considered as women inhabiting men’s spaces’ or an invitation to men for sexual harassment (Mujtaba & Reiss, 2015, 54). Thus, it is a norm in Pakistan that parents arrange a ‘drop and collect’ service by hiring private drivers to the university perpetuated by the fear for their daughters’ safety and family honour (Mujtaba & Reiss, 2015, pp. 59–60).

#### **1.4.5. Women’s Employment and Culture**

In Pakistani culture, despite growing awareness and a large number of women participating in education, female employment in general is not promoted due to social stigmatisation and traditional stereotypes. Social structure resists and opposes any changes that do not fit into its basic ideology. Socially some men see earning money through women as humiliating and consider it as ‘a negative point for the honour and dignity of the family’ (Zakar *et al.*, 2013). In support of this study, Malik and Courtney (2010) and Mujtaba and Reiss (2015) argued that majority of the qualified women in Pakistan are either not allowed to engage in a profession or are permitted on the conditions that they teach at a female institution, and therefore, they have little means of achieving economic independence and empowerment.

#### **1.4.6 Changing Trend in Culture**

Despite strict gender hierarchies in the power structures of Pakistani culture, the forces of globalisation and modernisation have exerted pressure to change the nature and structure of gender relations in Pakistan (Zakar *et al.*, 2013). Since 2001, when General Musharraf created Higher Education Commission, he provided scholarships to both men and women in order to study both nationally and internationally. This created a radical new position for Pakistani women. Now, they were no longer limited to the four walls of the home, instead the ‘ideal women’ could gain her status through education rather than through domesticity.

Educational aspirations have changed in recent years and people have begun to respect educated women. To some extent, education is now viewed as a blessing for a woman, because it equips her with the knowledge that forms the basis of her economic independence, increased status and recognition in the family and the wider community (Noureen, 2015; Malik & Courtney, 2011). Women started struggling for their rights: most recently, young Pakistani female students have challenged the existing social norms and showed a level of awareness against gender discrimination, sexual harassment and glass ceilings at the institutional level (Noureen, 2015).

To conclude, although with the passage of time, familial awareness about the importance of education has brought a positive transformation in Pakistan, still the focus of female education is to increase her value in the marriage market and not to give her autonomy. There is no policy, intervention and authority on parents to give equal importance to male and female higher education. The university learning culture in Pakistan follows traditional methods of education and lags behind international standards, which may cause trouble for a Pakistani female studying abroad. Similarly, even though the Higher Education Commission has established textbook boards in the provinces to inspect the standardisation of education and assessment, still textbooks, curricula and teachers' attitudes inculcate traditional socio-culture values and shape boys and girls differently, which may hinder independent living while studying abroad. Moreover, parents and teachers restrict female students' mobility and monitor their on-campus and off-campus activities for fear of social stigma. Overall, the confidence and autonomy level of a female Pakistani student can be seen in the fact that she cannot pursue education or employment on the basis of her competence; rather, she is subject to the permission of the male members of the family, which she cannot question. Her autonomy is hindered in making education, employment and marital choices of life; her autonomy, by contrast, is linked to marital age and sons, and thus 'she has her world created for her'.

### **Part 1.5: QAA Guidelines for Postgraduate Students**

According to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education England, Wales and Northern Ireland, (QAA, 2008), a postgraduate student must have the capacity to direct and initiate their own learning. It says

To deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences. To demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level and to continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level (p. 21).

In order to fulfil the guidelines of QAA, even though a female Pakistani student has to transform herself from learning in a traditional learning background to being able to participate in a collaborative learning environment, I argue that the above quote from QAA can be seen as showing the need for my research. The QAA guidelines in characteristics of successful graduate student of the UK apply to every graduate student in the UK, regardless of their cultural background. With regard to transition, there might be some kind of incompatibility between the UK education culture and the education culture of female students in Pakistan, as they have very different views of important questions such as authority, status, deference, and religion (See 1.4).

### **Part 1.5: Summary**

This chapter discussed politics, policy and current trends of female higher education in Pakistan. Pakistan came into being as a secular state in 1947, after the partition of India. At the time, the founder expressed his belief that education be available to all, whether male or female. However, in the following years the country suffered from political instability, conflict and economic downturn, and as a result women's education was side-lined as a more conservative society took hold. In 1977, General Zia was elected into power with a manifesto of the 'Islamisation' of society. This meant that he conflated the ideas of nationalism and Islam into a sense of identity, whereby the ideal Pakistani woman was expected to adhere to the limitations of 'the veil and the four walls'. This triggered a protest movement within society, led mainly by women, who expressed their distaste through various forums. The election of Benazir Bhutto, as the first female Prime Minister, eleven years later, could be seen as a victory of sorts for female empowerment. However, this proved to be short-lived, as one year later Nawaz Sharif took over, and steered the country back to a conservative state. In 2001, General Musharraf came to power, with a more liberal manifesto. He created equal opportunities for both men and women in various fields, such as education and politics. Through his Higher Education Commission, he

provided scholarships in order to study both nationally and internationally. This created a radical new position for Pakistani women. Now, they were no longer limited to the four walls of the home, instead, the 'ideal women' could gain her status through education rather than through domesticity. Current trends of studying abroad and cultural transition in the context of education are worthy of attention. The next chapter is about reviewing literature on the issue of international students' transition to a UK higher educational institution.



## Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review the available literature on the topic, female Pakistani students' identities in transition to UK higher education. It further aims to develop the rationale for the theoretical framework and identify the gap in literature to locate the current study for original contribution. The initial scoping of the literature resulted with no literature specific to the topic, so to conduct the review, I broadened the search terms to international students and Asian students transitioning to studying abroad at the postgraduate level. However, during the process, I realised the need to gain insight in developing the focus of my study. Therefore, I used Bate's (1989) model of 'Berry picking' (See 2.1.3) to identify potential articles, rather than using one grand best retrieved set to conduct the review. This chapter is divided into six parts. The first part discusses the literature review process, which includes, scoping the literature, Bate's (1989) model of 'Berry picking', and the four review questions. The second, third, fourth and fifth part discusses each of the four review questions respectively. The sixth part concludes the review chapter and after going through a coding process identifies four key aspects– which I have defined as Family, Institution, Recognition and Social– that contributes to the understanding of the multiple dimensions of international student's life, who are undergoing transitioning to higher education abroad. These four dimensions of a student's life are of particular importance to my study, as I linked them thoroughly to other parts of the thesis.

### **Part 2.1: The Literature Review Process**

**This part discusses the review process, scoping the literature, introducing Bate's (1989) method of 'Berry picking', leading to the four review questions.**

#### **2.1.1 Scoping the Literature**

The first step in the review process was to scope the literature around international students' transition abroad and gain in-depth understanding. According to Wallace and Wray (2011, p. 13) the reviewer needs to 'sustain focus throughout the review, avoid digression and include everything that is relevant'. In the preliminary search of the literature, I attempted to find the keywords on the topic and understand the scope of my study. According to Creswell (2013, p. 34) 'identifying keywords is the first step in

searching for resources'. I therefore consulted the University library resources and various computerised databases including: ERIC (Education Research Information Centre); ETHOS (e-thesis online service), PyscINFO, Sociofile, Scopus, Social Science Citation Index and the British Library to map out the available literature. Reading and re-reading through the searched articles enabled me to identify the keywords of the study to conduct the review. More precisely, below are the key words and number of documents (reviews, research articles, dissertations and other references), which appeared under Scopus search. These were:

- Transition (1,746,653 document results) AND postgraduate students (1043 document results) AND International students (684 document results) AND Pakistani students (8 document results) AND female students (2 document results).

The results clearly showed a lack of research in this area, with only two results satisfying all of the search criteria. The eight documents resulting for 'Pakistani Students' were found to be of no relevance, as they focused on subjects such as poverty reduction, nurse's experiences, European Union mobility and international undergraduate student experiences. Therefore, to gain wider results it was necessary to broaden the search criteria by removing the key terms of 'Pakistani students' and 'female students'. I then analysed the literature further by examining historical shifts, authors, geographical regions, subject areas and affiliated institutions.

In terms of a historical shift in international students' transition, the analysis revealed a sharp increase in the number of studies, which took place in the twelve years from 2006 to 2018 (beginning at 18 documents and reaching a peak of 134 documents). This is in stark contrast to the lack of literature during the previous period. In 1981, there was only one published document, and by 1992 still only four documents recorded.

The geographical search results showed that the highest-ranking country in the literature on international students' transition was the UK (307 documents), followed by the USA (230) and Australia (158). It is notable that the above-mentioned top results are all from Western countries. A similar pattern was found in the affiliation of the top three institutions where the studies were conducted. These were the University of Toronto (15 documents), Maastricht University (13 documents) and Oxford University (10 documents).

An analysis of authors revealed the three highest results to be Schierpbier (8 documents), Bullock (7 documents) and Kilminster (6 documents). All three authors focused their studies on Medicine in a clinical setting. In the subject analysis, medicine was the second highest subject with 19.9% of results, whereas social sciences were revealed to be 36.8% of the total. However, I excluded Medical clinical studies to maintain relevance, by limiting the document search to Social Sciences.

In the decision to identify relevant literature for my study, I found it difficult to neatly separate articles on the search engine, due to the interconnected nature of the fields, (that is 'transition' and 'international student', 'postgraduate student' and 'Asian student') it proved difficult to neatly separate them on the search engine. I therefore followed Bate's (1989) model of 'Berry picking' as an alternative method to review the literature.

### **2.1.2 'Berry picking' Model**

Bate's (1989) method of 'Berry picking' considers reviewing literature in a broader, less linear process. 'Berry picking' states four areas: the nature of the query, the nature of the search process, the range of search techniques used [and] the information 'domain' where the search is conducted (p. 409). Bate (1989) states that 'the nature of the query is an evolving one, rather than single and unchanging, and the nature of the search process is such that it follows a 'Berry picking' pattern, instead of leading to a single best retrieved set' (p. 412). In the evolving/'Berry picking' model, the search techniques change throughout and the sources searched change in both form and content.

Bate's (1989) model of 'Berry picking' makes use of browsing, footnote chasing; citation searching and identifying central journals. It also recommends area scanning of subject catalogue, as well as searching by abstract, indexes, and authors (p. 412). By following Bate's (1989) methods my search queries would evolve from 'Pakistani students' to 'international students' and then to 'Asian students'.

'Berry picking' search procedures resulted in studies from 1995-2018. Using a 22 years' time period from which to review studies provided a comprehensive and efficient standpoint on the subject. Additionally, in the selection of the article, I followed the inclusion criteria as ensuring the author's expertise in the area, credibility of the source in which the article is published and relevance of the evidence to the study. This then led me to investigate individual articles, whilst seeking references to factors such as international

students' experiences of adaptation and adjustment in studying abroad. Thus, in the next step of the review, to address how the existing literature approached transition, I developed the following four review questions:

- How does the present study view 'transition' and 'identity'?
- How are the experiences of international students' transition reflected in literature?
- How have the support strategies for international students' transition been researched?
- How have identities of international students in transition been researched?

Wallace and Wray (2011, p. 153) emphasises upon the researcher to help the readers in following the development of the argument, therefore it is important to understand the key terms 'identity' and 'transition'. In this regards, the next section discusses the first review question.

## **2.2 How is 'transition' and 'identity' conceptualised in the social science literature?**

In this part, I have looked at the conceptualisation of 'transition' and 'identity' in my study. More precisely, the key terms 'transition' and 'identity' appeared in 4555 documents' results (reviews, research articles, dissertations and other references) in the social science literature under Scopus. Consequently, I limited the search to postgraduate international students' transition which appeared in 68 documents. Thus, transition at other educational levels, for example primary to high school or transition at a national level was considered outside the scope of the current study and was excluded from the literature search. Similarly, studies that were conducted on the transition to non-academic institutions (for example refugees or medical, clinical studies) were also excluded from the review, as no interpretation could be drawn. After applying the exclusion and inclusion criteria, I reviewed literature using a broader less linear method called 'BerryPicking' model (See page 51). Reading and re-reading led my understanding to the fact that these key terms 'transition' and 'identity' have multiple interpretations across literature. Due to the nature of the study, I considered 'identity' from social science literature as multiple and fluid rather than single or static and 'transition' from general literature and explained them as below:

### **2.2.1 Transition**

Hussey and Smith (2010) defined transition to higher education as, ‘significant change in student’s life, self-concept and learning: a shift from one state of understanding, development and maturity to another’ (2010, p. 156). The stated definition interprets transition as a shifting process, e.g. from school to higher education; from leaving home to becoming an independent adult; from being a reluctant student to being keen or vice versa. On similar grounds, McKimm & Wilkinson (2015) have emphasised transition as the shifts ‘from assessing how well someone adheres to strict codes and guidelines, or meets explicitly and implicitly defined standards of behaviour, to one which sees cultural transition as yet another step in the journey of becoming and being a professional’ (pp. 842). Hussey and Smith (2010) further discussed students’ transition as a complex transformational process of subtle changes in attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs, understanding and skills. Due to the context of my study being international, the review considered the term ‘transition’ as the way international postgraduate students negotiate the process of shift to higher education institutes, from the home country’s understanding, development and maturity to that of the host country.

### **2.2.2 Identity**

Literature (Ligorio et al., 2013; Wenger, 1998; Brown & Campione, 1990; Wortham, 2004) conceptualised the term ‘identity’ in multiple way, i.e., identity of an individual as single and static (e.g. individuals’ origin or ethnicity) or as multiple and fluid (e.g. changing over time according to contingency (e.g. becoming a wife or a mother). In the current study, I considered James Gee’s approach to identity. According to Gee, (2000, p.1) identity is ‘being recognised as a ‘certain kind of person’, in a given context...in this sense of the term, all people have multiple identities connected not to their ‘internal states’, but to their performances in society’. Gee continues, ‘a person might be recognised [by others] as being a certain kind of person i.e. academic... an “at risk student”...The “kind of person” one is recognised as “being”, at a given time and place, can change from moment to moment in interaction, can change from context to context’ (p.1). Thus, Gee interprets identities of an individual as multiple, on-going and ever-changing with time and context. Therefore, Gee’s conception of identity is compatible to my study on transitions, as my study focus is also on shifts in time and context (such as moving from Pakistan to the UK).

Accordingly, in agreement with Gee (2000), identity of an individual could be answered with the question, 'Who am I, at this point in time and in this context?' The next part discusses the second review question two of the literature.

### **2.3 How are the experiences of international students' transition reflected in literature?**

This part discusses international students' experiences in transition. The subparts include networking experiences, students' division into Western and Asian groups based on stereotypical images, adapting to the learning culture, and homesickness.

#### **2.3.1 The Need to Network Prior Travelling Abroad**

Online networking sites are online communities that allow users to communicate with each other by posting profile information, photographs and videos (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Lin, 2012). Woodley and Meredith (2012) states that international students use Facebook, prior to 'transitioning to a new country, new university and new educational traditions' (p. 3). Woodley and Meredith's findings reveals that international students experience transition while at their home country, as they make an attempt to connect with the community of the host university through Facebook. Young and Schartner (2014) discusses international students' social connection with the host institution prior their arrival abroad. The above discussion gives rise to the question, as to why international students while in their home country connect to the host university through Facebook. There is an indication that students' transition may start with their imagination of self in the host university while at home country, therefore there is a need to conduct longitudinal research, which initiate data collection prior international students' engagement at a UK university to understand transition.

#### **2.3.2 Grouping into Western and Asian International Students**

Literature (Robertson *et al.*, 2000; Barron *et al.*, 2010; Horobin & Thom, 2015) explored international students' experiences in the light of tutors' discussions, who broadly divide them into two groups of students, Asian and Western. Robertson *et al.* (2000) argued Western international students with a participatory approach and Asian students with a passive and uncritical approach in their class. Horobin and Thom (2015) reported Asian students as being respectful in their attitude, pre-occupied with fulfilling the expectations,

well disciplined, diligent note-takers and good attendees in their classrooms. In contrast to the above researcher, Robson and Turner (2007) found that in order to respond to international students, tutors tend to adapt alternative teaching practices, which hinder their own research pursuits. On similar approach, Barron *et al.* (2010) mentioned that tutors found it challenging to teach and manage Asian students as they struggle in oral and aural skills in English, the language on which UK discursive pedagogies rely. Further, Barron *et al.* (2010) and Horobin and Thom (2015) found Asian students ‘too demanding’ and ‘more stressful’ as they have high expectations of their tutors. Consequently, literature (Robson & Turner 2007; Barron *et al.* 2010; Horobin & Thom 2015) termed Asian students as a ‘burden’. The above discussion concluded that literature reported Asian students as being respectful and hardworking, but also burdensome, due to their unfamiliarity with the academic and learning culture.

### **2.3.3 Learning the Culture of Western Institutions**

Every institution has its own learning culture. During transition international students travel to a different country, where they have to adapt to a different set of learning expectation due to the host institution culture (Bakar, 2013). Quan *et al.* (2013) study reported that 72% of international students’ experience learning as very difficult in transition to a UK University. The authors stated the reason for students learning difficulty in the differences between the home and host institutions’ cultures. Literature divided international students’ by Western and Asian students due to differences in their home institutions’ culture. In this regards, Khan *et al.* (2014) stated Asian students’ approach to learning as teacher-centred, subject-oriented, discipline-based, and lecture-focused, whereas in comparison Robertson *et al.* (2000) and Barron *et al.* (2010) stated Western students express independent ideas and learn through discussions with fellow students. Further, Barron *et al.* (2010) stated that Asian students are often used to learning through memorisation and therefore are inactive in seminars and group discussions. Khan *et al.* (2014) found Asian students struggle in group discussion due to lack of problem-based patterns of learning and critical reading in the traditional learning approach of their home country institutions. Consequently, Asian students may need additional time and effort to express independent ideas, follow the pedagogy of the host institution, develop problem-based patterns of learning and engage in critical discussions with staff and fellow

students. Another group of researchers (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015; Reintes *et al.*, 2014) also found Asian students' struggle in Western learning strategies due to differences in culture, language, values, norms and beliefs. However, adopting the host institutions culture may impact on students' identities.

The above discussion suggests that during transition, international students have to negate the home country epistemologies of education and develop new competencies of the host country's learning culture.

### **2.3.4 Following Western Pedagogies**

Literature (Rienties, 2014; Wu & Hammond, 2011) discusses that international student experience difficulty in following the pedagogical methods of the Western institutions during transition. In agreement to the above, Robertson *et al.*, (2000) and Barron *et al.*, (2010) stated the pedagogical challenges of international students in following lectures, taking tutorial activities, and participating in group tasks and presentations. More particularly, Barron *et al.*, (2010) found the dialogic approach in the pedagogy as unsettling for Asian students. Whereas, even though Barron *et al.*, found the dialogic approach in the pedagogy problematic for Asian students, still, Western institutions use the same pedagogies for both international and home students alike. Thus, Western institutions are forcing Asian students to adapt to Western pedagogy, which might be a good strategy to give equal treatment to all, but this does not then facilitate the issues of students' cultural transition.

### **2.3.5 Understanding the Assessment Criteria of West**

International students' performance in grade assessment and class assessment is an issue of great concern in literature. Khan *et al.*, (2014) and Quan *et al.*, (2013) found that international students experience academic underperformance in their final exam due to non-familiarity with assessment criteria of the host institution. However, Robertson *et al.*, (2000) and Barron *et al.*, (2010) reported that the criteria particularly is challenging for Asian students as they are typically shy and passive to answer questions in classroom assessments and are reluctant to contribute in presentation and tutorial assessments. Wu and Hammond (2011) stated that being unfamiliar with local academic discourses; Asian students often struggle to write assignments in the British style. Furthermore, being unaware of the convention of acknowledging quotations from academic sources in writing



their assignments, they unknowingly commit plagiarism (Robertson *et al.*, 2000; Barron *et al.*, 2010). On the contrary researchers (Robertson *et al.*, 2000; Barron *et al.*, 2010; Wu & Hammond, 2011) found that Asian students being hard workers and familiar with timed examinations in their home countries achieve higher scores on written exams. Thus, international students struggle in practical and written assessments and unwittingly commit into plagiarism due to the differences in the home and host institution.

The above discussion suggested that international students' struggles are based on the subjective experiences of the home academic culture, which requires cultural research for students' smooth transition to UK higher education.

### **2.3.6 Incorporating Western Independent Learning Style**

There is extensive literature on international students' struggle in independent learning during transition to western institutions. In this regard, Spiro *et al.*, (2012) associate the term 'independent learner' with critical thinking, and the weaning of the student from dependence on the teacher's guidance to the capacity to organise their own learning. Rienties (2014) study stated that lack of independent learning impact students' academic competence and their command on research skills. Robertson *et al.*, (2000) and Barron *et al.* (2010) specified that Asian students' struggle in critiquing the written text in the book and the oral text in the lecture. Bakar (2013) associates Asian students' struggle in independent learning to their home country's institutional culture, which works on the principle of teacher-centeredness. In the UK, according to the mission statement of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education England, Wales and Northern Ireland, (QAA, 2008) a postgraduate student must have the capacity 'to demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks' (p. 21). Whereas Asian students may struggle to demonstrate self-direction due to their education from traditional learning background (Bakar, 2013). Thus, the QAA guidelines 'to demonstrate self-direction' demand Asian students to transform themselves against their home country's learning culture. Tian (2008) reported that in order to overcome, survive and succeed in the new academic culture of the UK, Asian students often employ diverse strategies to understand the interrelationship between the home and host contexts, which might result in the reformation and reconstruction of their identities.

The above discussion summarises that during transition to UK higher education, Asian students have to fulfil QAA guidelines to gain their postgraduate degree. The QAA guidelines suggest a shift in academic culture from traditional Asian practices to collaborative UK practices. The process of shifting culture might not be smooth and therefore international students may undergo some renegotiation with self, which might impact their identities.

### **2.3.7 Self Disclosure Problem and Interpersonal Relationship in Class**

The quality of interpersonal relationships between international students and administration and staff is a concern in literature. Literature (Ward, 2006; Wu & Hammond, 2011) reported problems in international students' relationship with the administration in getting academic and support services from the host institution. Spiro *et al.* (2012) reported that proficiency in language was a huge impediment among international students in establishing interpersonal relationships within the host institution. Researchers (Khan *et al.*, 2014; Quan *et al.*, 2013; Wu & Hammond, 2011) have specified that international students struggle in English language due to differences in accent, issues with fluency and non-familiarity with colloquial terms. Khan *et al.*, (2014) reported that students experienced linguistic barriers at a higher degree, when the host institutions' staff used phrases with conflicting meanings. A small body of literature considers the reason of Asian students' struggle in interpersonal relationship due to their transition from collectivistic cultures. More particularly, Wu and Hammond (2011) found self-disclosure during the classroom, as a troublesome area for international students from highly collectivist cultures.

The above discussion summarises that international students, particularly Asian from highly collectivistic cultures, may experience self-disclosure as difficult in developing interpersonal relationships with local staff and students at the host institution. These students not only have to gain linguistic mastery in their accents, colloquialism and fluency, but they also have to rationalise the new cultural codes of the host institution.

### **2.3.8 Undergoing Homesickness**

International students' initial cultural adjustment is termed in literature as homesickness, where student loss cues of acceptable behaviour according to the local values, and feels anxious, depressed and angry (Pedersen, 1995). Cultural adjustment in transition is

defined in literature (Ward & Kennedy 1999) as, ‘the ability to fit in, to acquire culturally appropriate skills and to negotiate interactive aspects of the host environment’ (p. 660). A considerable amount of the literature, since the mid- 1990s (Ye, 2006; Neri & Ville, 2008; Ryan, 2011) has considered international students’ psychological issues due to their experiences of homesickness and isolation during transition. Rienties (2014) study found that international students feel emotionally isolated due to their attachment with the family that is left behind in their home country. Students’ isolation, in combination with academic and sociocultural challenges, negatively affects students’ adaptation in the new patterns of life in the host country (Ryan, 2011; Spiro *et al.*, 2012). Students’ psychological well-being is critical for their academic growth in the host institution, whereas their isolation from family can lead to serious problems (Neri & Ville, 2008; Ryan, 2011, Quan *et al.*, 2013). A small body of literature considers the reason of Asian students’ struggle in their transition from collectivistic cultures. In this regards, Robson and Turner (2007) and Barron *et al.* (2010) state that, in general, students from highly collectivistic culture face greater difficulties in transition than others. However, due to international students’ high levels of satisfaction in their experience of studying abroad, researchers (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015 and Wu & Hammond, 2011) replaced the term ‘culture shock’ with the term ‘culture bump’ and considered it as ‘adjustment stress’ rather than a ‘permanent shock’ (p. 425). However, student’ grades satisfaction refers to their institutional wellbeing, whereas students’ culture shock refers to their collective in-group identity. Consequently, considering cultural adaptation with grades satisfaction is unclear, particularly on the assumption of a quantitative survey regarding students’ study experiences.

The above discussion concludes that during transition international students break their direct link with family and become emotionally isolated and homesick. Students’ feeling of isolation from family is reported at higher degree in Asian students from collectivistic culture; however literature reported it as a temporary rather than a ‘permanent’ state, based on students’ grade satisfaction. There is a gap in the literature to understand Asian students’ link with family (from collectivistic culture) in transitioning to UK higher education.

### **2.3.9 Transitional Experiences as a Journey Rather Than a Moment**

Literature (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015) discusses students' cultural transition as a complex, multi-layered process, which involves professional socialisation, acculturation, cultural sensitivity and 'a double shift in social and professional identity formation' (p. 841). On similar grounds, Sawyer's (2011) study found international students' experiences of cultural transition in four stages. Firstly, students are excited about studying abroad and are in the 'honeymoon period'. Secondly, they live in an unfamiliar culture with frustration, i.e., a 'crisis period'. Afterward, they go through 'gradual adjustment' and finally they adapt to 'biculturalism' (p. 7). To explain the term 'biculturalism', McKimm and Wilkinson, (2015) define it as 'professional socialisation', which, according to the authors is part of an ever-shifting professional identity (p. 842). Thus, cultural transition is an on-going process and not a single moment of transition, whereas universities deal with students' transitional experiences in the first few weeks of joining university.

The above discussion concluded that, in the process of transition, students experience multi-layered shifts in social and professional identity formation. Thus, in order to understand those multi-layered shifts of students' transition, it is necessary to conduct a longitudinal research.

### **2.3.10 Summary**

Section 2.3 discussed the review question, how the experiences of international students' transition are reflected in literature? The review found that international students use Facebook at their home country to connect with their host institution, which suggests that transition may begin prior students' physical move. Further, upon arrival to the host country, international students' experiences are categorised in literature as Asian and Western students' abroad. Having said this, literature assumes international students with certain cultural and national stereotypical images, which could give these students a sense of self in the inter-cultural communication of the host institution. Students' academic challenges were reported in class participation, class presentations, critical reading and writing etc. Furthermore, literature discussed students' struggle in independent learning and following the dialogic approach in the pedagogies of the host institutions. In this regards, literature found that Asian students from collectivistic cultures struggle more in homesickness, self-disclosure and building interpersonal relationship with staff and fellow

students. The above mentioned struggles maybe linked to their subjective experiences of home academic culture and their adaptation to the host culture. During the process of shifting culture, international students might undergo some negotiation of self, which may impact their identities. In this regards, there is a need to conduct a longitudinal cultural study to explore students thinking feeling and believing in transition.

## **2.4 How have the support strategies for international students' transition been researched?**

This question is answered through the support strategies identified to be considered by universities, tutors and international students. Further, literature discussed networking structures as a support for international students.

### **2.4.1 Consideration for Universities**

There is extensive literature in providing support strategies for universities to overcome the challenges of international students' transition. In this regards, studies (Hussey & Smith, 2010; Barron *et al.*, 2010; Medland, 2016; Reintes *et al.*, 2014; Horobin & Thom, 2015) have acknowledged international students' challenges in terms of their adaptation to the host institutional culture and emphasized upon Western universities to offer them support.

#### **2.4.1.1 Achieving Better Inclusion**

Barron *et al.* (2010) proposed UK universities to familiarise their staff with cultural diversity and ensure the internationalisation of higher education in a meaningful way. Horobin and Thom (2015) and Harvey (2016) suggested universities to actively participate in achieving the better inclusion of international students by arranging collaborative training among students' support staff and course tutors to cater transitional needs. Recognising cultural challenges of international students will ensure the intercultural competence of staff and students' and will significantly enhance intercultural identities (Williams *et al.*, 2015). To improve students' linguistic skills, Medland (2016) suggested universities to focus on their academic reading, writing and speaking competence.

#### **2.4.1.2 Flexible Assessment Criteria**

To support international students in oral, written and practical assessments, researchers (Hussey & Smith, 2010; Medland, 2016; Reintes *et al.*, 2014) suggest universities to be

flexible in their methods. Hussey and Smith (2010) criticised the term-based semester system exam of the UK universities, which pressurise students to transform according to the dictates of the institution and ignore transitional needs. Hussey and Smith further states that the institutional pressure on these students contributes to their lack of adaptation and increases dropout rates.

#### **2.4.1.3 Providing Access to Module- Specific Research**

To develop independent learning skill among students, Horobin & Thom (2015) encouraged universities to provide them access to module-specific research facilities and allocate them independent study space in the library. Further, to understand students' needs in developing independent learning, Medland (2016) suggested universities to investigate 'students' feedback experience surveys' (e.g. the National Student Survey) and provide support structure accordingly to cater their transitional needs. However, student surveys are mostly quantitative, whereas human experiences may better be analysed within qualitative parameters (Creswell, 1998). Moreover, student feedback survey are targeted toward students' academic achievements, thus it ignores other dimensions of transition.

#### **2.4.1.4 Conducting Future Research in the Area**

Literature on international students' transition, not only suggests various steps to satisfy students' needs at the institution, but there is also a dearth of interest for future research in the area. In this regard, Tian's (2008) study argued that even though one cannot deny the shared cultural constructs of Asian students, still future research is needed to investigate methodologies sensitive to students' individual differences. Similarly, Bakar's (2013) study also suggested methodology specific future research to support international students' individual, cultural and subjective transitions in studying abroad.

### **2.4.2 Consideration for Tutors**

Literature discusses support strategies for tutors to overcome the challenges of international students' transition in the following areas.

#### **2.4.2.1 Following Andragogic Strategies**

To enable Asian students to follow Western pedagogy, researchers (Quan *et al.*, 2013; Rienties, 2014; Wu & Hammond, 2011) emphasised the need to explain complex concepts and ideas through context-familiar pedagogies. In this regard, Bakar (2013) recommends

universities to follow ‘andragogic strategies’. According to Bakar, these strategies focus more on the process as compared to the content being taught. More specifically, Bakar suggested to the tutors of Asian international students to use case studies and role-playing strategies, where the context is made clear to students in each evaluation of the problem. Additionally, Barron *et al.* (2010) and Simpson (2015) advocated tutors to use communicative methods of teaching by engaging students in classroom activities rather than using lecture method. Thus, literature discussed specific andragogic, case study approach in teaching Asian students at western universities.

#### **2.4.2.2 Introducing collaborative Group Activities**

Culturally appropriate interpersonal relationship is considered essential for building professional development among international students in literature (Horobin & Thom, 2015). To develop students’ interpersonal skills, Barron *et al.* (2010) emphasised upon tutors to bring together international and home students through collaborative in-group activities. Further, to enhance international students’ sense of belonging, Germanier’s (2012) research highlighted international students need to understand spontaneous context-bound humour in classroom interactions. Germanier further suggested tutors and administration of the host universities to include classroom humour in the syllabus of the pre-sessional spoken English preparatory sessions.

#### **2.4.1.3 Facilitating Reading and Writing Skills**

To deal with linguistic barriers, Barron *et al.* (2010) recommended tutors to take certain measures including: assigning international students with extra time for better understanding, providing them notes and reading materials, giving clear written instructions for assessments, developing strong communication to discuss academic worries and providing help to overcome assignments related worries. Hussey and Smith (2010) suggested that tutors constantly interpret their role to the students in the teaching sessions. The authors stated the role of a tutor in-group assignment as someone who identify and satisfy the areas of the international students which needs intervention. On a furthering point, Simpson (2015, p. 9) suggested tutors to give group assignments to international and home students for developing ‘planning’, ‘monitoring’ and ‘evaluation’ in oral and written, linguistic skills.

### **2.4.3 Consideration for International Students**

Literature discusses suggests international students to overcome their challenges by self-support mechanism in the following way.

#### **2.4.3.1 Self Support Mechanism**

Literature (Spiro *et al.*, 2012; Quan *et al.*, 2013; Simpson, 2015; Wu & Hammond, 2011) suggested international students to understand their individual challenges in the way of getting recognition at the dominant discourses of UK Higher Education and overcome those challenges with self-support mechanism. To guide students in developing self-support, Simpson (2015) emphasised upon the following practical steps: join pre-sessional language courses, master subject knowledge, prefer active learning, avail speaking opportunities, avoid shyness and try not to be afraid of the fear of making errors. Thus, the above literature emphasised upon international students to transition by starting to think about themselves in a different way i.e. positioning/ recognising themselves differently vis-à-vis the discourse-based structures of their home country. Thus, ‘personal willingness to change’ was a support structure for international students’ transition. Thus, by suggesting self-support to embrace change, the above literature recognises the fact that international students go through an identity shift from being a home country student to a UK student. In the process, international students need to conceptualise, how they will become the person they foresaw themselves as becoming in transition. Consequently, these students have to speak and practically act according to their new identities to get recognition of the host academic culture. This suggests that becoming an international student is linked to a reconstruction of self-i.e., the development of the host learners’ identity.

#### **2.4.4 Networking Structures**

A huge body of literature views online and offline networking as a mean to overcome international students challenges in transition in the following way.

##### **2.4.4.1 Connection with Friends as a Substitute of Family**

Networking with friends to overcome homesickness is also discussed in literature as providing a support structure. In a large longitudinal study, McKimm and Wilkinson (2015) found that international students initially gain familiarity with academic peers during transition, and gradually after ‘becoming, being and belonging’, they develop



mastery in their field and they identify themselves with their student community rather than their family (p. 842). A key aspect of international students' transition is they begin to see themselves from within the community where they study and network with host country friends (Lin, 2012; Hussey & Smith, 2010; Gibbs *et al.*, 2004). Thus, with time and networking during transition, international students shift their attachment from family to friends and see friends as family substitute.

Awareness of homesickness and isolation among international students is not a recent discovery; however, previous literature (Pedersen, 1995) has described it as culture shock, whereas recent literature (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015; Wu & Hammond) termed it as cultural bump. This down grading of international students' transition might be due to the establishment of family connections through various communication channels after the advent of the internet. A large number of published studies (Binsahl *et al.* 2015; McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015; Wu & Hammond) describe the link between social media and international students' homesickness. Wu and Hammond (2011) reported 'social networking sites ... facilitate a sense of connection with family and friends back home and indeed across the world' (p. 436). Similarly, in a recent cross-cultural study, Binsahl *et al.* (2015) found that Saudi female students use social networking sites for maintaining connectivity and bonding with family while they are temporarily out of their home country. The above discussion is summarised as social networking sites and networking with friends act as a support structure for international students to overcome homesickness and gain academic competence. Thus, during family dimension transition, international students blend the boundaries of their family, friends and institutions (to be explained later).

#### **2.4.4.2 Maintaining Ties though Social Networking Sites**

Social networking sites are seen as a growing support structure for international students' social capital, psychological wellbeing and adaptation to the host university (Ellison *et al.*, 2007; Stefanone *et al.*, 2011; Sawyer, 2011; Kim *et al.*, 2009). Online sites give students the opportunity to create online profiles, build new relationships and maintain friendship patterns in transition (Wu & Hammond, 2011; Ryan *et al.*, 2011; Ismail, 2010; Boyd & Ellison, 2007). After moving abroad, during initial phase of transition, international students use social networking sites to cope with adjustment stress (McKimm &

Wilkinson, 2015; Wu & Hammond, 2011). Woodley and Meredith (2012, p. 3) found that Facebook helps students' transition to the university by developing, maintaining and extending both online and on-campus social networks. Woodley and Meredith (2012, p.4) compared the ethical and technological issues of Facebook with its advantages of being cost effective and student friendly, and suggested that universities may consider faculty Facebook pages as a strategy to academically and socially sustain international students at the host university. Woodley and Meredith (2012) further found that in faculty Facebook pages, the university's transition officer generates the content, which is mostly bidirectional (as students post questions and respond to the posts of others). Thus, through interactive activity on Facebook, international students achieve a sense of community and belonging in the host university. Further, in terms of academic growth, international students use online communities to collaborate, exchange messages, share knowledge, and interact with their friends in the host country (Sawyer, 2011). Thus, during the process of transition, online networking helps students to go through multi-layered shifts in social and professional identity formation.

The above discussion concluded that social networking sites not only overcome distances, but it also provides online identity to international student. These sites enable students to make personal profiles and get connected with close friends and family in the home country and become members of a virtual campus in the host country. Thus, social networking sites blur the boundaries of family, institution and social dimensions in transition.

#### **2.2.4.3 Peer Group Discussion for Self-Learning**

The role of integrated peer group academic discussions for self-mentoring is discussed in literature at length (Wu & Hammond, 2011; McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015). In this regards, Spiro *et al.* (2012) termed informal peer group activities as 'phased scaffolding', where international students get the chance to negotiate their educational practices among peers prior to its application. More precisely, McKimm and Wilkinson (2015) advocated peer support as a strategy to satisfy academic challenges and develop international students' understanding of the curriculum. Thus, McKimm and Wilkinson's study suggests that networking with peers overcome institutional challenges. The study further showed the positive effects of peer mentoring on developing multicultural norms, values and nuances

for international students' cultural competence, professional socialisation, acculturation and identity formation. On similar grounds, Bakar (2013) found the multi-ethnic peer group approach particularly helpful for Asian students' capacity building in independent learning and sociocultural adjustment.

The above discussion concluded that informal collaborative peer support groups not only enhance international students' academic competence, but can also enable them to negotiate, rationalise and abridge their identity shifts across the transition from a non-UK setting to a UK academic setup.

#### **2.4.4.3 Participation in Campus Societies**

Campus societies are emphasised in literature as a support structure for international students' social adaptation (Wu & Hammond, 2011). Coles and Swam (2012) discussed the efficiency of academic societies in supporting students' scholastic abilities, whereas nationality- and activity-based societies in creating a multicultural campus. Literature states that International students, soon after their arrival to the host institution, join various societies on the basis of nationality, accommodation, food, hobbies and shared interests to start networking (Coles & Swami, 2012). These societies are physical and online. Students virtually access, manage and arrange online campus activities, from their home settings (Wu and Hammond, 2011). International students use Internet to strengthen their ties with friends on campus, which help them to understand the cultural practices of the host institutions (Lin, 2012).

Students develop friendship in campus societies, which acts as social capital, for the rest of their life. In this regards, Putnam (2000) discusses various forms of social capital with the terms 'bridging' and 'bonding' in a way that bridging social capital consists of loose relationships (weak ties), which serve as bridges, connecting students to different networks, allowing them to access new perspectives. Additionally, bonding social capital provides emotional support through strong relationships (strong ties), such as close friends, which exerts greater influence on students' interests and actions.

The above discussion states that campus societies enable students to collectively organise, manage and participate in the online and on-campus activities. Students' engagements with multinational friends in campus societies enable them to understand and practice a

multicultural self in the host institutions. Thus, campus societies play a specific role in international students' cultural and professional transition during studying abroad.

#### **2.4.4.3 Establishing Co-national, Multinational and Host National Friends**

Literature discusses networking of international students' with co-national, multinational and host national friends during transition in various ways (Lin, 2012; Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011; Knapper & Copley, 2000). Co-national students' group are seen in literature as those who are of the same nationality and share the same cultural background, such as language and history (Iversen, 2009). Similarly, multinational students are recognised as those students, who develop a bond together for being 'strangers in a strange land' (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2010, p. 283). According to Lin (2012) co-national friends, by the virtue of sharing the same language, lifestyle, customs and traditions, network with each other and provide mutual help in a more favourable environment. On similar grounds, Hendrickson *et al.* (2010) stated that co-national friends enhance a mutual understanding of the new culture by discussing their experiences of social interaction with the same emotions and intellectual exchange. However, in contrast to the above, Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) found that students who did not establish connection with co-cultural friends, but rather connected with multinational friends were personally more adjusted. Further, Sawyer (2011, p. 9) found that initially, after becoming aware of the differences among multinational student groups, there may be bewilderment and frustration, but after analysing different aspects, students immerse themselves into the others' culture and begin to understand their society. On the same grounds, Ali and Kohun (2009) argued that collaboration of the multinational students' groups, with diverse backgrounds increases their chances of social integration into the programme and results in successful completion of their study.

Hendrickson *et al.* (2011) found that international students, by networking with host students, obtain fluency in English and use university facilities in a better way, which enable them to complete academic goals and get higher grades. Likewise, Hendrickson *et al.* discussed international and host national students grouping as particularly helpful in having a greater sense of identity at the University.

#### **2.4.4.4 Processual Social Transition**

Literature discussed international students' support in social transition in a specific pattern, where they initially position themselves as an outsider in the host context and therefore feel talking to the host national students as a huge 'identity shift' (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015). Consequently, soon after arrival, they establish connection with on campus co-national students (Wu & Hammond, 2011). In this regards, researchers reported that, international students' primary friendship networks consist of co-national friends (Maundeni, 2001; Neri & Ville, 2008; Kim *et al.*, 2009; Lin, 2012). Further, after joining the host institution, international students engage themselves in various societies on the basis of nationality, accommodation, food, hobbies and shared interests to start networking (Coles & Swami, 2012). Gradually, these students develop friendship with multinational and host national friends to understand the culture of the host institutions (Lin, 2012). Consequently, through networking international students' understand the host culture and their discourses i.e., the position of men versus women, a way to take the lead in the meetings or the attitudes in dress and appearance (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015). Chen (2005, p. 7–8) termed social transition as 'unfolding the self' and explained it as 'a process of transforming and moving oneself from the lower to higher level of the developmental ladder of human beings, which represents the process of unceasingly edifying, liberating, and purifying personal attributes of the self'.

The above discussion concluded that in the process of transition, international students go through identity shifts, where they initially interact with co-national friends to provide mutual help in understandings the host culture. Afterward, through multi-cultural friendship groups, students immerse themselves into others' cultures and try to understand their culture. Gradually, they group with host national students and obtain fluency in English, etc., to develop new identities. Thus, the socio-cultural transition of international students is a longitudinal process of identity construction, where a student starts with their home country understanding by grouping with co-national friends and gradually networks with multicultural and host national friendship groups to construct new identities.

#### **2.4.5 Summary**

Section 2.4 discussed the review question, 'how the support strategies for international students' transition have been researched?' The review found that for supporting students'

smooth transition, literature suggested reforms to universities, tutors and international. The universities were advised to ensure the inclusivity of international students in specific terms. That is, adopting flexibility in the exam system, allocating independent study spaces and promoting cultural diversity in the institution. Tutors were advised to diversify their teaching strategies. That is, improving students' critical skills, bridging international and home students in collaborative in-class group activities, giving clear instructions, assigning extra time and looking for areas of intervention. I argue that the suggested support in literature is limited in a sense that it could only help students with the logistical element i.e. the planning, implementing and controlling the efficient and effective flow of information to meet certain requirements. Further, even though the reviewed literature emphasised that universities and tutors need to be familiarised with cultural diversity, still the support offered to the student is mainly focused on students' academic success, in the terms defined by the institution rather than students' thinking and feeling in transition. Further, literature suggested international students to redefine home academic culture embrace change and achieve competence in the host institution's culture through self-effort (Barron *et al.*, 2010). I argue that, it in itself is a demand from international student to go through an identity shift from being a home country student to a UK student, as students need to conceptualise how to become the person they foresaw themselves as becoming.

The above discussion concluded that in terms of support, the literature insisted upon students to adapt to the host institutions' ways of being a students' in transition. Resultantly, students' adaptation to the acts and practices of the host institution is focused on achieving grades, rather than taking them as individuals. It is well established that international students need support in transition, however, the suggested support is mostly result-oriented and institution-based and the discussion around students' individual cultural subjectivities is still an under researched area. Thus, as previously discussed in the review by Bakar's study, there is a need of methodology specific future research in soliciting international students' individual, cultural and subjective experiences of transition.

## **2.5 How have identities of international students in transition been researched?**

### **2.5.1 Stereotypical Representation of International Students**

Literature (Koehne, 2005; Brown & Brown, 2013) on identities in transition discusses that international students have stereotypical regional images on the basis of group images and

identities among staff and students of the host University. Brown and Brown (2013) found that international students face real and perceived challenges to their national self-images. Similarly, Wadsworth, *et al.* (2007) discussed international students', 'perceived personal-enacted identity gap', which according to the authors, 'mediated the relationships among acculturation, discrimination, and educational satisfaction' (p. 64). The term 'perceive' in the above two studies seemed to indicate a failure in understanding international students' self-image. Le Ha (2009) reported that due to stereotypical images around English language ability and being Asian, these students have a sense of self in positioning themselves in intercultural communication. Similarly, Fotovatian and Miller (2014) criticised the negative effects of the stereotypical identities, which underpin the heterogeneous experiences of international students in the host universities. Thus, due to the stereotypical images of being Asian, students might position themselves as outsiders in the host university activities.

In this regards, Koehne (2005) study reported that 'some discourses construct closed and limited subject positions for students based on difference and sameness. Others are more fluid and complex and are based on reinvention and hybridity. Students show resistance to some positioning made available to them' (p.140). The author further says that international students' struggle to assimilate within the discourses of the host institution are just as much part of the transition as any other active resistance to the discourses.

Brown and Brown (2013) reported that international students get emotional in collective identity threats. In this regard, Literature (Li *et al.* 2016) found the significance of ethnicity on students' relationships with others, acculturation, and attitudes toward seeking professional counselling services. Le Ha (2009) asked authorities to promote new ways for giving students the ownership of English in multiple domains so that new identities are produced and reproduced. Le Ha considered it vital to listen to students' voices and not to assume their identities through stereotypical images Harvey (2016) recognised international students in two ways: a deficit model and a surplus model. The author explained that in a 'deficit model, international students have been stereotyped as passive, uncritical, reluctant to participate orally in class and unwilling to engage with domestic students', whereas 'in contrast, the surplus model characterises international students as valuable resources from which Western academia can learn (pp. 370-371). The 'deficit model' (in Harvey's terms) leave a particular stereotypical impression on international

students, due to which they recognise themselves in a particular way in the host institution as according to Urrieta (2007, p. 107) ‘identity is also very much about how people come to understand themselves, how they come to “figure” who they are, through the “worlds” that they participate in and how they relate to others within and outside of these worlds’. Literature discusses the interplay of agency in international students’ external observation of self. In this regards, Davies *et al.*, (2011) study found that during studying abroad, international student recognises themselves with the subject they study, rather than national images. Davies *et al.*, (2011) states that in the transitional process other individuals define students in a certain way (e.g. as a therapist because they were studying therapy) that international students develop in them a certain sense of self, or socially construct them in a distinct way. Davies *et al.*, (2011) study further discussed the importance of agency in international students’ external observation of self to transform their internal selves in the process of becoming a therapist. On similar ground, Stets and Burke (2003) explain the self as emerging out of the mind. They found that humans have the ability to reflect back upon themselves by taking themselves as objects. Stets and Burke further said that individuals’ ability to reflect upon them as an object emerges from the point of view of others with whom they interact. Stets and Burke’s (2003) study on the interplay of individual and social characteristic of the self, indicated a gap in literature on the role of agency in transition.

In this regards, Tian’s (2008) study urged the authorities for not over-generalising the depiction of ‘the Chinese learner’ rather emphasised the need to understand the complexity of individual agency in transition. Further, Harvey (2016) emphasised upon higher education practitioners to interrogate institutional ‘beliefs, practices and policies for their conduciveness to genuine intercultural dialogue, particularly when internationalisation agendas are increasingly driven by economic imperatives rather than a desire for ‘international understanding’ and ‘learning to live together’ (p. 380). Thus, there is a dire need to conduct qualitative studies to enquire students’ agency in transitional identity construction at the individual level on the question– how international students, think, feel and believe about their stereotypical recognition in transition.



### **2.5.2 The Journey from Home-Host Academic Culture**

Educational theories have thoroughly conceptualised learning as connected to identity (Brown & Campione, 1990; Ligorio *et al.*, 2013; Wenger, 1998; Wortham, 2004). In this regard, Cadman (1997) states that international students struggle in academic and critical writing is due to their pre-arrival academic identities, which are formed in the home country education system. However, during transition, international students participate in the host country's educational activities (Ligorio *et al.*, 2013). Accordingly, they interact with local culture, fellow students, academic staff, university administrators and the wider research community, (Cotterall, 2011, p. 57) which 'affects the way they perceive and present themselves' (Ligorio *et al.*, 2013, p. 351). Consequently, during the process of transition these students construct new identities (Cotterall (2011, p. 57).

### **2.5.3 Developing Global Identities**

Bagnall's (2015) study reported international students' new identities in transition to the host country, as becoming global citizens, who affiliate themselves with the world rather than the country. The author further states, that these students sustain their global identities throughout their life. On similar grounds, Gu and Schweinfurt's (2015) study reported that after studying abroad, international students return home not only with new competences and skills but also with a new view of the world. Gu and Schweisfurth termed studying abroad as a profound identity transformation experience, where these students go back to their home country with a new sense of self. The authors further found that these students distinguish themselves from those, among whom they have lived throughout their lives. Chang's (2011) study found international students' personal biographical experiences have a stronger influence on their negotiated social identities. Thus, every international student has a unique and individual personal history, which is different from his or her family members, conational and co-cultural fellows. Similarly, Seda (2009) reported that male and female students' cope with acculturation and psycho-social adaptation differently in transition. Supportably, Oikonomidou and Williams (2013) study found that, despite many issues, Japanese female students tried to find ways to integrate together in their social context. The reason might be in the differences in cultural expectations for men and women around the world. For example, Binsahl *et al.* (2015)

found that Saudi female students, unlike Saudi male students, were more careful in posting real and accurate identities on their Facebook profiles due to cultural considerations

The above discussion suggests that the international students' identity, even though is created from the home country academic system, still it is always in a process of transformation due to transition. During studying abroad, international students acquire linguistic competence, learn new skills, interact with others and develop new self-understandings of being a global citizen. Furthermore, international students after completion of study usually go back to their home countries and sustain their new identities. The above discussion concluded that international students might face identity transition differently, based on their personal developmental history and gender. Thus, there is a need to conduct gender specific research on students' identities construction during transition. To conclude the review found that international students during transition experience multi-layered identity shifts. These students network with other individuals in the host country, to make a sense of self in their individual transformation in transition. The review found that female students might face transition differently than men due to gender role differences in their home cultural reality. The review identified a gap in the literature on the question– how international students, think, feel and believe about their social transition.

#### **2.5.4 Establishment of Family in the Host Country**

Literature (Ye, 2006; Neri & Ville, 2008; Ryan, 2011; McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015) on international students' transition discussed psychological issues relating to international students' homesickness and isolation. McKimm and Wilkinson (2015) found that international students during transition gain familiarity with academic peers and gradually identify themselves with their friends rather than their families (p. 842). However, what remains unclear is whether or not this finding is a clear representation of identity. Can international students resolve their psychological issues by substituting family with friends smoothly or they deal with different perceptions, while going through real life transformation during transitioning to higher education? However, there is no literature to understand homesickness or international students' connection with family from collectivistic culture during students' transition to the host country.

The above discussion concluded that literature concerning international students' family in transition discusses their emotional isolation and homesickness. The literature suggests that emotional isolation of the student from the family during transition can create psychological issues, which may restrict their adaptation in the host institution. Establishing a social network in the host country can help support students homesickness and isolation. The review identified a gap in literature as to how an international student thinks, feel and believe about family during transition.

### **2.5.5 Summary**

Section 2.5 discussed the review question, how identities of international students in transition have been researched? The review found, that students' identities are seen in the literature as an administrative construct of the host institution, whereas students' struggles (section 2.3) in learning were seen in the epistemologies of home country academic culture. Further, literature states that during interaction with host academic culture, international students become global citizens and after graduating they sustain those new identities in their home country. This suggests that international students' identities formation in transition might be a permanent rather than a singular state in their life.

The above discussion concludes that students' positioning of self as an international student in transition may be in the agency to interplay between home and host cultural characteristic of self. Therefore, students' identity construction in transition could be seen as a real problem of self-identity going through transformation. However, there is no literature to explore how an individual student think, feel and believe about their changing identities during transition. This intertwining form of the process of identity transformation requires methodologically specific longitudinal research to explore students' thinking, feeling, believing at an individual level.

### **Part 2.6: Conclusion**

To conclude this chapter, I conducted the review on international students' experiences, support and identities in transition. In the process, I found that there is no literature on identities in the transition of female Pakistani students to UK higher education. In Pakistani context, literature on identity is limited to static identities that is gender, religion and national identity (Durrani& Dunne, 2010). Further, my study found that the issue of transition is seen broadly from Western perspective as most of the literature on

international students' transition is produced in western countries and institutions (as obvious from the statistics of the document search in the literature review). Thus, my study which even though in the topic (exploring Pakistani female students' transitions) itself is an original contribution to the small but growing body of literature (Hu, 2012) but even further more generally my study will make an attempt to reveal culture-specific complexities of individual students' identities and agency in transition to UK higher education. To consider academic and non-academic self of the international student, I found four recurring dimensions of their life in transition. Consequently, I brought together various codes from the reviewed literature to understand these four dimensions. The following section explains how these four dimensions emerged. They have been outlined and defined below, along with my interpretation, a few examples of codes and the review findings to give a complete picture of each of the four dimensions.

### **Family dimension of life**

Within the literature, the example codes that emerged were 'connection with family' (Gu & Schweisfarth, 2015), 'family life' (Binsahl *et al.*, 2015; Khan *et al.*, 2015), 'homesickness' (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015) and 'isolation from family' (Ye, 2006; Neri & Ville, 2008; Ryan, 2011; McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015; Wu & Hammond, 2015). These codes encompass the whole paradigm of thoughts and feelings connected to the transition that being an international student would experience that is moving from a close-knit family of blood relatives to a place of higher education abroad. The review found that in the aspect of family dimension, there is literature on students' homesickness (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015), psychological challenges (Rienties, 2014), and isolation (Ryan, 2011) due to loss of connection with family. Furthermore, there is literature that states that students establish connections with family through social networking sites (Ryan, 2011; Spiro *et al.*, 2012) but they developed stronger connections with those studying their subjects rather than the family (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015). The literature, however, did not say why students develop stronger connections with friends rather than family and how international students think, feel and believe about family in transition.

### **Institutional dimension of life**

The few example codes from the literature are 'academic success' (Hussey & Smith, 2010), 'research' (Barron *et al.*, 2010), 'learning pedagogies' (Medland, 2016), 'skills'

(Reintes *et al.*, 2014), ‘teaching’ (Horobin & Thom, 2015), ‘education’ (Harvey, 2016), ‘universities’ (Simpson, 2015) and ‘academic expectations’ (Quan *et al.*, 2013). These codes discuss the move of international students from one educational context to another. The review found that literature (Rienties, 2014; Wu & Hammond, 2011) related to institutional dimension transition stated that international students experience transition differently than others. For example, European students experience the transition to UK university life differently from Asian students. My review found that transition is not just about a student who is coming from a non-British context to a British university for learning, but more specifically, ‘transition’ is bound up with ‘identity’. The review found that literature does not address the notion of international students’ transition in its fullest sense at the individual level. On one hand there are studies (Robson and Turner, 2007; Barron *et al.*, 2010) that says that students from highly collectivistic cultures face greater difficulties in transition. On the other hand there are studies (Medland 2016; Reintes *et al.*, 2014; Horobin & Thom, 2015; Simpson, 2015) that support these students’ logistical elements of transition, but there seems to be no literature to fill the gap between these two streams on the topic of context specific, individual, gendered study on international students’ identities transition from home country to the UK higher education.

The above discussion concluded that the practices of the higher education system want to mould students in accordance to the institutional need as they conceptualise students’ transition as institutional only, which is not a full, but rather only part of the various dimensions of students life.

### **Recognition dimension of life**

Students upon leaving their home country take on another dimension relating to their national identity and their sense of being perceived as an outsider within the host culture of their new country. This relates to a sense of positionality and how students may perceive themselves and how they may be perceived by others. Therefore there are two parts of this dimension that is their own sense of self and the way that others may label or recognise them as a student. For example, in the codes from the literature these students were seen as ‘Chinese students’ (Simpson, 2015), ‘international students’ (Quan *et al.*, 2013), ‘Saudi students’ (Binsahl *et al.*, 2015) and ‘East Asian students’ (Khan *et al.*, 2014). These codes view international students with a new status, through which they may acquire a new sense

of self, a new recognition, which could be positive or negative. That is seen as a process of becoming an international student from a home student. The review found that in the aspect of recognition dimension, tutors recognised Asian students as respectful, hard-working and burdensome in response to their teaching in class. In this regards, international students are recognised by the stereotypical images of their home country, which may give them a sense of self, which they resist or conform to, based on their individual subjectivity.

The above discussion concluded that there is a need to conduct a methodological, student-centred, in-depth, qualitative study at individual level, to consider international students thinking feeling and believing while negotiating home and host culture.

### **Social dimension of life**

The few example codes from the literature are ‘cultural norms’ (Robson & Turner, 2007; Barron *et al.*, 2010), ‘friendship’ (Lin, 2012; Hussey & Smith, 2010; Gibbs *et al.*, 2004), ‘global citizen’ (Bagnall, 2015), and ‘Facebook’ (Woodley and Meredith, 2012; Binsahl *et al.* 2015). These codes consider the student’s social, cultural and online networking with others. This includes both new social relationships as well as maintaining existing ones from their country of origin. In the social dimension, the review discussed international students’ experiences as multi-layered identity shifts from country to country and culture to culture. In this regards, the reviewed literature found that students from highly collectivistic cultures experience self-disclosure quite challenging. Literature suggested that international students join campus societies (Coles & Swami, 2012; Wu & Hammond, 2011) and develop networking with co-national (Lin, 2012), host national (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011) and international students (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015). In online networking, Woodley and Meredith (2012) found that prior even entering into the host country, international students use Facebook to connect with host institution, therefore transition may begin prior physical move. The review stated that during transition students initially interact with co-national students to feel at home. Afterward, they develop friendship ties with multinational and host national students that help in gaining linguistic academic and cultural competence. However, the review discussed students’ emotional sensitivity to ethnic identities, based on their country’s global standing. Further, a group of researchers (Binsahl *et al.* ’s, 2015; Seda, 2009; Oikonomidoy & Williams, 2013) reported that due to

gender based differences in cultural identities of the international students, female students may face transition differently from male students.

Thus, the social dimension of the students' transition identified a gap in literature to conduct context specific, research on female student thinking, feeling and believing in transition that begins with the start of the academic year and continues till the end of the year at the host institution.

The above mentioned four dimensions of students' life in transition would allow me to add to the neglected areas of literature, as the current institutional administrative structure in transition is a deficit model, as it is not addressing, firstly, the broader question of non-academic issues and secondly, the notion of transition. The four dimensions discussed above share many characteristics with the Higher Education Academy report on the topic, 'student transition in higher education: concept, theories and practices' written by O'Donnell *et al.* (2016). In this report O'Donnell *et al.* presented 'a review of the literature on higher education transition' and discussed results from their empirical study about current practices in transition initiatives from a variety of higher education institutions' in the UK (p.3). O'Donnell *et al.*'s (2016) report explained transition building on the argument of Ecclestone (2006), who define transition with four themes: institutional transition (the move from one educational context to another); social and contextual dimensions of transition (the impact of context upon individual identity that lead to shifts through cognition and emotion); transition as a process of being and becoming (the rejection of reliance upon particular institutions or contexts); and transition as a permanent human state (unlike the first three concepts which suggest transition involves stability and flux, the fourth concepts views the whole life as an iterative process) ( p.5). In O'Donnell *et al.*'s study, three of the four themes (including institutional transition, social transition, and transition as a process of being and becoming) are similar to those dimensions in my study. However, the aforementioned study being conducted through a Western lens did not include international students' families as a theme in transition. This could be because as a product of Western society- with its focus on individualism – O'Donnell *et al.* (2016) may not be aware of the importance of the family unit and wider community within Pakistani culture. Therefore my study on the family theme, would add to O'Donnell *et al.*'s study.

. The literature review leads my study to the following research question:

1. 'How do Pakistani female students narrate their identities, before, during and after transitioning to the UK?' To answer the above question I created the following sub questions:

- How do female Pakistan postgraduate students narrate their family, institution, recognition and social dimension of life at the start of joining the UK University?
- How they define their family, institution, recognition and social dimension of life after three, six and nine months of transitioning to the UK University?

The next chapter is about the theoretical framework of the current study.



## Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

This Chapter discusses the theoretical foundation of my study that is about female Pakistani students' identities construction in transition to UK University. The chapter is divided into three parts:

The first part discusses the terms 'identity', 'identity in practice' and Gee's (1996) 'Discourse' identities' and their meaning in the current study. Identities in the study are considered as multiple and on-going construct in life (Gee, 2000, p. 99; Holland *et al.*, 1998). For example, as shown in Figure 1, a student may have cultural, family, work, academic, discourse, religion, gender, and appearance identities.

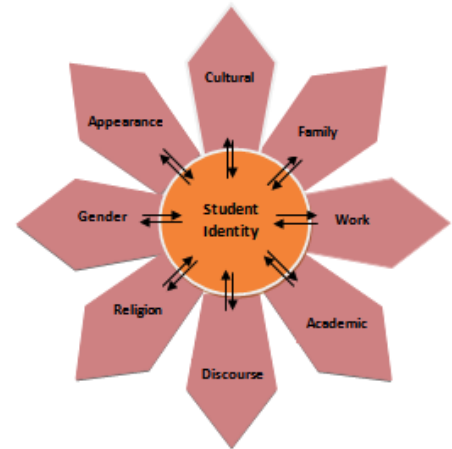


Figure 1: Multiple Identities of a Student

The second part illuminates cultural models and positional identities from Holland *et al.* (1998) book, *Identity and Agency in Cultural World* to understand transition as a change in identity. Holland *et al.* (1998) bring together thinking from different theorists, including Bourdieu, Vygotsky and Bakhtin to shed further light on how people construct identities through their engagement in social worlds. In my study, participants' narratives of transition revealed a change in their subjective inner experiences (their thinking, feelings and believing) around a conflict in relation to their past, present and possible, which was similar to Holland *et al.*'s approach on identity construction. In this way, Holland *et al.*'s theory justifies my claim that my participants went through the process of identity construction to a certain extent. Thus, Holland *et al.*'s book is like a conceptual toolbox that I can draw upon; however, inevitably certain tools are more or less useful for understanding certain cases. Further, to avoid complication in the text, I did not use all of Holland *et al.*'s conceptual terms (apart from 'Figured World' 'Positionality' 'cultural models') in my thesis but still; I used these terms in the current chapter to make the theory understandable.

The third part gives the example of a Pakistani woman according to Gee and Holland *et al.* conceptual frames and discusses the key concepts, 'position' and 'empowerment'. Furthermore, I put data in the theoretical chapter to conceptualise the data and to make the

theory connected with the focus of the study. Thus, data in this chapter are just examples, rather than actual analysis. The analysis takes place later in the thesis in Chapters Five and Six.

### **Part 3.1: Identity**

Identity can be seen as single or multiple, over time and according to contingency (Brown & Campion, 1990; Ligorio *et al.*, 2013; Wenger, 1998; Wortham, 2004). In my study, I combined Gee (2000) and Holland *et al.*'s (1998) definitions to develop a stance on identity. According to Gee, identity is 'being recognised as a 'certain kind of person', in a given context...in this sense of the term, all people have multiple identities connected not to their 'internal states', but to their performances in society' (2000, p. 99). In accordance with Gee, I understand identity as performance, and therefore analysed the interview data and the timeline and relational map artefacts as their performance (practice) of their identity in the research. Gee further states that

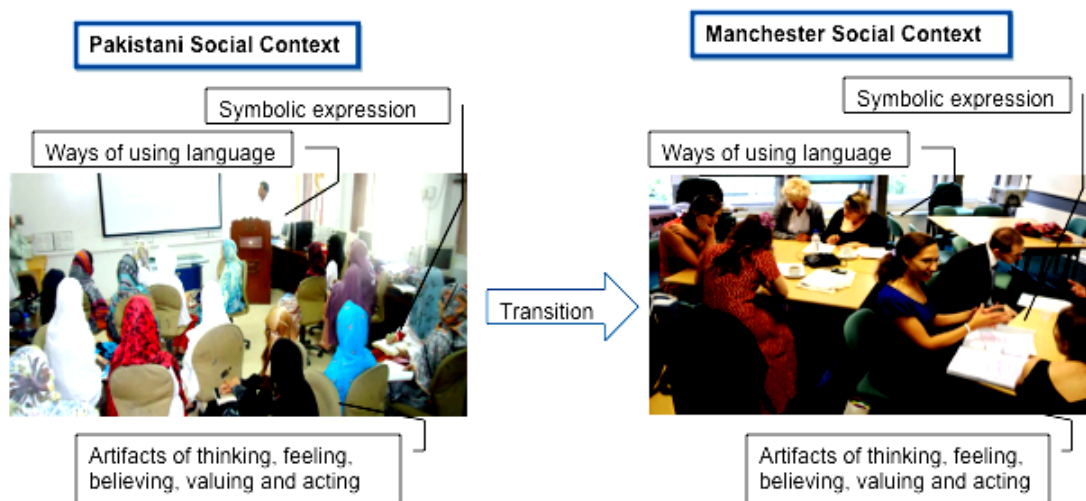
When any human being acts and interacts in a given context, others recognise that person as acting and interacting as a certain "kind of person" or even as several different "kinds" at once... A person might be recognised as... academic, kindergarten teacher, 'at risk' student, and so on and so forth, through countless possibilities. The 'kind of person' one is recognised as 'being', at a given time and place, can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context, and, of course, can be ambiguous or unstable (Gee, 2000, p.1).

In terms of identity, I interpret participants' narratives to see as to how they position themselves in relation to the cultural models. As Holland *et al.* (1998) frame identity as positioning in relation to cultural models. Under Holland *et al.*'s view of identity, 'people tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are' (p.3). Thus, in my study, identity is defined as an answer to the question, who I am at this moment in time and in a given context? I am interested in identity as performed in a narrative. That is the way participants narrate themselves in the interview to me.

#### **3.1.1 'Discourse' Identities ('with an Upper Case D')**

Gee provides a framework for seeing different perspectives on identity that are performed or imposed on others. Gee's (1996) states, 'Discourse' identities 'with an upper case D is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions,

and artefacts, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or “social network” (Gee, 1996, p. 131). Gee’s framework is based in his work on discourse analysis and the idea of Discourse being the way we present ourselves as particular people in particular contexts through ways of thinking, acting, believing etc. Identity is the recognition, or imposition in some cases, of that Discourse (e.g. Discourse of being a Pakistani woman). In this regard, I made sure to keep the question (‘who am I at this point in time and in this context’?) central in the entire four-generation interviews, to elicit narratives of the participants as particular individuals in particular contexts. Further, the above question was kept in mind during the selection of photos and the creation of the timeline and relational map to give centrality to participants’ voice and context. Thus, participants’ elicitation of the visuals enabled them to choose their unique way, in which they want to present their perceptions of their context. Figure 2 uses artefacts (the two pictures) to mediate the actions of postgraduate students in Pakistan and the UK context. According to Holland *et al.*, (1998, pp. 60–61), artefacts are ‘mediators in human action and psychological tools’. Looking at these pictures, there seem many differences in the two contexts, including classroom culture, dress code, pedagogies etc.



**Figure 2: Transition from Pakistani Reality to UK Reality**

Figure 2 suggests that participants’ undergoing transition between educational systems may need to modify their ‘thinking, feeling, believing, acting, speaking and expression’ from Pakistani social context to the UK social context. These modifications are complex

subjectivities of the individual in transition, as they are embedded in many layers of social and contextual understandings, which can have an impact on their identities. I want to explore participants' thinking, feeling, and believing, to understand what they bring to the interview, regarding who they were, who they are and who they can be during transition. Thus, the interview process can be revealing for the participants, as it is a coproduction between interviewer and interviewee. Participants thinking may enable me to understand the complexity of identity, agency and culture in transitioning from home to the UK higher education. In this regard, I drew extensively upon cultural models.

### **3.1.2 Cultural Models**

According to Holland *et al.* (1998), cultural models are 'stereotypical distillates, generalisation from past experience that people make. They are akin to...the processes that maintain the self in continual change, call arrests-representation of self at a particular time that people try to reassert, even under new conditions' (p.55). Gee (1999, p. 60) writes that using a word or phrase, not in terms of its meaning, but against a set of socio-cultural assumptions indicates the existence of a cultural model. Thus, cultural models are metaphors of the society that connects an individual's mind to sociocultural norms and inform their actions. 'Cultural models are underlying maxims or principles that determine why and how we behave as we do' (Bruce, 2005, p. 64). Cultural models (CMs) are socially shared – they can exist at national or societal level, and they can also apply to smaller groups. For example, a particular family might have a set of cultural models that they share in the group. Early marriage is a CM for a Pakistani female. Holland *et al.* (1998, p. 55) termed Cultural models as 'conceptualisations of Figured Worlds (see 3.2)'.

In Sofia's example below, I showed how I conducted the analysis of cultural models in my study. Sofia said, 'my father was not ready for my early marriage but [there] was ... social pressure. Pressure from my mother and elders, as in our Eastern culture, we cannot wait for [our] daughters' ... marriages. If we have good options for them, we should not keep them at home just for study purposes' (Sofia: 1).

In the quotation above, Sofia has explained the cultural model of 'early marriage'. Sofia positioned herself in alignment to the cultural model by stating 'if we have good options... we should not keep them at home just for study purposes'. Thus, in alignment to the cultural model, Sofia gave preference to early marriage over study in her first interview. In

this way, I considered participants' perception of how they position themselves around Pakistani cultural models during transition and determine change in their identities over time.

### **Part 3.2: Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds**

In order to put my research evidence in a perspective, I used Holland *et al.*'s (1998) book *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, which is about how identity is constructed and performed. In the book, Holland *et al.* bring together thinking from different theorists, particularly Bourdieu, Vygotsky and Bakhtin to step further in understanding how people construct multiple identities, through their engagement in social worlds. In doing so, they put forward conceptual tools for analysis i.e. Figured Worlds (FWs), positionality, space of authoring and world making. In the current study, I will not critique, unpack or analyse the theories of Vygotsky, Bourdieu, and Bakhtin other than through Holland *et al.*'s interpretation.

#### **3.2.1 Figured World**

Holland *et al.* (1998) initiated with the interpretive framework of Figured Worlds, which are defined as 'socially and culturally constructed realm[s] of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognised, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others' (p.52). Holland *et al.* states that Figured Worlds are 'realms of interpretation'. Places such as the parental home, school, the in-law's home and profession, are some of the Figured Worlds or sub-spaces of Pakistan. 'Particular characters and actors are recognised', indicates that Figured Worlds are populated by figures (most influential others within the Figured World) e.g. father, teacher, husband, etc. These figures are recognised with a certain status in the hierarchy of the power structures of participants' Figured Worlds. 'Significance is assigned to certain acts' refers to the cultural models of each Figured World e.g. 'obedience to father'. 'Particular outcomes are valued over others' refers to the cultural believes e.g., in Sofia's case, she and the surrounding community valued the cultural model 'early marriage' over 'study' for girls in Pakistan. Figured worlds include figures, cultural models and artefacts. Artefacts surely include concepts and language, and indeed cultural models, also Artefacts are – verbal, gestural, and material production- (Holland *et al.*, 1998, p.17) to which individuals of the Figured Worlds collectively attribute meaning for example a piece of cloth attributed

as a 'veil' is an artefact of a Pakistani woman. People use artefacts 'to affect their own and others' thinking, feeling, and behaviour' (Holland *et al.*, 1998, p. 50).

Thus, to understand transition to UK higher education, it is helpful for understanding the values (cultural models) of the Figured World and to know-how, in relationships, these figures, cultural models and artefacts influence people (in the hierarchy of power structures), how individuals position themselves in the Figured World and how they are perceived and positioned by the people of the Figured World. Consequently, due to continuous embeddedness of a cultural model of individual in a certain position within the Figured World, certain cultural models (e.g. early marriage) become fossilised in an individual's personality to the extent that they become the dispositional identities/habitus (see 3.2.1.1) of the individual. In this way, certain sociocultural discourses (identities) perpetuate themselves in society in an on-going and never-ending cycle until an individual uses agency (Holland *et al.*, 1998, explains autonomy of self as self-agency as on p. 192), and improvisation (see disposition/habitus) to merge or rupture different discourses. Individuals rupture these discourses, through their thinking, feeling, believing during the narrative, which links Figured Worlds to Gee's (1996, p.131) Discourse identities (capital D).

### **3.2.1.1 Disposition/ Habitus**

According to Holland *et al.* (1998, p. 136), 'social positions, in other words, become dispositions through participation in, identification with and development of expertise within the Figured World'. Habitus is therefore the result of the strong behaviour of the individual's past. Holland *et al.* (1998, p. 7) took the term from Bourdieu, who used it to explain improvisations: 'the sort of impromptu actions that occur when our past, brought to the present as habitus, meets with a particular combination of circumstances and conditions for which we have no set response' (pp. 17–18). In my study, participants had enacted their Pakistan identities as their habitus, due to which they were thinking feeling and believing in a particular way. For example, Sofia stated 'my father did not support me morally to choose that path and I didn't want to take an independent decision' (Sofia: 1). Thus, Sofia's habitus stopped her in taking an independent decision in the Figured World of school. Thus, habitus is an embodied act (habit) of the past, which 'constrains and affords a space of action and agency' (William, 2011, p.131). Holland *et al.* (1998, p. 302) wrote

that Vygotsky's term 'fossilisation as habitation is also pertinent to Bourdieu's conception of the habitus'. Thus, an individual's past is fossilised in them, and they act automatically in a certain way as a habit.

### **3.2.1.2 Agency**

Holland *et al.* (1998, p. 42) defined human agency as 'the realised capacity of people to act upon their world... That capacity is the power of people to act purposively and reflectively... with one another, to reiterate and remake the world in which they live, in circumstances where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable.' Holland further says, 'the autonomy of the self or self-agency depends upon ones capacity to produce the means that organise ones' activity' (p. 192).

Further, Bruner (1996, p. 136) stated that 'experimental narrative sometimes depicts action in a way that ruptures this connection between the action and the intentional states that are its background... Some element of freedom is always implied in the narrative – some agency that can intrude on a presumed causal chain. Agency presupposes choice.' Thus, the agency is the freedom of an agent from cultural constraints to act in the world from choice and remake their world. Agency needs performance, choice and resistance. Thus, 'agency lies in the improvisations that people create in response to particular situations' (Holland *et al.*, p. 291). In this regard, the agency is also linked to Gee's (1996, p.131) Discourse identities (with capital D), which discusses an individual's thinking, feeling, believing in the narrative interview to understand identity. According to Holland *et al.*, there are different kinds of agency – improvisation and world-making. Improvisation is an individual and local form of agency and it doesn't have to produce massive radical changes, whereas world making is collective form of agency that makes more substantial kinds of changes in social structures.

### **3.2.2 Positional Identities**

Holland *et al.* then brings in Bourdieu to take note of power, which enable position in a 'field' structured by power relations of one kind or another. The authors organise or structures Figured Worlds around the position of status, power, rank, and privilege and call its role in relation to identity as 'positionality' or 'positional identities'. While Holland *et al.*'s use Bourdieu to understand power in social worlds, their focus is on identity and the sociocultural aspect of identity, for example, how people embody certain discourses based

on their position. According to Holland *et al.* (1998), ‘positional identity... is a person’s apprehension of her social position in a lived world: that is, depending on the others present, of her great or lesser access to spaces, activities, genres, and, through those genres, authoritative voices, or any voice at all’ (p 127–128). In another passage, Holland *et al.* (1998) writes that ‘identities are enacted and produced, and individuals take up positions in accordance with the day-to-day and on-the-ground relations of power, deference, and entitlement, social affiliation and distance’ (pp. 127–128).

In order to understand cultural models, positionality, improvisation, identity in practice and agency, I used Holland *et al.* ’s (1998) example:

Gyanumaya, a lower-caste woman, arrived at the house where Skinner was living in Naudada. Calling down from the second floor balcony, Skinner invited her to come in through the kitchen and up the stairs to be interviewed. But instead Gyanumaya scaled the outside of the house and climbed through an opening in the railing that enclosed the balcony. Since neither Naudadans in general nor Gyanumaya in particular was accustomed to climbing the sides of houses to reach the second floor, something called for explanation. (p. 273)

In the above example, Gyanumaya’s cultural model (i.e. the norms of the Hindu caste system), created a conflict between low caste and high caste Hindu identity, which put her into the underprivileged position of not being able to enter through the kitchen door. Gyanumaya, had three options: first, to use agency and resist the CM by entering through the kitchen door; second, to accept the cultural model and not to enter into the building at all; third, to use agency and improvise, i.e. find a way to enter the kitchen without breaking the cultural model. Thus, Gyanumaya improvised (found a way out through practice) by climbing through the sides of house. Thus, Gyanumaya’s Hindu identity put her in to the practice/action, i.e. climbing, which reflected her identity in practice. Identity in practice is when one’s identity causes them to pursue a certain action. Gyanumaya’s identity in practice is climbing the house. Thus, positional identities mean that participants may be positioned or position themselves in alignment with the cultural models or resist them based on their agency. According to Holland *et al.*, ‘agency lies in the improvisations that people create in response to particular situations’ (p. 291). Figured worlds are particular to cultural studies, as the focus is on ‘the development of identities and agency in relation to practice’ (Holland *et al.* 1998, p. 7). According to Creaby (2016), ‘Figured Worlds can be understood as the context for identity in practice, as a place of “being” and “becoming”’.



Drawing on dialogic perspectives ... and relations of power, Holland *et al.* argue that meaning is constantly negotiated through social interaction in positional cultural worlds' (p. 43).

To conclude the above discussion, in Holland *et al.*'s framework, all these various concepts exist within Figured Worlds. Figured worlds are socio-historical places with cultural practices which are discursive and are formed over time, in terms of history. They are 'the frames of meaning in which interpretations of human actions are negotiated' (Holland *et al.*, 1998, p. 271). Figured worlds are imagined social spaces (e.g. school) where certain objects, practices and types of people exist, negotiate and reproduce a particular realm psychically. Thus, Figured Worlds are not all in one's head, nor are they all in the social space, rather they are the coming together of the two. Individuals engage in different Figured Worlds depending on their identities. Thus, some Figured Worlds would be more figurative in an individuals' mind than others. For example, in the Figured World of GP practice, if we enter as a patient and not as a GP, we only get the idea of the figures of expectations of how the doctor and the nurse will behave. These figurative ideas are narrativised and are social scripts of expectations that we all hold based on our historical experiences and the cultural context of the Figured World. Thus, a Figured World is a framework of how to be and belong to a certain space.

### **3.2.3 Dialogism or Self-Authoring**

Holland *et al.* (1998) then moves on to Bakhtin's work of self-authoring and explained it as

'subjectivity... within the interplay between the social and embodied sources of the self, what might be called the self-in-practice or the authoring self, occupies the interface between intimate discourses, inner speaking, and bodily practices formed in the past and discourses and practice to which people are exposed, willingly or not, in the present. It authors or orchestrates the products of these sites of self. (p. 31–32)

According to Holland *et al.* (1998), 'the meaning that we make of ourselves is, in Bakhtin's terms, "authoring the self" ...the self is a position from which meaning is made, a position that is "addressed" by and "answers" others and the "world". In answering, the self "authors" the world – including itself and others' (p. 173). Individuals respond to others in a sense of regulation i.e. the history in a person (*habitus*) creates all these sorts of ideas about what one does. Some of that is very subconscious /unconscious, and some might be within one's awareness. Sometimes people might actually be trapped within a

discourse without realising that they are constantly acting or performing in a certain way. Holland *et al.* (1998) further states that in 'Bakhtin's view, it will be remembered that the time of the self is always open, unfinished, as opposed to the time we assume for others, which is closed, finalizable... We see not only ourselves, but the world, in the finalising categories of the other, in other words, we see the world by authoring it' (p. 173).

Dialogism is about being in a constant dialogue with the Other, and sometimes that other can be an internal space of regulation. Thus, identity is never a fixed construct for Holland *et al.*, rather it is always in a state of reformation. According to Creaby (2016, p. 49) 'narratives of the self can offer insights into how individuals are constructing the world around them, what has been influential to this and how they author themselves in relation to it'. Thus, through Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, Holland *et al.* (1998) explains how people author themselves to the world, in response to the world, and as they respond, they renegotiate who they are. Holland *et al.* (p. 65) further stated that 'identities constitute an enduring and significant aspect of history-in-person, history that is brought to current situations. They are pivotal elements? of the perspective that persons bring to the construal of new activities and even new Figured Worlds'.

The above discussion concluded that according to Holland *et al.* (1998), using the technique of authoring, people use agency and negotiate identities within and across Figured Worlds in everyday practices. There is always an ongoing negotiation of self, or many selves in one space, whereby challenging, engaging or resisting a discourse, individuals make sense of what the others are saying, and drawing on these discursive influences, they create a sense of performance i.e. identity in practice. Holland *et al.* argue that in orchestration, individuals are always responding to the world (i.e. sort of referring to addressivity and answerability), thus, even by staying silent, they are responding because they are weaving this narrative of themselves. In this regards, Gee's Discourse identities help us to see different ways the individuals could author themselves.

Thus, by drawing on all the socio historical experience of their history in person, and the discourses around how the power is structured in their world, they are creating a sense of identity in practice. Their self-authoring or identity in practice in Holland *et al.*'s terms or their identity performance in Gee's terms offers a space of opportunity for agency hence why Holland *et al.*'s book is entitled *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds.*' Holland *et*

*al.* say that identity is a pivot, we are a product of the social discourses that control our world but we are also the producers of them: thus, not only are we produced by them, we reproduce them and perpetuate them in an ongoing, never-ending cycle. It is when people get to improvise their different discourses, through the merging of different discourses that people create new worlds or new ways of being, e.g. my participants, being in transition to a different culture, may create new ways of being.

### **3.2.3.1 Hybridity**

According to Holland *et al.* (1998), cited in Solomon (2012) hybridisation is taking an authorial stance in the orchestration of multiple voices and, in doing so, re-figuring the space of authorship, multiplying the possible ways of identifying activity' (p. 8). Solomon *et al.* (2015, p.3) states 'authoring of the self is achieved through the orchestration of multiple voices, and the hybridisation of discourses; it is this process which underpins agency and choice in a constant process of becoming'. Solomon *et al.* (2015, p. 8) further says,

'We use hybridity and hybridisation to refer to the production of new forms of identity as a resolution to a contradiction between two juxtaposed identities. In our use of hybridisation we are mindful that the 'old' forms are not lost, they are simultaneously retained and destroyed in the new form. Drawing on Bakhtin (1981), Holland *et al.* describe hybridisation as taking an authorial stance in the orchestration of multiple voices and, in doing so, "re-figuring the space of authorship, multiplying the possible ways of identifying activity." (p.315). This captures the significance of producing hybrid forms not only in terms of an individual's ontological development but in social transformation too'.

In my research, participants believed in particular cultural models ('obedience to parents', 'male supremacy', 'veil and the four walls' and 'what will people say?') from their past in Pakistan. These cultural models were mediating participants' actions and decisions as they participated in a process of transition at the UK University. However, participants were not accepting or rejecting these cultural models, rather they were positioning themselves around these cultural models in different ways. I argue that during transition participants developed a hybrid self, as being living in a different cultural reality, participants redefined those Pakistani cultural models in British culture. Consequently, upon their return to Pakistan at data point four, the Pakistani cultural models were both retained and destroyed simultaneously as something new. For example, in creating timeline and relational map

artefacts, participants placed the concept of ‘family and religion’ although they also placed some British cultural models (For example, travel, freedom of expression, independence). These maps suggests that the students were using a fuller range of cultural models, which I suggested by data point four they had outwardly accepted the Pakistani cultural models but they were inwardly focused on attaining their own independence and freedom, as might be recognised in the maps by including, for example, travel.

### **Part 3.3: Pakistani Women**

#### **Part 3.3.1 Pakistani Women According to Theoretical Framework**

In this part, I have introduced Pakistani Women using Holland *et al.*, (1998) and Gee (1996). In Gee’s (1996) terms of identity, ‘Who am I at this point of time and in this context?’, Pakistani women during their engagement in day to day life, have had to negotiate their position according to the affordances of wider society and the political context which has varied between conservative (domestic) and more liberal (education) spaces. These contexts could be described in Holland *et al.*’s (1998) terms as ‘Figured Worlds’ of interpretation or ‘cultural realms peopled by characters from collective imaginings’ (p.51) which are implicitly understood by society. The ‘domestic’ Figured World is still recognized as an archetype of the ideal women; however, education has emerged as an alternative realm through which to gain status (position) and empowerment. That said, Pakistani women still do not possess full agency over their educational choices and may negotiate societal expectations of what constitutes ‘appropriate’ to study. Therefore, it could be said that the choices of Pakistani females are circumscribed by the ‘four walls’ of domesticity that are still present within the educational sphere.

In terms of Gee’s (1996) theory of Discourse identities, he posits that all identities are relational and socially performed. Therefore Pakistani women will have an implicit understanding of how to ‘perform’ the roles expected of them, within the domestic and educational ‘Figured Worlds’, as well as the agency to decide whether or not to accept these roles. Gee describes identity as ‘relational’, meaning that it does not exist in isolation, but depends upon interaction with the people around us, as well as the institutions we operate within and the roles in which we find ourselves. Whereas, Figured Worlds discusses the power structures within institutional roles as hierarchical and gives rise to position, rank and status. Individuals understand their position within this structure

and act accordingly. In the next part, I have elaborated on the empowerment of Pakistani women drawing upon Kabeer's (1999) theory.

### **Part 3.3.2 Women's Empowerment**

Kabeer (1999) discusses 'that women's empowerment is about the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ability' (p. 435). In my study, I used the term empowerment when participants made strategic life choices to change their position through the process of transition from one culture to another, for example leaving behind the patriarchal structures of their home culture (Pakistan) and being exposed to a culture (UK) with alternative opportunities for female positioning. Kabeer (1999) further states that

'The ability to exercise choice incorporates three inter-related dimensions: resources (defined broadly to include not only access, but also future claims, to both material and human and social resources); agency (including processes of decision making, as well as less measurable manifestations of agency such as negotiation, deception and manipulation); and achievements (well-being outcomes)' (p. 435).

Kabeer's model of empowerment can be seen as a triangle, with the three dimensions interplaying with one another, with Agency taken as the most important. In Kabeer's terms, the act of empowerment is a processual journey from disempowerment (rather than a simplistic linear process). For example, a woman who already enjoys a certain degree of empowerment could not be termed as experiencing this process of empowerment, as individual needs to begin from a position of disempowerment.

As from Pakistani culture, the participants had been socialised to experience less agency over their own lives in comparison with men. In accordance with cultural norms, their fathers have dictated the direction of their lives, making decisions relating to their path of academic study as well as deciding when and whom they should marry. Thus, through transition to UK higher education, my participants went through the process of empowerment, when they left behind the patriarchal culture of Pakistan, where their decision-making power lay with their father (or male family members). Moving to the UK and taking the position of international student empowered them by elevating their status in society both geographically and socially outside of the domesticated 'four walls' of Pakistan. Within UK culture they were expected to make more of their own decisions and thus afforded the permission or 'agency' to do so. Being in the position of a UK university

student also enabled access to more resources than they would have previously been able to draw upon in Pakistan. These include the social resources of joining societies as well as other support systems. These are the dimensions specified by Kabeer (1999) which combine to create an empowered individual. I have used Holland et al.'s (1998) and Bruner (1996) theories to explain agency, as they are part of my theoretical and analysis framework, however I found Kabeer to be an invaluable source, as being both female and from the Indian subcontinent, means she herself is in a position to offer insights as a member of this specific culture which could provide an additional layer of understanding to the Western viewpoint.

Positionality, according to Holland, affords 'greater or lesser access to spaces, activities, genres ... and voice' (p.127-128). For Pakistani women, this is demonstrated most clearly in the importance of the cultural model 'the veil and the four walls' and the image of the ideal woman as one who is confined to the home and domestic sphere. As my research subjects went through a process of transition, they not only have undergone a journey of empowerment, as they have moved from their internalised patriarchal society to one in which they can enjoy more equal status, but additionally have gained a changed positionality (status) in the society. That is from being a wife, daughter and mother to achieving a position of a professional woman and academic at a prestigious international university.

### **Part 3.4: Summary**

This chapter helped me to understand identities and develop a stance that transition is basically a change in identification. Gee's Discourse identities prompted me to examine the thinking, feeling and believing in the participants' data around the topics of various cultural models to understand the complexity of identity, agency and culture in transition. Holland *et al.*'s (1998) book enabled me to capture the process of participants' transitional identities construction on their journey from Pakistan to the UK through their conceptual tools, particularly the analysis of cultural models and positional identities. Positional identities identifies how participants position themselves around Pakistani cultural models, i.e. whether they align themselves to cultural models just as they did in the first interview or they resist them or improvise through them in subsequent interviews. Participants' change (i.e. resistance or improvisation) might make them more or less agentic in

different contexts. Agency may arise alongside shifts in changing positions as they understand and negotiate the Figured Worlds of Pakistan and the UK differently. Thus, in the analysis, I picked up changes and shifts in participants' positionality, while they were self-authoring in the interview. The next chapter is about the methodology of the study.

## Chapter Four: Methodology

Based on the gap identified in the literature review and the theoretical framework considered, this chapter discusses the research methodology to answer the research question, ‘how do Pakistani female students narrate their identities before, during and after transitioning to the UK?’ It begins by presenting the research paradigm followed by the research design, pilot study and participants. This is followed by a discussion of visual methods, the longitudinal method of data collection and the analytical procedures used. Towards the end I discuss reflexivity, ethical dilemmas and trustworthiness. Thus, the research paradigm (epistemology, ontology) of my study combines the research design (narrative interview, visual methods, narrative analysis) and the theoretical framework (Gee, 1996; Holland *et al.*, 1998) to operationalise analysis into a socio-cultural context.

### Part 4.1: Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is ‘the net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological, and methodological... set of beliefs that guide action’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 31). Crotty (1998, p. 3) defined epistemology as ‘a way of understanding and explaining, how we know [the knowledge], what we know’. The epistemology of my study is ‘constructionism’ which according to Crotty (1998) is,

‘the view that all knowledge is constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context’ (p. 42).

Thus, ‘constructionism’ is a way to generate knowledge about how people perceive their social world and their experiences as living actors in the world. My study is based on social practice conceptual framework, where the cultural models of the individuals mediate their perceptions in the context of practice. Crotty (1998, p. 11) declared that, ‘realism in ontology, and constructionism in epistemology turn out to be quite compatible’. Crotty (1998, p. 63) defined realism as, ‘reality is socially constructed’. This is opposed to idealism, which is the philosophical view that what is real is somehow confined to what is in the mind, i.e. it consists only of ideas’ (p. 64). As Crotty (1998, p.10) writes, ‘ontology is the study of being’, thus in my research I view participants’ ontology as constructivist because each participant was a kind of socially and culturally constructed being from Pakistani social reality. In this regard, I used Gee’s (2000) theory of Discourse identities,



which posits that all identities are socially performed. To ensure constructionism in my research, I designed four interviews at different stages of transition to gain insights into participants' perceptions and the related change over time. In all the four interviews, I asked participants to answer questions keeping in consideration 'who am I at this point in time and in this context?' which provoked participants thinking as particular individuals in particular contexts. I considered the use of visual methods as part of my research paradigm as it provokes participants' reflection on their culturally constructed world by stimulating recall and allowing the dialogue to emerge. In my data generation, the interview process was a co-construction between the interviewer and the interviewee and each stage was built on the other. In agreement with Gee (e.g. through Discourse), I understand identity as performance and therefore I analysed participants' interviews and their visual elicitation as their performance (practice) of their identity to me during the interview process, in the research settings.

Gee describes identity as 'relational', meaning that it does not exist in isolation, but depends upon our interaction with the people around us, as well as within the institutions we operate and with the roles in which we find ourselves. Thus, individuals understand their position within the structure and act accordingly. Therefore Pakistani women will have an implicit understanding of how to 'perform' the roles expected of them, within various 'Figured Worlds' (Holland *et al.*, 1998), as well as the agency to decide whether to accept these roles.

In my research, due to transition, participants were constructing a new way of being, which was the amalgamation of their cultural experiences in the past (Pakistan), their image of the UK university, where they were going to study and their practical and lived experiences of transition over the course of one year. Therefore, based on Holland *et al.* (1998), who frames identity as positioning in relation to cultural models, I interpret participants' narratives in terms of their identity that is how they position themselves in relation to the cultural models at various data points. In parallel, I view my ontology as realism because the narrative interviews and narrative analysis in my research took into account participants' interpretations on their selected or created images, which were based on the real-life discourse of being a Pakistani woman. I therefore kept participants' voices central in the research process. I am aware that my position in this research of having the shared experiences with participants (i.e. being a Pakistani woman, who came to a UK

university to study at a postgrad level) created many kinds of possibilities for relationships for gathering the kind of data that I wanted to gather and for interpreting that data. Hence, to enact the paradigm, I used different visual methods to elicit in-depth experiences of the participants, which I interpreted using my insider's position, the theoretical framework of Gee (2000) and Holland *et al.* (1998) and narrative and thematic analysis.

#### **Part 4.2: Research Design**

My research adopted qualitative multiple case study design to explore the identity construction of female Pakistani postgraduate students in transition to a UK university. I preferred to use qualitative (over quantitative) methods, as my research parameters were concerned with the subjective experiences of participants, defined in their individual ways, as according to Creswell (1998, p. 15) case studies capture human experiences and analyse participants' words 'within the natural setting and in a holistic way'. Moreover, Yin (2014, p. 2) views case studies as a preferred method 'when (a) 'how' or 'why' questions are asked (b) the investigator has little control over events, and (c) the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within a real life context'. This suits my research question: 'how do Pakistani female students narrate their identities, before, during and after transitioning to the UK?'

The cases in my study are 'female Pakistani students studying at the UK University'. The cases 'are bounded by time (September 2014–August 2015) and activity' (Creswell, 2013, p. 15). The unit of analysis is students' situated realities, in relation to their significant others and their cultural practices. The phenomenon of interest is transition to higher education. The case site is the UK University at the north of England as according to Robson (2011, p. 136) 'specifying 'site' might be preferable because it reminds us that a case always occurs in particular social and physical settings'. I preferred the above mentioned UK University as a case site, because being a PhD student at the institute; I had familiarity and understanding of it. Moreover, the site was rated by UKCISA (2012) as the highest recruiter of international students in UK and was therefore relevant for the study. According to Robson (2011, p. 79) 'case study requires collection of information via a range of data collection techniques'. Thus, I supplemented narrative interviews with distinct visual data collection techniques (photo elicitation, timeline and relational maps) in order to have an in-depth understanding of the case.

### 4.2.1 Pilot Study

I conducted my pilot study on the topic, ‘The Impact of Social Networking on Changing Educational Identity: Case Studies of Pakistani Female Postgraduate Students in the UK University’. The pilot study was aimed to see the impact of social networking on the changing identities of female students in transition from Pakistan to the UK University.

The research question was:

- What is the impact of social networking on female Pakistani students’ educational experiences in transition to living and studying at the UK University?

I recruited two female Pakistani students, Shireen and Laila who had been studying at the UK University for six months. Shireen was a recipient of a scholarship whereas Laila was self-funded. Shireen had prior experience of living in hostels in Pakistan and abroad, whereas Laila had no such experience.

I used narrative interviews along with participants’ photos and a timeline of their practices at the UK University to see if it generates the type of data needed for the main study. The narrative interviews and visual methods (photo elicitation and timeline) were deemed appropriate and so described in the next part (See 4.2.3). In the analysis of the pilot study data, I tried several theories, including cultural models (Gee, 2000) positionality or positioning theory (Holland *et al.*, 1998), legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and narrative analysis (Bruner, 1996).

The generated data was divided into three themes: Firstly, participants’ identities in Pakistan, where both Laila and Shireen were situated in the centre in Pakistan; secondly, their identity in the UK, whereas compared to Shireen, Laila’s identity was no longer grounded in the new context and thirdly growth, where Laila was trying to regain her belonging to the new context through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Laila was trying to construct new identities in four categories i.e. self, family, student life and community.

I examined changes in participants’ identity using analysis of cultural models (cultural models), drawing on Gee (1999, 2001). For example, Laila had a cultural model (cultural belief) of ‘not accessing her tutor for help’. She said, ‘I thought he will say, see that stupid [person]’. Thus, she perceived that accessing her tutor for help after his teaching would

give her poor self-image due to being stupid for not understanding the task in class in the first place.

According to positioning theory (Holland *et al.*, 1998), ‘people tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say’ (Holland *et al.*, 1998, p. 3). Laila said, ‘I did not ask any of my course tutors, even when I had problems’. In the above quotation, Laila’s cultural model was stopping her from accessing her tutor. However, Laila started social networking with multinational friends. She said,



Image 1: Laila with Her Friends

‘these are finally my two friends (See Image 1), I got open to them, and I stated the problem I was having with my supervisors, my tutors, my system, money issues and my clothes and stuff. I was talking to them and crying, so I developed a bond with these people, because they kind of explained the system to me: ‘how to deal the supervisor, how to handle them, how to do assignments’.

Due to social networking, Laila changed her position around the cultural model, as she said,

‘Last semester I would not go to tutor and ask him anything, because I was like, oh! No, he is going to think that, see that stupid [person]. I still feel the same way but then I understand the fact that I am here to learn, so if I go back home from here without learning anything that’s going to be even worse than the tutor thinking of me as stupid’.

Thus, she changed from someone who awaits teachers’ intervention to someone who actively seeks out help from the teacher by taking action.

In comparison to Laila, Shireen rationalised the conflicts and adapted quite easily, perhaps because it was not her first transition, as she said,

‘My grandmother used to tell my mom you adopted English culture and sent your kids out of home at the age of 17’ (See Image 2).

Laila took more time and struggle than Shireen to adjust to the system. However, toward the end of the interview,



Shireen with her Grandmom

Image 2: Shireen with her Nana

in the quote below, Laila ultimately concluded that her struggle was not in the UK or Pakistani system, rather her adaptation was within herself. She stated,

‘I realised that your PhD is about yourself; it is not about the system. Now I feel more adjusted because I accepted the fact that it is not me versus the system, it is me versus me, or me versus my barriers, the barriers I have in my own personality or in my own life, which are stopping me from my own self’.

Laila’s quote led the focus of my study to identity. I presented the findings of my pilot work at the UK University in the form of poster (Appendix 8) and won second prize in the poster competition of the SEED conference. My pilot study was an exploratory work which helped me to shape the main study in the following way:

- 1) The pilot study led my focus on identity, when I had thought it would be social networking.
- 2) In sampling, my two participants, being unmarried, articulated different self-perceptions than I. For example, I was over-occupied with my family and study and they were lonely and homesick. Similarly, Laila, due to her first transition took more time in adaptation than Shireen, therefore, in the main study I used purposive sampling in recruiting participants of different age groups, academic fields, marital status and experience of travel abroad, which were also salient within the literature (Lowe *et al.* 2009).
- 3) In the theoretical framework, the pilot narrative was built through an analysis of the positioning of the participant’s in relation to significant cultural models identified by my study. This enabled me to compare and contrast the development at each stage; my approach was in keeping with Gee’s (2001) definition of identity and Holland *et al.*’s (1998) positioning theory. Cultural models were important in three ways: firstly, they were helpful in giving a holistic picture of the narrative in each section; secondly, they enabled me to compare and contrast the development at each stage; thirdly, they connected my research with Holland *et al.*’s (1998) framework.
- 4) Photographs, initially selected as prompts, played an intriguing role in the study. They acted as artefacts (Holland *et al.* 1998, p. 61, 63), mediated participant’s thoughts and resolved conflicts by evoking a certain position.

5) My pilot study helped me develop the order of visual methods in the main study, e.g. I decided to use photos at Data Point Two and no visuals at Data Point One, as even though photos were generating rich data, still it limited participants to the content of the photos, and their narrative was in episodes. Shireen said, 'it [photos] limits me sometimes because I may not have a photo for every event I go to'. Similarly, sharing images of females may have some cultural restrictions which could affect trust building in the first meeting (Data Point One). Further, in my main study at Data Point Three, I used the timeline created by Shireen (See Figure 3) as an example in participant information sheet.



Shireen's Timeline of Acts and Practices at the UK University

Figure 3: Shireen's Timeline

#### 4.2.2 Methods

The methods part includes participants, data generation process with visual elicitation techniques and data analysis.

##### 4.2.2.1 Participants

Given the Case study design and based on the pilot study experience (See pilot study), I preferred purposive sampling to justify the selection of the case. 'Purposive sampling demands that we think carefully about the parameters of the population we are studying

and choose our sample case carefully on this basis' (Silverman , 2010, p.141). As a theoretical Case study, I decided to consider the cases with varied age groups, academic background, marital status and experience of travel abroad for theoretical insights in socio cultural transition, which were also salient with the literature (Lowe *et al.*, 2009). I chose female Pakistani students (who came from Pakistan and joined the UK University at a postgraduate level in September 2014) as participants. I restricted the study to female students only, because (as mentioned in the literature review and context chapter of my thesis) female students have different expectations and gender roles in Pakistan than men, which might make the impact of the transition to the UK be more intense for them. Further, being a female researcher myself, having female participants would avoid 'chivalry masculinity' (Presser, 2005, p. 270), meaning it improves the collaborative negotiation of narrated identities. Furthermore, I argue that due to the nature of my study (i.e. exploring participants' inner subjective experiences and their positioning during transition), male gender could create a problem for the participants and myself, culturally.

### **Access to Participants**

Due to the nature of my study, which is related to transitional identities, I needed to interview my participants in the welcome week, at the beginning of their formal attendance in the courses at the UK University; therefore, I made a recruitment advertisement. In the advertisement, I mentioned my rationale for sampling as 'Pakistani female postgraduate students, who are joining the UK University in 2014'. Further, during selection I was mindful to choose participants purposefully with varied age groups, academic background, marital status and experience of traveling abroad, to meet the criteria of conducting purposive sampling in the data generation of my study. I left my contact details, for the interested participants to contact me. I took the following steps:

- I requested my supervisor to forward the advert to the academic advisors at various schools of the university, for circulation among students.
- I displayed the advertisement (Appendix 4) as a poster in the Student Union, Library and other prominent places including International Society, Pakistani Society, etc.
- I further approached Student Services to locate the UK University visa issuing authority for obtaining information about the incoming Pakistani female students.

However, I could not get the required information from the visa office because the university considers the information as confidential.

- I constantly contacted members of the social societies in the university including the Pakistani Society, the Islamic society and the International Society through Facebook.
- I contacted the agencies in Pakistan (Aspire and HR consultants), which provides services to students joining UK universities for higher studies.
- I contacted the Higher Education Commission Pakistan for information and the email address of the sponsored students joining the UK University.
- I attended different induction activities on welcome week with the intention to personally find potential participants for my research.

In total, I was successful in meeting 7 potential participants. However, one of these participants withdrew early in the process after the second interview. During the photo elicitation she had revealed that she moved to the UK at 5 years of age, and so for the purposes of my research she was already much assimilated to UK culture. For this reason we agreed to no longer continue.

This left me with a remaining six participants. According to Seidman (2006, p. 55), ‘in-depth interviewing, applied to a sample of relatively few participants who all experience similar social conditions gives enormous power to the stories.’ The smaller sample produces narrative style interviews that probed deeply into process and meanings in the research and allowed participants to tell their stories in greater detail. Table 6 gives information about participants.



Participants	Age	Married	Fields	Location	Funding	Position among Siblings
<b>Sofia</b>	35	Yes	Education	Multan, Punjab	Funded	Youngest
<b>Shabana</b>	24	No	Chemistry	Lahore, Punjab	Self-Funded	2 <sup>nd</sup> Eldest
<b>Lena</b>	22	No	Finance	Sialkot, Punjab	Self-Funded	Eldest
<b>Bena</b>	42	No	Leadership	Karachi, Sindh	Self-Funded	Youngest
<b>Fafa</b>	26	No	Medicine	Sialkot, Punjab	Self-Funded	Eldest
<b>Sana</b>	25	No	Sociology	Sialkot, Punjab	Self-Funded	3 <sup>rd</sup> Eldest

**Table 6: Participants Information**

In my pilot study I used pseudonyms as Laila and Shireen, where my supervisors would sometime struggle to say the name ‘Shireen’. I therefore used those names, which were equally easier to pronounce for both British and Asian readers.

To introduce my participants, I met Sofia in the University building, Shabana in Student Union, Lena and Bena in the International Society dinner event, whereas Fafa in medical college cafe and Sana in the Induction Week event. Participants were from different age groups, subject of study and department. Bena (42 years’ old) was the oldest participant and Lena (22 years’ old) was the youngest. However, Lena and Fafa were the eldest child of their respective families, whereas Sofia and Bena were the youngest. Sofia was the only married participant who joined the University with her husband and three children. In terms of education, only two of the participants, Fafa and Lena, had studied in private schools, whereas the others had studied in public schools. Only Sofia was funded for her studies, all the other participants were self-funded. Further, all participants, but Bena, were from Punjab, the most populous province in Pakistan. Bena was from Karachi, which is the most populous city in Pakistan. The locations of participants in Pakistan were different for me, as I am from Peshawar, the capital of North-West Frontier Province, which is currently called Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Participants shared common beliefs as they were all Muslim, which is representative of almost 98%, of the population of Pakistan (World Population Data, 2014). Furthermore, the participants were educated and came to the UK University to pursue their one-year master’s studies. Furthermore, none of them came from a poor background, and almost everyone had a previous experience of boarding school or being away from their family.

In my first meeting, I introduced my research to participants and confirmed their suitability accordingly. For example, if they came from Pakistan to the UK in 2014 for the purpose of postgraduate studies. I discussed with them the use of visual methods and the longitudinal nature of my research, where they would monitor their thinking, feeling believing over the time during transition. I made sure that at least one of them was married and I had participants of various age groups. After their willingness to take part in the study and discussion around ethical issues, I sent them participant information sheet each (Appendix 1) and consent form (Appendix 2) in advance of the interviews. Once we conducted the first interview, which was a biographical narrative interview, where they told me about their past life stories, they developed a relationship with me. I perceive that due to the nature of my study, at each data point, participants would get back with them some kind of awareness or consciousness about their transitional journey, which would motivate them for future interviews. Further, the use of different visual methods made the interviewing process interesting and reflective. Thus, with the use of distinct visual elicitation techniques, participants were learning new methods and with self-reflection, they were going through the process of understanding themselves and their transition. Further, to keep my rapport with participants and to minimize the risk of withdrawal, I was quite considerate for example; I was open to rescheduling the interview to fit myself into their timetable, as I knew they were very busy and had little time to offer. Also, I was lucky as my participants were responsible enough as they gave huge importance to the longitudinal focus of my study. The fact that the participants were navigating an alien cultural system also created a further bond in our relationship as our interviews became a place where they could discuss their worries and experiences of life in the UK. They had built relationships with me, as a few of them decided to become my friends on Social media and discussed their personal worries with me.

#### **4.2.2.2 Data Generation Process**

In generating data, I gave participants the choice of language – English or Urdu – for the conducting the interviews. I was fully confident that if a participant opted to use a Pakistani language, I could translate the narration of the interview to English. However, as English is the official language of Pakistan, participants preferred the interview to be in English. In generating data, I acknowledged the effects of the post hoc rationalisation of narratives as a factor for change that occurs in the earlier and later interviews over time





(Schwitzgebel & Ellis, 2016), and hence I decided to collect data at four different data points, with visual prompts to facilitate participants' reflections. I changed visual methods each time in order to prevent boredom among participants and to encourage thinking on different topics, which enriched my data. To devise the four dimensions of life: family, self, institution, and community, in data collection, I requested participants to bring photos of people, places or things in each of these dimensions. Further, participants considered these four dimensions of life, while creating timelines and relational maps. I audio recorded the entire four interviews with the prior permission of each participant to ensure complete recording of the data in an impartial manner and to facilitate in depth analysis of their discourses.

#### **4.2.2.2.1 Narrative Interviews**

Narrative interviews are considered appropriate for generating data about identity construction (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998), as in this process participants narrate their thinking and feelings about their experiences of acts and practices, through which identity is 'constructed and accomplished performativity' (Riesman, 2008, p. 312). Researchers (Riesman, 2008; Sfarid & Prusak, 2005; Cohen *et al.*, 2011) found the significance of narrative method in provoking participants' reflection on past events and present experiences within a social context, which resonate with my study, which is about transition from the past in Pakistan to the present in the UK. Thus, in my research, the interview process was a co-construction between participants and researcher, where the visual methods were producing change in the participants by bringing them to awareness.

I conducted the study with four narrative interviews at four different data points (See Table 8), in the formal setting of my office at the UK University building. Literature (Sawyer, 2011, p. 7) explained international students' transition in four stages: honeymoon, crisis, gradual adjustment and biculturalism. Thus, I made Sawyer's four stages theory as a base, to explore participants' understanding at these four stages in transition.

The calendar in Table Eight is used in the coding framework, where the month on the calendar symbol links participants' quotations to the time of the interview i.e. 'who am I' at this moment in time (see coding framework). Thus, the change in calendar depicts participants' transition from data point to data point.

Interview	Date	Setting	Prompts	Visuals	Aim of the interview
Data Point 1 Honeymoon	19.10.14 	UK University	Four dimension	None	Participant's life and expectations from the UK University.
Data Point 2 Crisis	29.01.15 	UK University	Four dimension	Photos	Participant's experiences in Pakistan and in the UK University.
Data Point 3 Gradual adjustment	07.04.15 	UK University	Four dimension	Timeline	Participant's reflection on the practices of the UK University.
Data Point 4 Biculturalisation	29.06.15 	UK University	Four dimension	Relation map	Identity construction and member checking

**Table 7: Data Generation Process**

### **Data Point One**

The aim of the first interview was to understand participant's lives, their narrated Pakistani ideology and their expectations from the UK University, prior to their engagement. I therefore interviewed participants at the start of the formal course. The first narrative interview, 45–60 minutes long, was conducted in October, 2014 (See Table 7) according to the interview protocol (See Appendix 3.1). October was the best time for the interview, as according to literature (Sawyer, 2011, p. 7), participants are taken to be in the honeymoon period at this point – they had just joined the UK University and had yet to begin the adaptation process. At this data point, I did not use visual methods, as I wanted to familiarise myself with the full narrative of participants' pasts. The first round of interviews, with the entire six participants, was completed by November 2014.

### **Data Point Two**

The aim of the second interview was to understand participants' transitional experiences in January 2015, after the first trimester of joining the UK University. January was the best time to interview them as literature sees international students after the first trimester as being in the crisis stage (Sawyer, 2011, p. 7) at the host university. Prior to Data Point 2, in the participant information sheet (Appendix 1), I had given participants the interview

protocol. The second narrative interview, which was 60 minutes long, was conducted according to the instruction and protocol given in Appendix 3.2. Thus, I used participant-selected photos as prompts with the narrative interview. Data collection for Data Point Two was finished by mid-February 2015.

### **Data Point Three**

The aim of the third interview was to understand participant's experiences of the acts and practices of the university in April 2015 and its impact on their four dimensions of identities over time. By April, they had six months of involvement in different activities at the UK University and had according to literature (Sawyer, 2011, p. 7), started gradual adjustment. At Data Point Three, I supplemented the interview with the timeline created by six participants. The third interview, including timeline creation and elicitation, took 45–60 minutes. Data gathering for this data point was finished by April 2015.

### **Data Point Four**

The aim of the fourth interview was to understand participants' self-understanding and the construction of changing identities in transition forward (i.e. the physical move from the UK to Pakistan and its impact on four dimensions of identities) toward the end of the study. By June, they had nine months of involvement in different activities in the UK and according to Sawyer's (2011, p. 7) model; they were marked in the biculturalism stage. The fourth interview, 20–30 minutes long, was conducted in June 2015 (See Table 7) with relational map, according to the instruction and protocol (See Appendix 3.4). Furthermore, at the end of the Data Point Four, I presented the transcribed interviews (Data Points 1, 2, and 3) for member checking to the participants; however, they did not make any major changes and happily gave permission to publish the data. The fourth round of interviews, with the entire six participants, was completed by July 2015.

#### **4.2.2.3 Visual Methods**

Literature used visual methods in three contexts: 'researcher created/collected images; participant created/existing images; and collaboratively created images by participant and researcher' (Hill, 2013, p. 135). In my study, I chose participant created/existing images as according to McCarthy (2013), this can facilitate participants in narrating their experiences. Participant's created/existing images are again divided into two categories, 'pre-existing visual images and artefacts produced without researcher effort (e.g. artwork,

film, website content, cartoons, photographs), and respondent generated imagery... produced by respondents within the confines of a research study' (Jackson, 2013, p. 415). I have used blend of both pre-existed photos and the timeline and relational map artefacts created by participants, particularly for my research.

Visual elicitation methods (photos, timelines and relational maps) provoke participants' narratives of transition in eliciting a 'holistic picture of their experience, attitudes, memories and immediate sensations with time' (Lombard, 2013; McCarthy, 2013, p. 79). Park and Basole (2016, p. 01) states that, 'humans are visual thinkers and they use visualisations to solve problems, explore opportunities, communicate ideas, recognise patterns, and understand complexity'. Furthermore, visuals help the researcher to overcome 'cultural, ability, or linguistic barriers' (Jackson, 2013, p. 415) with 'participants' interpretation of question and allow a creative way of interviewing that is responsive to participants' own meaning and association' (Bagnoli, 2009, p. 547). Researchers (Pink, 2001; Johanna, 2006) agree that participant-led images, spatial arrangements and material artefacts have meaning within their specific groups and cultural realities, which participants interpret in multiple idiosyncratic ways. Accordingly, these images acted in my study as artefacts of participant's individual Figured Worlds, which is part of their identity. In the analysis phase, I considered timeline and relational map in one category as the literature explained them in a term, 'graphic elicitation' and 'participatory diagramming' (Berends, 2011; Jackson, 2013, p. 16).

### **How I used Visual Methodologies in My Study**

According to Jackson (2013), researchers need to have a solid theoretical foundation guiding the selection of the visual methods and their subsequent analysis. At each data point, I collected data from visual methods, considering the quote, 'who am I at this point in time and in this context'? (Gee 2001). Picture of participants' transitional life could be seen as artefacts of the context of flux, as they are tangible objects, which mediate individuals' thinking of the Figured Worlds and attribute different meaning to it. According to Holland *et al.* (1998)

'Artefacts 'open up' Figured Worlds. They are the means by which Figured Worlds are evoked, collectively developed, individually learned, and made socially and personally powerful" (p.61).

Holland *et al.* (1998) discussed artefacts as, ‘the media of consciousness, of higher mental functions’ (p.63), which people use “to affect their own and others’ thinking, feeling, and behaviour” (Holland *et al.*, 1998, p. 50). Visual methodologies did not only allow my theoretical framework to see into participants’ minds, but by getting them to reflect on their visuals, these visuals were prompting them to create stories about themselves in a particular way. That is the visuals they selected or created were acting as artefacts and were bringing them to consciousness about their transition.

To approach visuals in my research, I adopted Jackson’s (2013, p. 419) way, which deals with three critical sites:

1) The production site that is ‘what were the circumstances at the site’: how the researcher explained the use of the method to participants and how participants elaborated on their experience of using the method. In my study the production site was the UK University where the data was produced.

2) The image site (i.e. how the significant experiences of participants were ...represented in the image). In my study the image site is why participant chose or creates the image and how they present the content of the visuals.

3) The site of the audience (i.e. the researcher’s position and relationship to the experiences in the visuals). In my study the site of an audience states how the researcher or the reader sees the image (Jackson, 2013, p. 419). Thus, in interpreting the visual data, I used a double analysis technique, where the participant and the researcher mutually reflected on the subject matter of the visuals at the time of the interview (Richard & Lahman, 2015).

#### **4.2.2.3.1 Photo Elicitation**

Photo elicitation was first developed as a research technique by John Collier at Cornell University in the late 1950’s. He noted that using photographs ‘helped subjects overcome the fatigue and repetition of conventional interviews [and help] stimulate and release emotional statements about the informant’s life’ (1957:858) (Harper, 2002, p.2). The technique has been referred to in literature under many names, e.g. ‘native image making, photo voice, photo novellas, auto-photography and visual narratives’ (McCarthy, 2013, p. 86).

Photo elicitation is defined by Blackbeard and Lindegger (2015, p. 87) as ‘the production of photographs by participants, prompted by an invitational question. The participant

provides commentary on the images produced, either individually with an interviewer or in a focus group’.

Researchers (Khan & Siry, 2014; Jorgenson & Sullivan, 2010; Haines-Saah *et al.*, 2013) considered photos to be the tenets of empowerment for the researcher to view specific moments, tangible details and tacit subjectivities of participants’ lives. Further, Harper, D. (2002) concludes that ‘photo-elicitation enlarges the possibilities of conventional empirical research’ (p.13). Harper (2002), states ‘that photographs used in photo elicitation research extend along a continuum’. At one extreme of the continuum are ‘visual inventories of objects, people and artefacts, which represent the subjectivities embodied in framing, exposure, and other technical considerations’. In the middle of the continuum are images that ‘depict events that were part of collective and institutional pasts, which connect individuals to experiences or eras even if the images do not reflect the research subject’s actual lives’. At the other extreme of the continuum photographs portray the intimate dimensions of the social. That is, the elicitation interviews connect ‘core definitions of the self to society, culture and history’ (P.13). Thus, photos seem compatible to my research on identity and transition and therefore I looked for the reasons to consider it at Data Point two.

### **Why Photos?**

I preferred photos in my research at Data point two for few reasons: firstly, my research and photo elicitation, both deal with ‘the exploration of self-identity’, (Lombard, 2013, p. 24), agency (Khan & Siry, 2014) and the ‘multiple meaning embedded within cultures’ (Richard & Lahman, 2015; Lombard, 2013, p. 24, 29). Secondly, photos act as artefacts in the construction of participants’ narratives, as according to Richard and Lahman (2015), photo elicitation connects participants’ previous behaviours to their present world. Furthermore, having participant’s photos of the past in Pakistan and present in the UK, displayed side-by-side in front of the researcher and the participant allowed for the possibility to visualise different cultures at the same time, acting as ‘bridges between worlds’ (Harper, 2002, p.9). Thirdly, my research is about participants’ thinking, feeling and believing in a specific context (Gee, 2000) and according to Richard and Lahman (2015, p. 04), photos ‘capture participants’ feelings’. Fourthly, the insights and voices of female Pakistani students’ transition is built around tacit knowledge, affect and other



elements of cognition that are hard to elucidate explicitly, but the reflective nature of photos (Richard & Lahman, 2015) may act as a scene of familiarity in soliciting their voices, which overcome the limitations of verbal and written discourses between the researcher and the participant (Justesen *et al.*, 2014; Khan & Siry, 2014; Jorgenson & Sullivan, 2010; Richard & Lahman, 2015).

### **Production Site (Photographs)**

On the production site (Jackson, 2013, p. 419), I requested participants to keep a total of 12 photos (of people, places or things), with at least one photo for each of the following aspects:

- Yourself in Pakistan and in the UK.
- Your contact with your family in Pakistan and in the UK
- You as a student at an institution in Pakistan and in the UK
- Your contact with community in Pakistan and in the UK.

Some participants started their interviews immediately, as they had chosen photos in advance, whereas others took time to choose photos from their Facebook profile or memory sticks and so stayed a bit longer to conduct the interview. The aim of having this selection criterion for the photos was to collect data pertaining to all the four dimensions of their life, without neglecting any aspect.

### **Image Site (Photographs)**

During elicitation, participants were asked to mention the photo, and the dimension of life on which they had chosen to narrate. For example: ‘why did you select this photo and what is special about it? This question would enable the participant to discuss the content of the photo in a specific context. Further, the question would connect the participant’s thought with their transition. In the process I posed a narrative question to link data with Discourse (with capital D) of Gee (1996, p.131). Thus, in the image site (Jackson, 2013, p. 419), during the interview, participants initially elicited the reason for choosing the photo and afterward elicited the related experiences in the content of the photo (see Chapter 8).

### **Analysis of Photo Data**

#### **The Site of the Audience (Photographs)**

To analyse photographs, the literature divided photos into subject matter and settings (Richard & Lahman, 2015). Even further, Jorgenson and Sullivan (2010) considered

analysing the photos in isolation that is ‘by colours, graphics and positioning of the individual’ and in-groups that is ‘pictures showing only objects versus those showing people, and pictures showing multiple devices versus those with a single object as the focus’ (p. 6). However, I argue that analysis of photos can be highly misleading in research as it depends on the image-making skills and purpose of the participant (Jorgenson & Sullivan, 2010, p. 2). Alternatively, Justesen *et al.* (2014) and Jorgenson & Sullivan (2010, p. 7) advocated a reflexive approach in the analysis of photos: this means that photographs, being particular to the participant, cannot stand alone without the participants’ explanation, as ‘multiple contexts influence the interpretation of images’.

In my research, participants were using photos that were created in the past, for personal reasons and not for research activity. Thus, the content of the photos as such is not the focus of my analysis – rather, the photos have acted as prompts, and therefore, it is the dialogue that I have with the participant around the photo that is important. Khan and Siry, (2014, p. 204) found inherent subjectivity in the interpretations of the photos as a challenge because the participants’ analysis ‘is grounded in a lived understanding of the context; but on the other hand, images are open to multiple interpretations’. In terms of being a Pakistani woman the Discourse identity is to a large extent imposed upon participants through their positionality within a patriarchal discourse and its tacit social norms. Gee (1996) gave the idea of Discourse being the way we present ourselves as particular people in particular contexts through ways of thinking, acting and believing. Photographs bring individuals to consciousness by providing recognition or imposition of that Discourse of being a Pakistani woman. Harper described the power of photographs to ‘jolt subjects into a new awareness of their social existence’. He referred to this as ‘breaking the frame’ (Harper, 2002, p.9) leading to a more reflective attitude towards the taken-for-granted aspects (or habitus) of participant’s lives. In my study on identity, photos brought to my research the moments when participants were thinking, feeling, believing around their implicit frames of Pakistani habitus and recorded its impact upon identity in transition. I therefore decided to keep participants’ personal subjective construct (Gee, 2000) central at the site of audience (Jackson, 2013, p. 419), and take on board only participant’s interpretation of the photos. This decision made my research more authentic, original and free from researcher biases. Thus, in my research, the image site is the interpretation of an image, which is a co-construction of the participants’ and the researcher’s reflection on the

subject matter of the photos at the time of the interview, which Richard and Lahman (2015) termed as ‘double analysis’.

#### **4.2.2.3.2 Timeline**

Timeline elicitation, also known as lifelines, graphic elicitation and participatory diagramming are defined in literature (Berends, 2011, p. 2) as ‘visual depiction of a life history, where events are displayed in chronological order’. However, in my study I chose six months’ (October–March 2014) time for the duration of the timeline, so that participants could reflect back on their first three months (Oct. 2014–Dec 2015) again, firstly to see a different way of eliciting participants’ perceptions on Data Point 2, and secondly to look for changes in data due to changes in method, and finally to satisfy the post-hoc effect, as human experiences are capricious and can change over time depending on random factors, such as having a good day at work.

In creating the timeline, I decided to give full freedom to the participant to use colours, shapes and symbols, to help elicit their thinking, feeling and believing about the acts and practices of the university. According to Jackson (2013, p. 426–427) a timeline demonstrates the creative, self-expressive process of the participants ‘through the compilation of colours, symbols, and unscripted text’ to elicit the tacit values relating to identities, which are often ignored otherwise.

#### **Why Timelines?**

The focus of Data Point 3 was to explore their identity construction while engaging in the acts and practices of the UK university. I was interested in capturing their thinking, feeling and believing around various Discourse identities (existing and emerging) at this point in transition. I decided to use timelines at Data Point 3 for a few reasons. Firstly, the timeline enables this by organising participants’ past and present identities, as according to Jackson (2013, p. 419) timeline ‘reconstruct their past and reorganise their perceptions of self within the context of their environments’. Secondly, the timeline would visually represent participants’ student identity chronologically, as according to the literature (Hope *et al.*, 2013; Korallo *et al.*, 2012), timelines restore and affirm the interest of the researcher and ensure higher recall accuracy to the participant than the standardised interview. Thirdly, timelines enable researchers ‘to know the significant events impacting their [participant’s]

identity development over time' (Jackson, 2013, p. 419). Finally, timelines are preferred due to the compatibility of the method with narrative research (Yu *et al.*, 2016).

### **Production Site (Timeline)**

According to Jackson, 2013 (p. 419), on the production site as per the protocol (Appendix 3.3), I provided a blank paper and colour markers to the participants and gave them some directions as given in the protocol (See Appendix 3.3) to create a timeline of acts and practices at the UK University. I requested participants to use the charts and markers to draw a timeline indicating the most important activities and practices, during the time frame of six months from Dec to March at the UK University. Further, to collect data around all the four dimensions of their life, I requested them to consider the following aspects:

- Acts & practices about self
- Acts & practices about family
- Acts & practices about institution
- Acts & practices about community'

In order to facilitate timeline creation, I reassured participants that their drawing skills were not the focus of the study, as according to researchers (Jackson, 2013; Yu *et al.*, 2016) participants might feel tested for thinking on the spot in graphics creation. Furthermore, during timeline creation, participants asked several questions, e.g. 'can I use a computer for creating the timeline?' Similarly, Bena requested, 'can I use symbols from the Internet to express my feeling at times?' which she then used in her timeline (Appendix 6.5). I ensured full freedom to participants in creating a timeline, as I was interested in 'an image they feel reflects a timeline of their identity experiences' (Jackson, 2013, p. 419).

### **Image Site (Timeline)**

During elicitation, participants were asked to narrate their understanding, feeling & experiences about the academic life of the UK University. For example: what were the acts and practices? How do you feel about it? What was the best and worst time since you are in the UK, and why? What have you learned from it? What else you want to tell me? How did you experience timeline elicitation process? The above questions linked my data with Discourse (with capital D) of Gee (1996, p.131). Thus, in the image site (Jackson, 2013, p.

419), during the interview, participants explained their thinking, feeling and believing around the acts and practices and the related experiences in the content of the timeline (see Chapter 8).

#### **4.2.2.3.3 Relational Map**

A Relational Map (RM) is seen in literature as a type of concept map, which is defined as a ‘two dimensional diagrams that consist of concepts or nodes (put into an ellipse, circle, rectangle or square) jointed by labelled lines (the words or phrase) to show relationships and interrelationships between those selected concepts...The relational map can be in the hierarchical, cluster or chain form’ (Djanette & Fouad, 2014, p. 583). I preferred using relational maps as a data generation method at Data Point 4 for constructing identities, which I could have potentially used in Data Points 2 and 3, but I did not do this for a few reasons: first, the aim of Data Points 2 and 3 was to go deeply into the participants’ lives (and thus to expand and not to conclude); second, I decided not to use the same method at each data point to minimise the impact of methods; thirdly, to avoid boredom.

#### **Why Relational Map?**

The focus of Data Point 4 was to explore participant’s identity construction after 9 months of living in the UK and preparing to return home to Pakistan. Based on Gee’s Discourse identities, in the past participants were thinking, feeling and believing in ways inherent to their Pakistani cultural model. Therefore, at this point it is necessary to analyse whether transition has left any impact on their Pakistani habitus and whether this is evidenced through the maps they produce. I decided to use a relational map at data point four in my research for several reasons. Firstly, I used the method to ‘enter into the heart’ of the participant by visualising their perception through their mapping of ‘self and others’ at Data Point 4 and their projection forward about life, with hierarchal importance. Secondly, Park and Basole (2016) and Djanette and Fouad (2014) found relational maps to be useful methods to explore identity construction. Thirdly, I used the method to provide basic ‘scaffolding’ to participants in eliciting tacit information (Bagnoli, 2009, p. 555, 560), reflecting upon their own thinking (Montero *et al.* 2015) and making them aware of their own conceptions, which has meta cognitive effects (Montero *et al.*, 2015; MoLenari, 2015). Fourthly, it resonates with my methodology, as Djanette and Fouad (2014) used relational maps in their case study design. Finally, comparing the concepts of relational

map would enable me to bring together ideas of the earlier interviews, which would give trustworthiness and add member checking to my data analysis.

### **Production Site (Relational Map)**

On the production site (Jackson, 2013, p. 419), I provided paper, colours and a sample of the relational map (Lord, 2013) to create a relational map. The sample, coupled with the directions (See Appendix 3.4), was particularly helpful in adapting them to the method, and participants found no difficulty in creating relational maps. I requested participants to keep the concept 'self' in the centre and position other concepts around 'self' in a hierarchy with relative importance, keeping in view, 'who am I at this moment in time and in a given context'. I requested them to consider the following aspects:

- Start with the sun labelled 'Me' as a student-.
- Position the provided blank stars (with themes about acts, practices, people, places or things) nearer or farther, around the sun in their relative importance to you ('who am I at this moment?').

Knowing that constructing a relational map is a complex task for participants, I ensured my presence in the room for ready feedback at the time of interview. Even more, in creating the diagram, I encouraged participants to 'construct their own meaning of time and placement of life-events' and recount it to me afterwards (Jackson, 2013, p. 416). Participants asked a few questions about the appropriateness of their diagram, and the use of the computer, to which I reassured their freedom in making choices. On average, each participant spent approximately 10–15 minutes in creating relational map. In my research, relational map creation was the least time-consuming among all the three visual elicitation methods used. Six participants constructed relational maps (Appendices 10.1–10.6)

### **Image Site (Relational Map)**

During elicitation, participants were asked to narrate their understanding, feeling & experiences of the time. For example: explain the relational map you have created; the reason why these acts, practices, person, places or things are nearer or farther to you. What else you want to tell me? How did you experience creating relational map?

The above questions linked my data with the theoretical framework. Thus, in the image site (Jackson, 2013, p. 419), participants elicited colour, structure, position and meanings from the concepts in the relational map (See Chapter 8).

### **Analysis of Timeline and Relational Map**

To analyse graphic elicitation, I initially decided to use content analysis, as Djanette and Fouad (2014) advocated for its analysis in qualitative and quantitative research, however, I doubted my decision after reading the quotation, ‘the quality of understanding of the concepts used by the students is more important than their amount or accuracy’ (p. 587). I therefore used visuals as prompts to generate data, as according to Park and Basole, (2016, p. 01), ‘the foundational challenge in information visualisation research is to transform and map raw data into appropriate symbolic and spatial visual representations and couple it with effective and intuitive interaction techniques’. Even though, I was interested in participants’ elicitation and not in analysing visuals for accuracy of concept (Bagnoli, 2009; Goodson *et al.*, 2010; Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009; Lombard, 2013; McCarthy, 2013), I made an attempt to overcome Park and Basole’s challenge, in the audience site (Jackson, 2013, p. 419) for timeline and relational map as below:

#### **The Site of the Audience (Timeline)**

At the site of the audience (Jackson, 2013, p. 419) I put together the raw timeline data of all the participants into one table, divided into monthly columns (See Appendix 11), alongside their names and ages. Further, I coded the data in colour, according to the frequency and commonality of themes in the timeline. Displaying all the timelines data in this way enabled me to identify any reoccurring patterns across participant’s timelines. For example, the process enabled us to consider differences in age, roles of positionality, marital status, hierarchal position among siblings, economic background and cultural differences as factors in transition. In addition, I tried to sum-up the month-by-month data of each participant to look at transition on a monthly basis (See Appendix 10). I have presented that data in 6.3 of my study.

#### **The Site of the Audience (Relational Map)**

At the site of the audience (Jackson, 2013, p. 419) I repeated this process for the relational map data of all the participants by creating one table which included columns for the Centre of the map, the Nearest concepts and the Farthest concepts (See Appendix 13). I

assigned colours to the frequently occurring concepts for coding purposes. Thus, I assigned red to marriage, green to family, blue to travelling, orange to academic, purple to career, brown to accommodation, pink to friends, grey to social pressure and a yellow highlighter to individual pressure (including emotional states and appearance). To define each concept, I created another table (See Appendix 12), where I included the wording used by participants for a particular concept. I analysed how these concepts are related to participant's Discourse identity of Pakistan. I have presented that data in 6.4 of my study.

I argue that my subjective interpretation of the timeline and the relational map artefact could not stand alone. However, the emerging concepts on the timeline and relational map act as validity for my research. For example, I found common themes on the relational map e.g. 'marriage', 'success', 'study', etc. These themes also came up in my interpretation of the participants' narratives, which therefore validated my analysis. Thus, in my study, the narratives of participants were built on visuals, even though the images acted as artefacts, but it was the participant's description and explanation which helped making sense of them.

#### **Part 4.3: Data Analysis**

In conducting the analysis of my research, I used qualitative methods. Qualitative data analysis 'seeks to unpick how people construct the world around them, what they are doing or what is happening to them in terms that are meaningful and offer rich insight' (Gibbs & Gibbs, 2008, p. 10). To understand qualitative data, I therefore was aware of my reflexivity because 'coherence of ideas rests with the analyst who has rigorously studied how different ideas or components fit together in a meaningful way when linked together' (Leininger, 1985, p. 60).

In the analysis process, I considered the four dimensions of identities (see literature review), my theoretical framework, including cultural models and positional identities (see theoretical framework) with the thematic analysis of Coffey and Atkinson (1996) and the narrative analysis of Bruner (1996). I transcribed data from all the four interviews and cleaned the data by deleting the incomplete and repetitive data. Further, I used pseudonyms and took other measures to anonymise the data (i.e. deleting words which could detect family or personal identity and hiding participants' faces in pictures).



### **4.3.1 Coffey and Atkinson's Thematic Analysis**

I used thematic analysis to find cultural models across data and to do a cross-case analysis. According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996) 'researchers need to be able to organise, manage and retrieve the most meaningful data bits' (p. 26). I started the analysis by transcribing the data. I ensured anonymity, confidentiality and accuracy of the recorded data during transcription. Furthermore, I listened to the taped material, read and re-read the transcripts and started to make broader selections from the data based on the four dimensions of participants' life. According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 26–27) 'coding should not be seen as a substitute for analysis...rather attaching codes to data and generating concepts have important functions in enabling us rigorously to review what our data are saying'. Thus, thematic analysis is a process of data coding, data categorisation and generating concepts. According to the authors, 'coding can be thought about as a way of relating our data to our ideas about those data. Because codes are thus links between locations in the data and sets of concepts or ideas' (p. 27). I therefore used my insider position, i.e. being a female student from Pakistan, and the literature review conducted on female culture in Pakistan (see Research Context Chapter) to identify the relevant concepts that were thoroughly and precisely related to my data. I brought together all the data bits that relate to a particular code to achieve a data display. At this stage, I was fully familiarised with the context of individual participants, therefore after displaying the data in coded form, I linked it together to retrieve categories and derive concepts that is cultural models. To display concepts (cultural models) across participants for the reader, and myself I used 'mind view software', as shown in Figure 4. To represent particular cultural models (see Table 8 below) in the Figure, I assigned it a specific colour.

#### **4.3.1.1 Cultural Models Depicted in the Figures and the Assigned Colour**

Each colour, as shown in Table 8 (4.3.1.1), is indicative of a particular cultural model in the figures (See Figure 5 below). The reason to give a colour to the cultural model is to bring clarity. Thus, these colours represent cultural models that have been elicited by participants in the interviews. I have used the same colour throughout the thesis to depict a particular cultural model. For instance, I have used red for the cultural model 'Log Kya Kahengay' translated as 'What will people say?', and orange for 'Chadar Aur Chardewari' translated as 'Veil and the four walls'.













Religious Belief	Light green	
Log Kya Kahengay (LKK) 'What will people say'?	Red	
Chadar Aur Chardevari' (CAC) 'Veil and the four walls'	Orange	
Not to question elders/tutors	Blue	
Patriarchy	Yellow	
Marriage, study and work	Turquoise	
Obedience to parents & elders	Light Blue	
Individuality/ Independent thinking	Purple	
Memorisation	Grey	
Social	Parrot green	
Social networking sites	Pink	
New Cultural understanding	Peach	

Table 8: Colours Assigned to the Cultural Models in Figures

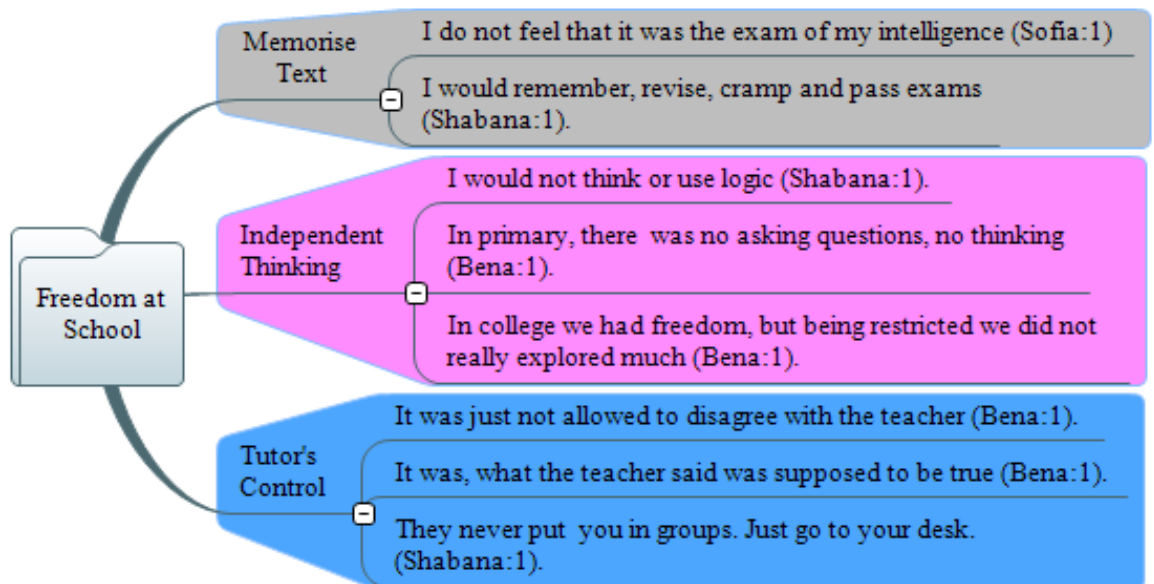


Figure 4: Primary School and Freedom

### 4.3.2 Bruner's Narrative Analysis

To explore individual students' agency and identity construction, I used Bruner's (1996) approach to narrative analysis, primarily because it provides a parsimonious approach that I have found helpful when examining 'messy and complex' data. Moreover, narratives constitute the psychological and cultural reality of the world in which individuals live, which is linked to my study on transitional identities. According to Bruner (1996),

Culture is the way of life and thought that we construct, negotiate, institutionalise, and finally (after it is all settled) end up calling 'reality' to comfort ourselves (p. 87).

In Bruner's (1996) narrative analysis, I used particularly the 'centrality of trouble', which he defines as

Looking as if that trouble change the identity or not. Stories pivot (based central) on breached norms. That places trouble at the hub (centre of a wheel) of the narrative realities. Stories worth telling and worth construing are typically born in trouble (p. 142).

Thus, according to Bruner, I would look for troubles, and monitor if that trouble has changed participants' identity or not. Bruner further states,

For in the last half of our century, dramatism has become epistemic, gripped not just by 'what happen' but by the puzzle of how in a turbulent world we come to know or to construct our realities. 'Trouble' ... is not only in a mismatch between a protagonist and her setting, but also in for example protagonists' internal struggle in constructing that setting' (p. 142).

Thus, Bruner's 'centrality of trouble' is compatible with my theoretical framework on the point to analyse, how participants' internal struggle, enable them to use agency and position themselves around cultural models to justify their choices and decisions in their narratives. Bruner (1996) states 'some element of freedom is always implied in narrative – some agency that can intrude on a presumed causal chain' (p. 136). Thus, in my research, agency is the freedom of the agent to act in the world from choice around their cultural models.

### 4.3.2.1 Narrative Analysis Process

I started the analysis process by listening to the taped material, reading and re-reading the transcripts to look for narratives of transition around the question ‘who am I at this moment in time and in a given context?’ (Gee, 2000, p.1), keeping various data points distinct to monitor transitional changes. I developed a Coding Framework to conduct a narrative analysis.

#### 4.3.2.1.1 Coding Framework

The coding framework was developed to capture the narratives of participants. These narratives typically involved conflict or negotiation and often drew on past, present and potential future decision making or events. This framework leads to the development of codes for past, present and possible future, as well as for codes to do with agency and decision making.

#### Example of analysis

I have chosen throughout the analysis chapter to use inserts (CFI) containing extracts from the interviews. I have summarised these extracts using a number of symbols and emoticons. For example, below is an example of the insert.



3.1 Husband on Oxford Road



3.2 Sofia on Oxford Road

Image 3: Sofia and her Husband on Oxford Road

In the example, Sofia while eliciting the photos reflected on her equal position to her husband as a student at the UK University. The calendar depicts that participant elicitation was on data point



This is my husband's picture, and this is mine. It feels like a dream to me. (Sofia: 2)



I could only see Oxford road through this picture... (Sofia: 2)



Now when I am a student myself and I walk on Oxford road, I can't explain how fabulous my feelings are, now I am part of this University and I will be like my husband an alumni of this university. I think it is miraculous (Sofia: 2) .

CFI 1: Sofia's Recognition as a 'UK Student'

two. The Pakistani flag depicted that her conflict was with the cultural model of Pakistan, 'male supremacy'. She renegotiated the conflict, which gave her the understanding that her equal position is due to her studentship in the UK. The gold tooth emoticon is a metaphorical representation of 'being a student in UK University', which gave Sofia a new recognition and changed her position in family in a certain way. Thus, each coding framework Insert (CFI) has a narrative of conflict, and through the use of emoticons, I tried to show how participants questioned their past, and modified their thinking, feeling, and believing during transition. When using the emoticon analysis, I have also connected them to the context in which the narrative was used.

The rest of the section presents my reasoning for presenting the data in this way.

I considered the theories and epistemological positions of Coffey & Atkinson (1996), Bruner (1996), Gee (1996) and Holland *et al.* (1998) to develop the coding framework of Past, Present and Possible for the data analysis of my study.

In 'The Culture of Education' (1996), Bruner discusses the concepts of Past, Present and Possible, which he sees as being represented in the academic subjects of Social Studies, History and Literature (p.87). Thus, Bruner believes Social Sciences explore contemporary society, whereas History discusses the past and what previous events have led up to the present state. Literature offers a window into alternative realities and possible ways of thinking. This links up to my research in which participants were in a constant debate within their past, present and possible, I therefore created a coding frame using Bruner's terms.

In each coding framework table of the past, present and possible, I identified participant's narrated sub-stories, which had a point of conflict [that is described as a 'centrality of trouble' in Bruner's (1996, p.142) term, and contradiction in Holland *et al.*'s (1998, p.17) term], which brought changes in participants' perceptions [that is described as 'thinking, feeling and believing as a member of socially meaningful group' in Gee's (1996, p.131) term] of the possible that is their positioning [ that is described as positional identity in Holland *et al.*'s (1998, pp 127-128)] around cultural model. Thus, in the resolution of the conflict, participants would either accept or reject the Pakistani cultural model, or at the very least develop a new understanding on them. Participant's resolution of the conflict would reveal their positional identities (Holland *et al.*, 1998, pp 127-128) in transition.

After conducting my analysis, I found out that a few emotional impressions came up repeatedly in the conflict and resolution process of the coding framework, where the end result might be participants' reconfiguring their identities. I therefore chose to use symbols and emoticons as a form of visual shorthand within my coding framework tables to present the analysis of participants' narratives visually. I used a set of thirteen different visuals, including three symbols of the past, four calendars of the present, and for the possible I used five emoticons and one symbol, which I felt best summarised the participant's distinctive narratives of conflict.

### The Visuals of Past

It emerged from my data that while discussing the trouble around transitional acts in their narratives, participants mentioned three types of 'Past' (See Table 9). They were as follows:

- Pakistani Flag (a cultural past based on growing up in Pakistan)
- Mosque Icon (a religious past based on their previous beliefs)
- UK Flag (a 'new' past covering the time since they first arrived to study in the UK)

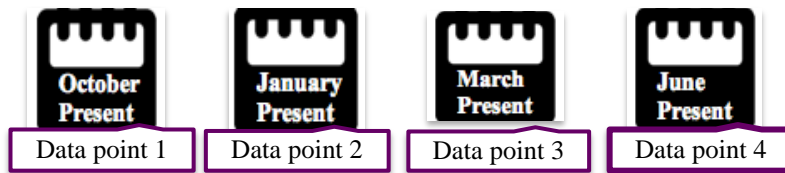


**Table 9: Past as Pakistani Culture, Religion and UK in Coding Framework**

### The Visuals of Present

Participants' trouble emerged in data at a particular time in transition, therefore to pinpoint that time, I used a 'calendar' symbol, marked with the interview data point (See Table 10). For example, these data points were decided according to Sawyer (2011), who theorised that every international student goes through four stages of transition.

- Data Point 1 (Honeymoon stage at October)
- Data Point 2 (Crisis stage at January)
- Data Point 3 (Gradual Adjustment at March)
- Data Point 4 (Biculturation at June)



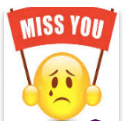

**Table 10: Present as Four Data Points in Coding Framework**

The Visuals of Possible

I found a pattern in my data which showed that after moving to the UK, where participants after renegotiating the trouble in the three pasts (See Table 11) would use agency and make choices. Thus, if the conflicts of the transitional act were due to religion, they would unanimously reject the transitional act. However, if the conflicts were about culture or their growing past, participants would use agency and make choices to get to the resolution of the conflict. To represent the ‘possible’ I used five emoticons taking the form of cartoon faces as well as one symbol (See Table 11). These were:

- Gold Tooth: That is representing newly acquired status, namely from the prestige of studying at an international university (for example, in Pakistan a woman’s status may be defined through adhering to passive cultural norms or bearing male children. However, the new status of ‘university student’ elevates the female position to being more equal to men).
- Thinking Face: That is representing inner mental debate (reflection on new cultural experiences and what they entail). Expressed in statements such as ‘I think...’ or ‘I feel...’
- Thumbs Up Face: That is signifying when participants used their own decision-making powers to accept or reject a new cultural norm (such as a mode of dressing).
- Spectacled Face: That is representing making sense of the new system (UK) and its expectations and norms in comparison to the previous system they have known (Pakistan).
- ‘Miss You’ Face: That is representing emotional anxieties, such as feelings towards returning home to Pakistan and the ability to ‘re-conform’ to the original culture.

- Signpost: That is representing projections of participant’s imagined future, whether in the UK or Pakistan. Here, participants expressed thoughts of redefining their future.

					
Inner mental debate	Recognition as int'l student	Emotional anxieties	Making sense of the systems	Making a decision	Imagined a possible future

**Table 11: Possible as Emoticon and Symbols in the Coding Framework**

Thus, participants after negotiations within past and present, would either state themselves being in a mental debate (thinking face) or being in a newly acquired status of international student (gold tooth emoticon) or feel sad (‘miss you’ face) or make sense of the expected behaviour in the new system (spectacled face), or use their own decision to modify themselves (thumb up face) or imagine a possible future (sign post). Thus, the emoticons in the Coding Framework depict a conflict and resolution process, which would ultimately state a certain kind of change (in their thinking feeling believing due to transition).

In this way, sometimes the Pakistani cultural model stopped participants from certain actions in transition to the UK University and sometimes transition (their acts at the UK University) gave them new insights and increased their agency within their Pakistani cultural models.

#### **4.3.2.2.2 Emoticons**

Emoticons, or ‘emotion icons’, are defined as ‘visual cues...that when read sideways represent feeling or emotions’ and ‘a textual face of a writer’s mood or facial expression’ (Dresner & Herring, 2010, p. 03). The literature describes how emoticons can be used to establish social presence in online platforms (Dunlap *et al.*, 2016, p. 06; Abu Sa’aleek, 2013; Beatty, 2003; Crystal, 2001.), and to express users’ ‘subtle mood changes’, (Godin, 1993, p.4), whereas my research was not based on online activities. However, like online representation, I used emoticons to represent participants’ emotions about transitional acts and not their facial expressions at the time of the interview. Participants’ transitional emotions would tell the study, how they felt during their resolution of the trouble (Bruner, 1996). Emoticons would visualise participants’ inner speech about their alignment or



resistance to the cultural model. Emoticons represent my interpretation of participant's emotions, to show reconfiguring or changing of identities within transition, which is the focus of my study.

### **Why Symbols and Emoticons?**

A picture is worth a thousand words. I restricted emoticons to the representation of emotions, as I viewed it helpful to the reader and the researcher in many ways:

- 1) Emoticons overcome the limitations of using words to describe emotions and convey the precise emotions of the participant to the reader, as according to Kavanagh (2016) emoticon clarify participants' stance or mood and express emotions in a softer way.
- 2) Emoticons provide a more subtle framework of coding, as there were whole ranges of emoticons which could convey the participant's inner thinking, understanding and missing of transition into the visual expression, as according to Dunlap *et al.*, (2016, p. 03), 'facial expressions, the placement of head and shoulders and the use of hands [in emoticons] can deliver information, regulate the interaction, and express feelings and intimacy'. The emoticons in my study are used to summarise the feelings that were expressed about the events and happenings in their transitional lives rather than their immediate emotions during the interview.
- 3) The visual depiction of participants' reconfiguration of the possible in the form of emotions helped the study because it revealed the differences as well as the similarities quite obviously across the data. For example, after applying the coding framework, I found that I have used similar emoticons repeatedly, which indicated a similar emotional response of different participants around the cultural model, and at the same time, the emoticons allowed me to convey this clearly to my reader.
- 4) I acknowledge the fact that there are limitations in finding the exact emoticon for a particular feeling, but it certainly gave a visual effect – emoticons acted as visual hooks and shouldered some of the burden of interpretation.
- 5) Furthermore, I argue that using emoticon succinctly indicate and represent matter of interest in transition, as I have got a visual theme running through out my thesis and visual representation is implied in various elements of my thesis.

- 6) The symbols and emoticons tell the reader about the interplay of participants thinking feeling and believing in transitional narratives and show the interplay of past, present and possible visually.

#### 4.3.2 2.3 Symbols and Emoticons Table

After conducting the narrative analysis of my data, I made Table 12, which contains a list of the symbols and emoticons that emerged during analysis and which I had used in the coding framework.

	The Pakistani flag suggests participants' debate within Pakistani CMs ( The cultural past)
	The mosque icon suggests participants' debate with religion (The religious past)
	The gold tooth emoticon depicts participant's newly acquired status, their recognition as an international student.
	The UK flag suggests participants' experiences accumulated since first arriving in the UK i.e. from Data Point 1 in October 2014 (Growing past).
	The thinking face suggests a trouble, -representing inner mental debate i.e. thinking or reflecting.
	The spectacled face represents that participant's making sense of the new system (UK)
	The thumb up face signifies that participant is using their own decision making.
	The 'Miss You' face represents participant's emotional anxieties.
	The sign post suggest participants' projection forward into their imagined possible future.

Table 12: Symbols and Emoticons in Coding Framework

#### **4.3.4 Analysis Chapters Structure**

I structured the two analysis chapters (Five and Six) in a way that Chapter Five discusses participants' negotiation of past, present and possible around their narratives of conflict in transition. In this Chapter, I chose to expand on three participants Sofia, Lena and Fafa. Presenting these participants' narrative and showing how three of the six participants folds and unfolds their thinking, feeling, believing enabled me to show the process of transitional identities construction. In Chapter Six, I bring together data from all participants to provide cross case analysis to the reader.

#### **Why Sofia and Lena**

Even though I have looked at each participant, I decided to use Sofia as the main case (out of the six cases) along with Lena due to some solid reasons:

1. Sofia, and Lena's case explained the narrative of transition in more detail and comparative way than others. Sofia attended public schools and Lena attended private schools. The key themes of Sofia's narrative were not only specific to the key moments of her life but also the key moments in terms of transition.
2. Sofia was the only married participant and Lena was the youngest participant. In addition. All participants had pre-defined expectations of married life, which is important in my study, as woman's autonomy in Pakistan is a life stage achievement, which unlike in the UK, is connected to marriage and motherhood (Stewart *et al.*, 2006; Ahmad *et al.*, 2009).
3. Sofia's narrative explained cultural models in real life, which were otherwise tacit. For example, all participants were in conflict about, 'marriage, study and work'. They were questioning the social pressures on their fathers regarding marriage, etc., however, Sofia's quotation resolved the conflict by saying, 'and we should not keep girls at home for study purposes only, if we have good proposals [marriage] for them'.
4. Sofia's case helped me to construe the social reality of Pakistan and the process of transition. Sofia narrated the in-depth experience of cultural transition quite consistently, which, according to Bruner (1996, p. 87), 'is the way of life and thought that we construct, negotiate, institutionalise, and finally (after it is all settled) end up calling "reality" to comfort ourselves'.

#### Part 4.4: Reflexivity

In this part, I explain my insider and outsider position, my claim that I gave my interpretation at instances to construe the reality and how I, as a researcher, reflected upon myself at various occasion in transition.

In my study, I acknowledged the importance of my position as both a researcher in the interpretation of the data and as a female Pakistani postgraduate student who is going through transition to the UK University herself. According to Creswell (2007, p.179) ‘how we write is a reflection of our own interpretation based on the cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics that we bring to research.

All writing is positioned and within a stance’. Consequently, in order to take a position, initially I thought myself to be better at an outsider position so that I could give power to the participant, who came from different geographical places in Pakistan. However, during data generation, participants often used the words, ‘you can understand’, ‘as you are familiar with’ or they would often use an Urdu word, which I would confirm with them by suggesting an English equivalent, which indicated to me that to some extent I am on an insider position in my research. Once I realised my position as an insider, I found it quite helpful in building trust between myself and the participants and obtaining rich data. My insider position also helped me to understand participants’ cultural models and the construction of their identities, which were embedded in the tacit sociocultural norms of Pakistan and the UK University.

To consider my own reflexivity, I used visual methods and explained my stance in ‘the audience site’ (Jackson, 2013, p. 419). My reflection on the whole research process made me ‘conscious of and reliant on the meaning participants attach to their visual’ (Jackson, 2013, p. 426). Thus, in the process of research, I would always doubt myself, for instance in my relational map protocol, I asked participants to put all those concepts on paper, which were important to them, in hierarchy around self. However, while listening to their elicitation, transcribing and observing the relational maps, I was in a debate with myself about whether participants arranged those concepts around themselves based on urgency or importance. However, in this mental debate, I ultimately came to the resolution that participants elicited these timeline and relational maps themselves and have interpreted the

visuals thus I had overcome the question of arrangement based on urgency or importance to some extent.

On another occasion, after viewing participants' changing identities due to transition, I was reflective in terms of what research can offer, for example I asked myself whether the change in identity is produced by transition or by using different visual methods. Thus, I could see various concepts in participant's created visuals (e.g. marriage, study and work debate), which was there in all the four interviews. However, participants related to marriage differently in the first interview (marriage being enforced by family), rather than the last interview (marriage being a personal choice), which suggested to me that my findings were changing due to the transition and not due to the research methods.

My reflexivity in the study enabled me to 'take a deeper look at my own life' (Jackson, 2013, p.426). I would sometimes compare myself with the experiences of other participants and would develop a new self-understanding on my transition. For example, being a married PhD student with a family, I would envy unmarried students in the first year of my study, as if their transitional journey is comparatively less challenging, however my research gave me this understanding that I was wrong: everyone has their own challenges in transition. These students had the challenge of loneliness, which I did not have. I therefore decided to write my personal experience of transition. However, as I have written my narrative (See Appendix 14) after the completion of my research, I therefore acknowledge the effects of the post hoc rationalisation as a factor on my narrative of transition over time (Schwitzgebel & Ellis, 2016). My reflections on the use of visual methods are included in Chapter Seven.

#### **Part 4.5: Ethical Dilemmas**

In conducting the study, I followed the ethical procedures of the Manchester Institute of Education and took the following measures:

- Prior to the commencement of the study, I obtained approval from the ethical committee of the University of Manchester and fulfilled all the necessary requirements.

- Two weeks in advance of each data generation interview, I discussed with the participants, the participant information sheet (See Appendix 1), which explained the process, purpose and use of the data by the researcher.
- Prior to generating data, I sought permission from the participants regarding publishing the data and visuals through informed consent forms.
- During interviews, I put participants at ease by giving preference to their chosen times, dates and venues, and therefore conducted two interviews on Skype, whereas the rest of the interview were conducted physically in a comfortable room at the UK University.
- During the data generation process, I was extremely sensitive to the ethical dilemmas, as the data was about the transitional period, and I was aware participants might get upset in eliciting narratives. To destress participants, I assured each participant of their right to refuse to answer any part of the question or withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason.
- I informed participants that if they found any issues while participating in my research, which they would prefer not to discuss with me, they could contact the Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator (See Appendix 1).
- In terms of confidentiality, I audio-recorded the interviews with participants' prior permission, following which, I transcribed the encrypted data faithfully myself.
- In the analysis of the data, I made sure of the anonymity and confidentiality of the participant and used only that data where written consent was obtained.
- In dealing with visuals, I strictly adhered to the UK University images policy. I made sure that the faces in the pictures were blurred and pseudonyms were used in the graphic elicitation charts and quotations to ensure anonymity. However, one of the participants wanted to show her face (which was all painted due to Halloween) in the photo, which even though was a challenge, but I did not blur her face, as I considered it unethical to hide her face if she was keen to refer to it in the elicitation of that photo.
- I have ensured the confidentiality of data by giving the University a different name, and using pseudonyms for participants, however, I accept the fact that I cannot ensure 100 % anonymity, but I can just mitigate the situation by taking certain step:

- The University in question is a big university and there are a large number of Pakistani female students studying in various schools, which automatically means that one story might be a little bit like other story.
- I have gone back to participants and member checked the data.
- I have taken permission from participants that they are happy for this data to be published.
- Even some of my participants wanted me to use their real names but I have chosen to anonymise their names.
- Similarly in case of photos, although I have decided to anonymise photos , some of the participants wanted to show their face

The above steps indicate that I have been conscious of the issues of confidentiality and anonymity through reporting and looked to mitigate the situation.

#### **Part 4.6: Trustworthiness**

The data in the study were generated, analysed, discussed and presented in accordance with the guidelines of Lincoln and Guba (1985) regarding credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability. To satisfy credibility (that is the extent to which a research account is believable and appropriate) I used multiple sources that is collecting data longitudinally and using various visual elicitation techniques. Further, I tried to be reflexive, by providing prompts from the transcribed data at intervals and assessing feedback from various sources. For example, I presented the findings of the pilot study to the University of Cambridge open review committee for feedback and salient work to other conferences nationally and internationally. I ensured dependability (that is the stability of data over time and over conditions) by triangulation in the methods of data generation and reviewing the collected data with relevant literature in the field. I dealt with conformability (that is the degree to which others agree or corroborate with the research findings) in my study by coupling interviews with participants' created visual methods to support the participants' narration and avoid bias from the researcher's imagination. Visual data served as a member-checking and validity tool for themes associated with theoretical conceptualisations in my research. Even though I limited my study to six participants, the aim was to look deep into the 'process' and 'meanings' participant attribute to their given situations and not for generalisation (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 119). I thus enhanced the

transferability (that is the results of the research can be transferred to other contexts and situations beyond the scope of the study context) of my study through the technique of representative sampling of Pakistani community to Asian and collectivistic culture.

#### **Part 4.7 Summary**

In Chapter Four, I discussed the research paradigm of my study that is realism in ontology (which could be seen through my consideration of participants as a kind of person in Pakistani social reality) and constructionism in epistemology (as due to transition, they were constructing a new ways of being). Further, the chapter discussed that I am using a case study research design, where the cases are ‘female Pakistani students studying at the UK University. Data for the study was generated longitudinally, in four narrative interviews. The first interview was conducted without visual methods, whereas, photo elicitation, timeline and relational maps were used in the later three interviews, respectively. These visual methods provoked participants’ reflection on cultural experiences in transition by stimulating recall and allowing the dialogue to emerge. Data were analysed with thematic analysis of Coffey and Atkinson (1996) and the narrative analysis of Bruner (1996). The analysis process of the visuals discussed production site, image site, and the site of audience. The production site took into account the circumstances at the site, the image site involved a co-construction of the participants’ and the researcher’s reflection on the subject matter of the visuals at the time of the interview, whereas ‘the audience site’ considered the researcher’s reflexivity, on participants created visuals. The next chapter is about the findings of my study, regarding the first research question.



## **Chapter Five: Negotiating Narratives of Conflict around Past, Present and Possible**

The purpose of this Chapter is to present participants' conflicts and contradictions around their narratives of transition at various data points in the past, present and possible framework in order to unfold their perception about transitioning to UK higher education. This chapter answers the research question 'how do Pakistani female students narrate their identities before, during and after transitioning to the UK University? To answer the research question, I chose to expand on the narratives of two participants, Sofia and Lena. The intention here is to show the narrative of the individual participants to address the broad question that considers the narratives of identity. This chapter contrast with the following chapter, which examines the emergence of themes across the cultural models of participants. I have chosen to present in depth Sofia and Lena's narrative because Sofia was the only married participant and Lena was the youngest. In addition, Sofia attended public schools and Lena attended private schools. In my study, I found a pattern, where participants' self-negotiation of the transitional narratives brought certain contradictions between past (who was I in the past?) and present ('who am I at this data point?'), which would enable them to project a new possible (imagined future). To pinpoint participants' narrative of conflict (trouble), I created a coding framework (See Methodology 4.3.2.1.1).

The coding framework was developed to capture the narratives of participants. These narratives typically involved conflict or negotiation and often drew on past, present and potential future decision making or events. This framework leads to the development of codes for past, present and possible future, as well as for codes to do with agency and decision making. These narratives suggest that at data point one participants' projection of the possible future was different relative to the respective data points (two, three and four), as participants had not yet seen the alternate cultural reality of the UK University. Throughout this chapter, I have chosen to use inserts from my analysis containing extracts from the interviews [I called them Coding Framework Insert (CFI)]. Further, in this chapter, I used Figured World and Hybridity (Holland *et al.*, 1998) in order to show the extent to which transition has impacted participants' identities [see theoretical framework chapter for definition and example of Figured World (pages 84-86 and Hybridity (pages 91)].

## Part 5.1: Sofia's Narrative of Transition

Sofia, 35 years old, was a married participant from Punjab, Pakistan. Her father was a doctor and mother, a housewife. She was the youngest of the three siblings.

### 5.1.1. Sofia's Life in Pakistan

#### 5.1.1.1 Decision for Choice of Study

Sofia's early education was from a public school. She was very competent in her studies and therefore was elected to be a class representative. Sofia's high academic achievements gave her both passion and eligibility to join medical school and follow in her father's footsteps. In Pakistan, the option of medical studies is competitive and is restricted only to those students who achieve more than 60%

marks in exams. Studying science is therefore considered as a mark of academic distinction and pride for a student. In CFI

2, Sofia's quote ('it was understood from my teacher's side that I would opt for pre-medicine')

suggests that she was aware of her academic competence. In Pakistan, there are two streams of education for students. One is science and the other is art.

The decision to choose the science path is made in Year nine, and from this point

students learn different subjects than those who choose the arts path. In Year nine, Sofia could not opt for science subjects, as her father as the decision maker chose different subjects for Sofia. In this regard, the cultural model of Pakistan, 'obedience to parents', meant that she did not have the agency to make an independent decision for herself. Sofia's father was her figure of someone, who guided and influenced her decisions. Sofia aligned herself with her father's authority and comforted herself by rationalising that his decision was in her best interests.

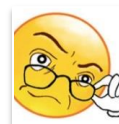
Thus, CFI 2 suggests that in Pakistani culture, paternal permission is important in girls' educational decision making. In this regards, Sofia's lack of resistance demonstrated acceptance of her positionality as less powerful than her father. Working within the



It was understood from my teachers' side that I would opt for pre-medical(Sofia: 1).



My father did not want me to become a doctor, although I could have adopted that path. (Sofia: 1).



(I did not do that because I did not want to take an independent decision... Being a doctor, he did not want his kids to spend restless day and night duties (Sofia: 1).

#### CFI 2: Sofia's Choice of Subject

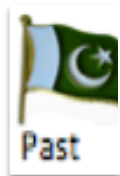
confines of Sofia’s family Figured World of being Pakistani female student, she could not make independent decision to study the subject of her choice. Therefore she continued her education as suggested by her father and joined a government university in Pakistan. Here, she enrolled in a Master’s programme in English Literature, with the aim of a possible future teaching career. Her decision was limited to her father’ choice, who simultaneously was a supportive figure as someone who guided and influenced her academic pathway.

### 5.1.1.2 Decision to Marry

In the first year of her Master’s degree in Pakistan, Sofia’s father decided that it was time for her to get married. In CFI 3, she accepted her father’s decision. She demonstrated her alignment with the Pakistani cultural model ‘early marriage’ in CFI 3. Sofia comforted herself that in Pakistan, the cultural model of early marriage is preferred for girls, and therefore marriage is considered more important for women than education. Here we can see the impact of cultural norms upon Sofia’s decision making in terms



In our Eastern culture, we cannot wait for the daughters to get marriage at a later age, if we have good options for them (Sofia: 1).



we should not keep them at home just for study purposes (Sofia: 1)..



My father was not ready for my early marriage, but it was social pressure (Sofia: 1).

#### CFI 3: Sofia's Decision to Marriage

of education and marriage. Sofia’s narrative made Pakistani cultural norms explicit, as within her identity of being an obedient Pakistani daughter she aligned herself with the cultural model of early marriage and self-authored her identity accordingly. In this respect, she reveals that despite her father’s higher social status of being a doctor and a male authority figure, her father also faced ‘social pressure’ (CFI 3) within the family Figured World. The word ‘social pressure’ in Sofia’s quote refers to the cultural model, ‘what will people say?’ which suggests that in Pakistan, society puts pressure on fathers to shape their decisions about their daughters in a certain way. Thus, Sofia’s action towards making decision has a link to the broader cultural model of Pakistan, which literature (Ahmad *et al*, 2009, p.619) terms as ‘loss of face’. That is the daughter’s acceptance or rejection of the

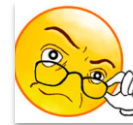
father's choice, may impact on his (Sofia's father's) social status. In this way, as answerable to society, Sofia's father mediated the societal norms with that of his daughter's wishes.

### 5.1.1.3 Decisions after Engagement

Sofia achieved more than 50% marks in the first year of her Master's exam. Consequently, she was then given the option by the University to either sit an exam or write a dissertation. Her preferred choice was to write a dissertation. However, she could not fulfil her wish, as in reality this would require her to prolong her studies by several



I was told by my in-laws that we cannot wait for two or three months extra... (Sofia: 1).



...As my husband was living alone in a bigger city of Pakistan (Sofia: 1).

#### CFI 4: Sofia's Inlaw's Home

months. This was objected by Sofia's in-laws (and her future husband), as they wanted her marriage to take place as soon as possible (See CFI 4). Sofia, being familiar with the cultural model of 'husband's supremacy' justified their decision and completed her Masters with exam rather than dissertation. Thus, even before her move to the in-law's home, Sofia self-authored her identity as an obedient daughter in law and aligned herself with her in-law's decision. This indicates that in the power structures of Pakistan, Sofia positions herself as having lower status in the cultural hierarchy as a woman and accepted the norms of abiding by the in-law's decisions. Sofia got married and moved into her in-law's home. She bore two sons and a daughter. Her husband was positioned as the head of the family. His super-ordination over Sofia was established in the family due to his education and job, as well as supported by the wider gendered cultural model of 'husband as a personification of God' (Ahmad *et al.*, 2009; Ali *et al.*, 2014; Zakar *et al.*, 2013) in Pakistan.

### 5.1.1.4 Professional Life

After five years of marriage, Sofia became an English lecturer in a female college on a permanent basis. In CFI 5, Sofia blames herself for her academic background from public school, rather than the education system, which divide individuals into different schooling systems. In Pakistan there are two schooling systems, private



I feel that there were so many deficiencies in my educational experiences as compared to those who were living in big cities... they had more fluency and accuracy [in English] (Sofia: 1).

#### CFI 5: Sofia's Status at Work

and public. The private schools are located in the capital cities of Pakistan, and use English as the medium of instruction, whereas the public schools (state schools) are situated all over the country and it uses Urdu. In the Figured World of college, she positioned herself as someone who is different from others in term of academic background, which put her in a subordinate position as compared to her colleagues at work, due to her academic background from public schools. Thus, as if, feeling different gave her the motivation to choose an academic route.

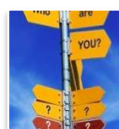
### 5.1.1.5 Critical Incident

In 2010, Sofia’s husband came to UK to pursue his master’s degree at the UK University. During summer vacations, Sofia joined her husband in the UK for three months. While in the UK, Sofia imagined herself in her

husband’s position and created a new possible (See CFI 6) of her studentship in the UK. However, at the end of the three months, she returned to Pakistan. In Sofia’s new possible, she imagined the position of being a student at the UK University and have an equal status to her husband. The more she allowed herself to inhabit this new possible (UK studentship), the more attractive



In 2010, my husband came to UK to pursue his master’s degree at the University. I came here just for three months in summer (Sofia: 1).



It aroused some special feeling inside me, as if! Can I be? How will I be able to come here and accomplish my dream? (Sofia: 1).



I underestimated myself; I thought I can’t apply to the university, because my husband is a civil servant in Pakistan so only he is competent (Sofia: 1).

CFI 6: Sofia's Critical Incident

it became to her. In the beginning, although she was excited by her new possible, she still could not position herself as reaching the heights of her husband’s intelligence and cultural status (See CFI 6), as the habitus of cultural expectations of Pakistani women still weighed heavily upon her.

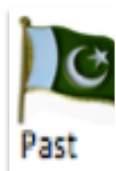
## 5.1.2 Imaginary World of Studying in the UK

### 5.1.2.1 Joining UK University

Sofia narrated the incident that during the process of filling out the admission form, she requested her husband to find a potential referee for the application. CFI 7 states that she viewed her husband as having little faith in her efforts to gain a scholarship and admission at the UK University. Therefore, his response was ‘discouraging’ to her (See CFI 7) indicating the presence of the internalised cultural model ‘veil and the four walls’ (Kothari 2005; Shaheed 2010). This phrase refers to the social expectation prevalent in Pakistani culture that women need to occupy themselves within the home and not with studies. At that point, Sofia was facing a conflict between her desires to join the UK University as an MA student and restrictions that the



There were some underlying meanings [within the husband's attitude] that [communicated] what rubbish she is doing? She is trying to achieve something, which is very far from her capacity. Even if she gets admission how will she be able to get scholarship? (Sofia: 1).



This feeling was discouraging. After this, I left my application for three weeks but then, because I was self-motivated, I completed my application (Sofia: 1).



In TESOL when I competed with my colleagues, it gave me an edge, because my boss thought it the most beneficial degree for English teachers in our country (Sofia: 1).

#### CFI 7: Renegotiating Triumph

cultural model of ‘Veil and the four walls’ placed around her, along with limited financial resources and the husband’s supremacy. Thus, within the marriage Figured World, she identifies herself as an obedient wife which is in conflict (‘discouraging’) with her new possible- that is to get admission at the UK University. Sofia’s husband’s lack of support affected her drive to achieve her goal and caused her to delay it temporarily. However, the strong feelings generated from her new imagined possible gave her the agency to complete the application form by herself. CFI 7 revealed that in Sofia’s marriage Figured World, the figure of husband was ‘discouraging’, as he did not facilitate her in the admission process of applying to UK University. In this respect, she resolved the conflict [mentioned in the explanation of CFI 7] by using agency through ‘self-authoring her ‘self-motivation’ towards her aspiration, which lead her to resolve the conflict and fill the application form. Sofia still lacked the necessary academic awards to earn an international scholarship. Luckily, the Government of Pakistan announced postgraduate scholarships for Pakistani

faculty member. In response to this, she chose to apply for Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) (See CFI 7) which gave her an edge on other participants and was successful in getting a scholarship to study at the UK University.

### 5.1.3.1 Projecting Imaginary World of Success at Data Point One

At this point in Sofia’s narratives, she began to recognise her new status as an international student and the ways in which this changed her position in certain dimensions of her life.

In the Figured World of studying at the UK University, Sofia self-authors her identity being an international student as ‘satisfaction’ and ‘elevation’. While prior her admission to UK University in CFI 5, she self-author her identity at a lower status as a college teacher when compared to other teachers. At this point, Sofia possible of getting admission at UK

University changed to a new imaginary possible. That is to get elevated status in job in Pakistan with her ‘foreign qualified’ (See CFI 8) status after her return from UK. Thus, achieving the UK studentship enabled her to see herself in an empowering position in her ‘new possible’ that is her



I think it will be a source of satisfaction and elevation for me (Sofia: 1)



In Pakistan you will hardly find any teacher who is foreign qualified in the governemnet college (Sofia: 1) .

#### CFI 8: Sofia's Imagined Position in Future Institution

future imaginary Figured World of a government college in Pakistan’. The Figured World of teaching in government college transformed and shaped into new form, where there is a shift in Sofia’s position from ‘public school’ qualified to ‘foreign qualified’<sup>2</sup> with ‘satisfaction and elevation’ in her imaginary future work place.

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<sup>2</sup> In Pakistan, an MA in English from Western countries is considered equivalent to an indigenous MPhil in the field. Consequently the eligibility in the job advertisements for the post of lecturer would say, ‘MA foreign qualified with two years’ experience or MPhil Pakistan with two years’ experience’.

### 5.1.3 Sofia's Life in UK

#### 5.1.3.2 Projecting Empowerment at Data Point Two



4.1 Husband on Oxford Road



4. 2. Sofia on Oxford Road

**Image 4: Sofia's Husband and Sofia on Oxford Road**

Sofia brought two photographs (4.1 and 4.2) to the interview. Her act of taking the picture on the same 'Oxford road', where her husband took photo as a student and bringing it [photos] to the interview, along her elicitation (See CFI 9) suggests that she was imagining to overcome a conflict with the cultural model 'husband supremacy'. Sofia's quote, 'Now when I am a student...' indicates the positional shift gained through her admission to a UK

University. Her Figured World has changed and she has acquired something in equal status to her husband, joining him in the status of 'a student', and 'alumni' of the UK University.



This is my husband's picture, and this is mine. It feels like a dream to me (Sofia: 2)



I could only see Oxford road through this picture... (Sofia: 2)



Now when I am a student myself and I walk on Oxford road, I can't explain how fabulous my feelings are, now I am part of this University and I will be like my husband an alumni of this university. I think it is miraculous (Sofia: 2).



Finally, now he is with me on dependent visa category (Sofia: 2).



Laughter (Sofia: 2).

#### CFI 9: Sofia's Imagination of Overcoming Patriarchy



In Pakistan, in relation to Sofia, her husband was on elevated cultural position ‘personification of God’ (Ali *et al.*, 2014) due to the cultural model ‘what will people say’, whereas in UK, she was free from the direct influence of Pakistani culture. Therefore at data point two she re-imagined her position relative to her husband in a way that their hierarchal status in the family reversed (See CFI 9).

Sofia chose to bring the photograph (Image 5) of her family from Lake District. She described her children and husband as being her whole world whilst positioning herself as ‘I’ and ‘my’ with having the agency to take the lead in the family, ‘I have brought my whole world with me’ (See CFI 10). Thus, this reflects the affordances gained due to her new position as an international student in the UK, whereby she was now able to claim a central and leading position in the family. Sofia looked at the photo (Image 5) again and expressed awareness of the contrasting ‘expressions of confidence and happiness’ on her face as compared to that of her husband.

The artefact of the photograph enabled



5. Sofia with family at Lake District

**Image 5: Sofia with Family at Lake District**

her to gain an explicit awareness of this moment, which she greeted with delightful laughter. Sofia could realise that she had broken away from the cultural model of ‘male supremacy’ based on her positionality in the individualistic culture of the UK. However, at this point, she experienced a conflict (See CFI 11) while re-negotiating her status in marriage with collectivistic culture. She compared her position relative to her husband in Pakistan and reviewed his decision, prior arrival to UK, ‘if we were not given a visa, I would not allow you to go [to UK]’.



Our family of five in this picture is our whole world (Sofia: 2).



I have brought my whole world with me (Sofia: 2).



Anyone can see in this picture, the expression of confidence or happiness on my face as compared to my husband (laughter) (Sofia:2).



The feelings that what I dreamed became true, now I am standing in Lake District with my whole family”. (Sofia: 2).

**CFI 10: Sofia's Claim of Leading the Family**

Thus, after renegotiating the societal expectations placed upon a Pakistani female, according to the cultural model ‘what will people say?’ (Zakar *et al.*, 2013) she realised that her excitement to study abroad was in

defiance to Pakistani cultural expectations of a wife, ‘the veil and the four walls’. She acknowledged that her scholarship and admission in the UK would ultimately not have been possible without her husband’s permission in the social reality of Pakistan. In her cultural negotiation, she expressed some alignment with this maxim (‘what would people say’) and her husband’s authority by stating, ‘even if he has



My husband told me [while in Pakistan] that if we were not given a visa, I will not allow you to go to the UK (Sofia: 2).



Even if he has allowed me, I would never leave my children behind me in Pakistan for a whole year (Sofia: 2).



If a mother feels that her family and children are becoming hurdles in this process, it will have a very negative impact on her mental and professional development (Sofia: 2).

#### CFI 11: Sofia's Negotiation of Cultural Expectations

allowed me, I would never leave my children’. Thus, Sofia was not able to break free from Pakistani cultural norms completely. However, in the first interview, the habitus of the Pakistani cultural model was dominant in Sofia’s narrative. Her statements were in alignment with Pakistani cultural model of the passive, deferential female, (‘I didn’t want to take independent decisions’), however, by the time of the second interview (three months later), she felt some agency to resist the cultural model of male supremacy and claim a leading role within the family. Thus, even though she was unable to completely break free from the socially constructed male supremacy and the powerful collectivistic values enunciated through the phrase, ‘what would people say’, her taking lead in family indicates transition in Sofia’s family dimension of life. Thus, in accordance with the power structures of Pakistan, which is explained in the cultural models above, Sofia’s identity is still considered as an obedient wife within the family marriage Figured World. However, she has more freedom in terms of making decisions. Thus, transition has redefined her role in the family marriage Figured World as someone who can make her decisions and is yet an obedient wife. Further, her positionality in the future imaginary Figured World of a government college in Pakistan changed to foreign qualified.

### 5.1.3.3 Negotiating British and Pakistani Imaginations



9.1 Sofia in the Lake District, UK



9.2 Sofia in Northern area of Pakistan

#### Image 5: Sofia's Imagined and Real UK

Sofia presented two photographs of the UK (6.1) and Pakistan (6.2) to discuss how she replaced her imagined UK of the past in Pakistan to the real UK in transition. In Pakistan, being inspired by William Wordsworth's poetry, she idealised Lake District with an unseen scenic beauty. However, when she visited the place, she realised that the area shared many similarities to the northern regions of Pakistan. Thus, instead of enjoying the beauty of the Lake District,

Sofia was in internal conflict with herself as to why she had idealised the West above Pakistan, ('why [do] we have fanciful imaginations about West?') (See CFI 12). Sofia resolved the conflict by understanding that this difference is based on human development and not scenic beauty. Thus, transition gave participants an insight into their imagined past and showed them a projection of new future possibilities, which was only possible by leaving their country.



I had a dream to come to Lake District because of William Wordsworth..I was thinking I would see special scenery, which I had never seen in my entire life (Sofia: 2).



But in these pictures, it is hard to distinguish which one is Pakistan.... (Sofia: 2).



Nature has given us the same beauty but why we have fanciful imagination about Western countries (Sofia: 2).



Because we are behind in human development area (Sofia: 2).

#### CFI 12: Sofia Replaced Imagined UK to Real UK

### 5.1.3.4 Networking Opportunities

#### 5.1.3.4.1 Networking with British and Pakistan Colleagues



7.1 Sofia with class at the UK



7.2 Sofia with staff in Pakistan

**Image 6: Sofia in UK and Pakistani institutions**

Sofia presented two pictures of UK (See Image 7.1) and Pakistani (See Image 7.2) institutes and viewed clearly defined hierarchal positions and status in the power structures of Pakistani institutions (e.g. the head, the one who is standing in the middle, etc) (See CFI 13). She recognised the fact that this differed from the UK cultural reality and stated, ‘we should not keep in our mind our system when we come to the UK’. Thus, after juxtaposing the norms of Pakistan and the UK, Sofia developed this understanding that these two realities cannot fit together.

Sofia revisited the photos (See Image 7.1 and 7.2) once again and discussed the cultural differences and her relationship with colleagues in the two contexts. She viewed UK colleagues as more diverse, where each person is



There is Hierarchy in this picture (7.2), you can see the head is the one standing in the middle (Sofia: 2)



Here (7.1) the lady in black is our tutor. She put her hand on the shoulder of my class fellow(Sofia: 2).



I would say, we should not keep in our mind our system, when we are coming to UK (Sofia: 2).

**CFI 13: Sofia Understands that UK and Pakistan are Distinct Realities**



This diversity of culture is really interesting (Sofia: 2).



Here (7.1) you can put each person in a single frame. We have gender, cultural and language differences....(Sofia: 2)



Here (7.2) it looks like a single frame picture. You can see all the colleagues are from same culture & country (Sofia: 2)



I am trying to **modify** my personality. Their friendship **has trained me** to be capable of living with people from **different way of thinking, brought up and cultures** (Sofia: 2)

**CFI 14: Renegotiating British and Pakistani Identities**

unique (each person is a single frame) by gender, language, country and cultural differences (See CFI 14). However, she viewed Pakistani colleagues as one culture ‘single frame’ and from one ‘country’. Comparing diversity in the two contexts, Sofia indicated a conflict around the presence of strictly defined hierarchal power structures in the culture of Pakistani institutions. To resolve the conflict, she decided to ‘modify’ her personality to fit into the UK culture and improvise. Sofia’s statement ‘their friendship has trained me’, suggests that through networking in transition, Sofia was becoming a multi-cultural citizen. To cope with transition, Sofia needed to break away from her habitus of the Pakistani cultural models and actively involved in the University practices. Sofia was comparing herself in the past and the present to modify her possible.

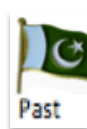
#### 5.1.3.4.2 Negotiating British and Pakistani Class Room Engagement

Sofia brought the photo (See image 8) and discussed her conflict around students’ classroom engagement and assessment in Pakistan and the UK. She described that her classroom practices in the UK University expect her to ‘equally participate’ in the activities (See CFI 15), whereas in Pakistan, her practices were around teacher centred education system. Therefore, she decided to modify her habits ‘I will prepare before coming to class’. Transition gave Sofia a new and distinct student identity from being silent to being equally ‘participative’.

Similarly, after her experience of Semester one assessment, where being familiar with the end of year exam in Pakistan, she struggled to submit her assignment on time. She described this experience as ‘very hectic’ (See CFI 15). Sofia’s experience of assignment submission at UK University,



Image 7: Sofia in UK Class Room



I was studying in a Pakistani style where we concentrate three months before our exam (Sofia: 2).



It was very hectic. I had to write 4 assignments in 3-4 days. I submitted it just one hour before submission time (Sofia: 2).



I have told myself that I will prepare before coming to the class (Sofia: 2).



Here students have to equally participate, be mentally active.., prepare from articles, and discuss it in class (Sofia: 2).



Now I am determined that in the next semester daily I will write something (Sofia: 2)

CFI 15: Sofia's modification in learning style

informed her possible that is to break away from Pakistani learning style to the UK style ‘daily I will write something’ (See CFI 15). Sofia’s decision ‘I will prepare before coming to the class’ was different from her past. Thus, through engagement in the practices of UK University, Sofia questioned the previously accepted modes of behaviour and modified in a certain way ‘Now I am determined that in the next semester daily I will write’ (See CFI15).

#### 5.1.3.4.3 Negotiating British and Pakistani Acts and Practices

The day to day practices of the UK University gave Sofia the consciousness to renegotiate and redefine Pakistani cultural models in a different way. For example, Sofia encountered the act of smiling to friends and strangers, which she termed as ‘smile culture’ and as an expected marker of politeness. This led her to question the significance of smiling within the Pakistani and religious cultural model. She defined smile in religion as ‘politeness’ and ‘forgiveness’ (See CFI 16). However soon she felt disorientated, as [although in the UK culture it is considered to be an innocuous greeting] in Pakistan the act of smiling at strangers is interpreted as a signifier of ‘availability’ or an act of seduction. She narrated her tension in the past and present about the meaning of a ‘smile’ in relation to her three identities: ‘I as a UK student’ (a friendly gesture), ‘I as a Muslim’ (an act of forgiveness) and ‘I as a Pakistani’ (act of seduction).

Thus, Sofia reassessed her internalised habitus in relation to smiling. She found less resistance to the act of smiling in terms of her ‘student identity’ and ‘Muslim identity’. However, it was more problematic to break away from the sociocultural norm of ‘what will people say?’ especially being a female subject where the act of smiling is a violation (‘seduces’) of the cultural model ‘veil and the four walls’ (See CFI 16). Thus in Sofia’s possible [imagined future] in Pakistan, she chose to resist ‘smile’ and



Even if you don't know the other person, if your eyes come in contact with them, he or she will pass a light smile, which is not present in my culture ( Sofia: 2).



I will not say, there is no politeness in my religion it is not a religious matter it is a cultural matter. Politeness is in all religion but the need is to practice it. It is a good way of forgiveness ( Sofia: 2).



In Pakistan smile of a woman is a signal or invitation to seduce other person. Even if you are unintentionally smiling the other person will interpret it in a wrong way ( Sofia: 2).



So in my culture we will have to have some frowns on our forehead, otherwise we cannot survive over there ( Sofia: 2).

CFI 16: Sofia Refigured Cultural Models to Religion and Culture

stated, ‘we will have to have some frowns on our forehead’. These moments of conflict from Sofia’s narrative enable us to understand how her identity had developed from socialisation in the UK. Thus, networking with friends and colleagues at UK University acted as a tool to bring participants to consciousness during transition, which enabled them to rupture the Pakistani cultural models [into religion and cultural aspect] and create a new identity, which is different from the past identity.

### 5.1.3.5 Sofia’s Negotiation of Family Dimension at Data Point Three

Sofia’s transition from her point of origin to a student in UK University was not a single moment of transition, rather a series of moments that in turn impacted on her positionality within the various figured worlds she inhabited, for example her role as a wife. At data point three, in the family



My husband is always at home. Sometimes in a day I have two classes so I stay outside my home from 9.00 am- 4.00 pm. He looks after my kids my home and even a lot of household responsibilities (Sofia: 3).

CFI 17: Sofia and Husband at Data Point 3

dimension of life, Sofia states, ‘my husband is always at home’ which made the point that her husband might be undergoing an identity transition of his own (See CFI 17). In Pakistan, he was employed as a civil servant, had a circle of friends and a purpose in his life, whereas in the UK, he was living mostly at home with children. Further, the cultural models of Pakistan (e.g. obedience to husband) were still part of Sofia’s life and she was constantly renegotiating them in the UK in various ways. Thus, CFI 17 suggests that even though in Sofia’s marital identity, there had been some degree of role reversal, which pointed to the negotiation of a progressively more equal partnership, still Sofia had a sense of her role as an obedient wife.

### 5.1.3.6 Reverse Culture Shock at Data Point Four

At data point four, Sofia faced a reverse culture shock.

#### 5.1.3.6.1 The Family Freedom of Mobility

In CFI 18, she revisited her growing past (since data point 1 to data point 4) in the UK and having a child with special needs, she appreciated the understanding of UK society towards special needs children. She was afraid that her freedom of mobility with the special need child might not be easy in Pakistan. In this regards, she termed these societal values as ‘human behaviour shock’ (See CFI 18). Thus, Sofia was comparing and contrasting her

children's past, present and possible, which gave her a feeling of reluctance about her transition back home due to restrictive cultural models. At the thought of leaving the UK, Sofia as a mother experienced conflict in the family's reverse transition. In, Sofia's transition, her husband and children were the key figures around whom she renegotiated her identity. Sofia's reverse culture shock upon her return to the home country [Pakistan]



*No one has hurt me in this year, not an expression of any body which can prick me (Sofia: 4).*



*Here when I go out, my son enjoys, my especial son enjoys and I enjoys. (Sofia: 4)*



*but when I will be over there I know ...I will have human behaviour shock, specially with my special child, the element of entertainment will be at its lesser place... (Sofia: 4)*

**CFI 18: Sofia's Reverse Culture shock and Family**

indicates her hybrid self in a way that transition has changed the meaning of home. At data point 4, Sofia being a Pakistani woman is drawing on freedom of mobility rather than the 'veil and the four walls'.

**5.1.3.6.2 Freedom from 'Veil and the Four Walls'**

Sofia compared the culture shock she faced at her arrival to the UK (data point 1) with the reverse culture shock and found the former with less intensity 'here when you put yourself out of home, nothing is problematic' (See CFI 19). She expressed freedom of mobility in the UK, whereas restriction on mobility in



When I came here I had cultural shock. (Sofia: 4).



But here when you put yourself out of home nothing is problematic (Sofia: 4).



But there in Pakistan when a female come out of her home, the eyes of the men are all the time moving around you, from your toe to head, that is irritating (Sofia: 4).

**CFI 19: Sofia's Reverse Culture shock and Veil and the Four Walls**

Pakistan 'the eyes of men are all the time moving around you' (See CFI 19). Thus, in Pakistan, the freedom of women outside the four walls of home is questionable in social discourses. Thus, Transition enabled her to experience freedom from the cultural model 'veil and the four walls'. In the fourth interview, Sofia was still in the loop of past, present and possible and was constructing new identities, however, at this point in her transition, due to the growing past, living in the UK had become her past and also her present, whereas Pakistan was her possible.



### 5.1.3.7 Hybrid Self

#### 5.1.3.7.1 Change Position Around the Cultural Model

At data point four, Sofia compared her freedom of mobility in her status as a UK student (in 2014) to her status as a wife (as a dependent in 2010). She found that her horizons have broadened as a student. She narrated a newfound autonomy and freedom in her decisions ‘now I want to absorb maximum beauty in my eyes’. Her quote, ‘now I have to move alone to accomplish daily tasks’ (See CFI 20) is based on her position as an international student and is beyond the cultural model ‘veil and the four walls’ of Pakistan. Thus, Sofia was aware of her elevated position in the power structures, due to transition as an international student.



Previously when I came here, I was a dependent, I could not get a chance to move freely in Manchester. I had to accompany my husband wherever he was going (Sofia: 4)



but now I have to move alone to accomplish daily tasks (Sofia: 4)



....**Now I want to** absorb maximum beauty **in my eyes** (Sofia: 4).

**CFI 20 : Sofia's studentship and her Freedom of Mobility**

#### 5.1.3.7.2 Modified Teacher (Imagined Future)

Sofia described her professional identity at the time of arrival to the UK as embodying the strict hierarchical student-teacher relationship (‘not to talk, just sit and listen to the teacher’) in accordance to the power structures of college in Pakistan (See CFI 21). However due to transition to UK, she projected forward to teach in a different institute in Pakistan (‘I do not want to go back to the same college’) as she wanted the agency to express her hybrid self and felt that she would be inhabited were she had to return to the same institution. Her statement ‘there will definitely be a change in my classroom, teaching and interaction with the students’ (See CFI 21), suggests her projection of changed teacher positionality in Pakistan. The above discussion suggests that



I came here as a typical teacher [of Pakistan], who ask students, not to talk, just sit and listen to the teacher; but now this aspect has changed (Sofia: 4)



I donot want to go back to that college.. There were lots of reason, the system of hierarchy (Sofia: 4).



I feel that when **I will** go back...there will definitely be a change in my classroom, teaching and interaction with the students (Sofia: 4).

**CFI 21: Sofia's Projection of a Modified Teaching Style**

in the past Sofia’s decisions were limited by Pakistani culture, whereas transition involved empowering herself as someone who can make her own decisions with autonomy, which suggests that the cultural expectation were resisted and challenged.

### 5.1.3.7.3 Claiming New Position in the Hierarchical Structures of Family

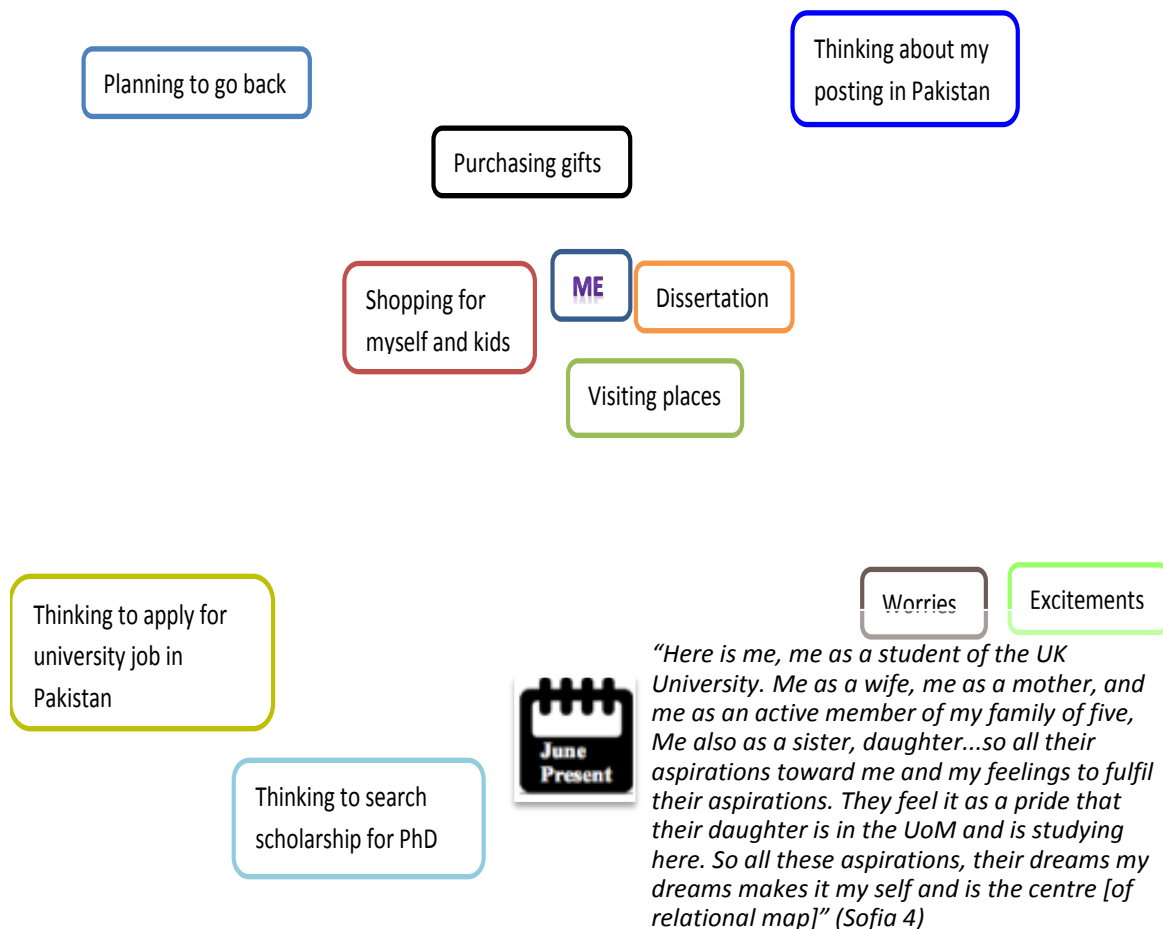


Figure 5: Sofia's Relational Map

CFI 22: Sofia as a Pride of the Family

In Sofia’s relational map (See Figure 5), she put the concept ‘me’ and elicited it as her multiple selves (See CFI 22). That is her first ‘me’ is a ‘student of the UK University’. Second me ‘as a wife’ and ‘an active member’ of her family of five (children and husband). Her claim of being on an active position in the family was based on UK studentship and was in opposition to Pakistani culture, which structures the man as the active member of the family. Furthermore, her quotation ‘all their aspirations toward me and my feelings to fulfil their aspirations’ suggests that she views herself to be in a position to which her family also aspires. Thus, in the family marriage Figured Worlds, Sofia self-authors her identity as an obedient woman being a daughter, wife and mother but also

someone who make her own decisions. For example, obedient woman live inside the boundaries, whereas Sofia’s student identity gave her the freedom to make decisions in relation to her transition and her future imaginary world [For example going out alone (CFI 20), the college she wants to join upon her return to Pakistan (CFI 21)]. Thus, transition as an international student enabled her to see herself in a hybrid way. That is an obedient woman but also active member of the family, where she views herself with a sense of pride of the family, which is different from a position being a woman in Pakistani culture.

### 5.1.18 Projecting a New Possible (Imaginary World of PhD)

At the point of going back to Pakistan, Sofia had gained studentship of the UK University in the past, and MA degree in the present and a university job, PhD admission and a PhD scholarship at a foreign University in the possible future. In CFI 23, at data point 4, Sofia imagined a new possible that is to achieve a PhD degree in the UK. In this regards, she viewed that her UK degree would enable her to get lectureship in Pakistan. Afterwards, she imagined her projected lectureship as a way to achieve PhD scholarship from government (‘the government sponsors a lot of employers’). Sofia was constantly renegotiating her past and present to imagine new possible



When I came here I was not as much thinking about my PhD ( Sofia: 4).



But now I am determined that, I will do my PhD. My desires for learning more and more have revived ( Sofia: 4).



After September 2015, I will be eligible to apply for University jobs. Then the chances for my Ph.D. here, or in foreign university would be brighter, because the government sponsors a lot of employers after one year (Sofia: 4).

CFI 23: Sofia's Past, Present and Possible as a Student

### 5.1.5 Summary

In Sofia’s narrative, at data point her quotes were in alignment to the cultural model ‘male supremacy’, ‘early marriage’ ‘preference of marriage on study for girls’. She elicited limited agency for herself in deciding the directions of her study and marriage. Sofia’s visit to UK as a dependent of her husband acted as a critical incident, which allowed her to imagine an alternative Figured World that is becoming a student at the UK University. Once she became a student at the UK University, prior to her physical move from Pakistan, her positionality changed (to international student) and her projection of the imagined

future changed. That is her recognition in future career changed from public school qualified to 'foreign qualified'. In the second interview, Sofia had the past of Pakistan and the growing past of the UK. She was comparing her pasts to make choices and develop new ways of being in the possible future. In the fourth interview, Sofia's possible (imagined future), which was to get admission into the UK University [at data point one], now transitioned to a new possible that is 'lectureship' and 'PhD'. At this point, she recognised herself as the 'aspiration' of her family. Sofia's elevated status was due to her studentship and not due to restrictive cultural models of 'veil and the four walls'. Having this in mind, with her studentship and transition alternative constructions of femininity were encountered and she felt entitled to be recognised as a pride of the family. At fourth interview, Sofia went through the experience of reverse culture shock, which suggests that she projected forward to Pakistan with a hybrid self, as transition has changed the conception of home country. In Sofia's transition, the Figured World of teaching at college in Pakistan and the marriage family Figured World were transformed through her imagination of becoming a student in the UK University. Within the college Figured World she viewed herself as someone being recognised as 'foreign qualified' and can stand on a top position. Within the family and marriage Figured World her decision making shaped into the new form, where she had more freedom to choose. Thus, within the college she imagined herself at a top status and therefore she developed a new identity, whereas in the family Figured World her identity, as 'being obedient' has not changed in Pakistani identity. However, in the new position being an obedient wife she could move out independently and make independent decisions, which suggest that she developed hybrid self of British Pakistani identity in a certain way. As a result, in Sofia's narrative of transition, 'being obedient' and 'moving out independently' were themes used when self-authoring her British Pakistani identity.

## Part 5.2: Lena's Narrative of Transition

### 5.2.1 Lena's Life in Pakistan

#### 5.2.1.1 Early Life

Lena, 22 years old, was an unmarried participant from Punjab, Pakistan. Her father was a businessman and mother, a housewife. She had two younger sisters but no brother. Lena's quotes in CFI 24 refer to patriarchy in the hierarchal power structures of Pakistan, where having a male child is seen as a protection of the family (Malik & Courtney, 2011). While Lena was studying in the final year of her bachelor's degree, her father passed away.



I always wanted to become a scientist because I loved discovering, doing and inventing stuff but... (Lena: 1).



In Pakistan it is a big thing if you don't have a son; I think that impacted me a lot. My dad had a big business empire, so everyone wanted him to have a son but he got only daughters. I was eldest so he had lots of expectations from me. He said that he wants me to be a business woman because he said, we can hire scientists.... I loved him so I decided whatever he wanted me to be I will be. He wanted me to do business so I went into business (Lena: 1).

#### CFI 24: Lena's Choice of Subject of Study

#### 5.2.1.2 Critical Incident

Lena's father's death acted as a critical incident in her life, as due to not having any brother, according to Islamic law, the uncles claimed their share in the inheritance of her father's business through court. In response to her uncles, Lena acted as a son of the family and defended the cases successfully.

She transferred the money to her mother's name and recognised herself as a 'son' of her father (see CFI 25).



Because he [my father] didn't have a son, he used to say I am his son.. (Lena: 1).

In the family Figured World of being a Pakistan woman, the father as a supportive figure, is someone who gave Lena a sense that she is different from the other Pakistani women. For



I fought for one and a half year. I got the property transferred to my mum's name. I created an income source for my mum and sisters(Lena: 1).

#### CFI 25: Lena's Critical Incident

example in CFI 24 Lena said, 'he used to say, 'I am his son'. Thus feeling different

suggests feeling in a position of a son. Feeling different emerged as a theme in Lena's narrative, which allowed her to imagine herself as a businesswoman in future. Lena aligned with her identity as 'son', which was in contradiction to her gender 'being a woman' and therefore brought a conflict ('Depressed') to her identity as a Pakistani woman'. Lena loved studying; therefore in order to solve the conflict, she decided to move abroad and joined UK University as a postgraduate student.

## 5.2.2 Lena's Life in UK

### 5.2.2.1 Renegotiation of Cultural Models

The figured world of Pakistani woman included cultural model such as 'respect to elders', 'not to question elders' and 'not to question religion'. In Lena's narrative, the UK University cultural model 'freedom of thought and expression' and feeling different (See CFI 26), combined together and allowed her to question the cultural model and religion (See CFI 26).



Image 8: Lena and Her Mother

Lena chose to bring the above photograph (See Image 9) from December holidays, when she visited Pakistan for a short period. She elicited a conversation with her mother, which had led her to develop conflict around her Pakistani identity (importance of respect to parents), Muslim identity (concepts of heaven and hell) and UK student identity (freedom of thoughts and expression). Lena mediated her thoughts with her mother regarding religion and culture but found that her mother's beliefs were closed and finalised. This was echoed by wider



I asked her (mum), if you drink alcohol you will not go to heaven? She said 'yes', I said 'okay my dad used to drink a lot, he must be in hell?' (Lena: 2)



I was trying to explain to her that **God** whoever he is, for any religion is too big. You cannot really confine his deeds, so have an open mind about God. (Lena: 2)



In Pakistan there was like, 'oh my God! she disrespected her mom.. That's a difference (in transition), even though if I had a thought (in the past).I would have never talked about my dad like that... (Lena: 2)



Freedom of expression and thoughts...**I think** it is good to be honest but it is bad because we should respect other people's feeling so I think there should be a balance (Lena: 2)

CFI 26: Lena's Family Conflict: Religion, Culture and UK Student

society (See CFI 26) and the shocked reactions in Pakistan that she would dare to challenge the power structures by questioning her parents or religion. Lena again had to negotiate the social pressures according to the cultural model of ‘what will people say?’ as by challenging both her mother and father, she went against societal taboos. Lena came to the consciousness that Pakistan and the UK University run according to two different ideologies, thus ‘freedom of expression’ might be appreciated in the UK, it is not so in Pakistan, and she would be more expected to keep balance and respect other people’s feeling. Thus, Lena’s three emergent identities, ended up with the resolution to find a balance among them. Transition [to UK University (‘freedom of thoughts and expression’)] worked as a tool to bring her to the consciousness, in order to challenge the Pakistani cultural models.

The above discussion suggests that even though Lena resists the UK cultural model, she also did not accept the Pakistani cultural model. Therefore, at this point she is somewhere in between and has not yet created a hybrid self. Her internal dialogue is unfinished; as she knows that she needs to find a balance between the two identities but has yet to resolve how she may do this. However, I argue, that the transitional processes have impacted Lena’s thinking, feeling and believing, as she positioned herself differently around Pakistani cultural models, i.e. she broke away from her ‘fossilized past’ as her habitus changed and she became conscious of her previously automatic thoughts and set responses. Thus, aspects of Pakistani culture, which had previously been seen as rigid and unquestionable, were now viewed as more fluid and negotiable. Transition gave Lena a fresh understanding or insight into her own culture. Further, Lena’s challenging of Pakistani cultural models allowed her to imagine herself in an imaginary world of living in UK.

### 5.2.2.2 Networking and Redefining Cultural Models



Image 9: Lena with Her Friends

Lena chose to bring to interview the above photo (See Image 10) of a Halloween party, as she saw this as a good example of her inner dialogue and confusion about negotiating identities through the artefact of clothing. She spoke of three ways this was manifested; ‘I as a Muslim’ (dress up to cover full body) and ‘I as a Pakistani’ (national dress) and ‘I as a Pakistani student in the UK’ (wearing shirt and jeans). Lena pointed to her dress in the photo and questioned multiple identities. In her time in the UK, she had become aware that what she had previously thought of a ‘religious’ mode of dress was actually a Pakistani cultural model (shalwar kamees). Meeting students from international Muslim backgrounds and observing the way they dress up had made her aware that it was the Pakistani cultural model that was more closed and finalised, and there was in fact more fluidity (to a certain extent) within religious clothing (CFI 27). At this stage Lena is in conflict with the cultural models of the Figured Worlds of Pakistani woman as she termed them as ‘cultural pressure’ and religious pressure’ and was resisting to wear Pakistani Kamees Shalwar, [in CFI 27] which allowed her to live in an imaginary world of living in the UK. She realised that the Pakistani cultural model ‘what will people say?’ dominate



This is a picture of Halloween (Lena: 2).



It actually reminds me how **confused** I am; because this culture [UK] is just too different, it is fun here... (Lena: 2).



It is fun here and not as much fun in Pakistan because people would judge you there. I got this black gown, so you can be this way [in Pakistan] but then there is always a religious pressure, always a cultural pressure. So if you are wearing tight jeans with shirt you are a bad person but if you are wearing shalwar kamees, which is tight and vulgar, you are a good person (Lena: 2).



I am someone who is in a **constant mental debate** with myself that whether to enjoy or not, sometimes I feel guilty, sometimes I feel good, it is very nostalgic (Lena:2).



..but Shalwar Kamees is not part of the religion, it is part of a culture, people blame religion (Lena: 2).

CFI 27: Lena's Dress Conflict: Religion, Culture and UK Student



everyone's thought and therefore the national dress of Pakistan 'Shalwaar Kamees' is seen as the only socially acceptable way to dress. It suggests that Lena was undergoing a cycle of renegotiation and self-authorship in consulting her habitus (which was made up of both Pakistani culture and Islamic principles) in order to find an acceptable way to perform at the UK University. This dialogue led her to another dialogue in which she compared her habitus with that of other Muslim international students. At this point she was in a state of confusion and reconfiguration. She compared her dress in the Halloween picture with Shalwaar Kamees in her imagination and found that the former (dress) is as modest as the later, but still could not perceive her UK dress as being considered acceptable in Pakistan. Lena resolved the conflict through her consciousness, which gave her the insight that Pakistan is not an Islamic state; rather it is a cultural state, because even though she is dressed according to religion, this might not be acceptable in Pakistan. Lena, even though, was in the state of disequilibrium in her thoughts; however we can see that she used agency and positioned herself in alignment with 'UK student identity' as she is part of the Halloween party in the photo. Thus, transition impacted Lena's identity to some extent as she could not gain this understanding by living in Pakistan.

### 5.2.2.3 Lena's Reverse Culture shock

#### 5.2.2.3.1 Freedom from 'Veil and the Four Walls

Lena was in a mental debate with several life decisions, e.g. whether to go back to Pakistan or stay in the UK. Her worry was her independence, which she wanted to secure by having a career in life. Lena wished to marry, but she was resisting the cultural model of an arranged marriage. Thus, CFI 28 suggests, that in the second interview, Lena felt to resolve the conflict between marriage, study and work. Lena at this point was again in an internal

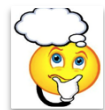
conflict related to her decision to stay in the UK or go back to Pakistan after the completion of her study. She enquired her three identities 'I as a Muslim' (not drinking alcohol), 'I as a Pakistani' (Veil and the four walls) and I as a UK student' (Freedom to



My fears are that since I have studied in very good instiution and met intelligent people ( Lena: 2).



So if I **marry someone from Pakistan**, who is not of the same calibre, I will get suffocated, I don't want to get divorce ( Lena: 2).



I want to find someone who has the brain. Plus **once I decided** to go back I will make it a point that whether I am here or there I will work ( Lena: 2).

CFI 28: Lena's Conflict of Marriage, Study and Work

walk alone) to find the reason for her tension. Lena once again reassessed her choices against her religious and cultural identities. She was re-assured that her transformation was not against her religious beliefs, through interactions with other Muslim students (CFI 30). She expressed her inner thoughts that she did not prefer the UK identity because of the opportunity to

drink alcohol or go to clubs, rather she wanted freedom to have her own agency in leaving the house rather than being restricted to the Pakistani cultural model ‘veil and the four walls’. Lena did not develop conflicting cultural and religious identities until she encountered different set of ideologies and were forced to diverge from her Pakistani habitus, thus transition gave Lena an awareness of her own culture.

### 5.2.2.3.2 Imaginary World of Living in UK

By the time of the third interview, Lena’s habitus had grown to include the experiences of living in the UK. She had transitioned to the extent that she had developed love for staying in the UK. Lena’s quote in CFI 29 states that at this point her struggles in UK were not academic, rather transition gave her the experience of living with freedom from the cultural models of Pakistan, which gave her a wish to stay in the UK; however, due to her nationality being Pakistani (Non- European), her options were closed and in this way she was



The fact that I have changed here is not that there is lot of drinking here and there are clubs, I don't want to do all that stuff(Lena: 3)



I want freedom in a sense that you can go out at nine o'clock and walk and not be scared but in Pakistan you are not allowed that way. So I love it here but then again I love my country (Lena: 3).

### CFI 30: Lena's Reverse Culture Shock: Religion and Culture



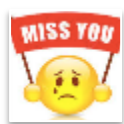
I have been trying to find a job, but if you are not from European Union, it is not easy to get a job [in UK], as third World citizen. It hits... So this country image is affecting us (Lena: 3)



I hate this UK policy, that you have to be earning £20,000 to stay in UK... It is insane; you can't get £20,000 in internship. I want to get more but the tention is, job on deadline! (Lena 3).



I think, because we are so intimidated by first world countries , we will never take stand on our own identity. I think we donot respect ourselves (Lena: 3)



But in our University everyone are so different, from different countries and together doing research, and that is really nice (Lena: 3)



I don't know what I am doing. I'm going back, I'm staying, I'm getting married. So is this bubble life real? is it? or not? (Lena: 3)

### CFI 29: Lena's Reverse Culture Shock

forced to go back to Pakistan and embrace those cultural models once again. Going back and embracing these cultural models again was a critical incident, which left her in limbo, 'I don't know what I am doing...' (See CFI 29).

Lena at this point developed a conflict, where she wanted to resist Pakistani collectivistic culture (family) and accept the UK individualistic culture (freedom) but she had no choice. Lena's quotes (See CFI 31) suggest that she renegotiated her changed identities, which meant giving herself the liberty of asking questions and pursuing happiness. She was afraid that she



I could not talk to my mother and sisters. So they were upset that I am not the same person any more. (Lena: 3)



I **think** that I changed as a person. I became more liberal I ask more questions, I became happier because I don't have family here, I don't have tensions' so problems with family put you down...I **think**, when I will go back there I will not be able to handle the stress over there. I **feel** that it is like a fairy tale and that's going to end soon. (Lena: 3)

#### CFI 31: Lena's Reverse Culture Shock

would not be allowed to ask questions in Pakistan. This suggests that her thoughts about Pakistani cultural models and UK cultural models were fixed at this point in transition. She concluded family norms as a source of tension but she was also aware that her stay in the UK is for a limited time.

The above discussion suggests that Lena was in a mental debate. Even though in the third interview, she demonstrated that she knew how the two worlds work, she now had developed 'liberty' and 'freedom of thoughts and expression' in her personality, which is in contradiction with the cultural models 'not to question elders' and 'being passive'. At the end of her mental debate, she could not come to a conclusion and she remained in a conflicted fairy world' (See CFI 31). The imaginary world of living in the UK includes themes. Such as 'freedom of mobility', 'networking with friends' 'freedom of thoughts and expressions' 'diversity' and 'respect to others'. These positive experiences of studying in the UK allowed her to imagine her future in the UK, however in this respect she faced the barrier of 'finding a job', 'UK policy' and 'questioning future'. These barriers changed her decisions towards living in the UK.

## 5.2.2. 4 Hybrid Self

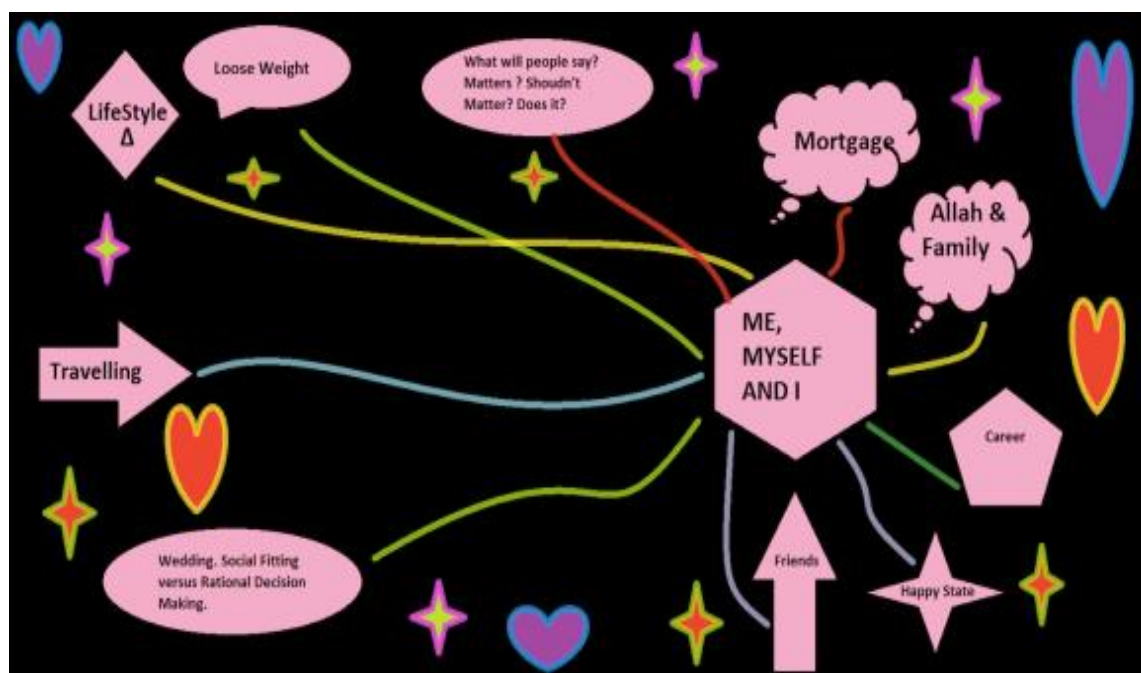


Figure 6: Lena's Relational Map

Lena's relational map (See Figure 6) suggests her self-understanding or agency after staying more than nine months in the UK University. At this point (in her elicitation and in the relational map), she created a hybrid self-one that outwardly adheres to the cultural models of Pakistan but inwardly was focused on her own individuality. Lena initially stated, I made this (relational map) now I am thinking if the things that are nearer or far away from, are they good in social norms (Lena: 4)? Thus, while Lena was putting these concepts forward, she was in a mental debate with the concepts and not with the culture. However, once she shared her map with me only then (during elicitation) she became conscious of whether her positioning of the concepts on the map was in accordance to the cultural model 'what would people say' or not?

### Lena's Family dimension

On the relational map, Lena put Allah and family together, which is the exact positioning in Pakistani cultural models 'obedience to parents is second only to God' (Ahmad *et al.*, 2009, 617; Ali *et al.*,



The first thing is my Allah and my family.. (Lena: 4)



If I review it in according to my academic, ambition, professional, personal, boyfriend/girlfriend life, my centre will be my God and family and everything else will come after (Lena: 4).

CFI 32: Lena's Renegotiation of Pakistani Cultural Models

2014). Lena's agency (after staying more than nine months in the UK University) states a tension, where Lena was 'reviewing' her academic, ambition, profession and individual choices against the cultural models and was making decisions (See CFI 32). Her acceptance and rejection of the cultural models after 'reviewing' was different than accepting them blindly. Thus, during transition, Lena had an outsider view on Pakistani cultural models. She was going back in her past, revisiting the cultural models, using agency and making choices to prioritise certain things over others, which may have impacted her identities.

Lena's quote 'I am the centre of my Universe', accounts for individualistic culture, whereas her quote 'I care what people say about me' suggests collectivistic culture (See CFI 33). Further, the concept 'me, myself and I', states that she was the first, second and third most important concept of her life. Moreover, looking at the relational map, Lena placed 'career' in the same position as 'family and Allah', as being incredibly important to her. Further the UK based cultural models 'happy state', 'career' and 'friends' are far nearer to the centre 'me' than the Pakistani cultural model 'What will people say?' and 'wedding...'. The concept on the relational map ('what will people say, matters? Shouldn't matter, does it?') states that she has already broken the fossil and understood the reality of it, which she cannot undo. Similarly, the concept 'wedding and social fitting versus rational decision making' states that Lena negotiates her hybrid self in the two cultures, i.e., collectivistic culture (marriage and social fitting) with individualistic culture (rational decision making). Thus, even though in the

second interview, Lena resisted Pakistani cultures by deciding to be part of the Halloween celebration, in the fourth interview she accepted her Muslim, Pakistani and UK cultural models and developed a hybrid self, which adhere to all three identities.



In this relational map I am the centre of my Universe, 'me, myself and I' (Lena: 4).



I care what people say about me. I question it every day. I am really concerned (Lena: 4)

**CFI 33: Lena's Renegotiation of Culture**

In self-authoring her identity, being a Pakistani woman, Lena viewed the cultural model of having a boyfriend and girlfriend as a part of being British Pakistani female. Within British Pakistani female Figured World, she is questioning and resisting the cultural models (What will People Say etc) on her relational map. She used the concepts such as, 'happy state'

'career' 'friends' 'family and Allah'. She did not draw the Pakistani cultural models near to the concept 'me' and also questioned them. She went back to Pakistan with hybrid identities that are both Pakistani and British.

### **5.2.5 Summary**

The above discussion concluded that at data point one, Lena's performance in the interview was within the social reality of Pakistan. At data point two, transition gave her an outsider's view on Pakistani cultural models. She assessed her UK university behaviour against Pakistani cultural models and became aware of the difference between cultural and religious beliefs. In this process, she unanimously upheld her core religious beliefs but she was using agency and making choices to accept or reject Pakistani or UK cultural models. This enabled her to understand the distinctiveness of the two cultural realities. Thus, after arrival to UK University, the Quality Assurance Agency (2008, p 21) had forced Lena to become critical thinker in writing her assignments, whereas once modified, she was afraid to go back to Pakistan and embody those passive roles. At data point three, Lena's critical incident was going back to Pakistan. In the fourth interview, Lena was renegotiating a hybrid way of being, where she accepted the cultural models superficially but was also aware of their reality and her preferences. In Lena's narrative, from the beginning, feeling different allowed her to make the decision to come to UK for higher studies. After becoming a student, networking and the cultural model of UK University 'freedom of thought and expression' gave her a sense of awareness to challenge the Pakistani cultural models. In order to resolve the conflict [as I mentioned before a hurdle in staying in UK] therefore, she developed a new identity that is a hybrid self within two different identities [British and Pakistani] while narrating her story of going back to Pakistan. As a result, in Lena's narrative of transition, feeling different and her imaginary world of living in the UK are themes used when self-authoring her British Pakistani identity.

### **Part 5.3 Conclusion**

My study found that transition is bound up with identity. Sofia and Lena's narrative suggests that their fathers were dominant presence in their lives, holding a powerful position in terms of deciding their academic or marital choices. Sofia termed her father's decisions due to social pressure, which suggested that due to the hierarchal power structures of Pakistan, the father's decisions were restricted by the Pakistani cultural

model, 'what will people say'. Both men and women were familiar with the cultural model 'veil and the four walls'. These cultural phrases acted as a modifier on behaviour and decision-making, with an underlying threat of losing status in the wider social structures, through being shamed or bringing shame upon someone else (That is a daughter bringing shame on her father). These cultural models predominantly affect the agency of women and girls, who understand their position of resistance as reflective upon both themselves and maintaining their father's status in the power structures. The implications of 'what will people say' create a dispositional identity, or habitus, that is constantly negotiated within everyday life. The power structure of Pakistani social hierarchy is structured in terms of age and gender, so that men are positioned as superior to women, and older family members are also afforded higher status. Thus, in order to maintain the father's status in the social hierarchy, daughters need to be compliant with their father and the cultural models.

Sofia and Lena's transition began prior their entrance to the host country. That is with the beginning of their imaginary life of studying in the UK. Participants life in UK, brought networking opportunities at the UK University with colleagues, peers and staff members. In their identities in practice, while networking at the UK University, participants were in negotiation with the tensions, contradictions and resistance around cultural models of Pakistan. In their negotiation of the past, they found out that their cultural models were made up of religion and culture. They viewed religion as a way of life, which did not change with transition. However, they found culture as something in which they had room for agency and choice. Thus, from their past in Pakistan to their growing past in the UK, both Sofia and Lena started to believe in these cultural models in a different way to gain a bit of freedom ('freedom of mobility' 'freedom of thoughts and expressions' 'going out alone').

At data point four, participants realised that they have to go back to Pakistan which acted as a reverse culture shock, as by then their past was living in the UK, whereas their projection of the possible was in Pakistan. Transition gave them a new understanding of their own cultural reality in Pakistan, including negating the hierarchal power structures of Pakistan and developing new learning habits. Their ideas what they thought about 'home' and their return to it (home), began to change.

At the end of their study, prior returning to Pakistan, the individualistic culture became hybridised in the collectivistic culture and participants went back to Pakistan with a hybrid self. Transition ruptured the reality of Pakistani cultural models, thus, participants considered these cultural models as less fixed. Those cultural models no longer governed their lives. Participants accepted cultural models at a surface level, but deep down they were focused on attaining their individual goals.

The above discussion concluded that participants were constantly renegotiating their past in the present to shape their possible. In their identity transition, throughout the year, they went through several layers of modification at the UK University. Being ‘remade in the UK’ did not just change the participants’ identities as a student, but also their conception of the possible future, and even the future location changed. Participants being from collectivistic culture were constantly renegotiating cultural models of Pakistani [past] at various data point in the UK [present] and at each data point they were projecting their future [possible] in a different way. Identity construction is thus, the constant renegotiation of the past in the present to reconstruct new possible. International students in transition are in the process of reconstructing themselves.



## Chapter Six: Transition across Participants

This chapter brings together participants' narratives around particular themes and cultural models in a figure to cross-reference the participant's quotes and pinpoint transitions. In conducting this study, I had not asked participants specifically to narrate culture, but instead found that cultural models emerged. I assigned colours to each cultural model in the Figure to show to the reader its presence. Chapter six encompasses data from all the six participants, providing a cross-case analysis. I divided this chapter into three parts; life in Pakistan, imaginary world of studying in the UK and life in the UK. The first and second part discusses the first research question, 'How do female Pakistani postgraduate students narrate their family, institution, recognition and social dimension of life at the start of joining the UK University? In order to answer this question, I used data from the first interview, as it was collected in the first week (September - October) of participants joining to the UK University. At this point, participants had yet to assimilate in the UK culture; therefore their performance in the interview was in accordance to Pakistani social reality, whereas their future possibilities were in the UK. The first part attempts to unpack the socio- cultural construction of the meaning of being a Pakistani female. For example, participants narrated a kind of positionality across various subspaces (realms) that showed obedience to their father, obedience to their teacher, gendered profession and their husband's supremacy. In all of these subspaces they were inclined to draw upon the two cultural models 'Log Kya Kahengay' (what will people say) and 'Chaddar aur Chardevari' (veil and the four walls). I have explained the aforementioned cultural models in detail in the introduction on page 23. Most participants revealed that they had critical incidents in life, which enabled them to use agency around these cultural models and think about joining UK University for higher studies. The second part discusses 'imagining the world of studying in the UK'. This part was divided into two subparts, studying and empowerment and pre-arrival networking. I argue that participants' transition began at this point, as, based on their admission in the UK University; they imagined gaining status in Pakistan. Furthermore, at this point they also had expectations of imagined empowerment stemming from being at the UK University.

The third part 'life in the UK' discusses the second research question, 'how they (participants) define their family, institution, recognition and social dimension of life after

three, six and nine months of transitioning to the UK University? In order to answer this question, I used data from the second, third and fourth interview, as at this point, participants' past, present and future possibilities had an impact from the UK social reality; therefore their performance in the interview drew on both British and Pakistani social reality. The third part is divided into four sub parts; networking opportunities, renegotiating British and Pakistani cultural models, reverse culture shock and hybridity between British and Pakistani cultural models. Hybridity was introduced in Chapter three pages 90-91. I use the term hybridity in this chapter as an important outcome of my analysis. Hybridity can have various connotations but I use the term in the way intended in my definition on page 90.

## Part 6.1: Life in Pakistan

### 6.1.1 Early Life

#### 6.1.1.1 Obedience to Father

Participants narrated their first subspace as parental home in Pakistan, where participants' quotes (See Figure 7) state that they aspired their father's job, imitated their acts, obeyed their choices (in study and marriage) and fulfilled their dreams. Participants' fathers guided and influenced each participant, which might be due to patriarchy in culture or

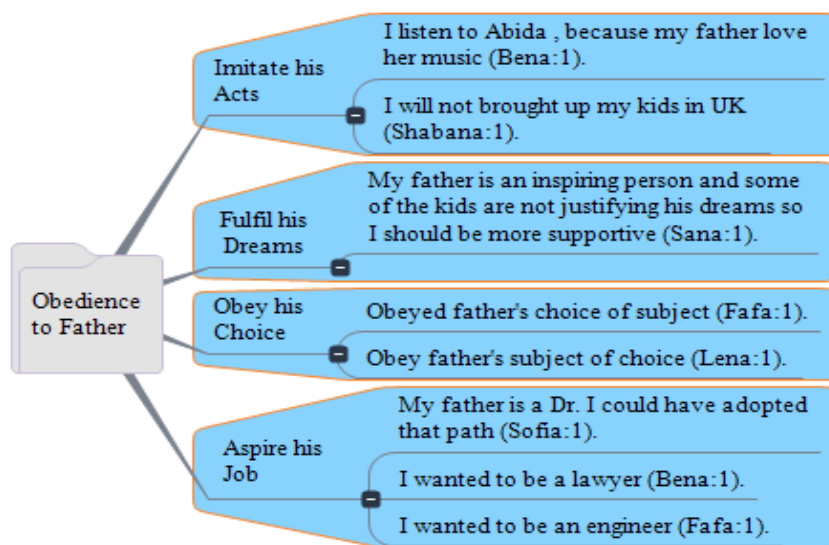


Figure 7: Parent Home and Obedience to Father

due to their father being their supporter in breaking the societal stereotypes by sending their daughters to study abroad. Whatever the case, it is certain that in Pakistani social structures, father has the authority figure and power in decision-making.

### 6.1.1.2 Teacher Centred School

Participants narrated their second subspace as school (see Figure 8), where the culture preferred them to memorise and reproduce text in exams rather than to critically judge. Due to the hierarchy in the power structures of Pakistan, participants viewed teacher's knowledge as taken to be true and unquestionable (See Bena's quote in Figure 9).

Participants narrated little emphasis in school on collaborative group work or independent thinking. Rather society expected them to be passive recipients of knowledge (See Shabana's quote in Figure 8). Participants' had boundaries in thinking freely at schools in the Pakistani

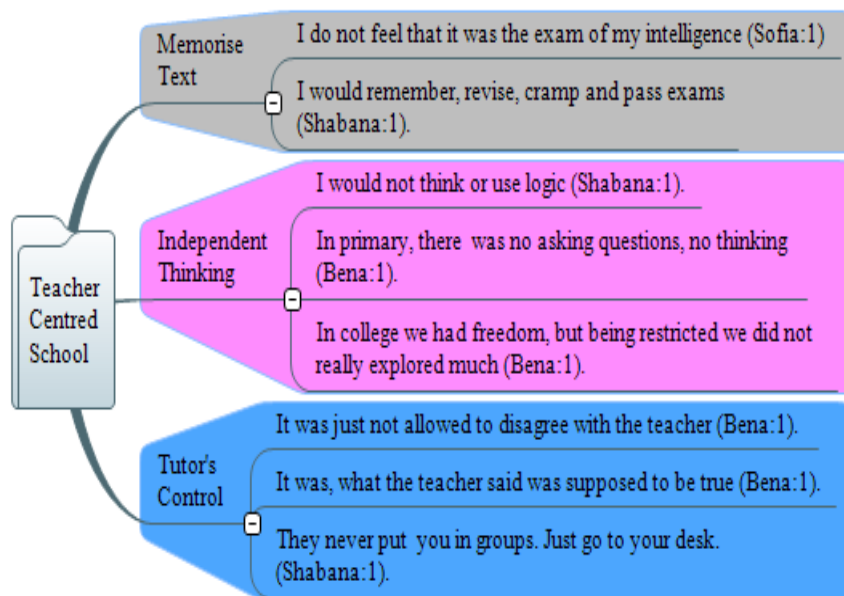


Figure 8: Teacher centred schools

education system. These boundaries may restrict individual acts in future, as Bena's quoted, 'in college we had freedom, but being restricted, we did not really explore much'.

### 6.1.1.3 Gendered Profession

Participants narrated their third subspace as high school (see Figure 10); where they narrated a trouble. That is, the entire cohort interviewed indicated that none of them had been given the opportunity to pursue their subjects of choice in Pakistan due to their gender. The decision of the daughter's field of study rested with the father as his daughter's profession has links to her marriage in Pakistani cultural reality. The social reality views the place of an ideal woman at home, as a wife and mother (which are attained through marriage), therefore the father, prior to making any choice, considers the impact of his decision on the daughter's marriage. Fafa's quotes ('they do not allow women in that field [engineering]'.... 'there is that cultural thing that woman is good for home') suggest that the cultural model 'veil and the four walls' define certain gender specific

boundaries in terms of professions in Pakistani society. Thus, culturally females are not allowed to join certain fields. For example

engineering is not seen as a subject for girls (See Figure 9), whereas medicine is valued for marriage and status in Pakistan (See Fafa's and Shabana's quote in

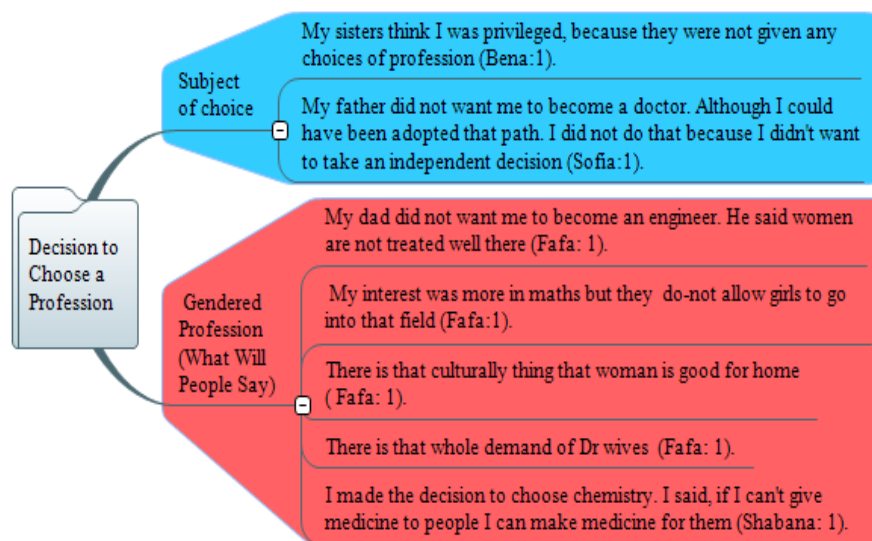


Figure 9: Gendered Profession

Figure 9). Thus, gender and professions are defined in a certain way in Pakistani cultural reality, where studying medicine attracts better marital proposals than any other fields.

#### 5.1.1.4 Husband's Supremacy

Participants narrated their fourth sub space as their in-laws' home (see Figure 10). In Pakistan, girls leave their parental home on marriage and enter into in-laws' home. From this point onwards, the in-laws act to take parental responsibility.

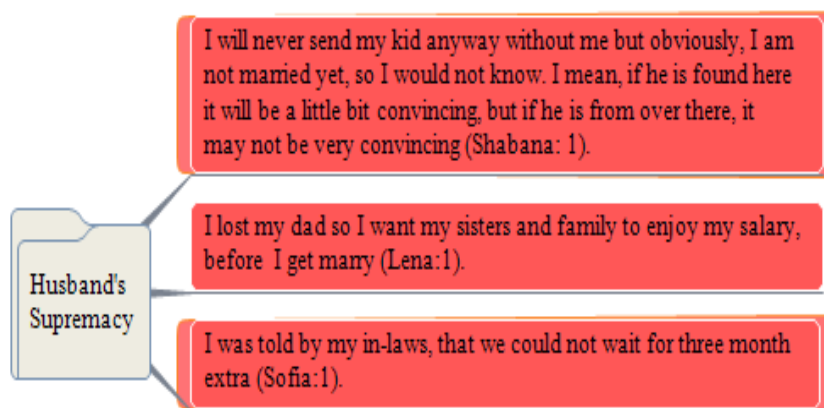


Figure 10: Husband's Supremacy

Participant's quotes suggest that the freedom of women after getting married varies largely as culturally women await husband's permission in education, raising children and economic affairs. The belief of having less autonomy for girls after marriage is tacit in culture due to the cultural model 'Log Kya Kahengay' ('What will people say?') and therefore every participant

(irrespective of being married or unmarried) was familiar with social expectations regarding marriage. For example, Shabana initially stated ‘I would never send my kids without me’ but soon, she corrected herself, ‘but if he is from over there [Pakistan], it may not be very convincing’. Shabana’s quote suggests that in Pakistan the freedom to make decision rests with the father rather than the mother, therefore she may have limited power to make decisions of hr future children if her husband is from Pakistan. Similarly, Lena wished to spend her salary on her mother and sisters but she stated ‘before I get marry’ as she might not be autonomous afterwards. Thus, women may need extra support in transition to become independent decision makers and learners, rather than simply deferring to male authority.

### 6.1.2 ‘Chadar Aur Chardewari’ (Veil & the Four Walls)

All participants discussed (see Figure 11) the conflict of ‘marriage’, ‘study’, ‘work’ and gender roles in culture, which expects man and woman to take up distinct positions in society. According to Pakistani cultural reality, society enunciates upon girls to consider the cultural model ‘Chadar Aur Chardewari’ (Veil and the four walls) which views women within certain boundaries. Participant’ quotes suggest that society expects parents to get their daughters married at an early age. However, if the parents suggest a delay in girl’s marriage to pursue higher education or to work, that means they broke the cultural model

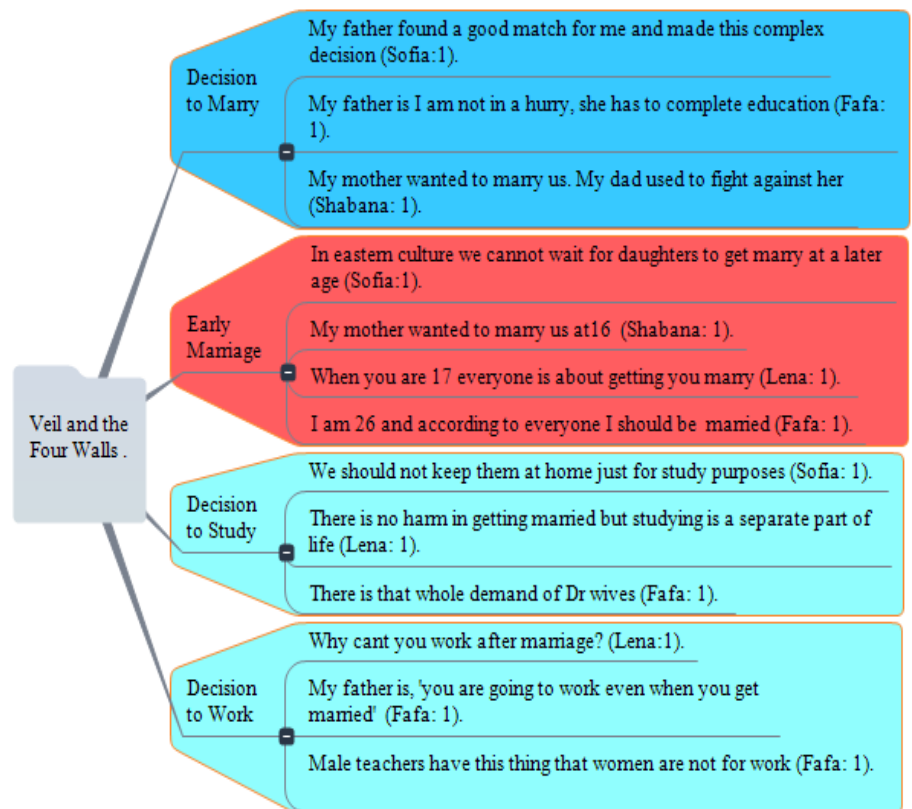


Figure 11: Veil and the Four Walls

and preferred education over marriage and consequently, may face social pressure (See Sofia's quote in Figure 11). The decision to allow daughter's to go on to higher education may be offset as a means to gain eventually a higher status in marriage. Lena's quote in Figure 11 (there is no harm in getting married but studying is a separate part of life) indicates that in Pakistan, parents have to prefer either girls' 'marriage' or 'study and work' as once married, the decision of the girls' study and work goes from father to husband's authority.

### 6.1.3 The Cultural Model 'What Will People Say'

Almost all participants referred to the cultural model 'Log Kya Kahengay' ('what will people say') (See Figure 12), which despite being a global cultural model might be seen at highest intensity in Pakistan. Participants used the terms 'social pressure' 'family pressure' and 'gossip' to explain this maxim. Sana discussed the family pressure on her father for

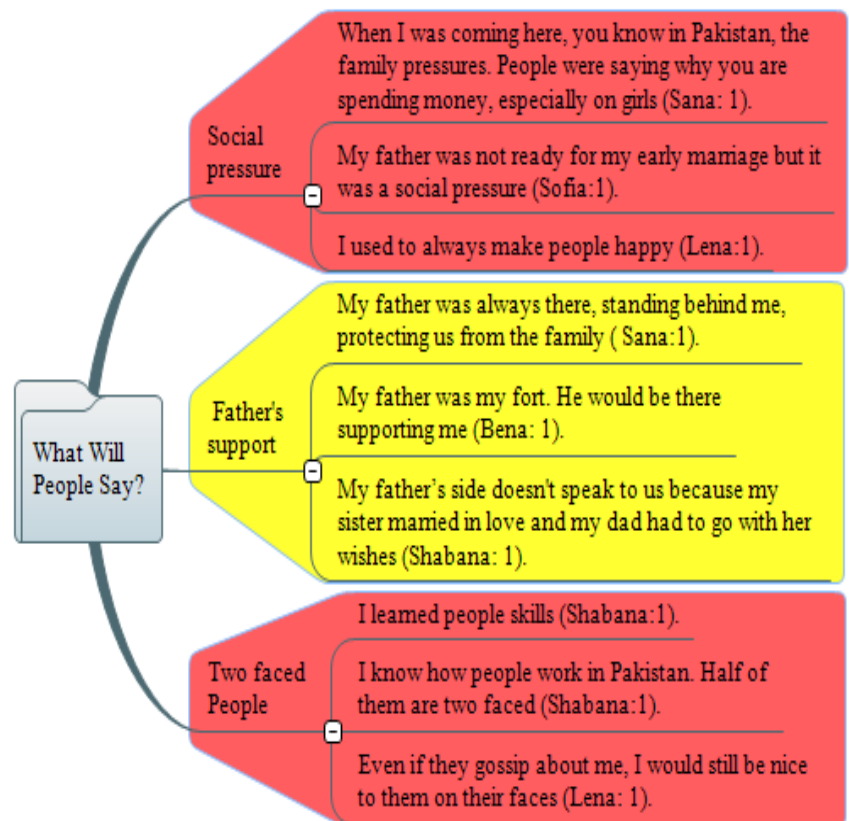


Figure 12: What Will People Say?

'spending money' on her education rather than marriage. All participants knew that the collectivistic cultural reality in Pakistan, judge individuals on their adherence to cultural models. Therefore, individuals live in a certain culturally acceptable way. Shabana termed the culturally accepted way as 'two faced', for example, individual face and cultural face. Lena described those two faces of individual as, 'even if they gossip about me, I would still be nice to them to their faces'. Thus, in accordance to Lena's quote in collectivistic culture individuals need to maintain self-image to be accepted in the society, otherwise they may

experience loss of face (Ahmad *et al.* 2009, p. 619), which may result in a social boycott. For example Shabana’s father faced a social boycott (‘my father’s side doesn’t speak to us....’) for accepting the daughter’s love marriage.

To conclude, the cultural model ‘what would people say?’ was part of participants’ fossilised collective behaviour, a way in which they conceived social reality in Pakistan. These identities were important to look at in transition, as according to Holland *et al.* (1998), ‘identities constitute an enduring and significant aspect of history-in-person, history that is bought to current situation’ (p. 65).

### 6.1.4 Critical Incident and Resisting Cultural Models

Participants’, while in Pakistan, decided to achieve a certain degree of freedom (Unlike the social norms of collectivistic reality) from their fossilised cultural models of Pakistan, and made efforts to get admission in the UK University (See Figure 13). Shabana, Sofia and Sana resisted the cultural models ‘patriarchy’ in Pakistan and thought about gender equality in culture. Fafa stood against social

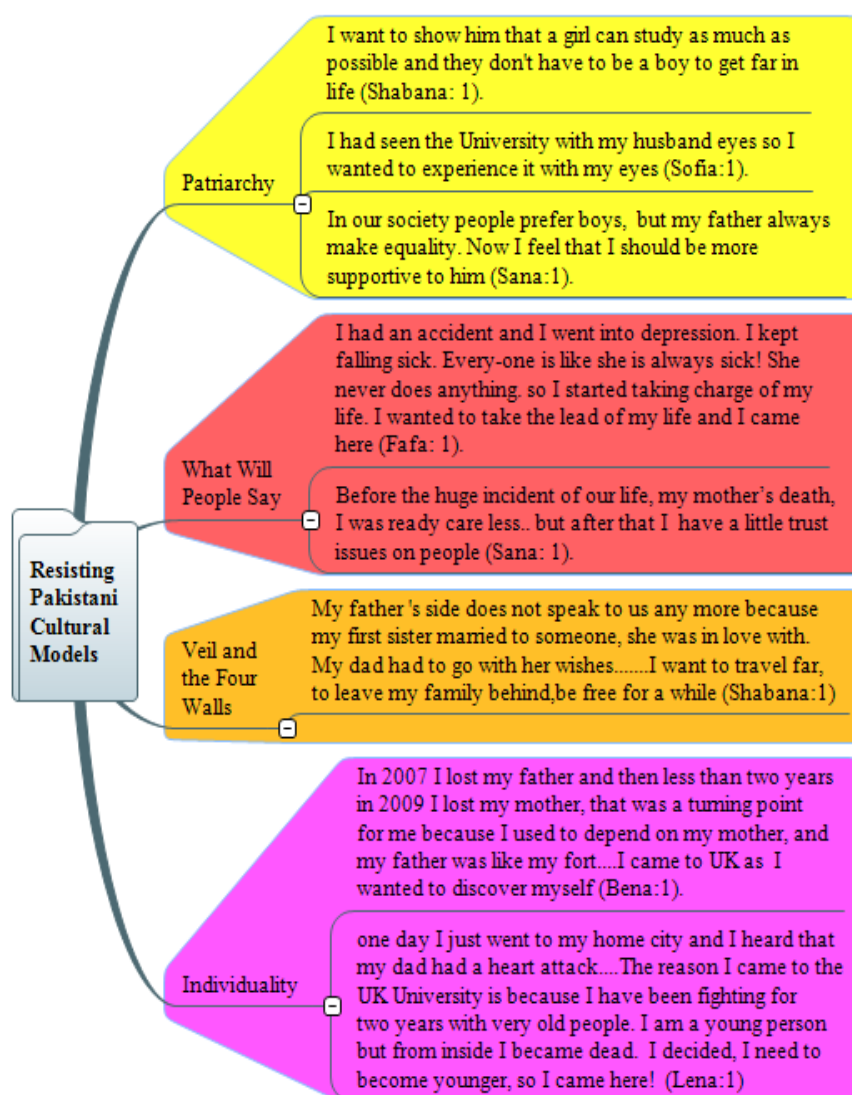


Figure 13: Critical Incidents and Resisting the Pakistani Cultural Models

pressure ('what would people say?') and decided to take 'the lead' of her life. Shabana wished to break the cultural model 'veil and the four walls' by leaving her family behind. Bena ('to discover herself) and Lena ('to become younger') wished to developed individually by joining the UK University, which suggests that they showed awareness to their idiocentric self. Thus, participants gained agency to act in the world from their choice and achieved admission in the UK University.

## Part 6.2 Imaginary World of Studying in the UK

### 6.2.1 Pre Arrival Transition

Participants' quotes (See Figure 14) suggest that after achieving admission in the UK University, they

developed anxieties and worries in Pakistan about their imagined life in the UK. These anxieties might be particular to Pakistani students, who were more concerned with their self-image and social conformity. Still participants stated

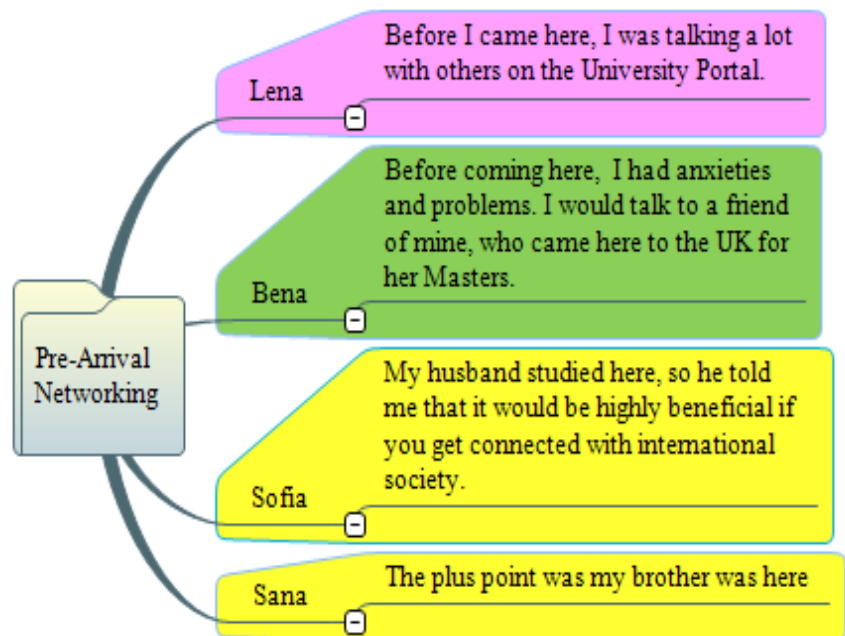


Figure 14:Pre-arrival Networking Transition

their worries and approached their friends, spouse or siblings to understand the unseen. Lena used online portal, Bena discussed her worries with friends, Sofia with her husband and Sana with her brother. Thus, participants at this point were curious about their life in the UK University, which states that transition began with participants' imagination, prior their physical move to the UK University. Thus, my participants had a collectivistic behaviour in their past, whereas due to transition they were entering into the individualistic social reality of the UK.



## 6.2.2 Projecting Imaginary World of Success at Data Point One

Participants' quotes (See Figure 15) suggest that after arrival to the UK University, they imagined a different future for themselves. That is at data point one, participants were projecting empowerment (in the form of skills, scholarship, PhD and career) in future from their transition to the UK University. They perceived an imaginary world where studying at the UK will change their capital in Pakistan.

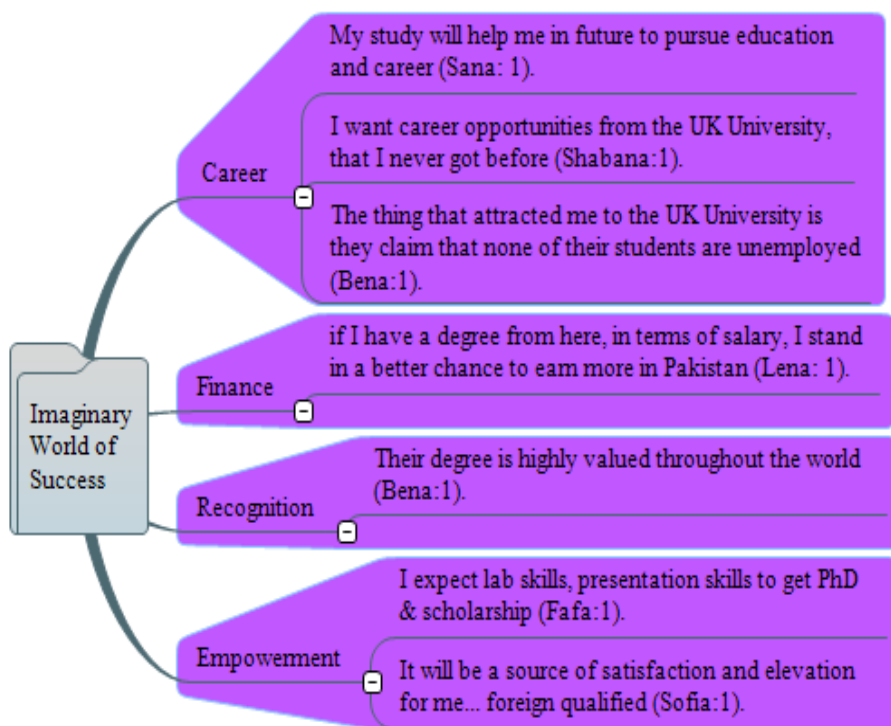


Figure 15: Imaginary world of successful woman

Thus, at the beginning of their study, they imagined transition to another phase, that is, return to Pakistan after getting their degree from the UK University. In this imagination, studying at the UK University had been missed out. Thus, participants romanticised recognition and validation in Pakistan, with their transition and studentship at the UK University. They were projecting for a new possible future, where they imagined themselves on empowered positions

## Part 6.3: Life in UK

In this part, I discussed how participant narrated their life in the UK, in the second, third and fourth interviews.

### 6.3.1 Networking Opportunities

At data point two, participants started networking in various platforms and renegotiated various cultural models of Pakistan.

### 6.3.1.1 Negotiating Pakistani Cultural Models

Participants' quotes (See Figure 16) suggest that they actively enjoyed taking part in the welcome week activities, which helped them to establish connections. These activities were particularly valuable for students from collectivistic cultures to understand the new system and get over the tacit cultural models of their past to develop new ties. Once participants started settling down in the University, they networked with friends and joined university societies related to geographical areas, study groups, languages, religions, activities and sports.

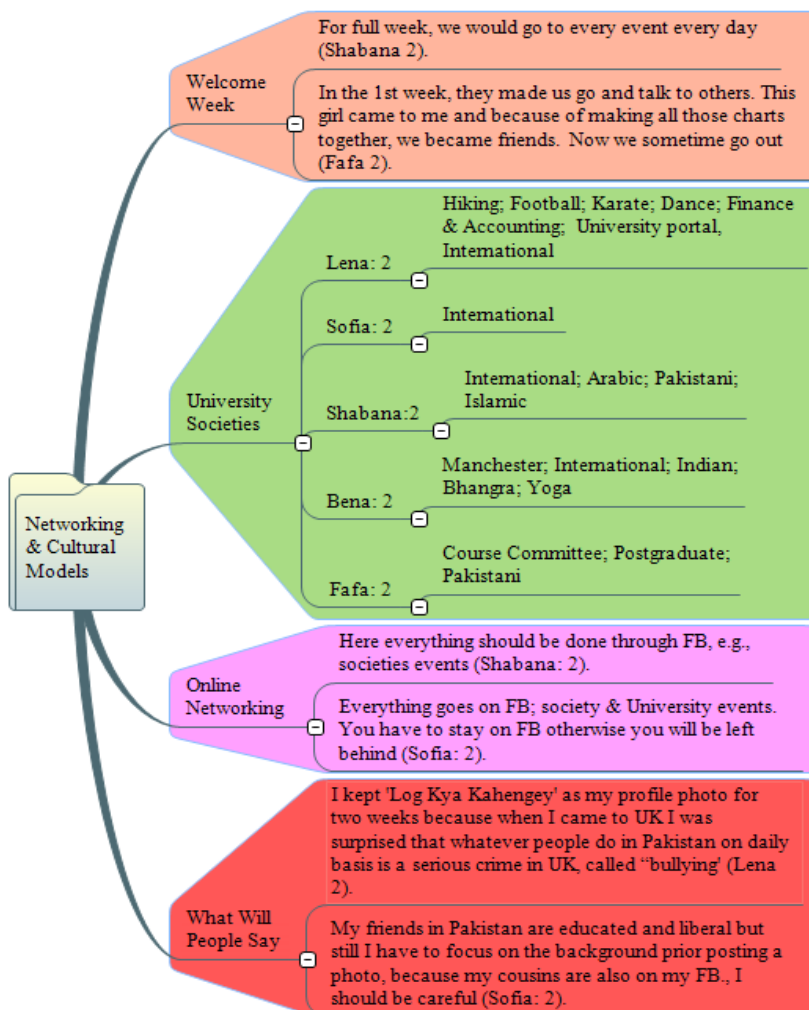


Figure 16: Negotiating British and Pakistani Cultural Models

Participants narrated their underlying aim to join societies as to evolve and shape their personality. They were networking with academia from around the world; learning new languages; getting familiar with multiple cultures and religions; participating in sports, dramas and activities and developing multinational friendships. Participants had cultural restrictions, gender role differences and limited mobility with friends in Pakistan due to the cultural model 'veil and the four walls' while in the UK they had international, UK and Pakistani friends. Thus, unlike in Pakistan, participants were focused on the exploration of self and the breaking of gender role differences, which was giving them a new self- understanding. The cultural

model ‘What will people say’ (see figure 17) suggests participants’ attempt to compare and contrast the cultural model to show the distinctiveness of the two contexts. For example Lena interpreted the cultural model ‘what will people say’ as ‘bullying’ and ‘a serious crime’ in the UK. Sofia’s quote ‘I have to focus on background prior posting the photo’ suggests that even though Sofia transitioned from collectivistic culture to an individualistic culture, her family and friends had not seen the alternative reality.

The above discussion concluded that networking at the UK University, including welcome week activities and societies enabled participants to renegotiate Pakistani cultural models in a UK reality.

### 6.3.1.2 Negotiating Friends and Family Cultural Models

After arrival to the UK, participants’ quotes (See Figure 17) suggest loneliness and homesickness, due

to loss of connection with family. To

overcome homesickness,

they narrated

networking with

co-national (See Bena’s quote) and

multinational friends (See

Lena’s quote).

Further, due to transition,

participants

redefined the cultural models of Pakistan, whereas their family have still not seen the alternate reality (For example in chapter 5, Lena redefined the cultural model ‘obedience to parents’ and ‘freedom of thoughts and expressions’ in a certain way). This may bring international students closer to friends, due to which they view friends as substitute for

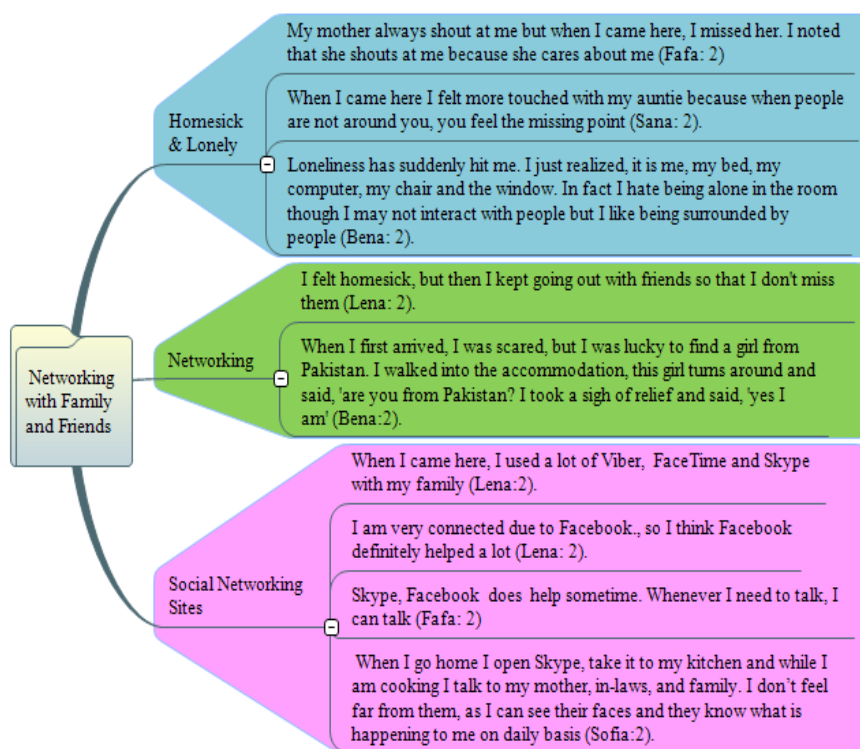


Figure 17: Negotiating Friends and Family Cultural Models

family. Participants ultimately established their lost connection with family in Pakistan through social networking sites (Skype, Viber, Facebook and Whatsapp). Thus, participants used social networking sites with family to overcome homesickness, but they developed closer ties with friends due to their redefining of cultural models.

### 6.3.1.3 Renegotiating the British and Pakistani Culture

Participants' quotes (See Figure 18) suggest that they were constantly comparing Pakistani and the UK cultural reality. For example Bena was trying to state that unlike the Pakistani cultural model 'what

will people say'; social approval was not necessary in the UK. On the contrary, difference of opinion was culturally acceptable, and people would give space to others to accept or alter their decision. For

example, Sofia

quoted her tutor's words 'can you meet me in my office at 11?' She emphasised on the word 'can' to present the freedom and flexibility in time, which indicates that UK culture is less fixed or finalised and individuals give freedom to other in their everyday talks. Fafa quoted that she has to watch her automatic set responses of the past as it might not work in the UK reality, due to cultural differences. Thus, at data point two, transition gave participants this understanding that in Pakistan, cultural acts and practices were closed and finalised, individuals learn and reproduce it, whereas in the UK it was more fluid and individuals give freedom to others in accepting or negating it.

The above discussion concluded that at data point two participants were struggling to cope with the cultural models 'obedience to parents second only to God'; 'hierarchal power structures of the family'; 'veil and the four walls' and 'what will people say?' Thus,

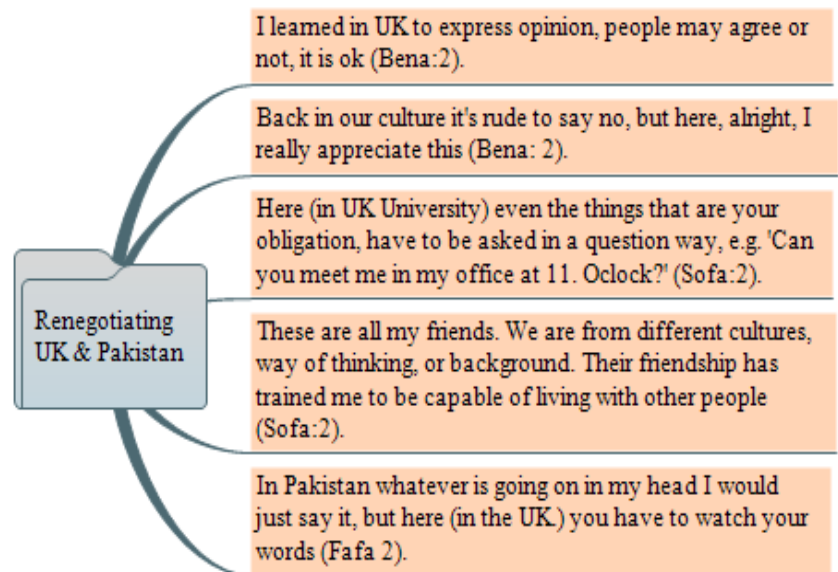


Figure 18: Renegotiating the British and Pakistani Culture

participants elicited a new perspective on the past cultural models, as these cultural models were not questionable in Pakistan, but transition made them questionable. Participants were constantly interplaying past and present to reach out to and define the possible. In this interplay, they developed an outsiders' perspective on their own culture. Toward the end of data point two, they came to the conclusion that UK and Pakistan are two distinct cultural realities, which might not fit together. They found that Pakistani cultural models could not possibly work in the UK reality, and therefore in their projection of the future, they needed some kind of modification.

### **5.3.2 Reverse Culture shock**

In the third interview, participants went through a critical incident (trouble) of imagining 'going back to Pakistan'. In all the timelines, participants place significance on newfound 'travelling' and 'social' opportunities in their transitional journeys.

During transition at data point three, participants found Pakistani cultural models: 'hierarchal family structures', 'not to question elders' 'veil & the four walls' and 'what will people say?' as opposing factors in returning to their home country (See Figure 19). For example in terms of 'hierarchal family structures' Lena quoted, 'I became happier because I don't have family here', whereas Bena quoted 'I will have clash with... family'. In terms of 'not to question elders' Lena stated herself as more 'liberal' where as Bena narrated herself as more 'critical and 'confident', which is in resistance to the power structure of Pakistan? Similarly, Lena's quote 'I want freedom ... go out nine o'clock and walk' states trouble with the cultural model 'veil & the four walls'. In terms of the cultural model 'what will people say', Lena termed it as 'stress' where as Bena stated 'I feel one should be allowed to live the way one wants, pressures of the society should not be forced upon anybody'. Similarly Fafa narrated that she joined societies where networking with friends helped her to take position around the cultural model 'what will people say'.

Being members of campus societies, travels, networking with friends and university practices state the fact that they were remade in the UK. It could be said that these activities were significant because these experiences contradict the Pakistani cultural model (they have been accustomed to) of the 'veil and the four walls', and the value placed on women as being confined to the domestic life of a wife and mother. Thus, participants on one hand had freedom from Pakistani cultural models, but on the other hand were

unable to stay in the UK due to visa restriction (from being Pakistani) and therefore were in the conflict. They had no choice but to go back and embrace the cultural models of Pakistan. Bena's statement, 'I think it would be very hard for me to go back to Pakistan', suggests that she was facing reverse culture shock of going back to Pakistan. Thus, transition has affected participants as they developed a new way of being which made them alien to Pakistani social reality.

In the third interview, all participants had some sort of social ties, where they were engaged with friends either individually or under societies. These societies and social ties gave participants a new understanding of their past, which they did not have in Pakistan. This new understanding suggested that with

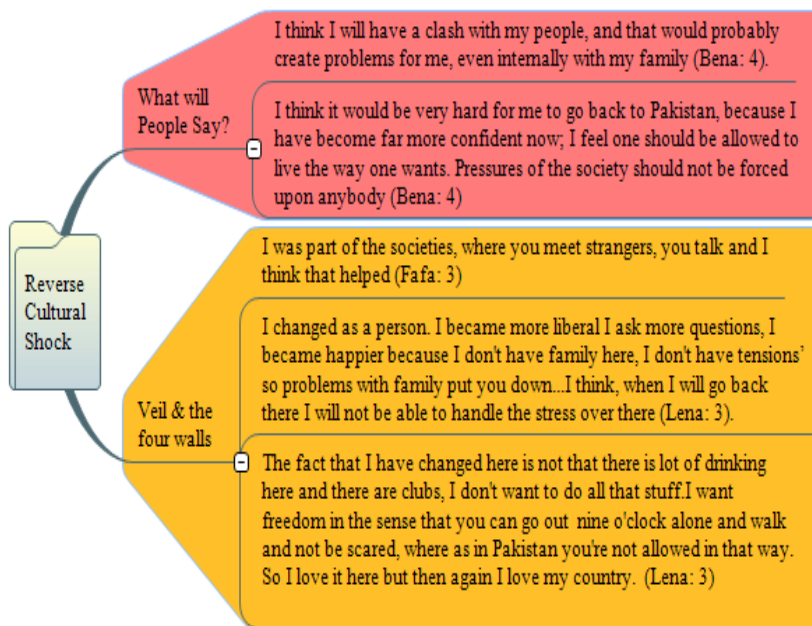


Figure 19: Reverse Culture Shock

transition, their view of the past as well as the present and possible future changed. Further, due to their studentship in the UK University at this point, participants could travel independently and were taking lead, which previously was not a case due to the position of women in the power structures of Pakistan. Thus, towards the end of the third interview, participants were not mentally at peace. For example they wanted freedom in mobility and expression, which was far from Pakistani cultural models but they also had love for Pakistan, and had limited choice to stay in the UK.

The above discussion concluded that international students' transition is not all about 'study skills'. The library and the university can help students with aspects of transition, but these cultural models still persist and make it difficult for the student to avail themselves of these facilities. However, with the help of multinational students'

networking, these students may get over those cultural models, which are stopping them from success or empowerment.

### 6.3.3 Hybrid Self

In this part, I discussed how participant narrated various dimensions of their life at data point four that is towards the end of their study, prior going back to Pakistan.

#### 5.3.3.1 Hybrid Institutional Dimensions of Life

At data point four, participants were confident with their academic achievements and have developed their academic writing and presentation skills (See Figure 20). Participants' academic issues were specific to a certain stage, which they overcame successfully and by the time of fourth interview, they imagined future prospects in the form of PhD rather than gaining academic skills (See Fafa's quote). Shabana had already secured a PhD with scholarship at the time. Participants had received institutional validation in the form of merits or distinction in their MA assignments, which suggested that they were successful in fulfilling the demands of QAA (2008). However, the

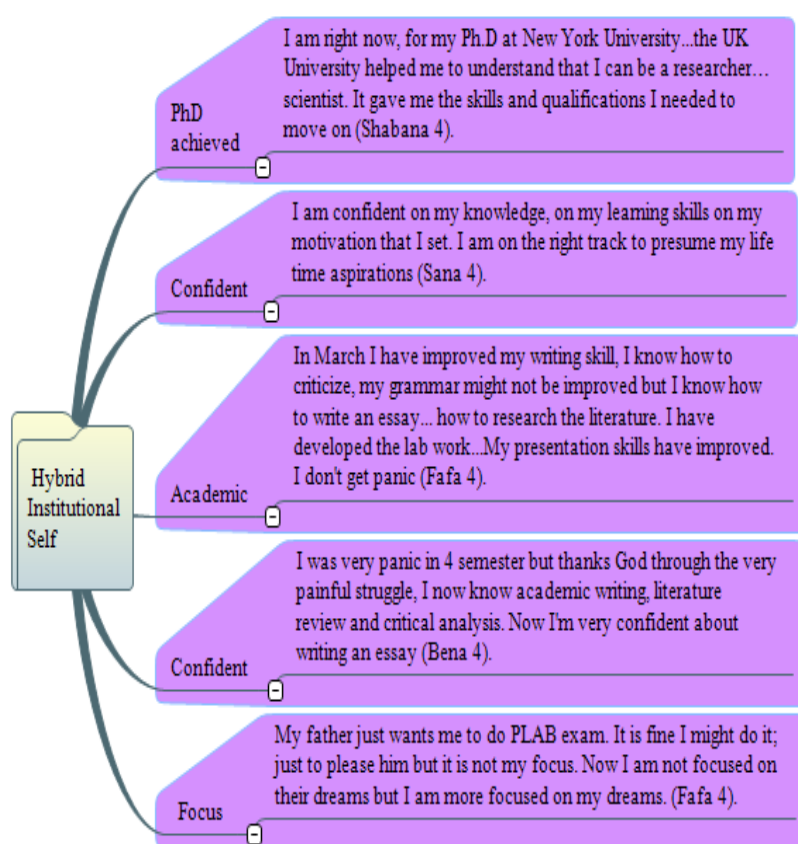


Figure 20: Hybrid Institutional Dimension of Life

demands of QAA (2008, p. 21) for MA degree holders that is 'to demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving the problems' gave rise to tensions and conflicts around the cultural models. For example, previously fathers made their academic decisions but at the fourth interview Fafa's projection forward was focused on personal decisions

and choices. She only accepted the cultural model ‘what will people say?’ superficially and had an underlying agency towards it and that was to achieve her personal dreams. Thus, at this point, participants had a hybrid institutional self, where their focus changed.

They were not denying the cultural models but were using agency to accept and resist and hence were going through modification in their thinking feeling and believing to keep them-selves first in their projected future, which suggests that they were still in the process of identity transition.

### 5.3.3.2 Hybrid Family and Recognition Dimensions of Life

At data point four, transition and networking was redefining participants’ family and recognition dimensions of life. Bena in her quotes (See Figure 21) was renegotiating her fossilised childhood identity as a ‘tomboy’ of the

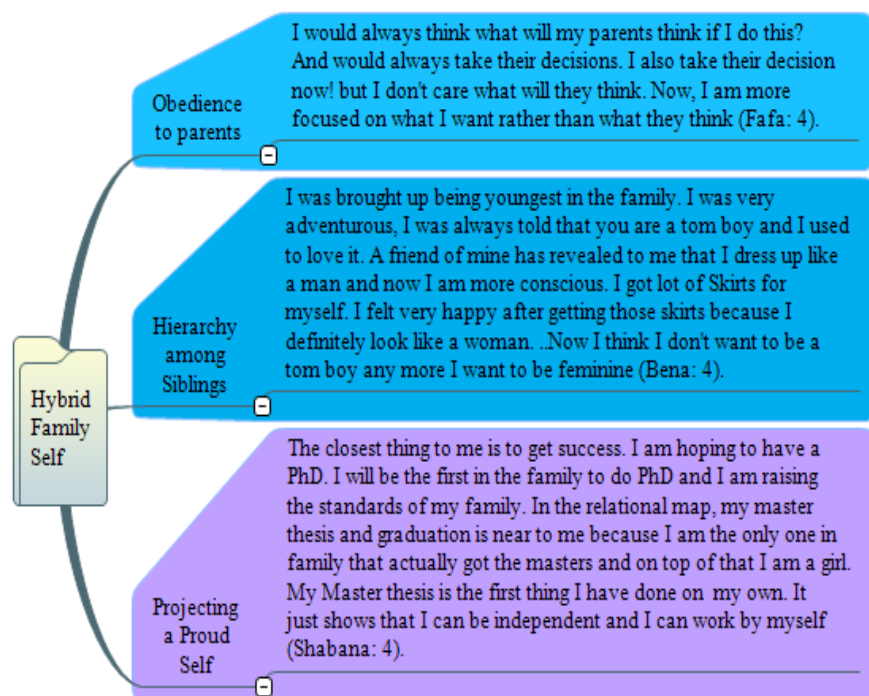


Figure 21: Hybrid Family and Recognition Dimension

family, which was assigned to her based on her hierarchal position as the youngest among siblings. She used to love her tomboy identity in Pakistan, and would unconsciously dress up like boys. During transition, her friends brought her to consciousness that she dress up like a boy, which was contradictory to her gender identity of being a female. Thus, in the UK reality, she started wearing girly dresses and ‘felt very happy’. Similarly, Fafa redefined her hierarchal position of being the eldest among siblings and developed friendship at University. She stated at data point four, ‘now I can sometime be crazy with



friends'. Thus, while in Pakistan, Fafa and Lena was acting according to their hierarchal position in the power structure of family, whereas due to transition to UK University and networking with friends, they were adopting a new way of being, which was different from their Pakistani way of being.

At data point four, participants recognised themselves as the pride of the family, which was previously not the case. For example, Shabana's quote, 'I am the only one in family that actually got a master's degree' suggests claiming higher position in the family with her academic achievement (See Figure 21). Further, her quote, 'on top of that I am a girl', suggests that she had proved her strength being a female, which was her conflict in the first interview. She stated at data point one, 'I want to show him [my dad] that a girl can study as much as possible and they don't have to be a boy to get far in life'. However, one can see Shabana's empowerment and autonomy in the quote, 'I will be the first in the family to do PhD and I am raising the standards of my family'.

The above discussion concluded that in Pakistani power structures, gender, age and hierarchal position among siblings define the expected behaviour of individuals. However at the point of return, participants with networking found it contradictory to their natural needs. Transition and networking brought participants to consciousness and they began to see themselves through their friends' eyes. They revisited, renegotiated and fixed their past through networking. Further, through education participants viewed themselves with autonomy, independence and the pride of the family. Their new recognition enabled them to overcome gender roles and project forward being the pride of the family with their hybrid self.

### **5.3.3.3 Hybrid Cultural Dimensions of Life**

At data point four, participants on one hand wanted to be married (according to Pakistani cultural models) but on the other they did not link marriage to success and happiness, rather their focus was on their 'own personality' (successful researcher) and their 'own feelings' (happiness and success), which are Western cultural models, which suggest that there may be some culturally hybrid. For example, at data point one, Shabana and Bena's were discussing 'early marriage' as in conflict to 'study' and 'work', whereas at data point four their discussion changed (See Figure 22). That is Bena quoted that she wants to marry (which is a Pakistani cultural model) but 'not at the expense of happiness'. Similarly,

Shabana wants to marry and be a ‘successful mother’ but she also identity herself as a ‘successful researcher’. Thus, participants’ successful life in the future was not tied up with marriage anymore.

At this point in transition, participants had agency towards culture. For example, Bena mentioned her freedom of expression (UK cultural model) over being silent (Pakistani cultural model). However, they adhered to core religious values. For example, Lena enquired social norms but upheld core religious values. She stated, ‘I am educated, calmer and my view of

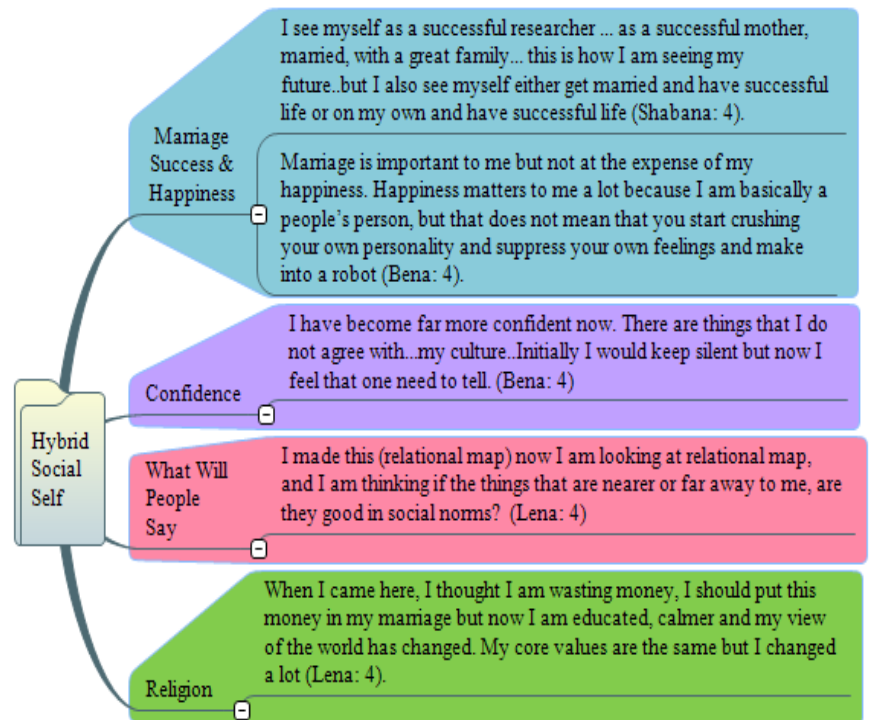


Figure 22: Hybrid Cultural Dimensions of Life

the world has changed, but my core values are the same’. The above discussion concluded that at data point four, participants had through a process of transition constructed a hybrid self, where they were using agency and making choices to reshape and reposition themselves around cultural models and construct new identities, which suggest that participants’ identities may be evolving even after finishing their studies.

### Part: 6.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to consider the themes that emerged across participants. In this regards, at data point one participants’ sense of self was strongly defined by their home culture and their family. For example, they were obedient to parents in decision making. In their institutional dimension of life their sense of self was recognised through obedience to authority figures. They spoke about the importance of respecting their teachers, memorising text book and joining gender-specific profession for study and work. In the social dimension of life, the power structures of Pakistani culture imposed a certain kind of

hierarchy on participants, where elders and male members were seen at a higher status than others in social judgment and decision-making. Thus, in Pakistani cultural reality, the collectivistic culture positions male members as gatekeepers, and responsible for the female members, hence any violation of cultural models could bring loss of face and social boycott to them. In Pakistan, their sense of self as a woman would be defined by the wider culture, i.e. codes of acceptable behaviour and limitations on what a woman may be permitted to do.

Participants' narratives suggest that transition begins at the point of projecting forward, that is, from the moment when they made the decision to study in the UK and started to imagine what their new life may involve. At that point participants had a past and present in Pakistan but they had UK in their imaginations. Participants developed a new sense of self whereby they could see themselves free from Pakistani cultural constraints.

In their life after arrival to the UK, participants elicited homesickness and loneliness, which they overcome through networking by using various platforms including: welcome week events, society membership and online forums. After engaging with the University through networking, participants broke or ruptured their fossil (habitus) and developed an outsiders' view on their cultural models, which created conflicts at various points in transition. To resolve the conflict they renegotiated their past and present to redefine their position around cultural models, which mediated their perception. While in the UK University, they redefined their sense of self, which demanded the use of critical thinking skills. I argue that participants were forced to use agency to question the world around them in order to succeed academically.

At data point three, participants' critical incident was going back to Pakistan. They initially had been forced by the University to become critical thinkers, whereas once modified; they had to go back to their passive roles. Thus, at this stage participants went through a reverse culture shock, where their past, present and future possibilities had tensions relating to going back to Pakistan, as they could not stay in the UK due to certain restrictions. By this time they had developed freedom from cultural expectations as well as enjoyed the freedom to move independently and travelled across the UK, rather than being confined to the domestic existence they had experienced in Pakistan.

At data point four, the cultural models no longer governed their lives. They accepted these cultural models at a surface level, but deep down they were focused on attaining their individual goals. At this point participants broke the four walls of domesticity and had imagined travelling around the world. They recognised themselves as the pride of the family. In the institutional dimensions of life, all participants won the recognition ‘foreign return’; with merit or distinctions in their MA degrees and felt empowered in the form of higher social status. I admit that even though there were only a few incidents where participants were dis-identifying themselves from Pakistani cultural models, still I argue that after transition they were not going back to the same position; rather they had transitioned to a different position. Thus, transition gave them a next level of understanding, i.e. a different position of self around the past cultural models, which suggests that transition impacted their identities. The next chapter is about the discussion of visual methodology used in my study.

## Chapter Seven: Discussion of Visual Methods

This chapter discusses the methodological question: ‘how can visual methods be used to reveal identity construction during transition to UK higher education?’ The chapter is divided into three parts, based on the photograph, timelines and relational maps artefacts. Each part of the chapter reflects the way I and my participants used these artefacts to carry out current research. Furthermore, the chapter tries to examine the impact of the visual elicitation method on the way participants talk and see themselves at various times in their transition, with reference to key theorists e.g., Figured World and Hybridity [see theoretical framework chapter for definition and example of Figured World (pages 84-86 and Hybridity (pages 91)] in order to show the extent to which transition has impacted participants’ identities. Even further, this chapter discusses two of the main Pakistani cultural models ‘Log Kya Kahengay’ (what will people say) and ‘Chaddar aur Chardevari’ (veil and the four walls). Descriptions of the meaning of these cultural models can be found on page 23.

### Part 7.1: Photographs

In this part I summarised the findings regarding the use of photo elicitation in my study in order to reflect on the method as to how participant narrated their way of understanding themselves during transition. In doing so, participants selected various photos to present how their identity has been constructed after the first three months of living in the UK.

#### 7.1.1 Photos’ as an Act of Identifying ‘Who am I’

Through the use of photographic artefacts, participants’ were able to use agency to select photos, which they saw as representative of critical episodes in their journey of transition. This gave them an explicit visual reference point to examine their changing positionality. For example, Fafa explained that,

In selecting photos I asked myself: What [was I]? How [have] I changed? What actually happened? What [has] improved and how can I improve myself more?



Image 10: Lena in Pakistan

According to Bagnoli (2009) ‘participants’ interpretation of a question...allows a creative way of interviewing that is responsive to participants’ own meaning and association’ (p. 547). Thus, participants’ selection of photos was particularly empowering as they were constructing their own identity of who they were, at the specific point in time of the interview.

### **7.1.2 Photos as an Act of Reliving Emotions**

Photos provoke participants’ ‘thinking, feeling, believing, valuing’ of the past (Pakistan) and present (the UK), which reveals their Discourse identities (Gee, 1996, p. 131). For example, Bena said,

I think photo elicitation [allows you to] re-live your experience and express your emotions; it brings out all the excitement and sadness.

According to McCarthy (2013) photo elicitation gives a ‘holistic picture of their [the participants’] experiences, attitudes, memories and immediate sensations with time’ (2013, p. 79). Lena brought to interview an image (See Image 13) of herself [as a volunteer tutor] amongst a class of school pupils. She elicited her emotions about the photo in the quotation, ‘we used to help them...teach them...take them out for movies. This photo made me feel good and reminded me that I did something good for these children’ (Lena: 2). Richard and Lahman (2015, p. 4) said that photo elicitation ‘captures participants’ feelings, thoughts, intentions, previous behaviours...and then connects these understandings to their world’. Richard and Lahman (2015) and Jorgenson and Sullivan (2010) used photo elicitation for raising participant’s emotional and cognitive selves to understand the intriguing subjectivity of their lives. Participants brought these pictures to elicit their inner subjective emotions of the past in Pakistan and connect them with their identity at the time of transition in the UK.

### **7.1.3 Photos as an Act of Situating Participant’s Identity within Life Context**

Photos revealed participants’ complex, subjective and personal (individual) cultural identity to the researcher and gave insight into their Figured Worlds in which they had lived experience. For example, Lena brought photographs representing her past life in Pakistan as well as her present in the UK, explaining, ‘You have seen a picture of my family when I was young. Then I showed you a picture from Turkey, my institutional setup

in Lahore and my institutional setup in the UK. These pictures (see Image 14) show a constant contrast, like how my life was in Pakistan and how it is in the UK’.



**Image 11: Lena within her Figured Worlds: Childhood, Pakistani College and UK University**

The literature (Khan and Siry, 2014; Jorgenson and Sullivan, 2010; Richard and Lahman, 2015) explained that photo elicitation had the potential to provide tangible detail, give real life impressions and provide a window to the researcher to the otherwise unobservable tacit and sensory dimensions of participants’ lives. Richard and Lahman (2015) called the process of using visual methods a model of collaboration between the participant and the researcher. Participants’ photos gave me a visual representation of their lives and helped me to understand their culturally constructed selves and their cultural context, which assisted in making sense of the data, as it explained their transition to a different cultural context. In this way I gained a more empathic connection to participants.

#### **7.1.4 Photos as an Act of Situating Inner Thoughts into Visual Artefacts**

Photos organised participants’ thoughts and empowered their language, which enabled them to articulate tacit knowledge with fluency. For example, Sofia described the affordances of photography to fill knowledge gaps, when she said, ‘I got help from photos as a teacher gets help from Audio Visual Aids...I am conveying my inner thoughts and feelings to you, even if I am not using appropriate words, you can understand from the concrete visual aids’. According to Richard and Lahman (2015), photo elicitation enables participants to ‘organise their mental understandings and then connect these understandings to their world’. Some studies (Justesen *et al.*, 2014; Khan & Siry, 2014; Jorgenson & Sullivan, 2010; Richard & Lahman, 2015) stated that photo elicitation acts to create a sense of familiarity in soliciting participants’ voices during the interview process. I found photos to be beneficial for participants’ attempts to organise and elicit the narratives,

which they were telling themselves at the time of interview; this enabled me to understand the complexity of their identities and agency in the transition.

### 7.1.5 Photos as an Act of Revealing the Cultural Model ‘What Will People Say’

Cultural models are ‘underlying maxims ... that determine why and how we behave as we do’ (Bruce, 2005, p. 64). This underlying maxim or principle is socially shared and understood throughout Pakistani society, perpetuating socio-cultural discourses as well as maintaining restrictive structures of power. In my study, photos helped in bringing cultural models to the research. For

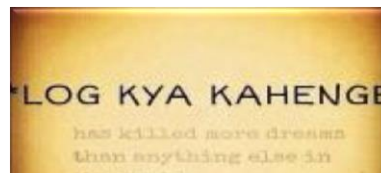


Image 12: What will People Say

example, Lena brought the image ‘Log Kya Kahengay’ [What will people say?] (See Image 15) and said, ‘there [in Pakistan] your business is everyone else’s business’.

Similarly, Bena brought the picture (see Image 16) of a Pakistani Sufi poet and said, ‘He is Shah Abdul Latif Bhitayee, a Sufi poet of Sindh. I love Sufism, which to me, is freedom. It is to understand God and not judge others. I have been very harsh on myself. I want to forgive myself. You are who you are and others are who they are; just promote, love, harmony and peace’. Bena’s quotation ‘not judge others’ refers to the cultural model ‘Log Kya Kahengay’. Her quote below indicates resistance to the cultural model.



A Sufi poet Shah Abdul Latif Bhitayee

Image 13: What will People Say?

‘I have been very harsh on myself [in the Past]. I want to forgive myself [in the present]. You are who you are and others are who they are [in the possible]’,

Richard and Lahman (2015) identified ‘participants’ cultural understandings’, ‘social psychology’, and ‘understandings of their thoughts and actions in social situations’ as the three main uses of photo elicitation (p. 5). Various studies (Pink, 2001; Rose, 2001) stated that images get their meaning within specific groups of people, who interpret them in multiple idiosyncratic ways [depending on their own Figured Worlds]. In my research, identifying cultural models was influential, as participants’ positioning around them would tell me about the ways they are seeing their changing identities.



### 7.1.6 Photos as an Act of Identifying Inner Multiplicity

Holland *et al.*'s (1998) book, *Identity and Agency in Cultural World* explained self-authoring as, 'the interplay between the...intimate discourses, inner speaking, and bodily



17.1 Sofia in UK



17.2 Sofia in Pakistan

Image 14: Sofia in UK and Pakistan

practices formed in the past and discourses and practice to which people are exposed in the present' (pp. 31–32). In my study photos were bringing participants' inner multiple voices of conflict (of past and present) to the research. For example Sofia said, 'I had a dream to come to [the] Lake District because a famous poet, William Wordsworth, is attached to it... [In Pakistan], I was thinking I would see something which I had never seen in my entire life, special visuals and scenery. But if I present these two pictures, it is hard to distinguish which one is Pakistan. Nature has given us the same beauty, but...why [do] we have fanciful [imagination] about Western countries, because we are behind in human development' (Sofia: 2). In the above example (See Image 17.1 and 17.2), the UK photographs gave a double perspective to Sofia. That is in one glance, while in the interview situation she could see herself in the photo enjoying a trip to the Lake District, whilst in the other glance she recalled the imaginative ideas she had projected onto the UK whilst she was still living in Pakistan. 'In her re-figuring of the space of authorship' Sofia was ['multiplying the possible ways of identifying the activity' (Solomon et al. (2015, p.8), as she was] confronted with the realisation that the natural beauty of Pakistan is equal to that of the Lake District, but due to the positionality of Pakistan developmentally, she had accepted a discourse of inferiority. Thus, after she had visited the Lake District, its realm of interpretation changed. That is from the previous idealised view held in her imagination to positioning her within the landscape [of Lake District] rather than as an outsider. Thus, through the photo, Sofia got a flashback to her inner thinking about the UK when she was in Pakistan and a flash forward to her actual experience of being in the UK. Participants' flashbacks and flash forwards through photos brought their inner multiplicity into the

research, revealing their changing positionality. [‘Holland et al. (1981, p.135) describe hybridisation as taking an authorial stance in the orchestration of multiple voices and, in doing so, “re-figuring the space of authorship, multiplying the possible ways of identifying activity’ (Solomon et al. (2015, p.8).]. Some studies (Richard & Lahman, 2015; Khan & Siry, 2014) mentioned that photo elicitation provokes participants’ critical consciousness and helps them to re-see, critique, and challenge the world. In my research, photos helped in eliciting participants’ inner speaking of their past (in Pakistan) and their discourses of the present (in the UK), which would help them to develop new understandings.

### 7.1.7 Photos as an Act to Provoke Agency

Photos provoked participants’ agency, which Holland *et al.* (1998) defined as ‘the realised capacity of people to act upon their world...purposively and reflectively...to reiterate and remake the world in which they live, in circumstances where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable’ (1998, p. 42). Lena brought an image of a social occasion in the UK University. She said, ‘This is a picture of



Image 15: Lena at The UK University

Halloween (See Image 18). It actually reminds me how confused I am, because this culture is just too different...because people would judge you there...I got this black gown, so you can be this way [in Pakistan] but then there is always a religious pressure, always a cultural pressure. So, if you are wearing tight jeans with a shirt. You are a bad person but if you are wearing Shalwar Kamees [Pakistani dress], which is tight and vulgar, you are a good person. So, I am someone who is in a constant mental debate with myself about whether to enjoy [UK dress culture] or not...Shalwaar Kamees is not part of the religion, it is part of the culture, people blame religion’ (Lena: 2). Looking at the photo, Lena recalled the happy feelings of Halloween night in the UK. Soon afterward, she viewed the same picture using the lens of her Pakistani cultural habitus and questioned that, within the dominant Figured World of religion and its values. This disruption to her previously ‘fossilised’ thoughts, led her to reflect on the dress code of religion in Pakistan and compared that to her non-religious black dress [of the UK] in the photo, with the question: ‘what does modesty mean in the UK and in Pakistan?’ Thus, in Lena’s previous realm of interpretation, English dress and Shalwar Kamees were artefacts imbued with distinct and opposing cultural significance. Stepping outside of her habitus, Lena could see that when

objectively removed from these values, her 'English' dress is as modest and Islamic as Shalwar Kamees. Thus, the photo gave participant the agency to choose between UK and Pakistani culture, as she now knew that in Pakistan they were wearing Shalwar Kamees for cultural reasons and not, as she previously thought, religious reasons. Once she had experienced positionality outside of the Pakistani Figured World and its cultural judgements, she gained the agency to disrupt the habitus which had perpetuated these belief systems. Therefore, she was able to contribute to her own agency. Khan and Siry (2014) used photo elicitation and also found agency among participants in producing data. Photo elicitation allowed participants to speak about transition in a certain way. The method explored the ways in which participants negotiated the two time points in culture using agency; unfolded the cultural models of Pakistan and reconfigured new self-identities. In this regard, I recognise my role as a female Pakistani post graduate student in the research as influential and view this conversation at the time of interview as a result of co-construction between my own positionality and the positionality of the participants. I accept that my positionality in the research may have informed their choice of pictures and their narration at the time of interview. Further, through our shared association, I was able to identify the key cultural debates like 'culture and religion'.

## **Part 7.2: Timeline**

In this part I have analysed timeline artefacts into three different ways. In the first part, I analysed the timeline artefacts by months. In the second part, I compared the timeline data in terms of participant's age, marital status and hierarchal position in the power structures of family. In the third part, I brought together participants' reflections on using the timeline activity in this study.

### **7.2.1.1. Monthly Basis Findings from Timeline Artefacts**

At data point three, all participants created a six monthly timeline (Oct-March 2014) of their acts and practices at the UK University (See Appendix 6.1- 6). In the following section, I analysed their acts and practices on monthly basis with examples from their timelines.

### **7.2.1.1 October: Settling in to their New Life**

In October, the timeline suggests that all participants were engaged in practical organisation and a period of settling into their new lives. For example Sofia wrote ‘kids got admission in school’, ‘rented my house’, Lena wrote ‘course & flat change’ ‘settling in’, Shabana wrote ‘joined University, began classes’. It could be said that Shabana and Bena has taken the most initiative by the former taking a part time job at ‘Vue cinema’ and the later putting herself forward for election to the Resident’s Association.

### **7.2.1.2. November: Engaging with Social Life**

In November, participants were beginning to engage with their newly developed social life with the exception of Sofia, who – I perceive due to her position as a wife and mother– had a more domestic Figured World. For example Sofia wrote ‘visited Blackpool with family’ and ‘assignment submitted’, whereas Shabana, Lena, Fafa, Bena and Sana joined societies and attended social events. Most of the participants joined societies for pleasure, however Lena and Shabana, the youngest participants also joined academic societies and Gym. Fafa achieved a leading role by becoming a class representative in November.

### **7.2.1.3. December: Practicing Agency**

In December, the timeline states some divergence in participant’s experiences. At this point, transition could be seen in a way that after a period of settling in to their new context they were now practising some agency around the cultural model ‘veil and the four walls’ through socialising. For example, Sana has discovered her enjoyment of walking and coffee shops (‘started regular walking’ ‘found my everlasting favourite Costa Coffee’) whilst others are socialising. For example Shabana stated (Arab society events, Christmas holidays). Fafa wrote ‘became an official committee member of MHS graduate society. Lena, described the most emotional upheaval and conflict by stating ‘family & emotions, comparative analysis’, ‘study plan failure’, ‘surprise news’. Further, December being the holiday period, half of the participants (Lena, Bena and Fafa) visited their home country Pakistan in this month for social and family reasons.

### **7.2.1.4 January: Getting into Academic Life**

In January, participants were fully immersed with their studies (as they were facing deadlines) and therefore most gave priority to academic pursuits on their timeline. For

example Shabana wrote ‘prepare for exam with full force’, ‘12- 23<sup>rd</sup> January exam period’, Sofia wrote ‘submitted four assignments’. Additionally, at this point, there was also more evidence of lead-taking and growing independence, such as working alone among participants. For example Fafa wrote ‘worked independently’. However, Bena continued to socialise (‘celebrated friends...’, ‘visit to Buxton, Chester, North Wales’), whereas Lena continued to struggle with emotional conflict (‘identity struggles’).

#### **7.2.1.5 February: Asserting the Lead**

In February, the timeline witness growing academic activities among participants (Sofia, Shabana, Lena and Fafa). They were now confidently asserting the lead academically. In the case of Shabana, she had achieved a prestigious place on a PhD programme with New-York University (‘got accepted into the PhD...’). Sana got awareness of human rights (‘participated in Ann Frank workshop.... Which put my interest into history and human rights) and personal rights (‘started taking support’).

#### **7.2.1.6 March: Highly Immersed in Studies**

In March, on the timeline, participants’ focus was still highly academic. For example Sofia wrote ‘research topic’ ‘data generation for research’ and Fafa wrote ‘series B exam’ ‘tutorial’ ‘project update’. However, Lena seemed to be the most questioning participant, with fears and anxieties about her future direction. Lena wrote ‘change of life plan’, ‘fear of university ending’, ‘increased love for University’. In contrast Shabana knew what direction her life will take her next, with further study in Abu Dhabi. ‘New York University invited me to Abu Dhabi... all expenses paid of’. It is worth noting that Shabana had dual British-Pakistani nationality. She left the UK as a child and came back to UK for her Masters. Being British national might be the reason for having less worries as she was legally entitled to remain in the UK and had more agency in deciding her future.

The above discussion suggested that in October participants were challenged by their settlement in the new country and a different institute. In November and December, they were actively engaged in campus societies, which gave them some kind of agency to move independently. January was the exam period, where participants were facing pressure to achieve high grades. Participants started to settle down by February and March, as they had developed some confidence in their academic and social life at the UK University.

## **7.2.2 Researcher Based Findings from the Timeline Artefacts**

Participant's timetables recorded important information about transition in an interesting way. For example, the analysis of the timeline suggested that participants' age, roles of positionality among siblings, marital status, economic background and cultural differences may play a factors in transition.

### **7.2.2.1 Transitional Experiences by Age**

Sofia (35 years old) and Bena (42 years' old - oldest participant) have chosen to record the significant events of their time in the UK in a mostly factual, dispassionate manner (e.g. Sofia wrote, 'Joined course one week late' and Bena wrote 'Eid party in Sheffield'), whereas in contrast Lena (22 years' old) and Shabana (24 years old) have not only recorded their important events but have also elaborated on their emotional states and resulting transitions during their time in the UK. For example, Lena mentioned

'Emotions triggered by a trip back to Pakistan', as well as 'Fears about New Year's resolutions failing to come true' and 'Emotions concerning the end of the university'.

Similarly Shabana wrote,

'Islamic Society Snowden Trek Charity- Participated in a trek under adverse weather conditions, where working as a cohesive group was paramount, overall enhancing my interpersonal and communicative competency'.

Thus, it could be said that age and roles of positionality (such as being either married or having experienced marriage or having children) may play a factor in transition as they are at a different stage of life.

### **7.2.2.2 Transitional Experiences by Marital Status**

On the timeline, the significant events of Sofia (rented house, kids got admission, husband illness, assignments feedback) and Bena (Eid party, Bhangra night, Diwali night, Pizza night, Bonfire night, exam results) were very divergent. Sofia was in the position of a married woman and mother and so her timeline revealed a more domestic and academically centred Figured World, whereas, Bena had positioned herself as a single woman, which might explain why her Figured World involved a focus on social life and shared group activities (with some reference to academic work). Thus, participants' marital status may play a factor in transition.

### **7.2.2.3 Transitional Experiences by hierarchal position among siblings**

On the timeline, Bena's (being a youngest child among siblings) social life was structured through events organised by the university or International Society (e.g. 'A trip to north wales'), whereas Lena (eldest child) used more informal networks to create social opportunities with her friends (e.g. 'party, party & more partying'). However, Bena also used her agency to resist and consciously make changes to her position. This could be seen in October, when she chose to stand for an elected position 'resident election') and therefore claimed a leading role for herself after a lifetime of being subservient to her seven elder siblings in Pakistan. On the other hand out of all the participants, Lena (eldest among siblings) seemed to express the most anxiety on timeline (e.g. she wrote 'study plan failure' 'exam anxiety' 'comparative analyses'). It is significant to note that, as with Lena, Fafa was the eldest sibling in her family and therefore the Pakistani cultural model demanded her to set an example of high achievement for her younger siblings. Consequently, the timeline of Fafa could be said to be almost entirely academic and University focused (e.g. essay, project, and lecture series) with only a few exceptions (such as attending a bonfire). Thus, participants' hierarchal position among siblings may play a factor in transition

### **7.2.2.4 Transitional experiences and participants' economic Background**

Participants' economic background may play a factor in transition. It was notable that out of all the participants, Lena travelled the most, with trips to multiple UK and European cities during her time in the UK. The rest of the participants also travelled, but this was limited to the UK only. It is important to note that Lena was from a wealthier economic background compared to the other participants.

### **7.2.2.5 Transitional experiences and participants' Motivation and Ambition**

Shabana's timeline seemed to be more balanced than other participants, as it listed both academic achievements, in tandem with a full social life as well as maintaining her family relationships (prep for exams, sister, classes). To an observer, she came across as confident and assertive, pursuing her ambitions and eventually achieving a place on a PhD programme at New York University. At data point one, Shabana had a conflict in her family dimension of life, where she resisted gender role differences in Pakistani culture and stated,

‘I have an ego against my dad; I want to show him that a girl can study as much as possible and they don’t have to be a boy to get far in life... I want to travel... but I’m not allowed, as I am a girl (Shabana: 1)’.

In order to resolve the conflict, she decided to prove her self-worth to her father and culture, by moving abroad for studies. Her PhD admission revealed her ambition to prove to her family that she was just as capable as her brother in a quote,

‘I want to show them that I am worth something as well (Shabana: 1).

Shabana’s quote suggests that she resisted the cultural model of patriarchy to prove her self-worth as a girl through institutional dimension. This acted as a driving force in her motivation to self-author her future world and she ultimately achieved her PhD. Thus, participants’ motivation or ambition may play a factor in transition.

#### **7.2.2.4 Transitional experiences and Individuality**

Sana, from her timeline (‘Visiting University library’, ‘weekend visits around the city’ ‘discovered BBC iPlayer’, ‘one book that...inspired me’), comes across as somewhat more socially cautious and timid than the other participants. She seems to progress slowly and could be considered to be more of a solitary figure, as the activities she enjoys involve walking by her-self and watching documentaries at home. However, culturally, the act of being able to take a walk on her own (being a woman) is highly significant, as this is something that may not have been an option for her in Pakistan. Therefore in the UK cultural model these events may seem to lack significance, but for Sana they are an example of breaking the habitus created for women in Pakistan (the veil and the four walls). Sana was enjoying her new positionality as a woman where she was able to go for walks, within a Figured World in which this was normalised and uncontroversial. Thus, cultural differences at the home country may play a factor in international student’s transition.

The above discussion concluded that participants’ (even though all were from one culture and country), experienced transitioning to UK higher education differently. This was found to relate to age, hierarchal position among siblings, marital status, economic background, ambition and individuality.



### **7.2.3. Participants Based Findings from the Timeline Artefacts**

Participants, during timeline creation, reflected on the inclusion and exclusion of the acts and practices in the timeline. In this way they were forced to decide for themselves which were the key events in their transition. For example, Lena said, ‘It is so weird, because we do so much stuff that we can’t normally put them in a timeline’. According to Bagnoli (2009, p. 547) ‘participants’ interpretation of questions...allow a creative way of interviewing that is responsive to participants own meaning and association’. Researchers (Bagnoli, 2009; McCarthy, 2013; Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009) agree that through timeline creation, participants decide the content of the interview prior to even interacting with the researcher, which minimises the researcher’s bias from the study. Jackson (2013, p. 419) stated that timelines bring to the research ‘the significant events impacting their identity development over time’.

#### **7.2.3.1 Timeline as an act of Signifying Critical Practices**

Participants, during timeline creation, reflected on the inclusion and exclusion of the acts and practices in the timeline. For example, Lena said, ‘It is so weird, because we do so much stuff that we can’t normally put them in a timeline’. According to Bagnoli (2009, p. 547) ‘participants’ interpretation of questions...allow a creative way of interviewing that is responsive to participants own meaning and association’. Researchers (Bagnoli, 2009; McCarthy, 2013; Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009) agree that through timeline creation, participants decide the content of the interview prior to even interacting with the researcher, which minimises the researcher’s bias from the study. Jackson (2013, p. 419) stated that timelines bring to the research ‘the significant events impacting their identity development over time’.

#### **7.2.3.2 Timeline as an act of Facilitating Fluency and Motivation**

Prompting participants to create timelines with accurate dates and sequences of events gave them satisfaction, certainty and fluency in data generation. For example, Lena said ‘it was actually fun now [that] I have written it down because it is a record of things that I have done’. Sofia felt that the timeline elicitation was as if she was watching the movie of her six months in the UK and was thus able to visualise the whole process of transition up to that point [Interview 3]. Researchers (Bagnoli 2009; McCarthy 2013; Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009) agree that the timeline method gives participants the motivation to reflect

creatively upon their experiences. According to various studies (Hope *et al.*, 2013; Jackson, 2013; Korallo *et al.*, 2012) the chronological order of the timeline ensures higher recall accuracy to the participant than standardised interviews. Thus, through timelines, participants were eliciting holistic data about their transition to the UK.

### **7.2.3.3 Timeline as an act of Reconstructing Self-perception**

In creating timelines, participants reconstructed their self-perceptions of the past and felt more satisfied about their transitional journey. For example, Lena said, ‘I was not really happy with myself because I didn’t get [a] distinction, I got a merit. Look at all the stuff that I have done. It still balances out that I was so fast: that it is okay if I couldn’t get a distinction’ (Lena: 2). According to Jackson (2013, p. 418) timelines ‘reconstruct their past and reorganise their perceptions of self within the context of their environments’. Jackson further said that timelines provide ‘additional therapeutic benefits for participants in the study’ (p. 419). In this way, it changes the participants’ inner discourse about themselves and therefore their positionality.

### **7.2.3.4 Timeline as an act of Revealing the Turning Points**

Timelines brought participants to the realisation that at that point, more than half of their stay in the UK had passed and that they would have to go back to Pakistan. They became sharply aware that they had developed changes in their thinking, feelings and beliefs around the cultural models of the past and present (see Figure 23) and described their present state as ‘UK university life’, which was going to end soon. Lena said, ‘I am enjoying [myself] a lot, but I am just worried [about] how I [will] react once this master’s is over because it will be tough to go back and it will be different to go back. I am still confused [about] whether to apply for a job or not’ (Lena: 3). The looming awareness of a return to Pakistan brought into sharp relief the distinctive realms of interpretation between Pakistan and UK cultural norms, and related confusion regarding positionality. Lena’s mental state of being ‘confused’ explains the impacts of the turning point on her thinking, feelings, and beliefs during transition. Lena’s timeline below mentions ‘identity struggles’ at the end of January. Her words: ‘change of life plans’, ‘fear of university ending’, ‘increased love for university’, and ‘bubble life’, on the timeline suggest reverse culture shock which was a turning points or decisive moments (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009) in

transition. According to the literature, timelines structure participants' thinking (Yu *et al.*, 2016) and reveal 'turning points' (Bridger, 2013, p. 109).

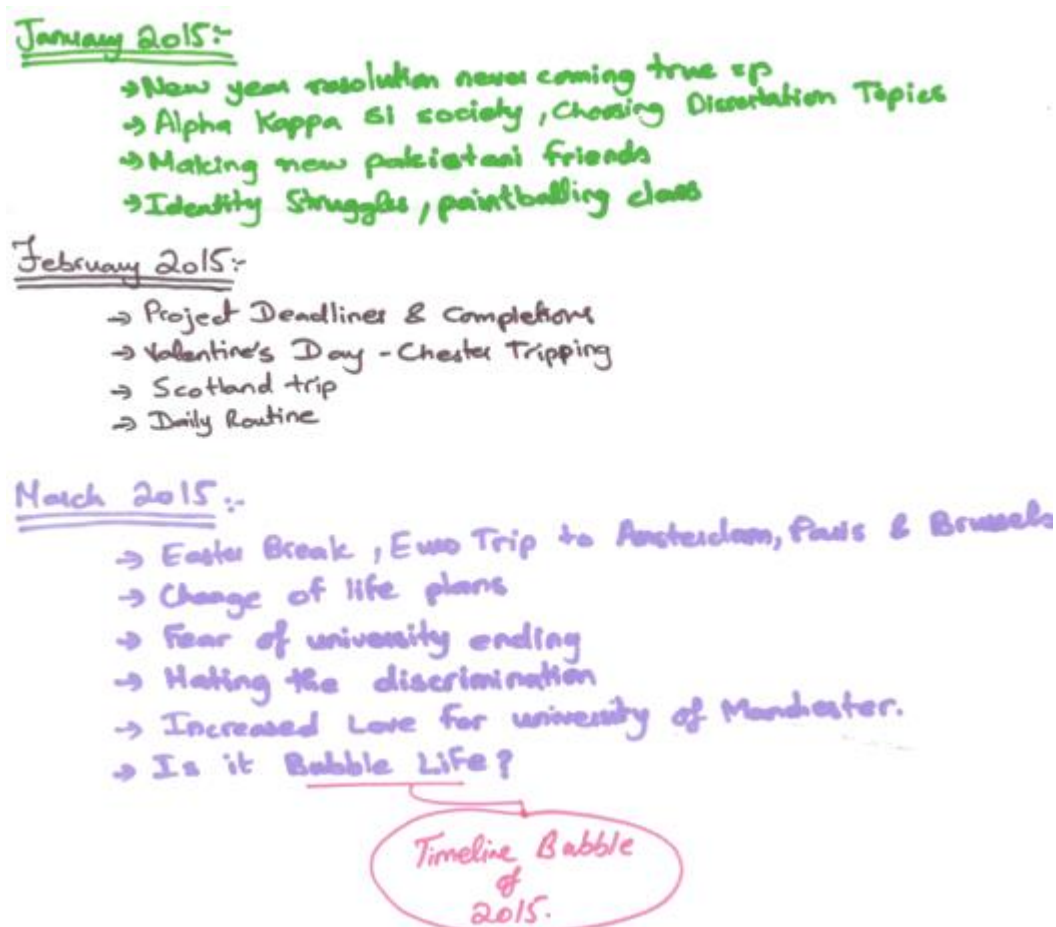


Figure 23: Lena's Timeline and Reverse Culture shock

### 7.2.3. 5 Timeline as an act of Showing a Bigger Picture

Timelines acted as artefacts to both the researcher and the reader as they revealed participants' engagement in multiple societies of the university and their many travels. For example, the timeline below (Figure 24 shows that Lena travelled to London, Milton Keynes, Ireland, York, Bath, the Lakes District and Scotland. Furthermore, she went to Italy, France, Thailand, Amsterdam, Brussels and Paris. Participants' engagement in university societies and travel indicates the breaking of the Pakistani cultural model 'veil and the four walls'. Thus, through the timelines, both the researcher and the participants achieved the broader objective after seeing 'the bigger picture' (Korallo *et al.*, 2012, p. 861).

### November 2014:-

- Joining GYM
- Leeds, York, London, Liverpool, Bath
- Party, Party & more Partying .
- Pakistan Society , Dancehouse .

### December 2014:-

- Trip to Pakistan, Family & emotions , comparative analysis
- Study Plan failure
- Exam Anxiety & Exams
- Meeting Friends
- Surprise News

### January 2015:-

- New year resolution never coming true =p
- Alpha Kappa Si society , Choosing Dissertation Topics
- Making new pakistani friends
- Identity Struggles , paintballing class

### February 2015:-

- Project Deadlines & Completions
- Valentine's Day - Chester Tripping
- Scotland trip
- Daily Routine

### March 2015:-

- Easter Break , Euro Trip to Amsterdam, Paris & Brussels

Figure 24: Lena's Timeline Depicting Travel

#### 7.2.3.6 Timeline as an act of Giving a General Overview

In their timelines, participants chose different shapes and colours to represent their feelings during various months, which identified their times of struggle and the reasons for their struggle in transition. For example, in my research, participants mentioned that November and December were challenging times in transition. Sana stated, 'I used circles [for the first three months] because at that time I was circling around...coursework, [the] institutional system, making friends and family worries. I put this grey colour because things were grey to me. I was not in any form'. Lena said, 'October was green and [a] good time. November was red, as I was fighting with things. December was blue because it was the most depressing month in the whole six months'. According to Jackson (2013, p. 422) 'eliciting from the participant the reasons for choice of colour and spatial organisation of the images

is a critical component to understanding the meaning of the image itself'. Thus, the discussion of colours and shapes in the timeline concluded that, even though there were individual differences, overall, the initial three months were quite challenging for these international students.

### Part 7.3: Relational Map

In this part I have analysed relational map artefacts into two ways. In the first part, I analysed the relational maps artefacts by the common concepts. In the second analysis, I gave meaning to the common concepts with the help of participants' reflections in order to show that the new identity concepts (friends, travel, career, individuality) emerged in transition. At data point four, prior going back to Pakistan, participants were mediating their thoughts around cultural models, as they had more agency by living through cultural models rather than rejecting them.

#### 7.3.1 Researcher's Analysis of Relational Map

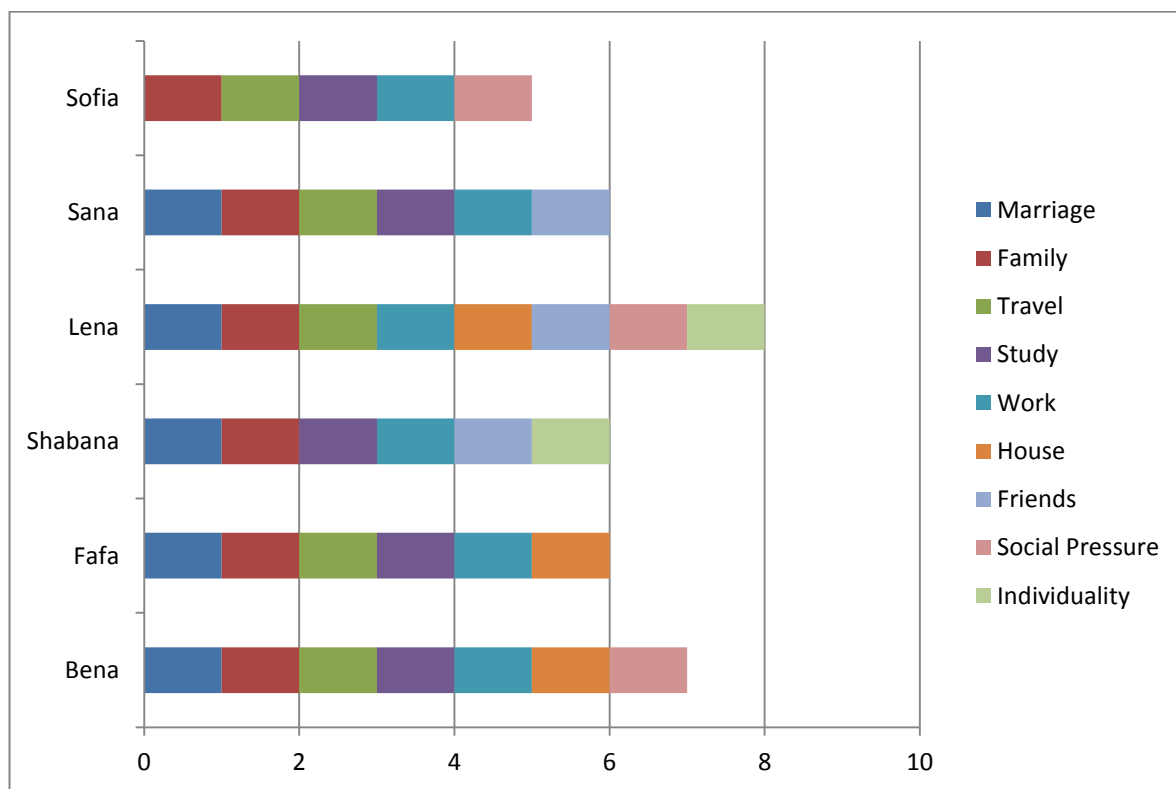


Figure 25: Relational Maps concepts Across Participants

In participants created relational map, they put the concepts of Pakistan and the UK around themselves. They were instructed to keep 'Me' in the middle, however two of the

participant's changed this wording and chose to define this instead as 'Myself' (Sana) or 'Me, Myself and I' (Lena). Further, I instructed them to write down those concepts which are important to them around 'me' in a hierarchal order. That is keeping the most important concepts, near 'me' and the less important being far away from 'me' on the paper. To depict participants' identity at this point, I brought together participants' concepts in a Bar Chart (See Figure 25), which suggests that their thinking, feeling and believing were around more or less similar concepts at this point. These concepts were: marriage, family, travel, study, work, God, house, friends, social pressure and individuality. The hierarchal placement of the concepts on the relational map is explained as under:

### **7.3.1.1 The Concept of Marriage**

All participants (with the exception of Sofia who was already married) put the concept 'Marriage' in their relational maps. Bena placed the highest importance on this, as she placed her 'Marriage' within the same sphere as herself ('me'), demonstrating it an integral part of her being. Shabana also placed high importance on marriage, as it was placed in close proximity to her-self ('me'). However, it was less important for the remaining participants, as it was placed on the periphery outside of other concepts. Lena seemed to have an ambivalent or confused attitude towards marriage, as she wrote the concept as 'wedding social fitting versus rational decision making', which seemed to be considering whether this was something she wanted for herself or felt pressured into by society.

### **7.3.1.2 The Concept of Family**

All of the participants saw 'family' as very important, placing it nearest to themselves ('me'). In Sana's case this meant fulfilling her father's dream by completing her PhD studies ('PhD to fulfil my father's dream'). In Sofia's case this meant making her children happy by buying them gifts (Shopping for myself and kids). For Shabana it took up two positions both near to 'me' ('family and mum') and far away ('children').

### **7.3.1.3 The Concept of Travel**

Another theme which presented itself in all but one of the participant's maps was 'Travel'. This seemed to be most important to Bena and Fafa, who placed it both close and further away from themselves ('me'). Sana and Sofia placed travel near to themselves, whereas Lena placed this further away. Shabana did not mention travelling at all in her map.

#### **7.3.1.4 The Concept of Academic Achievements**

All of the participants with the exception of Lena used academic achievement and education in their maps. For Bena it took up positions both near to herself ('PhD' and 'dissertation') and far away 'PhD'. Similarly Sofia positioned study both near ('dissertation') to and further away ('PhD') from ('me') herself. For Bena ('dissertation' 'PGCE'), Shabana ('dissertation' 'PhD') and Sana ('exploring different kind of knowledge' 'professional confident to join lecturer ship' 'PhD') it was placed nearest to themselves. Four participants (Fafa, Sana, Bena and Sofia) placed importance on completing their current dissertations to the best of their ability. That is Fafa wished to 'publish' further research, Sana desired to become an 'ethnographic researcher' in the near future. Bena and Sofia also wished to embark on further study and gain a place on a PhD programme. It is important to note that Shabana had already secured her place on a PhD, still she placed this close to herself.

#### **7.3.1.5 The Concept of Career**

Another common theme on each participant's map was 'Career' or 'Work', which was mentioned by all of the participants. Four participants placed this closest to themselves ('me'), with only Sofia and Bena placing it further away from themselves. It should be noted that Sofia was already in government employment (and had been sponsored to complete her MA studies).

#### **7.3.1.6 The Concept of House**

The theme of 'Accommodation' occurred for three of the participants. That is Bena ('accommodation'), Fafa ('permanent house') and Lena ('mortgage'). For Fafa it was placed both close ('accommodation') to and further away ('permanent house') from ('me') herself, for Lena is was close only and Bena placed it further away.

#### **7.3.1.7 The Concept of Friends**

'Friends' were also mentioned for three participants, Shabana ('friend'), Lena ('friends') and Sana ('socialisation with friends'). Shabana placed it, both close ('friend') to and further away ('relationship & networking') for herself (including working relationships) whereas Lena and Sana placed it only close to themselves.

### **7.3.1.8 The Concept of Social Pressure**

Three participants: Shabana ('making those close to me proud'), Lena ('what will people say? matters? Shouldn't matter? Does it?') and Sofia ('worries') also revealed the importance they placed on social pressures and expectations. All three participants placed the concept 'social pressure' further away from themselves; however it was strongest in Lena's case in which she outlined several different concerns as to what others might think of her.

### **7.3.1.9 The Concept of Religion**

Religion was also mentioned as an important concept, however by three participants, two of which Lena ('Allah') and Sana ('religion') placed it close to them and a third, Bena, placed it ('Sufi meditation') further away relating to her interest in Sufi meditation.

### **7.3.1.10 The Concept of Individuality**

The remaining themes were focused on individuality. For example positive emotional states, such as Shabana wrote ('fitness', 'happiness', 'successes'), Lena put ('happy state', 'life style' 'lose weight'), Sana wrote ('confidence') and Sofia wrote ('excitement'). For Lena and Shabana these were placed both near to and further away from themselves, whereas Sofia placed hers at a further distance. Both Shabana and Lena, in their positions as the youngest participants, mentioned the importance they placed on physical appearance, and both expressed a desire to lose weight and achieve a high level of fitness.

To conclude, the themes of marriage, family, God, house, and social pressure may be seen by Pakistani individuals as a cultural reality, whereas travel, study, work, friends, and individuality may be seen as a UK cultural reality, and therefore in conflict with the cultural models 'veil and the four walls' and 'what will people say'. For example, Sofia in her first interview stated that she had not seen Oxford road other than her husband's photo (in her 2010 visit). Thus, when she visited the UK in a position of 'wife', she did not have the affordance to travel independently. However, being in a position of 'student' at the UK University her affordances within the wider society changed from being a woman, wife, mother and daughter to being a 'foreign qualified', an 'Alumni', and a 'student at the UK university'. Thus, after being a student at the UK University, participants recognised themselves with empowerment, and were recognised by others in a different position.



## 7.3.2 Participant's Reflections on the use of Relational Map

### 7.3.2.1 Relational Map as an Act of Discovering Self

While creating relational maps, participants went through self-reflective dialogue to discover and understand themselves. For example, Bena said, 'this map (See Figure 26) ...helped me understand myself better. I feel it has really made me think more deeply into what my life is, where it is taking me and where should it take me'. Various studies (Montero *et al.*, 2015; MoLenari, 2015) state that through creating a relational map, participants reflect upon their own thinking (Montero *et*

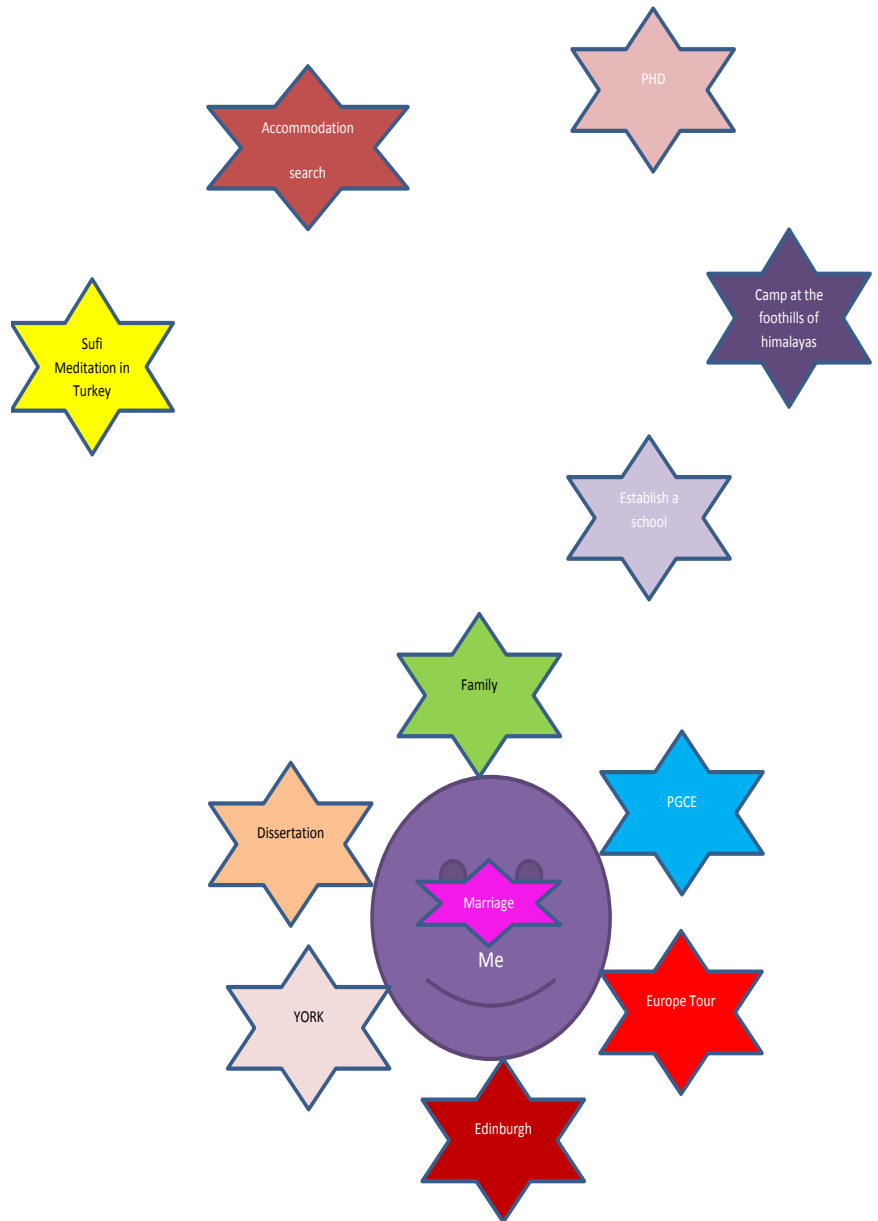


Figure 26: Bena's Relational Map

*al.*, 2015) and become aware of their own conceptions, which has metacognitive effects. According to Bagnoli (2009, p. 555), relational maps provide basic 'scaffolding' for participants to construct their own representations and elicit tacit information. In my study,

participants came up with the concepts of who they were and who they wanted to be, which provided them with agency or new self-understanding.

### 7.3.2.2 Relational Map as an Act of Projecting Forward

All participants projected forward about their lives and put the concepts ‘marriage’, ‘study’ and ‘work’ on their relational maps. For example, Fafa projected forward in her relational map as follows: ‘obviously I want to get married and have a permanent house...My goal to be an academic researcher is always there, this is why I want to get a research degree and do a PhD. I love roaming around with friends. Since I was a child, I wished for a world tour. May be one day I will actually go’. According to the literature, relational maps help participants in their decision making (Park & Basole, 2016) about future projections and expectations (Bagnoli, 2009). Fafa, in her relational map (see Figure 27) projected marriage, a permanent house, a profession as an academic, a PhD and going on a world tour.

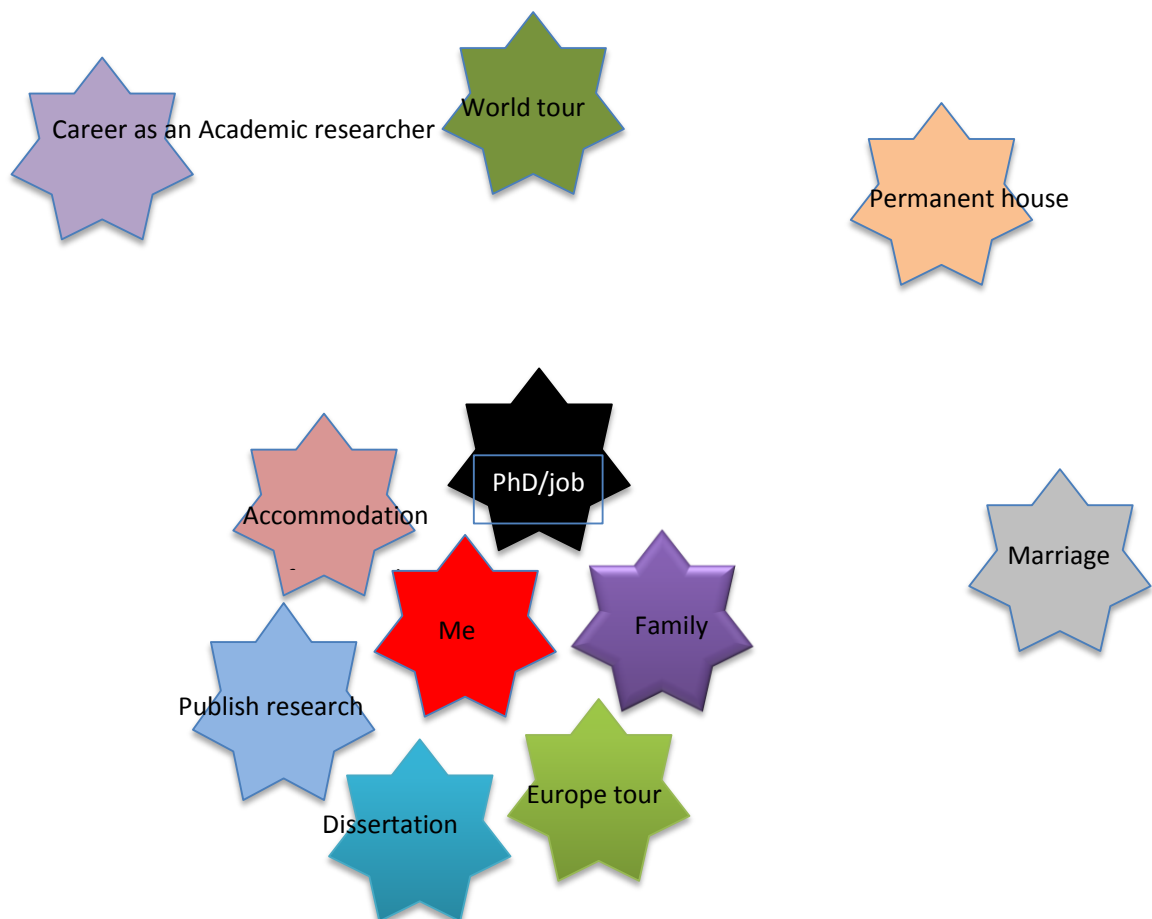


Figure 27: Fafa's Relational Map

### 7.3.2.3 Relational Map as an Act of discovering ‘Who am I’

Park and Basole (2016) and Djanette and Fouad (2014) stated that relational maps were a useful method to explore identity construction. Participants, while creating relational maps, questioned and resisted their cultural models. For example, in the relational map below, Lena (Figure 28) wrote the concepts: ‘what will people say? [Does it] matter? Shouldn’t [it] matter? Does it?’ similarly, ‘travelling’ is the breaking the cultural model ‘veil and the four walls’. The concept ‘Wedding, social fitting versus rational decision making’ shows agency. Furthermore, we can see agency in Lena’s relational map, as by analysing the concepts’ position from the centre ‘me’, she had not put family as a faraway concept that is compelling her to go back to Pakistan, rather she has drawn family, career and a happy state (with equal distance) as they have equal importance to her. Thus, if her choices were completely without agency, this map would look like an ideal Islamic world, with Allah and family, but without a career or a happy state.



Figure 28: Lena's Timeline; Identity Agency and Culture

## Part 7.4: Summary

In this chapter I discussed how visual methods can be used to reveal female Pakistani students’ identity construction. I found that visual methods were particularly helpful in female Pakistani students’ identity construction through the process of transition. Selecting photos and creating visuals brought participants’ interpretation of the research question to the study, and through this interpretation, they constructed their own identities. They were

looking at their personal (individual) history in the photo, which allowed them to relive their past emotions and connect them to the time of the interview. They criticised their physical and ideological states in the photo by juxtaposing the present ('who I am') in the UK, with the past ('who I was') in Pakistan to gain more understanding of the possible ('who I can be in the future'). Thus, photos bring participants brought past and present together in the same dialogic space, which gave them the agency to develop new self-understandings. Further, after three months of stay in the UK, the use of photos was useful as it brought them to the consciousness of 'who they are' and gave meaning to their life context. The analysis of the timeline revealed participants' individual commonalities and differences in transition based on age, financial and marital status and hierarchal position in the family. Further, the timeline concepts made visible a bigger picture of participants' positions around the cultural models to the researcher. For example, participants' engagement in various university societies and frequent travels on the timeline suggested their resistance to the cultural model, 'veil and the four walls'. Toward the end of creating the timelines, participants came to the realisation that more than half of their time in the UK had passed and that they were nearing the time when they would have to go back to Pakistan. This acted as a reverse culture shock and a turning point in their transition, which suggests individual differences in transition, and the process of adapting to British Pakistani identity that is the identity in the time of change.

Their relational maps visually depicted the cultural models and the important research concepts 'marriage', 'study', 'work', 'travel' and 'happiness'. This helped to cross reference the results, since in a traditional interview situation; the researcher would be obliged to take their word for it. Thus, the relational maps provided validity and reliability to my research. According to Gee, validity for discourse analysis includes the elements of 'convergence' and 'agreement' (p.113) meaning that for an analysis to be viewed as 'trustworthy' there should be some evidence of overlap and recurring themes in the answers provided to the interview questions. The analysis of the concepts on the relational map artefact revealed that they had put both the cultural models of Pakistan (career, marriage, family, religion, and social pressure) and that of the UK (travel, friends, happiness, work, separate house and individuality) around them as important. The positioning of the concepts around 'me' in the relational map states that participants used agency in the placement of the concepts and cultural models on the relational map to

project forward in life, which told me about the hybridisation of their identities in transition.

The above discussion concluded that visuals brought participants to awareness and made them conscious of their identity construction during transition. All these visual artefacts provided trustworthiness and acted as member checking for my research.

## Chapter Eight: Discussion

This chapter discusses the broader question that defines my research at a higher level, ‘how do Pakistani female students narrate their identities before, during and after transitioning to the UK?’ I answered the broader question with two sub-questions. This chapter is divided into four parts based on the answers to the two research questions and ultimately the third broader question followed by a discussion on the study’s contribution to the literature.

### **Part 8.1: Answer to research question 1: ‘how do female Pakistan postgraduate students narrate their family, institution, recognition and social dimension of life at the start of joining the UK University?’**

To answer the above question, I used data from the first interview and discussed participants’ four dimensions of life, cultural models, critical incidents and motivations for moving abroad.

#### **Four Dimensions of Life**

In the first interview, participants narrated their four dimensions of life in the cultural realities of Pakistan, thus in accordance to Holland *et al.*’s book, participants’ narratives were structured around the Figured Worlds of Pakistan. They were recognised in social reality at two levels. That is firstly; their personal/ individual abilities (e.g. being Sofia) and secondly their gender roles i.e. ‘being a woman’. The gender expectations of the collectivistic reality shaped their personal identities through social judgement, due to which they had to maintain self in a certain way. In this regards, because of patriarchy in culture, even-though participants were personally empowered but they were culturally disempowered due to their gender (being female). To give examples of empowering personal identities: Lena was recognised by her father as a son (‘he used to say, I am his son’) and Sana was recognised by her father as a social scientist (‘my daughter is a social scientist’). Similarly, Sofia was recognised by her teachers as competent to study medicine (‘it was understood that... I would opt for pre- medical’). Whereas to give examples of disempowered gendered identities: Fafa’s tutors in medical school said to her that ‘because you are a girl you just can’t do it’. Similarly, Shabana was not allowed by her parents to perform certain acts due to her gender (‘I’m not allowed, as I am a girl’). All participants but two (Lena and Shabana) had restrictions in making friends. Thus, participants, even

though personally empowered had limited choices, status and power position in Pakistan in comparison to men due to their gender. This suggests that being a man in it-self is a privilege in Pakistan.

The power structures of the Pakistani Figured Worlds dictate the supremacy of males and gender-specific roles. The dominant cultural models in participants' narratives were 'Log Kya Kahengay' (what will people say?) and 'Chadar aur Char-Deewari' (veil and the four walls). Participants' four dimensions of life were directed by the above two cultural models.

### **Family Dimension of Life**

In the family dimensions of life, participants were obedient to their fathers in the decisions of marriage, study and work. Thus, 'obedience to father' was a cultural model in participants' quotations, which was shaped by the collectivistic cultural belief, that 'obedience to parents is second only to God' (Ahmad *et al.*, 2009, 617; Ali *et al.*, 2014).

### **Institutional Dimension of Life**

In the institutional dimensions of life, the culture of the school was teacher-centred. Participants were not allowed to ask questions and were expected to memorise the text for their final exam. Literature (Mujtaba & Reiss, 2015; Noureen, 2015 Malik & Courtney, 2011) has reported the passiveness of students in class with the institutional attempt to inculcate traditional socio-cultural values into society. Malik and Courtney (2010, p. 32) summarise the fact that 'through textbooks, curricula and teacher's attitudes' the institutions shape boys and girls differently. Thus, inculcating gender role differences among individuals is part of the school curriculum.

In terms of the choice in subject of study in Pakistan, the entire cohort interviewed indicated that none of them had been given the opportunity to pursue their subjects of choice in Pakistan due to their gender. Irrespectively, all participants excelled in the suggested subject areas. However, the question that has to be asked is: what could these individuals have achieved if they have been given the opportunity to pursue subject areas in which they were passionate? Furthermore, a few participants changed their subjects of study in the first three months of transition, e.g. Lena loved math, but her father wanted her to study business. Once she came to the UK University, she changed her field and said 'he

wanted me to do business I wanted to do maths; the middle way was finance... so I took finance’

All participants linked their aspiration to education, which states that ‘respect in education’ is a strong cultural model in Pakistan. Participants had this understanding that through excellence in education, they could gain empowerment in Pakistan, but still most of them were not allowed to study their choice of subject or to decide their own profession as their choice of subject and profession was under paternal control. Parental control on a girl’s education is rooted in collectivistic culture. Ahmad *et al.*, (2009, p. 620) concluded that society views ‘the role of a woman within the four walls of the house’ with the devotion to take care of her family. Further, the professions available for women are in the walls of domesticity. For example in terms of gender-specific subjects (Noureen, 2015), parents discourage their daughters from studying mathematics and engineering (Khan & Mehmood, 1997; Mujtaba & Reiss, 2015). According to Mujtaba and Reiss (2015, p. 54), certain jobs in Pakistan are ‘considered as women inhabiting men’s spaces’. Thus, fathers are also not autonomous in making the decisions for their daughters’ lives; rather, they face social pressure to make their decisions in a culturally accepted way. This adds a pressure on daughter to obey.

### **Social Dimension of Life**

In the social dimensions of life participants discussed the cultural models of early marriage (Mujtaba & Reiss, 2015), supremacy of the husband (Zakar *et al.*, 2013) and social stigmas. The national cultural model ‘veil and the four walls’ views the home as the place for women and puts pressure on fathers to arrange their daughters’ early marriage. In my study, participant had the understanding that their fathers have the right to make the decisions of their marriage. Sofia’s father made the decision for her to have an early marriage over an education, which she rationalised as ‘in our Eastern culture ... we should not keep them (girls) at home just for study purpose’ (Sofia 1). The society beliefs ‘boys create their own world while girls have their world created for them’ (Stewart *et al.*, 2006). Furthermore, a huge body of literature (Mujtaba & Reiss; 2015, p. 56; Lloyd *et al.*, 2007) stated that in Pakistani ideology, the success of a woman is not in education but in marriage. However, in my research, the fathers of participants (other than Sofia) broke the cultural model and preferred foreign education for their daughters over their marriage.



Only Sofia got a scholarship from the Pakistani government, whereas all other participants came to UK with the financial support of their father.

Once married, the husbands and in-laws make the decisions of girls' life (Mujtaba & Reiss, 2015) and therefore, many qualified women in Pakistan, after marriage, are either not permitted to work at all, or permitted to do so only in restricted fields (Malik & Courtney, 2011). For example Sofia secured teaching in all girls' college after marriage. The collectivistic culture names the husband as the 'Majazi Khuda' (the personification of God) (Ali *et al.*, 2014) and views his restrictions on his wife as 'reformatory control' over the family (Zakar *et al.*, 2013). Society views the wife's unchecked freedom with stigma, and recognise her husband as a 'ran mureed' (wife's subordinate) (Zakar *et al.*, 2013). Consequently, women accept their lower positions in society and live in conformity with the wishes of their men (Malik & Courtney, 2011). Zakar *et al.* (2013) states that in the culture, if a woman fails to be a 'good mother' or a 'good wife', none of her other achievements carry social value. Once married women generally stick to the same man, as divorce even though permitted by law, is stigmatised and the divorce rate in the country is (1%) very low (Andersson *et al.*, 2010; Ali & Kramar, 2014). However, Ali *et al.* (2014) and Ali and Gavino (2008) stated that the intensity of these norms depends on the geographical area, economic condition and education level of the individuals in Pakistan.

Participants were aware of the collectivistic cultural model 'Log Kya Kahengay' ('what would people say?') or 'social pressure', which regulated gender role differences among individuals. Participants termed competence in the norms of collectivistic culture as 'people skills', which according to the literature is important for sustaining their social status (Stewart *et al.*, 2006) in harmonious collective interpersonal relationships, whereas breaking the norms brings 'loss of face', which is permanent till death (Ahmad *et al.*, 2009, p. 619). Literature confirms that in Pakistan, the words of society are influential and every individual is concerned with 'what will people think, what will people say about us' (Ahmad *et al.*, 2009, p. 617). Thus, participants' personal identities were shaped by their collective identities, which suggested that Pakistan has collectivistic culture, which shapes individuals in a certain gendered way.

### **Critical Incidents**

In terms of critical incidents, almost all participants' (while narrating their biographical histories) stated an incident in life, which was detrimental as that suddenly exposed them to social judgement (what will people say?). For example, all participants, other than Sofia were unmarried, thus they were living in parental homes and had limited exposure to the cultural model 'what will people say'. However, the critical incident was a rupture in the capsule of their protected lives. For example, Bena lost her parents and went into depression; Lena lost her father and had a fight with her uncles on property issues, Sana lost her mother and developed trust issues with people and Fafa had an accident and got exposed to the cultural model ' what will people say'. Further, Sofia's husband's superiority gave her the imagination to prove her strengths by claiming something similar to her husband. Literature (Stewart *et al.*, 2006; Ahmad *et al.*, 2009) associates women's autonomy and empowerment in Pakistan with marital stage (i.e. bearing of sons, becoming mother-in-law) and age. Thus, the unmarried participants felt particularly aggravated with social pressure due to the associated cultural stigmas in a heavily patriarchal society. The critical incidents shattered participants' lives and gave them the impetus to resist the cultural models, i.e. gender discrimination, 'Veil and the four walls' and made decisive control of their lives, which enabled them to move abroad. For these women, improvisation started with critical incidents, when participants made a decision and challenged the cultural models in Pakistan. Participants' decisions were themselves agentive. Their resistance to the cultural models suggested that they were quite different women, as they decided to resist their social world. Furthermore, it also suggests that participants (Shabana, Sana, Fafa) had supportive fathers, who facilitated their studying abroad, which is not a general practice (Mujtaba and Reiss, 2015) but a new trend toward daughters in Pakistani culture. The other participants (Sofia, Lena, Bena) themselves became the main drivers of their moving abroad.

### **Recognition Dimension of Life**

Participants' decisions to move abroad ultimately resulted in them gaining the new recognition, 'student at a UK University'. While in Pakistan, participants imagined to be a UK student. They needed support prior to their arrival to the UK, which is also established in the literature (Woodley & Meredith, 2012). In my study, participants had worries in their home country about their lives in the UK, which they satisfied through communication with friends, spouse and siblings. After the point of securing admission,

participants experienced a shift in power relations in the hierarchal power structures of Pakistan. Thus, prior to admission to the UK, being female, they were in a lower power position to men. However, from the moment they decided to apply to the UK University, their new positioning started to happen. Once they got acceptance from the UK University, their imagined future positionality started to change. Holland *et al* positionality quote,

Positional identity... is a person's apprehension of her social position in a lived world: that is, depending on the others present, of her great or lesser access to spaces, activities, genres, and, through those genres, authoritative voices, or any voice at all' (1998: 127-128)

In the first interview participants were in 'honeymoon period' as due to the new recognition of being a UK student, a shift in power relations came and they claimed for themselves a higher position with empowerment and autonomy in various Figured Worlds. They imagined themselves with the label 'foreign qualified' and had a firm foothold in an otherwise male-dominated culture and society. For example, Sofia replaced her past (2010) recognition of being 'dependent' on her husband, with present (2014) of being on the 'independent visa category' and imagined her future recognition as a 'foreign qualified'. Each participant, in their first interview, projected forward higher status through career opportunities, status, PhD and scholarships. Participants recognised themselves as the pride of the family throughout transition. Thus, transition to a UK higher education revived participants' internal and external perceptions about recognition i.e. the way they recognise themselves and the way they are recognised by peers, colleagues and family members.

## **Conclusion**

My study found that transition begins prior to the physical move, at the point when an individual secure the recognition of an 'international student', which is not found in the literature. Woodley and Meredith (2012), also suggests that transition begins prior to their physical move, based on their finding that international students use Facebook, prior to their arrival to the host country, however my study fills the gap in stating, how a female Pakistani student thinks, feels and believes after getting the recognition of being an international student in the UK? Further, participants narrative towards the start of joining the UK University stated that the Pakistani cultural models, due to continuous practice, were fossilised in participants as their habitus (see Chapter Two) and acted as a social reality to them and were informing their world view. Cultural models are important to

understand in transition, as it informs individuals' actions of how to behave or how to be in the transitioned (UK) reality. This demonstrates that the transition of international students is not just academic transition; rather, it is a transition of identity through agency.

### **Part 8.2: Answer to Research Question 2: 'How does the Participant Define their four Dimensions of Life after Three, Six and Nine months of stay at the UK university?'**

To answer the above question, I discussed participants' four dimensions of life with data from second, third and fourth interview.

#### **Data Point Two**

At this data point, the clash of cultural realities began, as participants had the experience of participating in the UK University in their past. They were negotiating their fossilised, Pakistani self, the confronted cultural differences and the upcoming challenges of their expected UK life. Their thinking, feeling and believing, of how the world works, were based on Pakistani cultural models and maintenance of the 'self-image' among others, whereas as a postgraduate student, they needed to satisfy the demands of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA, 2008, p. 21):

To deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences. To demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level and to continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

The QAA is the benchmark for the expected academic practice of higher education including postgraduate studies in the UK. These guidelines are applied equally to students from anywhere in the world who come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In my study, participants were in a position of student at the UK University, where they did not have a choice as they were positioned by the QAA and the UK University to take on board that position of being critical. According to Holland *et al.* (1998),

'People's perspectives develop over time. We explore the degree to which, and the conditions under which, experiences of being positioned (which often occur out of awareness) develop through symbolic bootstrapping into identities that afford a modicum of control over one's own behaviour' (p.44).

Participants enacted that position during transition by participating in different classroom activities, networking with multi-national friends, membership in campus societies, travelling around the world, which Holland *et al.* called ‘symbolic bootstrapping’ (i.e. a symbolic way of representing that position). Thus, participants already had in Pakistan some cultural models, but they took on board some of the symbolic tools from the UK University Figured World and internalised them. ‘Modicum of control’ is a kind of agency but it is not resisting power structures; it just makes an individual feel that they are choosing. Thus, when participants were resisting and accepting the UK and Pakistani cultural models with a choice, there may be a modicum of control over their choice, as they only have a small amount of control in reality. My research found that participants were forced to question those cultural models in the UK as they could not just stay the same, as there would be problems in transition. In the following passages I discuss the clash of QAA guidelines with participants’ fossilised collectivistic behaviour of Pakistan and its impact on the four dimensions of participants’ life:

#### **QAA and Family Dimension of Life**

After arrival to the UK University, participants initially experienced a loss of connection with family and felt lonely and homesick, which is established through literature (Lin, 2012; Sawyer, 2011; Wu & Hammond, 2011; Spiro *et al.*, 2012; Ryan, 2011). The literature (Spiro *et al.*, 2012; Rienties, 2014) discusses that international students experience psychological issues based on emotional isolation from their family in the host country. In my research, participants overcame their homesickness through socialising with friends in the first three months, which is established through literature (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015), but the literature did not give the reason as to how international students overcome homesickness through networking with friends.

My research found that the cultural models of Pakistan frown upon the free thoughts of girls or their questioning of ideas and views, which hinders independent thinking or the critical evaluation of an act. Parents and seniors express to girls the values of collectivistic culture to the extent of certainty, where the boundaries of religion and culture get blurred. However, in transitioning to the UK University, participants adapted to the Quality Assurance Agency’s (QAA, 2008) guideline and they started evaluating the situations critically and not culturally.

Thus after the first three months of physical move, participants went into a mental debate. For example, Lena questioning of her father's act of drinking alcohol and the related religious understanding created a bigger internal conflict in family. Thus, participants question their parents rationally and not culturally, which created trouble. The resolution of trouble enabled participants to understand the reality that is in the cultural model 'obedience to parents second only to God' (Ahmad *et al.*, 2009, 617; Ali *et al.*, 2014), the collectivistic culture blurs the boundaries of religion and culture to make them unquestionable.

During transition, the real issue for participants was that even though they transitioned to new culture and developed an outsider's view on the cultural models, their parents were still living in Pakistani cultural reality. Accordingly, due to transitioning to the QAA guideline, participants developed a psychological gap with their parents, around cultural models, which created distance and otherness. In this regard, participants established connections with family through social networking sites, which is also established in literature (Binsahl *et al.*, 2015) but my study adds to it that due to their new understanding international students view friends as a substitute of family.

The above discussion concludes that I agree that students feel homesick during the first three months after physically moving abroad, however, I argue that homesickness is a typical way in which transition from family is conceptualised. My research allowed me to transcend that relatively simplistic view to see the real issues, i.e. how international students see the cultural models of their family and how transition affects their relationship with their parents.

### **QAA and Institutional Dimension of Life**

In institutional dimensions of life, to fulfil the QAA (2008, p. 21) guidelines, participants were struggling with English grammar, academic writing, structuring an essay, verbal presentation, critical thinking and independent decision making, which is established in the literature (Williams *et al.*, 2015; Horobin & Thom, 2015). In this regards, tutors recognise Asian students in transition as 'respectful and hard-working students' (Wu & Hammond, 2011) but also 'burden students' (Barron *et al.*, 2010).

My study found that at data point two, the real issue was self-image, as due to hierarchal power structures in Pakistani institutes and the cultural model 'what will people say' even

though participants were struggling academically but they were not approaching their tutors. They were afraid of negative recognition and loss of face. That is the tutors might think that they are not intelligent enough to take the concept in the first place. However they ultimately broke the cultural models of past and started approaching their tutors with the help of multinational friends. For example Fafa said, 'I was part of the societies... I think that helped'. Participants Coles and Swami (2012) states that during transition, international students get engaged in induction week, campus societies etc., which literature (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2010; Hussey & Smith, 2010) reported as helpful in transition. My study found that breaking the hierarchy and maintaining a self-image was the obstacle in participants' academic achievements, which they overcome through networking.

### **QAA and Social Dimension of Life**

In social dimensions of life, participants after practicing QAA guidelines went into a state of disequilibrium with their identities in practice at the UK University. In their day to day practices they were reflecting upon the cultural models of Pakistani social reality, which after transitioning were neither recognised nor accepted in the UK reality. In participants' effort to fit in the UK culture, they would compare their UK behaviour with their past in Pakistan to modify themselves in the possible future. During the interplay of past, present and possible, they found that in Pakistan the boundaries of culture and religion were blurred. The vast majority of the so-called religious values in Pakistan, which they considered as unquestionable for being religious statutes, were in fact cultural norms and not stated in religion. For example, the husbands' recognition in the cultural model 'husband as personification of God' (Ali *et al.*, 2014) for a wife is a cultural discourse rather than religious verdict. Thus, transition ruptured the reality of Pakistani cultural models, and participants considered these cultural models as less fixed. Participants viewed religion as a way of life, which did not change with transition. However, they found culture as something in which they had room for agency and choice. Thus, during their inquiry into the past, they would unanimously uphold core religious values and use agency to make choices in accepting or resisting the cultural models. For instance, Lena decided to wear jeans but Sofia decided to keep wearing Shalwar Kamees. Once participants knew the reality of cultural models, these cultural models did not govern their lives afterwards.

Participants did not develop conflicting cultural and religious identities until they encountered different set of ideologies, thus transition gave participants an awareness of their own culture. After staying three months in the UK, participants knew the uniqueness of both the UK and Pakistani cultural realities and therefore came to the understanding that they could not make judgements in the UK based on Pakistani cultural models and decided to modify themselves.

Cotterall (2011) and Bagnall (2015) states, that international students construct new identities in transition, which they sustain even after their return to the home country. My study adds to the finding as to how these students renegotiate their past and scrutinise various identities (e.g. Muslim identity, Pakistani identity and student identity) using agency and making choices to decide whether to modify or not in the possible.

### **Data Point Three**

After six months in the UK, participants fulfilled QAA guidelines and successfully transformed their institutional dimensions of life from home academic practices to UK academic practices. They received merits and distinction in their assignment grade. They shifted their future projection from academic skills to PhD and career opportunities. They became critical individuals with independent ideas.

Participants' criticality at this stage impacted the cultural models of their social dimensions of life, which created troubles. For example, they were not passive anymore; rather they loved to question and make their own decisions, which changed their positioning around the cultural models of Pakistan. Participants were changing as the figures in their Figured Worlds were changing, because due to transition, the Figured Worlds of Pakistan were changing to the Figured Worlds of the UK.

Participants' dislocation were due to deep questions of cultural models, status and authority, i.e. the way people react and respond to authorities and their influences (for example teacher student relationship), hierarchal power structures within the institutions (for example not to call tutors by their first names, etc). There were subtle cultural differences that represented a change in the configuration of Figured Worlds, the figures and artefacts therein. Research (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015; Reintes *et al.*, 2014) also reported Asian students' struggle in transition due to changed values, norms and beliefs of the two academic cultures. Ligorio *et al.*, (2013, p. 351) states that international students'



participation in the host institution ‘affects the way they perceive and present themselves’. Similarly, Cotterall (2011, p. 57) reported that international students construct new identities in their interaction with local culture, fellow students, academic staff, university administrators and the wider research community.

### **Reverse Culture shock**

The timeline data revealed that participants at this stage were going through a critical incident in the form of transition back home to Pakistan. They were afraid that if they went back to Pakistan with a modified self, they might struggle or might not be accepted. Thus, they developed a conflict in choices of whether to go back to Pakistan or stay in the UK by finding a job. Once again, at this stage, they orchestrated multiple identities and consulted culture and religion. They reassured themselves that the reason they wanted to stay in the UK is not that they want to go to pubs or do anything against the core principles of religion; rather they wished to resist gender roles in culture, as they wanted freedom to question things and to travel. Participants’ social dimensions of life were constantly changing during the transitional phases. Chen (2005, pp.7–8) termed cultural transition as ‘unfolding the self’ and explained it as, ‘a process of transforming’.

My study found that even though participants learned to adapt and negotiate the new cultural norms at data point three, but this gave rise to the whole unexplored level of transition that my research has uncovered. That is the fact that the demands of the QAA (2008, p. 21) from postgraduate students are in tension with the cultural models that international students bring in. International students go through reverse culture shock, where they face an identity shift in terms of the fear to go back home with the changed self. Thus there is a need to understand transition at a more complex level than being solely about developing a ‘good academic practice’ in the student.

### **Data Point Four (Hybrid Self)**

In the fourth interview, participants came to the realisation that the UK bubble of autonomy and empowerment was about to end, thus the fairy tale would be ending and the real life in Pakistan would begin.

Participants knew the fact that it might not be possible for them to simply walk away from cultural models (of Pakistan) or break them completely. Further, they could not accept the Pakistani cultural models and undo the transition. Thus once the sit to create the relational

map, they put the concepts from both Pakistani (marriage, family, God, social) and the UK (travel, study, work, individual, happiness, success) reality, which suggests that an individualistic culture was beginning to sprout within the overall collectivistic Pakistani culture for the participants.

At this point, participants were constantly orchestrating the ‘self’ in the two contexts, to bring those ideas together to navigate new and different contexts for the self. They were in the process of finding a space for themselves to make new worlds, in which they could not only accept a certain amount of resistance about prior cultural discourses but can also fit with some of their Pakistani cultural models [which according to Holland *et al.* is a modicum of control]. They decided to accept the cultural models of Pakistan superficially as it might help them to adapt more effectively to Pakistani society and would also give them the opportunity to remain focused on achieving personal dreams rather than fulfilling cultural expectations.

Participants used agency and renegotiated their position around Pakistani cultural models and made their own role of structures and legislation by accepting the cultural reality superficially and not thoroughly, following their own interests. Participants’ superficial and real aims resulted in nurturing their hybrid selves, one, which outwardly appears to adhere to the cultural norms for better adaptation but inwardly has the determination and resilience to vigorously pursue their personal (individual) dreams and happiness. For example, in my study participants were in the debate around marriage study and work, which is discussed as follows:

### **Marriage Study and Work**

In my study, participants had a relationship of resistance to the debate of ‘marriage, study and work’ as they imagined a new social position, structure and roles around the debate during transition. According to the cultural model, ‘veil and the four walls’, Sofia in her first interview stated, ‘in our Eastern culture we cannot wait for daughter’s later marriages. If we have good options for them, we should not keep them at home just for study purposes’. Similarly, Zakar *et al.* (2013) state that, in Pakistani society, if a woman fails as a good mother or good wife, other achievements carry no social value and that woman is considered worthless. Thus, culturally, girls must be married to be happy, however, in the fourth interview, participants’ wanted to be married but not for happiness and success. For

example, Bena stated ‘marriage is important to me but not at the expense of my happiness’. Shabana said ‘I see myself in two ways either getting married and having a successful life or being on my own and having a successful life’. Participants were exercising agency, by resisting the dominant hegemonic model of marriage. Thus, participants made their own structural role by focussing on success and happiness in life, without linking it to marriage. Thus, transition gave them the relatively free choice of whether or not to be married. Further, culturally they had to live inside the home (Kothari, 2005), but with transition they were travelling around the world.

In terms of literature, Bagnall (2015) study reported that international students during transition become global citizens and affiliate themselves with the world rather than the country and sustain these ties throughout their lives. Gu and Schweisfurth’s (2015) stated that after studying abroad, students return home with new competences, skills and world views. The authors found studying and living abroad to be a profound identity-transforming experience which enabled them to view and live life with a new sense of self at home, and as a result, they distinguished themselves from those around them over time.

My research states that participants were changing in transition as they saw the world in quite a lot of different ways. Transition hybridised the structure and culture of the participants’ Figured Worlds and they considered the notion of free expression by breaking away from tradition or constraint. Transition and the status of being a student at the UK University gave participants the agency around the past cultural model (e.g. ‘veil and the four walls’) with which they imagined new social positions, structure and roles, which suggests that participants were trying to change their lives.

The above discussion concluded that participants during transition were constantly inquiring into their past. There were tensions, contradictions and resistance around cultural models, which participants were renegotiating in various transitional stages. Thus, during the transition from participants’ past in Pakistan to their growing past in the UK, these cultural models did not disappear, but rather participants were beginning to believe in them in a different way to gain a bit of freedom and to find a way out. Thus, my study found that students from collectivistic systems are neither self-contained individual decision makers, and nor are they simply defined by external social customs, because actually, while in transition, they are in the process of reconstructing themselves.

### **Part 8.3: Answer to the Broader Research Question, ‘How Do Pakistani Female Students Narrate their Identities Before, During and After Transitioning to the UK?’**

The two sub questions (8.1 and 8.2) enable me to answer the above (broader) question by defining international students’ identity construction in transition to UK higher education as below:

Transition is defined as projecting forward and identity as the story of the past (e.g. life in Pakistan), which individuals narrate continuously in the present, and in each present, they change and fix their pasts in a particular way. International students encounter various challenges in all of the four dimensions of life at different stages in transition, but at each stage they question their choices through their epistemological frames of the past, which they then redefine in their possible futures.

To explain the above definition, in the first interview participants narrated their identities as fixed in Pakistani cultural models, with imaginations of UK. In the second interview they went through a process of self-negotiation with the cultural models, which even though seemed real in Pakistan but became questionable in the UK culture. To resolve this tension, participants broke those cultural models into religion and culture. Thus, if UK practices were contradictory to religion, they would unanimously reject them, but if they were approved by religion but not culture, they would use agency and make choices that is their decision of whether to modify themselves or not. The resolution of the tension would give participants an insight into their own culture, which would shape their possible futures and modify their identities. The conflict and resolution process took place throughout the whole year, and gave the participants a new way of being, because even if they decided to continue practicing Pakistani cultural models, they developed new insights into them, which weakened the certainty of collectivistic culture. Participants’ conception of the possible in the first interview became the present and past in subsequent interviews and they were remade in the UK. A year ago, participants’ possibilities in the UK were based on their fixed Pakistani cultural models, whereas a year later, their projection forward to Pakistan was based on their the UK experience. Participants’ projection was not from Pakistan to the UK; rather their projection was from the past and present to the possible. They were just moving to a slightly different medium when they arrived in the UK. In their future projection, the UK would still be there, it would not go away, but they would

constantly revisit it and re-explain it. So, going back and re-imagining the past brings new possibilities. Participants' tensions, resolution and active choice making in the four dimensions of life highlight that they were in the process of reconstructing themselves and their cultural models.

## **Chapter Nine: Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter is to conclude the research, and discuss its significance and implications. This chapter concludes the research undertaken and presents a discussion regarding the study's contribution to knowledge. Next the chapter discusses implications, as well as the limitations of the study. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion around recommendations for future research.

### **Part 9.1: Summary of the Study**

This study aimed to explore female Pakistani students' identities construction in transition to UK higher education. The study was conducted longitudinally at four data points. I started interviewing participants from the moment they joined the UK university and continued to interview them until the moment when they began to transition back out upon their return to Pakistan. In the data generation process, I used visual elicitation methods, including photos, timelines and relational maps to provoke participants' reflection. In the data generation process of this study, I found the re-conceptualisation of transition through an identity and agency lens as projection forward. This suggests that transition begins before the student enters into the host institution and continues even after the end of the year. For example, in the first interview of the study, participants' past was in Pakistani social reality, whereas their present and possible was in the UK reality. At data point one, participants' narratives suggests that transition began with admission in the UK University as they started to imagine the possibilities of what their new life may involve. Consequently, prior to their arrival to the UK, soon after receiving the identity 'student at a UK university' they claimed a higher position for themselves in various sub-spaces of their home country. Further, at that point they identified various cultural models of Pakistan, which were influential in transition. After arrival to the UK University, they encountered various challenges at different stages of transition, due to their gradual adoption of the guidance of Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education England, Wales and Northern Ireland, (QAA, 2008) and networking. In the process, at each stage of transition, participants questioned their choices through their epistemological frames (cultural models) of the past, which they then redefined in their possible futures. In this way, the experience of living in the UK created a new past alongside their Pakistani past. In the course of one year, participants changed their positioning around cultural models by using

agency and making choices. Therefore, they imagined new social positioning, structure and roles around important topics, for example marriage, study and work (see Discussion). Toward the end of the year their past had now transitioned into the experience of living in the UK, and their future (possible) was in Pakistan. Therefore towards the end of the study they faced the realisation that they had to go back home, which acted as a critical incident. Consequently, in the fourth interview, while orchestrating multiple voices of Pakistani and UK identities, participants were using agency and making choices to merge these discourses to construct a new, hybrid way of being. They were identifying a place for themselves to make new space in which they could not only accept a certain amount of resistance to prior cultural discourse, but could also focus on personal interests. Therefore, it is argued that they renegotiated and redefined their position around cultural models and returned home with a hybrid self. Their experience of living in the UK has become a permanent feature of their past, one that will be constantly renegotiated in the present and possible as they encounter new life experiences.

Based on this study, I found that transition is not just a physical move from Pakistan to the UK, similarly, the future does not just follow smoothly from past to present, rather it involves going back, re-examining the past with possibilities for the future and there is the constant evolution of the possible throughout one's life. I argue that transition does not end at the end of one's studies. Transition proceeds further, and there is a whole shift of different transitions that all go together with participant from the UK to their home country. Thus, transition is the intermeshing of projection forward and the interplay of past, present and possible to renegotiate the future and as such is an ever-evolving process.

This research has led to the understanding of the complex ongoing transformations of female Pakistani students' changing self at an individual level in transition to UK higher education. We know that transition starts prior to international students' physical move to the host country, as transition is the refiguring of the preconception of concepts that people bring from their home country to the host country, which continues even after the end of the year. Participants carry the new identity with them throughout their life. This study defines, identity as the story of the past (their habitus), which individuals narrate continuously in the present, and in each present, they change and fix their pasts in a particular way.

## **Part 9.2: Contribution to Knowledge**

This study is making a significant contribution to knowledge and the current literature with respect to five areas namely; female Pakistani culture, international students' transition to UK higher education, identity, visual methods and theoretical framework.

### **9.2.1 Family Dimension of Transition**

In the aspect of family dimension, there is literature on students' homesickness (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015), psychological challenges (Rienties, 2014), and isolation (Ryan, 2011) in transition due to leaving their families behind. Furthermore, literature states that students maintain connections with family through social networking sites (Ryan, 2011; Spiro *et al.*, 2012) but developed stronger connections with peers (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015). The literature, however, does not explain why students develop stronger connections with friends rather than family in transition. My study found that the cultural models of Pakistan result in frowning upon the free thoughts of girls or their questioning of ideas and views, which hinders independent thinking or the critical evaluation of an act. However, in transitioning to the UK University, participants adapted to the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA, 2008) guideline and they started evaluating the situations critically and not culturally. My findings add to O'Donnell *et al.*'s (2016) study, in the aspect of international students' family dimension in transition.

### **9.2.2 Institutional Dimension**

In the aspect of institutional dimension, the literature (Medland, 2016; Reintes *et al.*, 2014) conceptualises international students' transition in terms of academic achievement and stresses the importance of developing competence in the host institutions' academic culture, through self-support (Barron *et al.*, 2010). My research found that this neglects the demands placed on international students in terms of undergoing an identity shift whilst adapting to the cultural differences and alternative learning practices they encounter. In Pakistan, students will have been accustomed to a 'rote' learning style with a heavy emphasis on memorisation, whereas in the UK they will be expected to participate in a more critical and collaborative manner. This is underpinned by the QAA guidelines (2008). This creates a need to understand transition at a more complex level, as in undergoing academic transformation this goes hand-in-hand with cultural transformation.



### **9.2.3 Social Dimension**

Literature suggests that international students join campus societies (Coles & Swami, 2012; Wu & Hammond, 2011) and develop networking with co-nationals (Lin, 2012), host nationals (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011) and international students (McKimm & Wilkinson, 2015). My research is in agreement with the above researchers. However, my contribution to this field is to also discover the significance of face-to-face networking as helpful in transition. I found through these interactions participants were exposed to outsiders' views on their cultural norms, which helped them to redefine their subjective positions around cultural models and renegotiate conflicted feelings towards cultural models in family, institution and recognition dimension.

### **9.2.4 Hybrid Self**

Bernal (2015) reported that after studying abroad, international students affiliate themselves with the globe rather than the country. They return to the home country with a new sense of self and distinguish themselves from those among whom they had lived (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). I found this definition was too simplistic and neglected to address the internal conflicts such students were struggling to negotiate. In this regard, my study has contributed to this gap. In the transformation process of an individual student, I examined how they initially negotiated with cultural models to develop a new sense of self in adaptation to the UK, but then had to undergo a reverse culture shock when they contemplated to return home. This contradicts previous research which defines transition as a finished or complete process instead of a hybrid one. I found that students outwardly accept the cultural models of Pakistan to be accepted in the society, but inwardly focus on their own individual interests. The negotiation of these identities leads to the formation of a 'hybrid self'.

### **9.2.5 Networking**

My study found that networking is helpful in all the four dimension of life prior to and after their arrival to the UK. In their family dimension identities, social networking sites (Lin 2012; Sawyer 2011; Hendrickson *et al.*, 2010; Hussey & Smith, 2010) helped participants to establish the lost connection with their families. More particularly, my study found that networking brings students to consciousness (around the reality of cultural models) as through multinational friends they received an outsiders' perspective (that was

different from home culture perspective) on their personality during transition. This helped in bringing their awareness towards their dispositional identities in every day practice.

### **9.2.6 Stages of Transition**

In my study, I organized the participant's interviews by using Sawyer's framework (2011) of four stages in transition: Honeymoon Period, Crisis Period, Gradual Adjustment and Biculturalism.

- Honeymoon Period – I found that transition begins in imagination, prior to the physical move at the point where participants decided to become an international student.
- Crisis Period – After arrival in the UK, participants were confronted with cultural differences to negotiate as well as challenges to their expectations of UK life.
- Gradual Adjustment – Participants learned to adapt and negotiate the new cultural norms.
- Biculturalism – The participants ultimately negotiated a 'hybrid' identity, with elements of both Pakistani and UK culture, in an effort to maintain the ability to fit in to both cultures.

My research also identified a fifth stage, which Sawyer did not identify. I chose to term this 'Reverse Culture Shock' as it relates to participants' renegotiation of the changes they have made in transition on the cultural models, which they then must encounter on their return to Pakistan. It could be said that Sawyer may have been unaware of this stage as he was observing students from within his own culture, whereas my perspective is that of an international student. Therefore, it could be said that he neglected to fully understand the role of implicit cultural models in transition. In relation to validity, Gee (2005) states that 'the individual piece of work is, then, of course juxtaposed to earlier and later work in the field [this] allows further aspects of convergence, agreement [and] coverage to be socially judged and adjudicated. Validity is as much, or more, in those social judgements and adjudications as it is in an individual piece of work' (p.115). In this regard, my study was built upon an earlier study of Sawyer's framework (2011) of four stages in transition: Honeymoon Period, Crisis Period, Gradual Adjustment and Biculturalism. My study added a further stage of 'reverse culture shock' to Sawyer's framework. Gee (2005) further describes, 'investigators build on each other's work in ways that, in the long run, we hope,

improves it [...] a valid analysis explains things that any future investigation of the same data, or related data, will have to take seriously into account' (p.114). My study was based on Pakistani culture, however these stages could be transferred to any cultural context and future researchers could study other nationalities in this way.

### **9.2.7 Theoretical Contribution in Pakistani Context**

I chose to use Gee (1996), Holland *et al.*, (1998) theories of identity construction in my study as they have not been previously used in terms of a Pakistani context. Thus, my study contributed to these theories by using them in a new context.

### **9.2.8 Visual Methods**

According to Jackson (2013, p. 16) there is lack of literature in defining 'explicit and transparent methodologies' to guide participatory diagramming. In this regards, I used photo-elicitation, timeline, relational maps, emoticons and Mind-view software in the application of theoretical framework of Gee (1996) and Holland *et al* (1998) in the study area of female Pakistani students' identity construction in transition, which is my contribution to literature.

### **9.2.9 Female Pakistani Students' Transition to UK**

The literature (Rienties, 2014; Wu & Hammond, 2011) states that European students experience transition to UK university life differently from Asian students. My study found that transition is not just about a student who is coming from a non-British context to a British university for learning, but more specifically, 'transition' is bound up with 'identity'. It is not merely tied to academic performance; rather it includes the cultural context of the student. In this regard, my study contributes to the Pakistani cultural context.

### **9.2.10 Higher Education Pakistan**

My study found that the cultural models of Pakistani females result in conflict with the QAA (2008) guidelines for the postgraduate students studying at a UK higher education institution. Thus, my contribution is to bring awareness to these factors for consideration in terms of policy for higher education in Pakistan and the UK. However it would be too naive to suggest that HEC Pakistan can change solely through a change in policy. Policy has to be enacted in practice and it is interpreted by practitioners who have their own entrenched pedagogic practices and importantly institutional practices. I would

then expect some resistance to change in policy. To develop a more critical pedagogy in higher education in Pakistan would present some challenges, e.g., changing established teaching practices, changing expectations of teachers and learners, training demands and also would bring resource implications. There is also a question I must ask myself at this time, about whether the policy of Pakistan actually does need to change? On one hand, education in Pakistan could be argued to be working nicely for the majority, however on the other hand in my study I found that the challenge of developing more critical approach to studies was immense for my participants and this cause considerable stresses and strains. There is also the question about if Pakistan is to have a really first class education system, should criticality not be something valued as skill that we in-skill for all our students.

### **9.2.11 Cultural Models of Pakistan**

I found that participants carried with them particular cultural models from Pakistan (such as ‘obedience to parents’, ‘male supremacy’, ‘veil and the four walls’ and ‘what will people say?’ etc.) which were influential in many ways. These cultural models were creating tensions and shaping and mediating participants’ identities in transition. My contribution was to address these tacit cultural models and make them more explicit so that future international students are aware of the unconscious forces influencing them. I found that participants were not accepting or rejecting the cultural models, rather they were positioning themselves around them in a different way. In the first interview, they positioned themselves more closely to the cultural model, whereas by the second and third interviews, I found that there was more resistance and renegotiation towards them. They had begun a process of challenging their home culture. This was because, as they spent more time in the UK, they identified a need to adapt and improvise in order to fit in. My research found that participants were forced to question the tacit cultural models by QAA (2008) guideline, as staying the same would lead to problems in academic transition. By the time of the final interviews, participants had renegotiated the cultural model to such an extent that they had been able to construct a hybrid self that would work in both the UK and Pakistan. Gee’s (2005) concept of ‘coverage’ states that ‘the analysis is more valid the more it can be applied to related sorts of data. This includes being able to make sense of what has come before and after the situation being analysed and being able to predict the sorts of things that might happen in related sorts of situations’ (p.114). Thus my analysis is

valid as my study has provided a framework that cultural models mediate identities in transition.

### **9.2.12 Culture and Religion Debate in Students' Transition**

My study found that by the time of the second interview, the transition was dividing each participant into multiple selves, i.e. Muslim, Pakistani and UK University student. During their identities in practice at the university, they went into a state of disequilibrium vis-a-vis Islamic and Pakistani culture. Thus, whilst transitioning to the UK, participants underwent a mental shift as they realised that Pakistan is not purely an Islamic state; rather it is a construct of religion and culture, where sometimes culture is superior to religion. For example participants realised that the husbands' identity in the cultural model 'husband as personification of God' for a wife is a cultural discourse rather than religious obligation. Participants began to realise that in Pakistan, society conflates cultural practices with religion in order that they may not be questioned. All participants chose to retain their religious values, however in terms of culture this varied based on individual agency and choice. For instance, Lena made the choice to wear jeans whereas Sofia continued to wear Shalwar Kamees of Pakistani culture.

### **9.2.13 Shift from Collectivistic to Individualistic Culture**

Literature (Robson and Turner, 2007; Barron *et al.*, 2010) identifies that students from highly collectivistic cultures face greater difficulties in transition to West. Researchers (Medland 2016; Reintes *et al.*, 2014; Horobin & Thom, 2015; Simpson, 2015) agree in supporting these students with logistical elements of transition, but there seems to be no literature that brings these two things together. My study fills the gap that transition is a cultural shift not only academic practice and discusses international students' identity construction in transition to the UK higher education (from a specific context) at the individual level.

## **Part 9.3: Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study have implications for policy makers, western universities, tutors, supervisors and international students in terms of transition and identities.

1. The following factors are presented as possible implications of this study for some groups of international students' experiences and changing identities in transition.

- **Awareness**

To be aware of the process of transition: for example, my study found that female Pakistani students come to the UK with a socially, culturally constructed self from their home country, whereby it is a cultural norm for decision-making about key life decisions and often also for relatively small decisions to be made on the females behalf by male family members. Upon arrival in the UK University the new student may be expected to engage in the practices of active decision making at the university.

Furthermore, all of the participants developed friendships on campus and became involved in university societies and developed interpersonal relationships with staff and colleagues. In this process of extended participation within the university it was as if they had redefined their culturally-constructed self from Pakistan through a British lens. They appeared to go through a process of self-negotiation and developed a hybrid self, which blended elements of both their new and old identities. However, in the process of transition they realised that they would have to eventually return to the socio-cultural reality of Pakistan and they all experienced a reverse culture shock. However, they were unable to undo the insights gained through the transition and their new sense of self.

### **Preparation**

Whilst in the UK, Pakistani students may reflect on how to manage this reverse culture shock, for example making plans and decisions about their future life. They may decide to strengthen their social networks within the UK in terms of education, friendships and career development.

### **Management**

Whilst in Pakistan, foreign return students may choose to strengthen bond with people having had similar experiences (such as former international students) in order to bring positive change in the social structures of Pakistan. Further, networking in Pakistan may bring opportunities for continuous personal development.

### **Embrace a Hybrid Self**

My study found that participants developed a hybrid self upon their return to the power structures of Pakistan. Thus, upon return, participants may find that the social reality of Pakistan has changed, as they have redefined those cultural models

through their hybrid lens. Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) found that international students return to their home country with a new sense of self and distinguish themselves from those among whom they had lived in their past. My suggestion to international students is to embrace their hybrid self and network in both cultures.

3. Previous studies on transition have not studied participants until they arrived, my study did not start prior their arrival either, however the visual methods in my study allowed certain aspects of past (Pakistan as a place as a culture, participants' past experiences of their family that is their pre arrival selves in photos) to come into the interview situation that might not have been there otherwise if I have interviewed them in a traditional way. For example Sofia brought the image of herself in Pakistan and the UK (see page) and she reconfigured and reconceptualised her vision from what UK would have to be in Pakistan to what UK was at the time of interview. Visual methods bring aspects of their past selves into the interview conversation and I could not have gained these kinds of insight without these methods. My suggestion for future researchers (working in the field of identity and transition) are that participant centred visuals methods (photograph, timeline and relational maps) could be used to support self-reflection and dialogue to negotiate identity.

4. The implications for Higher Education in the UK is that universities need to be aware of the identity aspect of the transition of international students, and especially female postgraduate students from Pakistan and other countries with similar cultures. My suggestion is that universities consider how they can facilitate a structure of support for these students that accounts adequately for awareness, preparation, management and also for alumni who may have a hybridity that could cause them difficulties on return to the power structures from whence they came. Therefore, in addition to incoming transition as an international student, I recommend attention is afforded to the process of transition on return to their home country as that appears a potential reverse shock.

#### **Part 9.4: Limitations of the Study**

The findings in this study are limited in the following way:

1. The study was based on a small number of participants; potentially future studies could be done on a larger scale. However, my study was in-depth and qualitative; therefore having more participants would have been beyond the scope of my study.

2. The study was conducted on female Pakistani students, whereas it would be interesting to see examples of both male and female Pakistani students to compare the similarities and differences based on gender during identity construction in transitioning to the UK. However, being a female researcher from Pakistan, it might be challenging to explore male participants' subjective inner thinking, feeling and believing due to the cultural model 'Log Kya Kahengay', or 'What will people say?'
3. The study involved only female Pakistani students' transition, whereas the experience of British students or European students could also be taken for comparison.

### **Part 9.5: Future Research**

The recommendations for future research are as follows:

#### **9.5.1 Culture Specific Stages of Transition**

The current study built upon an earlier study of Sawyer's framework (2011) of four stages in transition: Honeymoon Period, Crisis Period, Gradual Adjustment and Biculturalism. This study added a further stage of 'reverse culture shock' to Sawyer's framework. However, this study was based on Pakistani culture, although these stages could be applied to any cultural context and future researchers could study other nationalities in this way.

#### **9.5.2 Cultural Models of Other Nationalities**

This study identified cultural models from Pakistan (such as 'veil and the four walls') which were influential in many ways in transitional identities. However, these cultural models might vary based on the nationality; therefore future studies may take into account the impact of the cultural models of the student's home country on their identities in transition.

#### **9.5.3 Husbands of Women in Transition**

This study found a certain degree of role reversal in participants' husbands position vis-à-vis their wives due to transition (See 5.1.5), which identified a gap for future research: to conduct a study on the husbands of international female postgraduate students' transitioning from home to host country to see the impact of UK higher education on their identities in transition.



#### **9.5.4 Longitudinal Studies**

This research finished at the point of participants' transition back home to Pakistan, however it identified a research area: to explore whether these participants would continue to be in a stronger position in Pakistan and change the world. Furthermore, the recommended research would see how these participants negotiate and renegotiate their transitional experience of the UK over time (after 2019) in Pakistan and then compare these later identities (after 2019) with the time when they joined the UK University in Sept 2014.

#### **9.5.4 Visual Methods**

The current study used multiple visual methods (photo-elicitation, timeline and relational map) in combination; future studies could use these methods alone, e.g, using relational map at various data points of the study to achieve more consistent data. However, it is worth noting that it was most useful to use the methods in combination, because I was able to draw on my wider understanding of the participants and to bring that to the analysis of the later collected data points.

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## Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

### Renegotiating the Past, Present and Possible: Identities in Transition of Female Pakistani Students in an English University

#### Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study being undertaken by the PhD student in Educational Research at The UK University. The study is about, constructing identities through visual methods: transitional narratives of female Pakistani students in the UK as part of my PhD studies.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

#### **Who will conduct the research?**

Haleema Sadia , Wilkinson Building, UK University, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL.

#### **Title of the Research**

The title of the research is 'Renegotiating the Past, Present and Possible: Identities in Transition of Female Pakistani Students in an English University'.

#### **What is the aim of the research?**

The aim of the study is to deepen understanding about how female Pakistani students can experience transition in the context of studying at the UK University, through an exploration of their (changing) identities.

#### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen to take part in the study as you are a Pakistani student and have recently joined the UK University, UK at postgraduate level.

#### **What would I be asked to do if I took part?**

If you choose to take part in research, you will be asked to tell me about your experiences through narrative interviews at 4 stages of the study. In 1<sup>st</sup> interview I will enquire you about your expectations from the UK University. In second interview I will request you to bring 12 photos of people, places or things, with at least one photo for each of the following aspects: self, family, institution and community, to illustrate yourself in Pakistan and in UK University. In third interview I will ask you to draw the timeline of act and practices involved at UK University and elicit your experiences on it. In the third interview I will provide you, the themes taken from the data interview 1, 2 & 3. In fourth interview I will request you for giving relative position, in order of importance, to the themes in

concentric circles around the self. I will give you clear instructions and lots of chances to enquire. The data will be collected according to your preference for time, date and venue.

**What happens to the data collected?**

I will transcribe and analyse the data. The data will enable me to know Pakistani student's construction of changing identities, required for the completion of my PhD dissertation to be submitted to the Manchester Institute of Education at the UK University.

**How is confidentiality maintained?**

The faces in the pictures will be blurred and pseudonyms will be used in the graphic elicitation charts to ensure anonymity. The data will be carefully stored in a laptop and USB. The data will be destroyed after five years.

**What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**

Your participation is voluntary. You will have the right to refuse to answer any part of the question or to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason.

**Will I be paid for participating in the research?**

No payment will be made for taking part in the research

**What is the duration of the research?**

We will meet on three separate stages, the date, time and venue to be mutually convenient, between Sept 2014 and Dec 2015. If you agree, it will be for up to an hour each time. Usually interviews will last between thirty and forty five minutes, but an hour is allowed in case the time is needed.

**Where will the research be conducted?**

We will arrange to interview you either in person at the Faculty or at mutually convenient and safe public place in the university at a time/date convenient for you before February 23, 2014. We will arrange meeting thrice, either in your department at the University, ity, or in my office, or in a suitable place, wherever you prefer.

**Will the outcomes of the research be published?**

The outcomes of the research may be published in academic journals, conference proceedings and in the form of PhD thesis.

**Contact for further information**

Please contact me by email: [haleema.mian@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:haleema.mian@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk) or you can contact my supervisor, Dr Pauline Prevett, at The UK University by email: [pauline.prevett@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:pauline.prevett@manchester.ac.uk)

**What if something goes wrong?**

If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with members of the research team, please contact the Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator by either writing to 'The Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator, Research Office, Christie Building, The UK University, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL', by emailing: [Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk), or by telephoning 0161 275 7583 or 275 8093

## Appendix 2: Consent Form

Renegotiating the Past, Present and Possible: Identities in transition of Female Pakistani Students in an English University'

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment service.

3. I agree to the use of anonymous quotations

4. I understand that the interviews will be recorded

5. I agree that any data generated will be used for the purpose of the dissertation

I agree to take part in the above project

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person  
taking consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Appendix 3: Research Instrument

### Appendix 3.1 Narrative Interview One: Instructions, Protocol

Congratulations for getting admission as a postgraduate student in the UK University.

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Narrative questions seeking participant's expectations from the UK University
<b>Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can you tell me about what influenced you to join the UK University as a postgraduate student?</li><li>• How do you feel about it? E.g prepared</li><li>• What are your expectations from your course, faculty, school and UK University?</li></ul> Some probes I will use if needed; 'Can you give me an example of this...?' or 'Can you tell me more about this...?' 'What did you mean when you said...?'

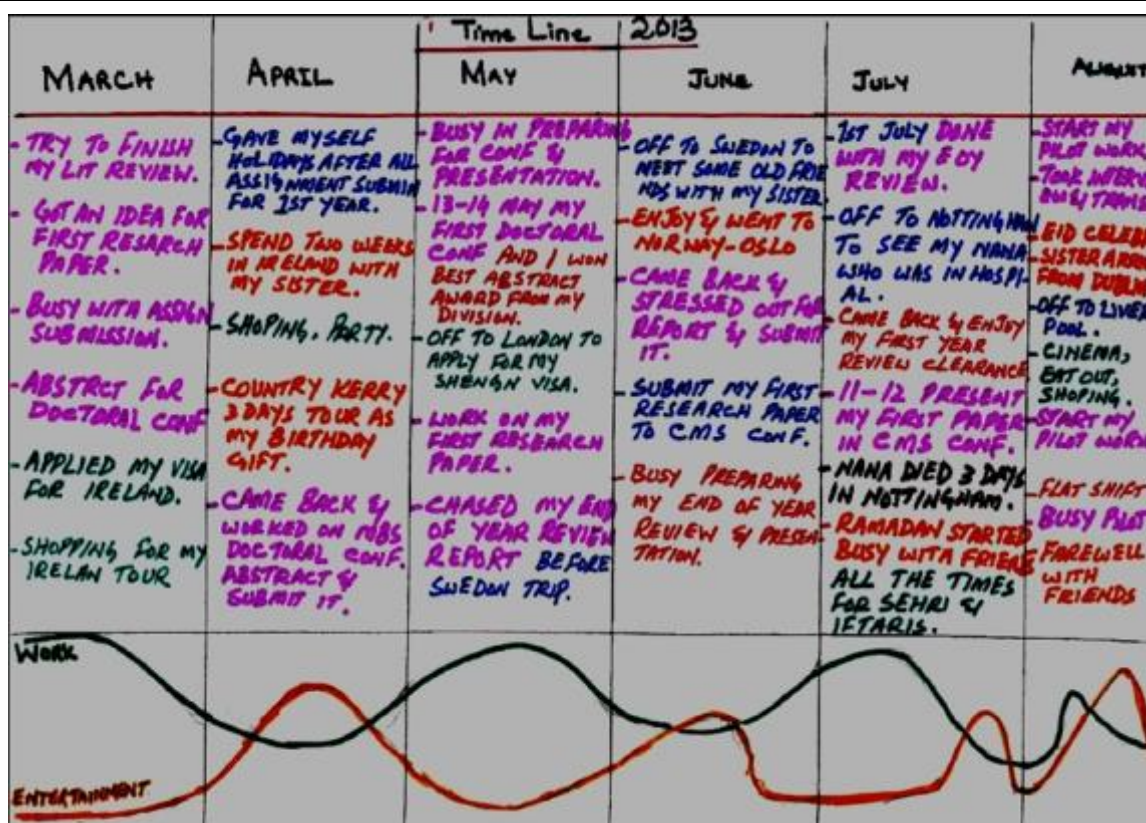
### Appendix 3.2: Narrative interview 2: Instructions, Protocol & Photos

Phase	Description
1	Request to the participant: 'Please keep 12 photos of people, places or things, with at least one photo for each of the following aspects: 1. You're self' in Pakistan & in UK. 2. Your contact with family in Pakistan & in UK 3. You as a student in institution in Pakistan & in UK 4. Your contact with community in Pakistan & UK'
2	Narrative questions seeking their understanding, feeling & experiences
3	Participant will explain the picture during the interview, why she selected these photos and what is special in it? and what ideas come to you about female postgraduate student academic life in each aspect?



### Appendix 3.3: Narrative Interview 3: Instructions, Protocol & Timeline

Phase	Description
1	Participant requested: ‘Please use the charts and markers to draw a timeline indicating the most important activities and practices, during the time frame of three months from Dec to Feb at UK University. Feel free to draw it, the way you are comfortable. Try to finish the activity in 15 minutes. The criteria for drawing is <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acts &amp; practices about self</li> <li>2. Acts &amp; practices about family</li> <li>3. Acts &amp; practices about institution</li> <li>4. Acts &amp; practices about community’</li> </ol>
2	Narrative questions seeking their understanding, feeling & experiences about the academic life of UK University.
3	Participant will explain the timeline during the interview, what were the acts and practices? How she feel about it? What was the best and worst time since she is in UK, and why? What have she learned from it? What else you want to tell me?



### Appendix 3.4: Narrative Interview Instructions, Protocol & Relational Map

Phase	Description
1	<p>Participant requested: ‘Please have a look to the example map and its construction (showing relational map). Now please create a relational map on the corkboard. Take as much time as you like.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Start with the sun labelled ‘Me as a student-.</li> <li>2. Position the provided stars (with themes about acts, practices, people, places or things) nearer or farther, around the sun in their relative importance to you (‘who am I at this moment?’).</li> <li>3. There are blank stars and markers for you to add stars with new label.</li> </ol> <p>Take as much time as you can. If you don’t like the written stars don’t use them at all.</p>
2	Narrative questions seeking their changing identities
3	Participant will explain during the interview the relational map, the reason why these acts, practices, person, places or things are nearer or farther to you.



## **Appendix 4: Recruitment Advert**

Hi,

I am a female Pakistani PhD student at the UK University, UK. I am researching Pakistani female postgraduate student's experiences, who are joining the UK University in 2014.

I am particularly interested in learning about the sociocultural and academic adjustment during transition from Pakistan to the UK University.

If you might be interested in taking part your perspectives and insights will be valuable to my research.

Please contact me on 07448388535 or my email [haleema.mian@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:haleema.mian@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk) and I will send you a Participant Information Sheet so that you decide whether or not you would like to take part. I have a limited number of spaces.

Wish you all the best and I hope to hear from you soon



## **Appendix 5: Full Transliterated Four interviews**

**In the CD attached**

# Appendix 6: Timelines

## Appendix 6.1: Shabana Timeline

October - Blue for anxiousness {STAR}

- Joined the University and began classes and lab commitments
- Celebrated Eid Ul Adah
- Had a VUE Cinema Job interview and was successful (Began working at VUE part time)
- Joined the Universities Arab Society , British Asian Society, Islamic soc and Pakistan Society
- Started Arab beginners class with the University
- Celebrated the best Halloween ever with family at Blackpool Vampire Beach (31st Oct)



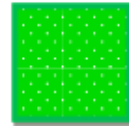
November - Maroon for Initiation, Felling Lost and out of place but happy {TRIANGLE}

- Engaged in Bonfire night with University friends and met people (5th Nov)
- Islamic society Snowden trek charity - Participated in a trek under adverse weather conditions, where working as a cohesive group was paramount, overall enhancing my inter-personal and communicative competency (9th Nov)
- Watched the Comedian Miranda sings live at Manchester Academy
- Visited my Bachelors university (Hull) and stayed a weekend with Syrian friend (14th Nov)
- Watched the singer Kina Granis Live at Manchester academy with my cousin (16th Nov)



December - Green for a sense of being, Striving towards goals {SQAURE}

- Initiated and immersed myself within Arab society events Go karting
- Christmas holidays, no break for a Masters student but I was allowed one week off
- I continued with a lot of lab work and project experiments
- Prepared for my GRE exam within a week and gave the test (29th Dec)
- Dad left to Pakistan on 2nd Jan



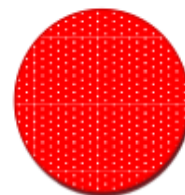
January - Brown, grim feelings as my mum left {wave like}

- My mum left to Pakistan on 7th Jan
- I began to prep for exams with full force
- I had friends from Saudi Arabia visit on the 15th Jan
- Jan 12th to 23rd was exam period
- Attended a major cosmetic scientist event at the University of Manchester and engaged in great talks about future science activities and its role in cosmetic science.



February - Red for Future thoughts, happiness, sadness a mixture {CIRCLE}

- Arab games night society event
- meetings with supervisors
- My cousin and brother left to Pakistan on the 4th Feb
- My sister who is now pregnant arrived to the UK and stayed with me on the 11th Feb, she is currently still staying with us until she has the baby
- Got accepted into the PhD programme in New York University - Abu Dhabi



March - Orange for a good feels excitement for future {THOUGHT CLOUD}

- NYU -Abu Dhabi invited me over to visit Abu Dhabi for one weekend (all expenses paid for), so I went to meet supervisors and students (13th March to 16th March)
- Easter holidays took one week off and spent time with friends made from Arab Soc, we went Rock climbing, cinema and the fun outdoor activity Go Ape in Bolton



## Appendix 6.2 Lena Timeline

### October 2014:-

- New to university of Manchester, settling down, accommodation concerns
- Course & Accommodation change
- Halloween Night
- Friends, Family, life

### November 2014:-

- Joining GYM
- Leeds, York, London, Liverpool, Bath
- Party, Party & more Partying.
- Pakistan Society, Dancehouse.

### December 2014:-

- Trip to Pakistan, family & emotions, comparative analysis
- Study Plan failure
- Exam Anxiety & Exams
- Meeting Friends
- Surprise News

### January 2015:-

- New year resolution never coming true up
- Alpha Kappa Si society, Choosing Dissertation Topics
- Making new Pakistani friends
- Identity Struggles, paintballing class

### February 2015:-

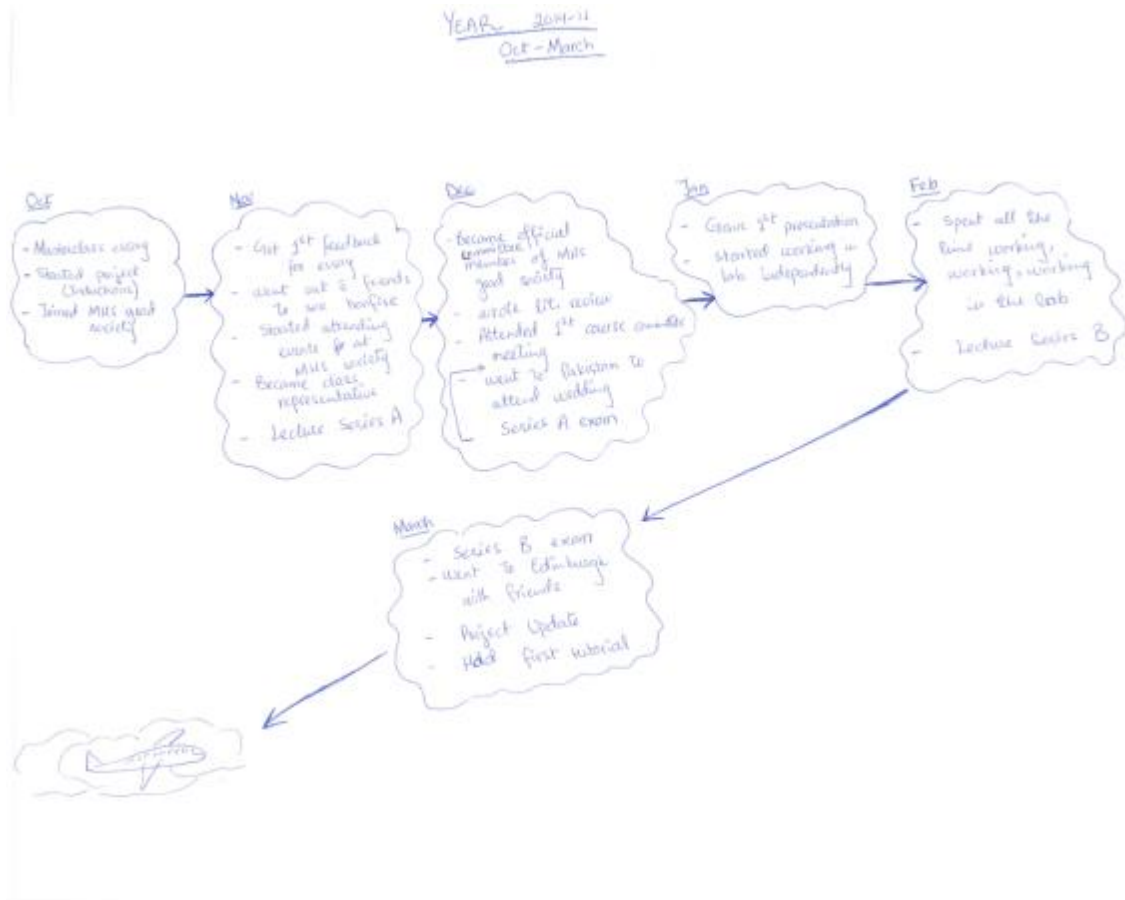
- Project Deadlines & Completion
- Valentine's Day - Chester Tripping
- Scotland trip
- Daily Routine

### March 2015:-

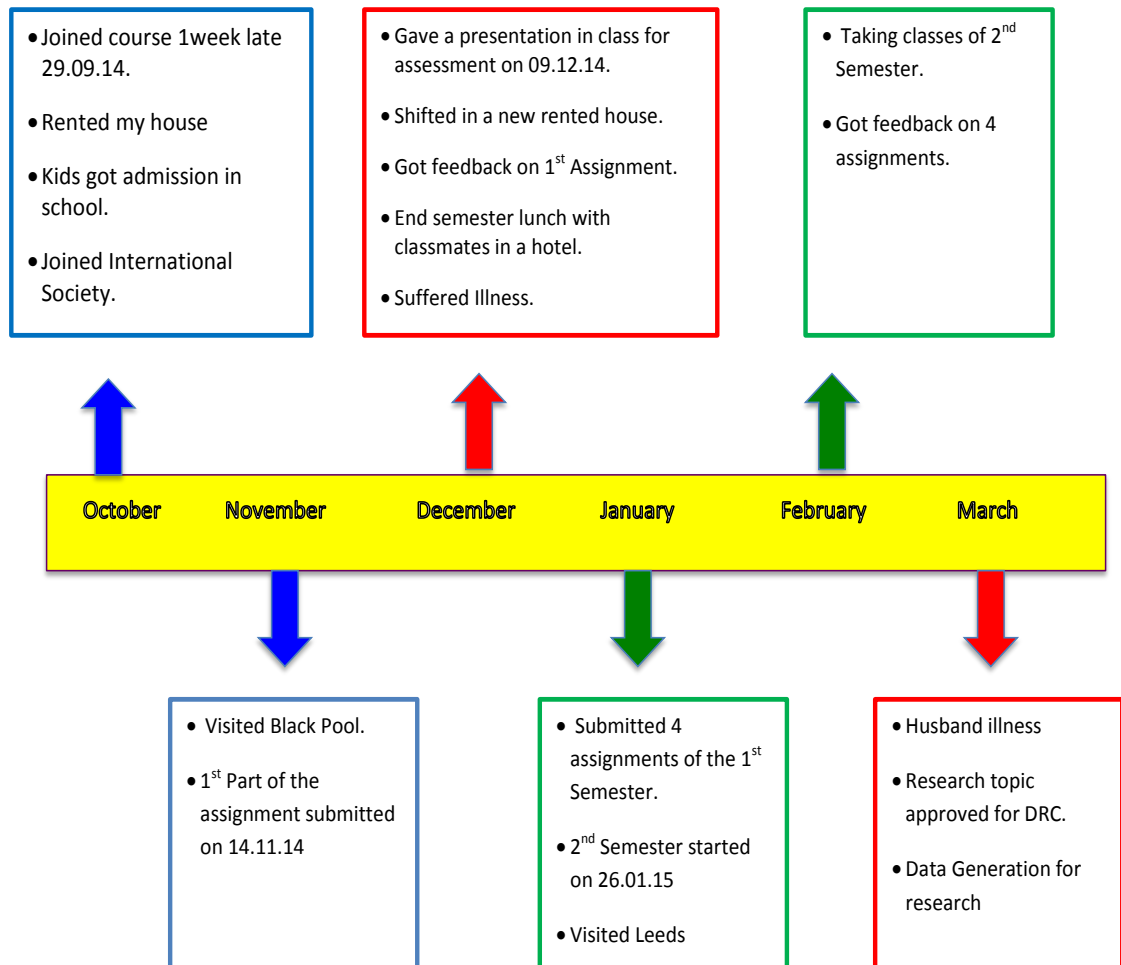
- Easter Break, Euro Trip to Amsterdam, Paris & Brussels
- Change of life plans
- Fear of university ending
- Hating the discrimination
- Increased Love for university of Manchester.
- Is it Babble Life?

Timeline Babble  
&  
2015.

## Appendix 6.3: Fafa's Timeline



## Appendix 6.4: Sofia's Timeline



## Appendix 6.5: Bena's Timeline

October 2014

1. Eid Party in Sheffield
2. Resident Election of
3. University Teaching style
4. Bollywood society member
5. Attending Bhangra night
6. Attending Devali night



November 2014

1. Started assignment drafts
2. Organized Pizza night
3. Started my research
4. Qawaali concert
5. Bonfire night
6. Christmas lights inauguration
7. Chinese restaurant Buffet



December 2014

1. Submitting draft of essay
2. Trip to Pakistan
3. The shrine of Bhattai
4. Village tour
5. Train journey to Hyderabad
6. Visit to Rani kot
7. Submitted final assignment



January 2015

1. Back to Manchester
2. Joined friends
3. Celebrated friend's baby birth
4. Visit to Buxton
5. A trip to Chester zoo
6. A trip to North Wales

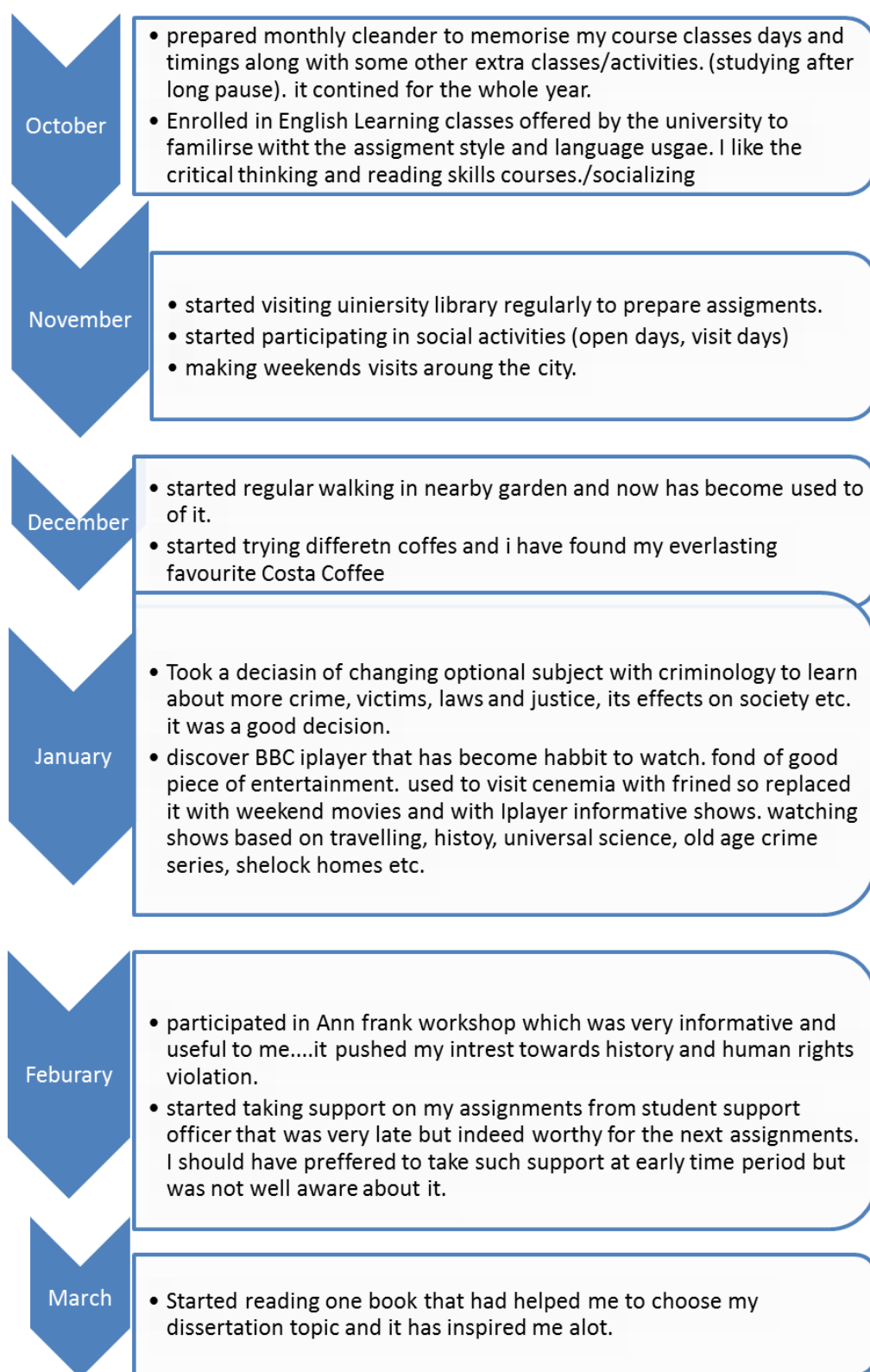
February 2015

1. Finalized my subjects
2. Resident's Association meeting
3. Organized Pizza night
4. A trip to Scotland
5. Got exam results

March 2015

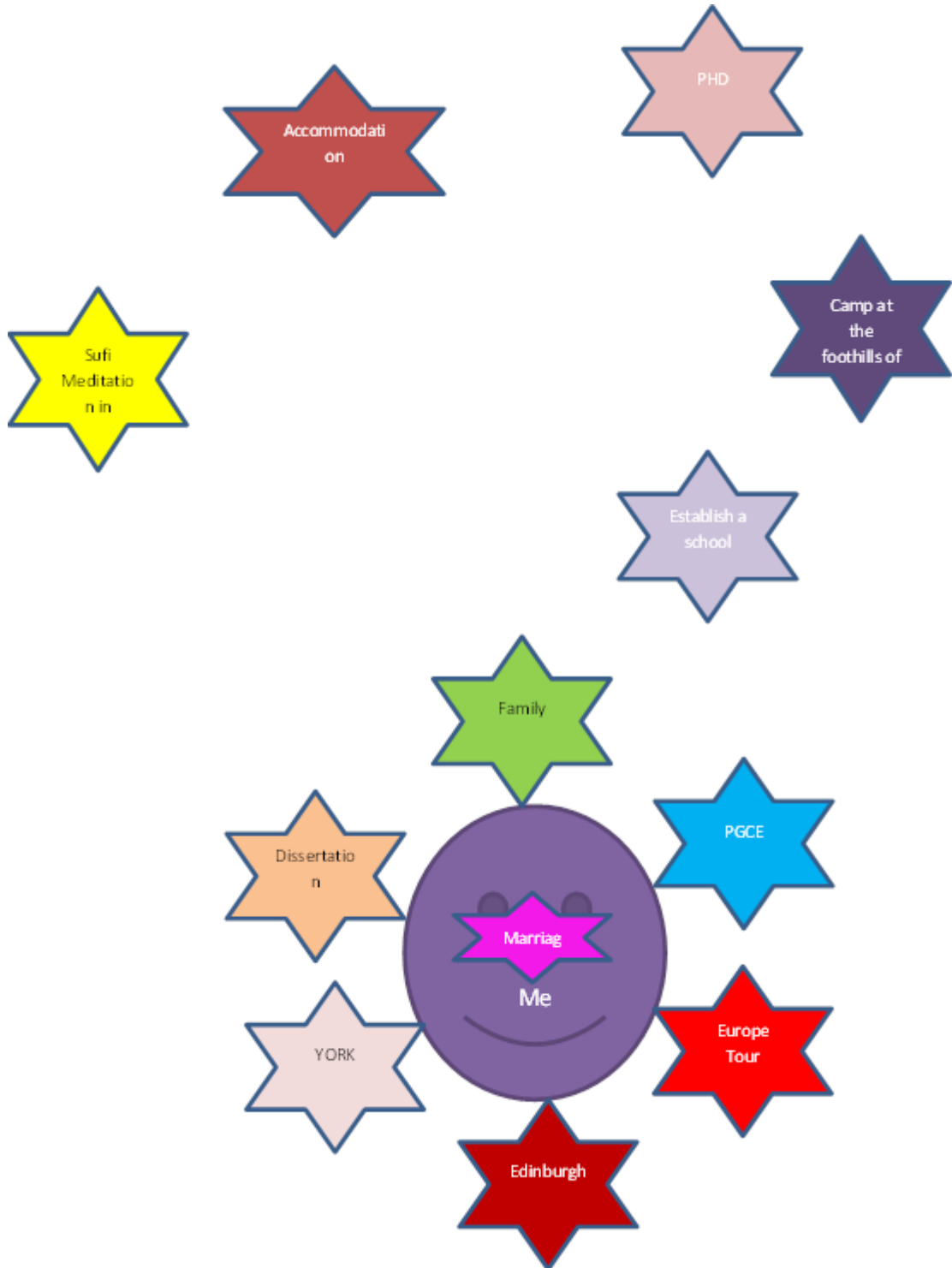
1. Visit to Bath, Stonehenge, Lullworth.
2. Meditated on high cliff on Durdledoor.
3. Finalized essay and dissertation topic
4. Completed assignments
5. London week
6. Visit to Sheffield & Chatsworth
7. Feedback from assignment

## Appendix 6.6: Sana's Timeline



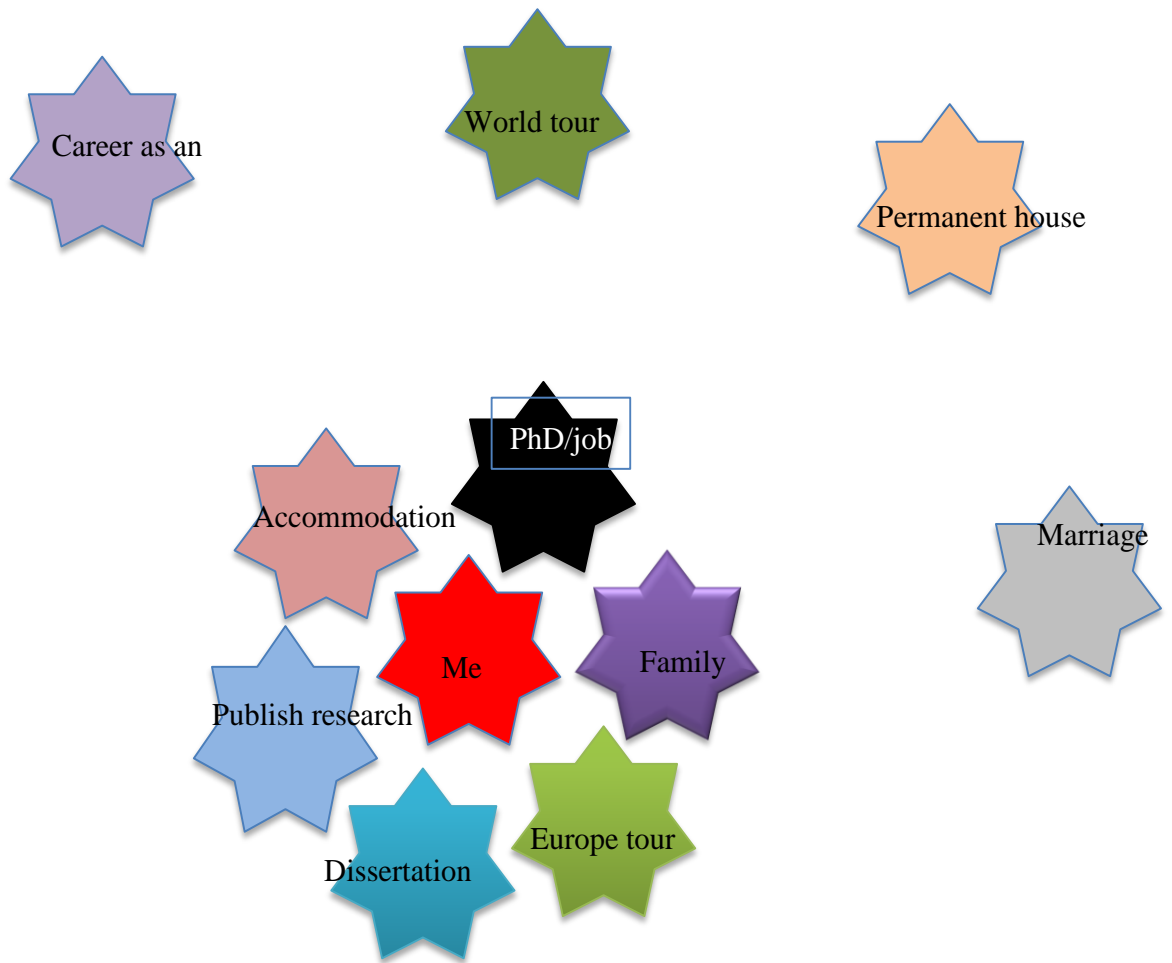
# Appendix 7: Relational Map

## Appendix 7.1: Bena's Relational Map

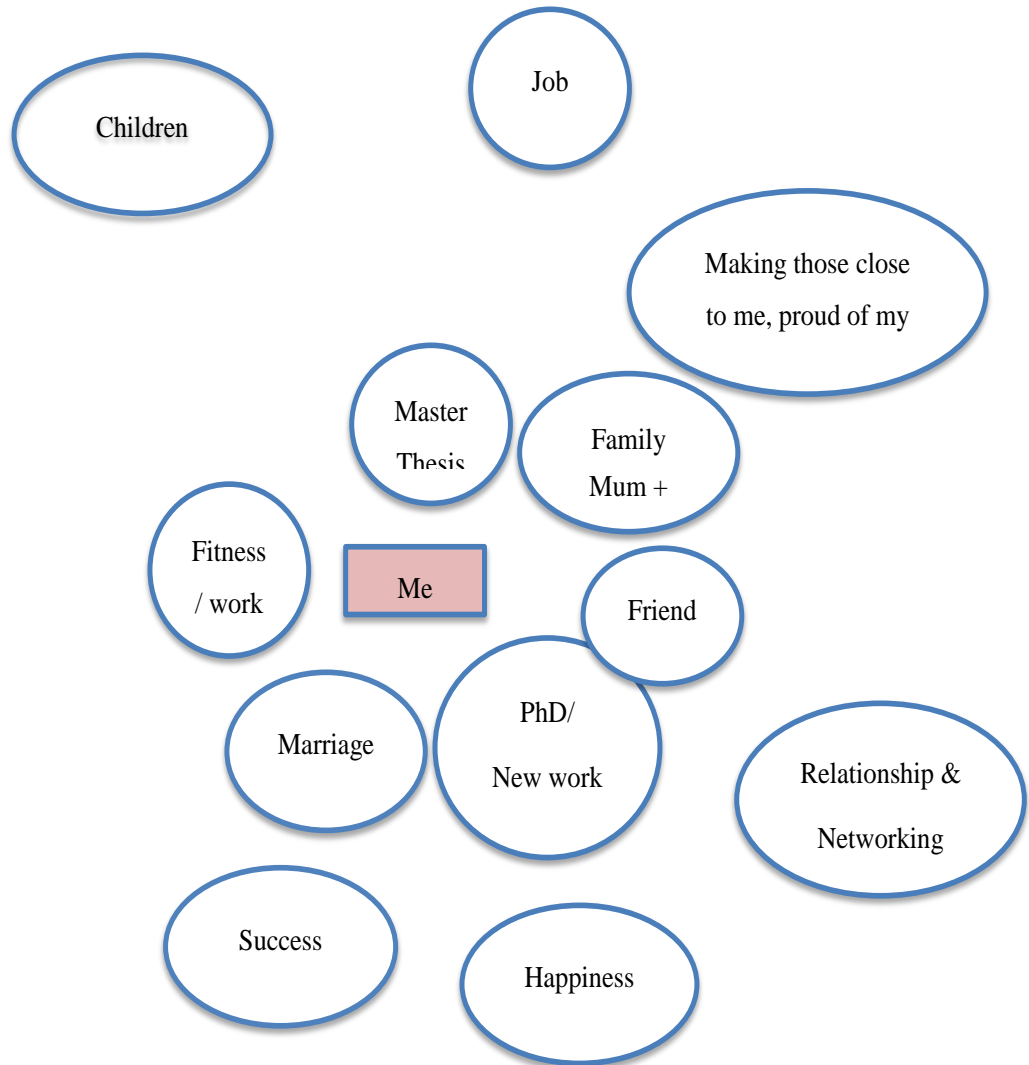




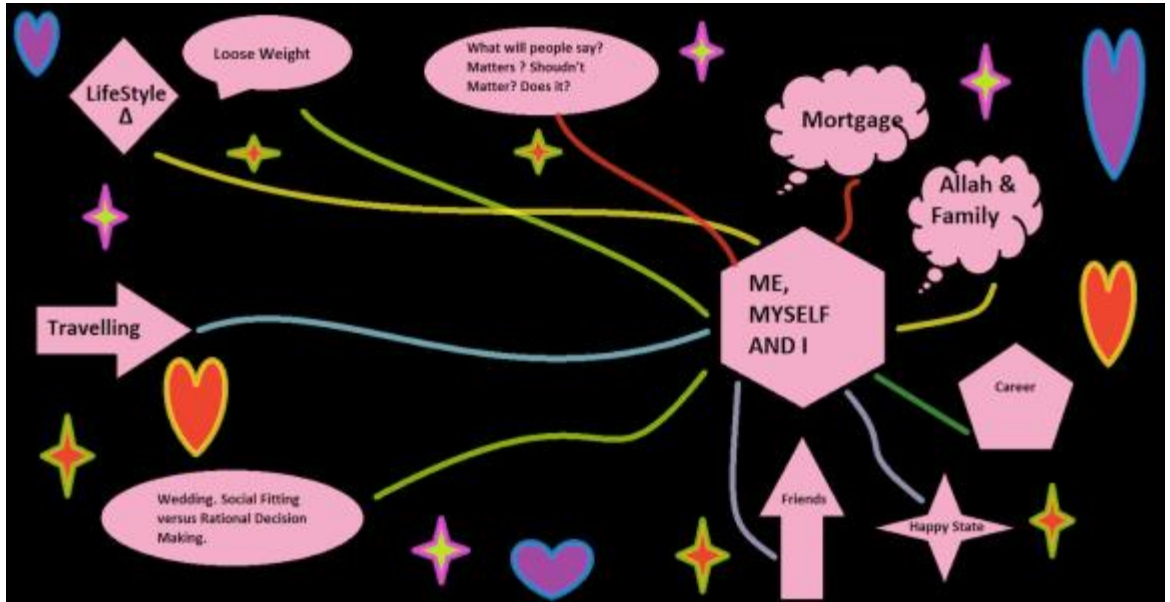
## Appendix 7.2: Fafa's Relational Map



### Appendix 7.3: Shabana's Relational Map

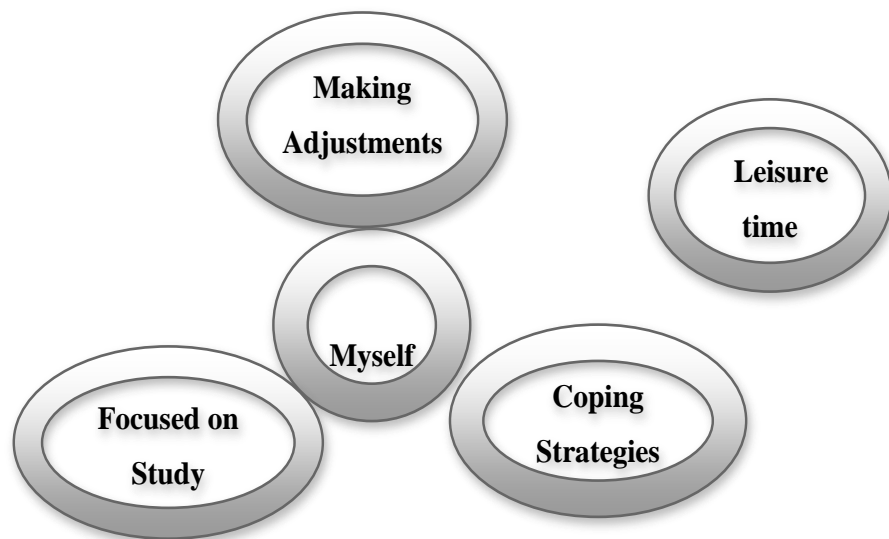


## Appendix 7.4: Lena's Relational Map



## Appendix 7.5: Sana's Relational Map

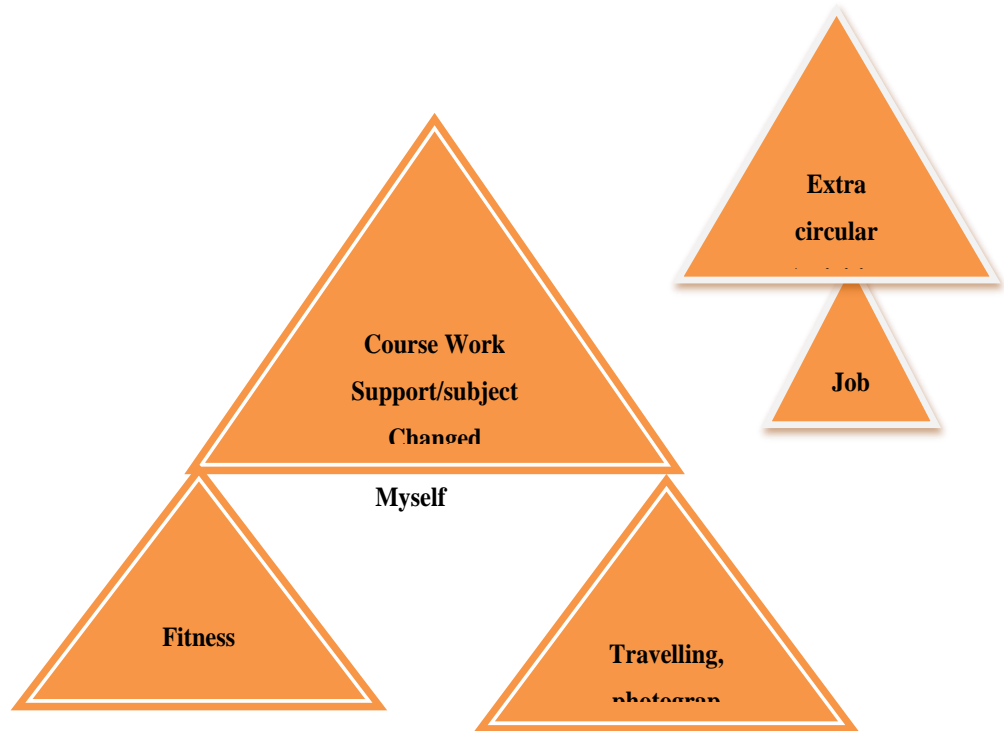
Stage 1: Joined University of Manchester: grey area not clear at that moment.



Stage 2: Three months later after joining UoM: developing hope



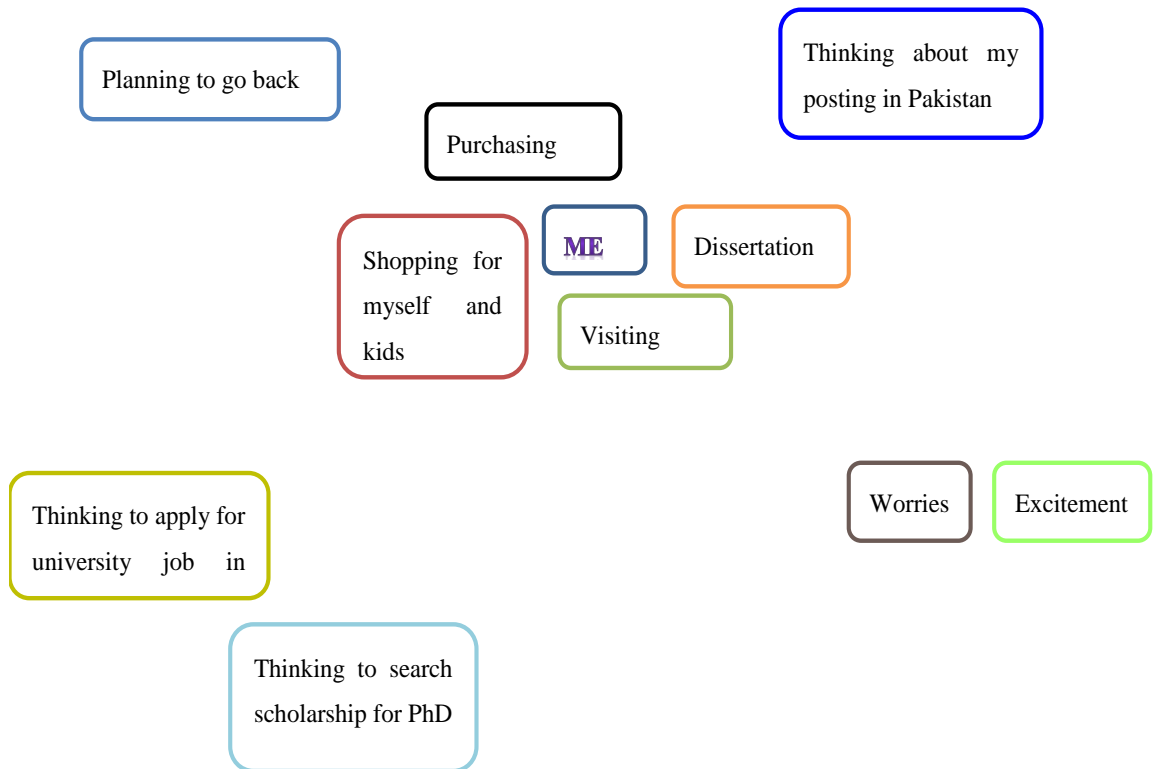
Stage 3: Six months later after joining UoM: optimistic about future: things are getting shape



Stage 4: Nine months later: feeling confident in professional and family life. Hopeful for a moderate and balanced life



## Appendix 7.6: Sofia's Relational Map



# The Impact of Social networking on Changing Educational Identity: A Case Study of Pakistani Female Postgraduate Student in Manchester

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## 1. Introduction

International students are attracted to UK universities for a range of reasons, including the opportunity to improve academic qualifications. According to UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) 428,323 international students came to UK for higher studies in the year 2010-11. Settling in a new environment is a challenging task for overseas students. They need to understand the local academic, social and cultural life of the University. Social networking may provide a useful means of communication and understanding for incoming Pakistani students to adjust well to their new setting. Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are used for maintaining pre-existing social ties and creating new connections. Experiences during the transitional period of socio-cultural adjustment may have an impact on the student's educational identities.



## 2. Literature Review

International students in their transition to UK have to adopt different social and cultural patterns from psychological and sociological aspects (Ryan, 2011). Students shifting position may demand the process of understanding through interaction to increase the level of fitness against the demands of a new cultural environment can be met (Ary 2011, Ye 2008). According to Holland et al. (1998), participants in an interactive contact can adaptively shift from one position to another depending on what features are more relevant and effective in every specific situation. Doing so, they actively construct different identities and use them as resources, defining relevance and strength to their argumentations. Social networking may provide a useful means of communication and understanding for incoming Pakistani students to adjust well to their new setting (Lu, 2012). Wenger (1998) argues that, "The experience of identity is a way of being in the world".

## 3. Aim and Objectives

The study aims to explore the impact of social networking on adjustment through changing educational identity of Pakistani female postgraduate students in Manchester.

## 4. Research Questions

Research questions to be addressed include:  
**How can becoming an international student impact on student's educational identity?**  
**What academic challenges do Pakistani female postgraduate students face at UK?**

**How social networking support their educational identity and adjustment?**

The study is designed on the basis of my personal experience when I joined UK for higher studies. I found the transition in UK very challenging because becoming a successful learner in Pakistan is exam based and teacher centered while in UK it's assignment based and student centered. The proposed study has implication for the international students to develop change in their expected identity for better adjustment to academic and socio-cultural life of the University. Moreover, the study has suggestion for universities as to how they can respond to the better inclusion of international students.

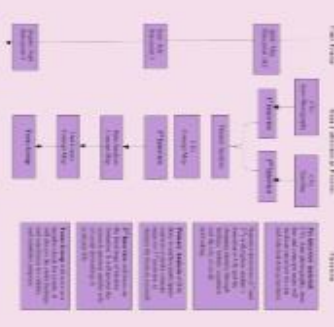
## 5. Conceptual Framework

Students' construction of different identities in the context will be explored through positioning theory of Holland et al. (1998). Student's initial adjustment and identity change will be explored through logframe perceived participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Their academic identity change in the transition will be viewed through Culture Models of Geertz (2004).

## 6. Method

To address the research questions, qualitative exploratory case study research methods will be used as it's concerned with in-depth case study of students' changing identities. The cases will be Pakistani female postgraduate students at the University of Manchester. Six participants will be recruited through purposive non-probability sampling strategy. The methods for data generation will be narrative interviews at three different stages of study. Narrative interviews will enable the voices of participants to be heard, placing them central to the research process as they reflect upon, reinterpret, give meaning to and construct past events and experiences within a social context. In order to direct the participants, they may be requested for relevant academic materials which serve in making the interview more directed and informed. Based on the nature of the research questions,

and the methods used in this project, data will be richly analyzed by beginning in thematic, and then getting from an examination of the 'what' and 'how' of the talk through narrative and discourse analysis.



## 7. Contribution to Knowledge

Information is available in the literature on international students regarding their socio-cultural adjustment, but there is a gap in the available literature on the subject for Pakistani students through online and offline networking. The study will also contribute to the literature on the impact of social networking through changing identities.

## 8. References

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning with and through the Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.  
Holland, D., Linstead, S., & Miller, L. (1998). *Positioning Theory: Learning to be a Teacher*. London: Routledge.  
Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
Geertz, C. (2004). *Culture: The Anthropology of Cultural Change*. New York: Basic Books.  
Lu, L. (2012). *The Impact of Social Networking Sites on the Adjustment of International Students*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester.

Year	Title	Author(s)	Journal	Volume
2011	International students in the UK: A review of the literature	UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)		
2010	International students in the UK: A review of the literature	UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)		
2008	International students in the UK: A review of the literature	UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)		
2004	Culture: The Anthropology of Cultural Change	Geertz, C.	New York: Basic Books	
1998	Communities of Practice: Learning with and through the Culture	Wenger, E.	Cambridge, MA: MIT Press	
1991	Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation	Lave, J., & Wenger, E.	Cambridge: Cambridge University Press	
1998	Positioning Theory: Learning to be a Teacher	Holland, D., Linstead, S., & Miller, L.	London: Routledge	



## Appendix 10: Summary of Each Participants' Month-by-Month Timelines

Participants	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Sofia (35 yrs)	Practical Organisation	Academic	Academic with some socialising	Academic with 1 UK trip	Academic	Academic with personal crisis (husband illness)
Shabana (24 yrs)	Period of assimilation (joining societies) Part Time job	Participating socially	Social immersion. Academic work	Academic	Family and academic. Acceptance for PhD study	Career achievement. Social life
Lena (22 yrs)	Worry/Settling in	Period of travelling and socialising	Emotional Upheaval concerning studying/exams, Family and relationships Trip to Pakistan	Emotional anxiety (unspecified) More travel.	More UK travel. Project deadlines	Conflict & Fear. European travel.
Bena (42 yrs)	Agency to lead (election)	Socialising and organising	Trip to Pakistan. Academic	Travel and socialising	Leading and organising. UK trips	Academic. Self-discovery. UK trips
Fafa (26 yrs)	academic	Academic. Taking the lead. socialising	Leading role. Academic. Trip to Pakistan	Academic. Independent role	Academic. Independent role	Academic. Trip to Edinburgh.
Sana (25 yrs)	organisation	Begins participating in social life	discovers walking and coffee shops	Changes course option. Discovers documentaries	Taking the lead. Awareness of human rights and personal rights.	Academic inspiration.



## Appendix 11: All Participants' Timelines in one Table for Analysis

Participant	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Sofia (35 yrs)	Rented house Kids school admission Joined International Society. GP registration. Lake District.	Black Pool 1st assignment submitted	presentation assessment Shifted house. Assignment Feedback Lunch with classmates Illness Writing four Assignments Christmas lights Presentation Feedback	Submitted 4 assignments Second Semester started Leeds	Semester two classes Feedback on four assignments	Husband illness Research topic approved Data Generation began
Shabana (24 yrs)	Began classes and lab at Univ  Eid Ul Adhah Part time job Joined: Arab Society, British Asian Society, Islamic society and Pakistan Society  Started Arabic classes  Celebrated Halloween	Bonfire night and met a friend Islamic society Participated in a trek, where working as a cohesive group was paramount, overall enhanced my inter-personal and communicative competency  Miranda sings comedian at Manchester Academy  Watched the singer Kina Granis Live at Manchester academy	Immersed myself within Arab society events  Christmas holidays  Continued lab work and project experiments  Prepared GRE exam	Mum left to Pakistan  Prep for exams  Friend's visit  exam period  cosmetic scientist event at the university	Arab society event  Meetings with supervisors  Cousin left to Pakistan  Sister who is now pregnant arrived to the UK and stayed with me  Got accepted into the PhD programme in New York University - Abu Dhabi	NYU -Abu Dhabi invited me over to visit Abu Dhabi for one weekend (all expenses paid for), so I went to meet supervisors and students  Easter holidays took one week off and spent time with friends made from Arab Soc, we went Rock climbing, cinema and the fun outdoor activity Go Ape in Bolton
Lena (22 yrs)	New to UK University., settling down Accommodation concerns Changed course & Accomo. Halloween Night	Joined Gym  Leeds, York, London, Liverpool, Bath	Trip to Pakistan, family & emotions, comparative analysis Study plan failure. Exam anxiety and exam	New-year resolution, never coming true Alpha kappa Si Society. Choosing Dissertation. Visit to Buxton.	Project deadline & Completion  Valentine Day- Chester Tripping	Easter Break, Euro trip to Amsterdam, Paris & Brussels. Change of life plans. Fear of University ending.

	Friends, family, life.	Party, party & more partying. Pakistani society dance house.	Meeting friend Surprise news	Chester zoo. North Wales.	Scotland trip Daily Routine	Hating the discrimination. Increased love for UK University. Is it Bubble Life
Bena (42 yrs)	Eid Party in Sheffield Resident Election University Teaching style Bollywood society Attending Bhangra night Attending Devali night	Started assignment drafts Organized Pizza night Started my research Qawaali concert Bonfire night Christmas lights inauguration Chinese restaurant Buffet	Submitting draft of essay Trip to Pakistan The shrine of Bhittai Village tour Train journey to Hyderabad Visit to Rani kot. Submitted final assignment	Back to Uni Joined friends Celebrated friend's baby birth Visit to Buxton A trip to Chester zoo A trip to North Wales	Finalized my subjects Resident's Association meeting Organized Pizza night A trip to Scotland Got exam results	Visit to Bath, Stonehenge, Lullworth. Meditated on high cliff on Durdledoor. Finalized essay and dissertation topic Completed assignments London week Sheffield & Chatsworth Feedback from assignment
Fafa (26 yrs)	Master Class Essay Started Project Induction Joined MHS Grad. Society.	1st Feedback for Essay Bonfire with friends MHS Society Event. Became Class Rep.	Became official committee member of MHS Society. Wrote literature review Attended 1 <sup>st</sup> course committee meeting. Lecture Series A Went to Pakistan to attend wedding	Gave 1 <sup>st</sup> presentation  Started working in Lab independently	Spent all the time working in Lab independently Lecture Series B	Series B exam Edinburgh with friends Project update Had first tutorial
Sana (25 yrs)	Prepared monthly calendar of course dates and times along with other activities.  Enrolled in English Learning classes to familiarise with the assignment style and language, like critical thinking and reading skills.  socializing	University library visits to prepare assignments.  started participation in social activities  Making weekends visits around the city.	Started regular walk in nearby garden.  started trying different coffees and I have found my everlasting favourite Costa Coffee	Took a decision of changing optional subject with criminology to learn about more crime, victims, laws and justice, its effects on society etc Discover BBC iPlayer that has become habit to watch. Entertainment. Visit cinema with friend so replaced it with weekend movies and with iPlayer informative shows. watching shows based on travelling, history, universal science, old age crime series, Sherlock homes etc.	Participated in Ann frank workshop which.... pushed my interest towards history and human rights violation.  Started taking support on my assignments from student support officer that was very late but indeed worthy for the next assignments.	Started reading one book that had helped me to choose my dissertation topic and it has inspired me a lot.

## Appendix 12: Concepts in each participant's relational maps

Concepts	Bena	Fafa	Shabana	Lena	Sana	Sofia
<b>Marriage</b>	Marriage	Marriage	Marriage	Wedding	Marriage	
<b>Family</b>	Family	Family	Family	Family	Father	Kids
<b>Travelling</b>	Europe Tour, Edinburgh, YORK, Turkey, Himalayas,	Europe tour, World tour		Traveling	Tourism	Visiting Places
<b>Academic</b>	PGCE, Dissertation, PhD	PhD, Dissertation, Publish	Master Thesis		PhD, Researcher	Dissertation
<b>Career</b>	Establish a school	Career as an Academic researcher	Work	Career	Lecturer ship	university job
<b>Accommodation</b>	Accommodation	Accommodation Permanent house		Mortgage		
<b>Friendship</b>			Friends, Relationship & Networking	Friends	Socialising with friends	
<b>Social pressure</b>	Making those close to me, proud of my work			What will people say? Matters? Shouldn't matter? Does it?  social fitting versus rational decision making		Worries
<b>Individual pressure</b>			Happiness Success Fitness,	Happy state, Lose weight, Life style		Excitements

## Appendix 13: All six relational maps of six participants

Marriage: Red  
 Family: Green  
 Travelling: Blue  
 Academic: Orange  
 Career: Purple  
 Accommodation: Brown  
 Friends: Pink  
 Social pressure: Grey  
 Individual pressure: Dark Brown (yellow highlighter)

All Participants	Centre	Nearest	farther
Bena (42)	Me (Marriage)	Family, PGCE, Europe Tour, Edinburgh, YORK, Dissertation	Establish a school, Camp at the foothills of Himalayas, Sufi Meditation in Turkey, Accommodation Search, PHD
Fafa	Me	Accommodation, PhD/job, Family, Europe tour, Dissertation, Publish research	Marriage, Permanent house, Career as an Academic researcher, World tour
Shabana	Me	Master Thesis, Family, Friends, PhD/ New work, Marriage Fitness/ work	Relationship & Networking, Making those close to me, proud of my work, Job, Children, Success, Happiness
Lena (22)	Me, Myself and I	Friends, Happy state, Career, Allah & family, Mortgage	What will pople say? Matters? Shouldn't matter? Does it?, Lose weight, Life style, travelling, Wedding social fitting versus rational decision making
Sana	Myself	Tourism, history, religion exploring different kind of knowledge. PhD to fulfil my father's dream, Ethnographic Researcher on social issues, Professionally Confident to join lecturer ship in any university	Socialisation with friends, Marriage
Sofia	Me	Dissertation, Visiting places, Shopping for myself and kids Purchasing gifts	Thinking about my posting in Pakistan, Planning to go back, Thinking to apply for university job in Pakistan, Thinking to search scholarship for PhD, Worries, and Excitements.

## **Appendix 14: My Narrative of Transition**

I belong to a religious family from Peshawar, Pakistan. I am the second eldest among six brothers and one sister. My father is a Ph.D. doctor.

From my childhood, I always wanted to be a doctor. I therefore opted for triple science at secondary school. However, in year eight, I became engaged as a consequence of the local culture of arranged marriages. After the engagement, my friends and others would say, you do not need to study, as you are going to marry soon. I however, made a commitment to myself that I will never fall behind educationally with my female peer group, even if I am married. In 1992, upon completion of year 10 of my education at the age of 16, I got married and went to live in my in-laws' house. At that time, it was not customary for women in my in-laws' house to study beyond secondary level education. Thus after marriage, the importance of education and thus books, having had great respect in my father's house, lost value in my in-laws' house. I remember, I would ask my mother in law, 'how is life?' She would reply, 'life is passing by'. I would say to myself, 'I don't want life to just pass by; I wish to live a life with purpose'. I, therefore, studied privately, outside the education system at home, following 10 years' studying of formal education. However, after sometime my husband and In-Laws gave me permission and in 1999, I passed my B.Ed and M.Ed exams with distinction from a government University. Afterwards, in 2003, I achieved a Masters' in Arabic degree in the first division.

The year 2004 was auspicious for me. In this year, God gave me a son, Muhammad. Also in 2004, I was awarded a fully funded Ph.D. scholarship to conduct my first Ph.D. indigenously. Whilst undertaking my Ph.D. I won an international scholarship to the George Town University in Washington DC as a visiting researcher USA for a period of 6 months. In 2010, I obtained Ph.D. on the topic 'a comparative study of the stories in the Bible and the Quran'.

In September 2012, I joined the UK University as a Ph.D. education student on a four-year program, which meant 1st-year-course work, with six courses in semester one and two. During semester two, I conducted a pilot study. To my surprise, my participant was lonely and homesick in the UK. She had time and energy, but was missing her family and was experiencing difficulties in adapting to living alone. Even though, her worries were very different from mine, she was equally struggling during transition. My pilot experience was quite positive, as it shaped up my research topic, from students' transition and social networking sites to students' transition and identity. After semester two, the University panel approved the ethical consideration of my research toward a Ph.D. and thus from

September 2014 till June 2015, I collected my research data longitudinally, at four data points.

In September 2014, when I went to the field to collect data, I faced a few issues in data collection. I was expecting data around struggle in academic adjustment based on my pilot study experience and my preliminary reading. However, to my surprise, at data point one; participants' narratives were highly embedded in Pakistani culture. These narratives were based around their position as a daughter and their resistance to social pressure. They narrated coming to the UK as a victory, and as gaining power and autonomy. They associated their victory with paternal help in Pakistan and envisioned a new status/ position for themselves in their family. Thus, data point one, added a new dimension to the literature i.e., international students' cultural context in academic transition.

In unfolding Pakistani family culture, I faced a huge challenge. I found that there was only a small body of literature that focuses specifically on female culture in Pakistan. Most of the literature on Pakistani women was under the topic of 'violence against woman'. Reading the literature, I experienced a self-dialogue, which I termed as a 'literature shock'. However, I ultimately presented female culture, with the available literature with the justification to myself that even though the cultural intensity of Pakistani women was mentioned at a higher degree in literature, one could justify that in real life cultural intensity varies among people based upon family, education, and the location of the individual. The review on female culture in Pakistan, satisfied the aim of the Chapter that was to bring to the reader, the cultural picture of what is perceived as an 'ideal woman' in Pakistan, so that the reader can understand the degree of acceptance or resistance of the participants presented by their transitional narratives.

In reflecting back to the journey of my Ph.D., I realised that my own life experiences were influential in the kinds of questions I asked and the relationships that I developed with the participants and this is an important part of the study that I have data that I did. I recognise that my approach to analysis shaped to my own subjectivities, that were the product of my past life experiences of being a Pakistani women. I recognise that the knowledge I bring or I have about female Pakistani culture may have informed the interview questions, how I approached the participants and how I understood their answers.

In conducting the research process, my reflexive position would always put me into a loop, which seemed to be in accordance to my coding framework, a sub-story of past, present and possible, that would take me to a resolution. For example, once or twice in the week, I would go to the park. Whilst in the park, most of the time, I would be in debate with myself in the past understanding (of the stories in the Bible and Quran') and present, (new understanding of the stories) due to transition, which would take me to a resolution where I would be telling myself oh! Although in Pakistan this verse means this but now I can see that this verse can mean that. Thus, I received another level of understanding on my previous interpretation of divine stories due to transition. I understood my position better when I read a quotation of Saint Augustine at the airport while travelling abroad in 2016. The quotation was: 'the world is like a book, those who have not travelled, has read only one page of the book'. It strongly gave me insight that my interpretation and understanding of the world / divine messages in the past was based only upon one page (that of Pakistani culture) but my present that in the UK culture is the second page of the book.

In 2015/16, I joined Social Theories of Learning group to improve my knowledge of the academic discourses. After being actively engaged in the theory group, I found the Figured World theoretical philosophy very interesting that is your identity is not only what other people tell you; rather your identity is what you tell yourself about who you are. Thus, I told myself it does not matter if people think 'I am good'. Rather, I started telling myself that 'well-done Haleema! I am proud of you'. You are doing very well'. I understood the power of self-appraisal from my theoretical framework. Thus prior to my Ph.D., I never thought of my own happiness. I would always think of my son's happiness, my husband's happiness, my parent's happiness, and even my sibling's happiness. However, after learning this theory, I started asking myself, 'Haleema, will it make you happy?' if the answer would be 'yes' and it would not be harming anyone else, then I would do whatever it was, otherwise, I would not. I realised I had no best friend. I made a friend, with whom I sometimes travel locally. During my Ph.D., I visited many places with my family and also my friend. Thus, undertaking my Ph.D. taught me that it does no harm to have time and happiness for myself, however, it sometimes make me think, have I changed and became individualistic to some extent due to transition to the UK higher education?

The answer come as, yes I am certainly changing. My personality is evolving. I am worried about the future, but I am certainly stronger than who I was in the past. I know the power

of decision-making. I know the power of telling myself, what I want to do and being decisive on it. Things are changing and are becoming better for me as an individual!