The Educational Experiences and Life Choices of British Pakistani Muslim Women: An Ethnographic Case Study.

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Abstract

This thesis is a longitudinal ethnographic analysis of the educational experiences of Pakistani Muslim women in a southern English city and the implications of these experiences for their later lives. It is a study of my own community: I the ethnographer/researcher have been a member of this community, and therefore 'in the field', for three decades as youth-worker, teacher, headteacher and active community member.   This experience has offered me unique access to study British Pakistani Muslim women's lives as I am known and trusted. Muslim women are a hard to reach group in research terms. I reflect on my own work and community experience across three decades, cross-checking my observations and memories with key informants (former associates, colleagues and pupils). I present data from in-depth interviews with 76 women, most of whom I used to teach; these interviews, conducted using life history method, elicited and clarified their memories of schooling and its consequences in their later life experiences. My research participants, mostly British born, are from rural-origin families in Pakistan whose parents first came to the UK in the 1970s. The result is a rich tapestry of data focusing on education and related family issues such as gender expectations and marriage.

This study breaks new ground in giving voice to adult Pakistani Muslim women who have experienced education, marriage and childrearing in families with strong patriarchal practices. I examine the nature of male hegemony and patriarchy as experienced by women from culturally conservative Pakistani families. I reveal some of the nuances of gendered power relations, with wives having to side either with menfolk or daughters, and women themselves trying to negotiate a route through conflicting pressures. I conclude that early marriages interrupt education; that transnational marriages can cause marital instability and divorce; and that family pressure and rigidly upheld traditions can lead to difficulties in women's personal lives. I draw (with some care) on concepts from social justice; Bourdieu's notion of the reproduction of class attitudes; Anthony Giddens' structuration model which emphasises personal agency, to explore how blocking young women's education damages their career prospects and family incomes. I argue that the process of struggle for change is complex; that agency is mostly gained through negotiation with families that often exhibit unhelpful culturally conservative attitudes; and that resistance is possible but challenging. I suggest that long-term appropriate

counselling and mentoring within the UK Pakistani community could provide an essential support for these women.

Key themes: UK-Pakistani female education, UK-Pakistani female careers, responses to patriarchy, Pakistani marriages, Pakistani family issues.

GLOSSARY

Urdu terms used by research participants, with their English translations

Abaya   A loose black robe worn by Muslim women to cover themselves.

Deen   Following Islam according to Qur'an and Sunnah.

Fitnah   Affliction, distress.

Hajj   Pilgrimage to the Muslim Holy city of Makka (Mecca) in Saudi Arabia.

Hijab   Head scarf Muslim women use to cover their hair.

Ijtihad   To derive and deduce religious opinion about some matter that is not
                   mentioned in the sources of Islam, keeping in view the spirit and overall
                   framework of Islam.

Inshallah   God willing.

Izzat   Honour.

Madrassa   Traditional Muslim schools teaching mostly Islamic subjects.

Namaz   Prayer.

Nikah   Muslim marriage contract.

Pathans   Tribal people also known as Pakhtuns, mostly from Northern Pakistan and
                   Afghanistan.

Punjabi   The language widely spoken in the rural areas of the Punjab.

Purdah   To hide, to cover.

Qur'an   The holy book of Muslims.

Rishta   Marriage proposal.

Sabr   Patience.

Salah   Prayer.

Shalwar Kameez   Traditional loose trousers and long top used by Pakistani women.

Sharam   Shame; or in a demure manner, soberly, modestly.

Ulama   Religious teacher.

Urdu   The language widely spoken in Indian Sub-continent by Muslims.

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Acknowledgments

Declaration

I certify that all the material in this thesis which is not my work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origins of the Research

There has been considerable research on the hopes and aspirations of British Muslim Pakistani parents and their school-going daughters for higher education and later careers (for example Basit, 1996, 2005, 2012; Haw, 1998; Shain, 2003; Bhatti, 1999). This thesis adds to this body of work by focusing on the actual experience of mature women, offering an analysis of the relationships between British Pakistani Muslim girls' aspirations, and their school achievements, higher educational experience and subsequent life trajectories. It provides a longitudinal perspective over three decades by presenting mature women's reflections on their own education and its effect upon their life choices.

My own positioning as a Pakistani woman and teacher has uniquely enabled me to access former pupils and invite them to reflect on the quality and consequences of their educational experiences. I have worked at the cutting edge of the education of British Pakistani Muslim girls and women since the 1980s and have known, and been known by, their families over three generations. This has given me an understanding of young British Pakistani Muslim women's experiences that would have been inaccessible to male researchers, or even to female researchers who are not already known and trusted, for I was embedded "in the field" for three decades as youth-worker, teacher and community member before undertaking this research. My experience has shaped my research questions concerning the relationships between educational aspiration, educational experience and subsequent life choices of British Pakistani women. It has also required me to be reflexive and self-critical, to check my memories and test my assumptions, to give open and fair hearing to the many voices within my research sample, whilst being careful not to impose my own views on them. I interviewed 76 former pupils, sometimes with other family members present. Often, my interviewees discussed many other issues besides answering my interview questions, because they knew me from school or because of my pastoral role in the community. My interview questions were open-ended (see the schedules in Appendix 2), but during the interviews the issue of marriage was a dominant theme,

described as an obstacle to higher education and as an impediment to embarking on a career. I explore connections between marriage and female higher education. In summary, this thesis presents the findings of a longitudinal ethnographic study that augments my historic observations gathered over three decades with in-depth life history interviews of 76 Muslim women from my community talking about how their educational experiences impacted on their later lives.

The start of my research story is my own late father in the Pakistani Punjab. He championed the education of his daughters, and of girls in general, encouraging me through school and university. He was a middle class air force officer; daughters in middle class families in Pakistan tended to be more likely to enter higher and professional education than girls from poorer families, freer from the socio-economic and cultural constraints associated with poorer and often socially more conservative families. I nevertheless had my marriage arranged in the usual family way and came to live permanently in England. I have one daughter who had an English education before marrying her choice of partner and moving to Pakistan.

In England, my first job was with the Centre for Multicultural Education in 1985 as a bilingual teacher. I also joined *Anjuman-khawateen-e-Pakistan,* a Pakistani women's organization that organized social events for women. This experience made me aware of the difficulties newly arrived Pakistani women were facing whilst adjusting to life in Britain. My own more liberal background had been very different from that of most of these women. I was particularly struck by the cultural conservatism that prevailed in decisions about girls' and young women's education, so I used the women's organization as a platform and became an outspoken and ardent supporter of better educational choices for Pakistani girls. I had no knowledge of feminism then but ardently believed in fair treatment and broader opportunities for Pakistani Muslim women. I also helped raise awareness of the domestic violence experienced by some married women. I resisted some of the cultural norms that underpin male dominance in my community and suffered some of the consequences of doing so.

I undertook a Master of Education (M.Ed) degree, writing a dissertation on language switching (1992). Through the support of the Masters teaching team, I was introduced to a senior HMI who helped me build a portfolio that granted me qualified teacher status. I then became a full-time qualified teacher of English and Urdu at the only state all-girls

comprehensive school (School A in this thesis) in the city. This school had a 30% intake of girls from Asian, mostly Pakistani, backgrounds until it closed in 2003. This closure led to an initiative from within the local Muslim community to open a private, low budget Muslim girls' school in the city (School B in this thesis). I agreed to be the Headteacher on condition that the school followed the National Curriculum and prepared pupils for GCSEs. Most of the pupils at this school had English as additional language; nevertheless the school's first GCSE cohort scored more highly than any other city comprehensive (see Appendix 3).

My teaching experiences heightened my awareness that patriarchal practices in many Pakistani families include early marriages before a girl becomes "too independent", which frequently curtail young women's aspirations regarding higher education (see also Falah and Nagel, 2005; Aston, Hooker, Page &Hooker, 2007). I have witnessed the long-term consequences of this for Pakistani girls from culturally conservative family backgrounds who struggle to find financial and emotional security in their later lives.

In my analysis and presentation of findings, I have turned in particular to literature by Muslim feminists, which I discuss in some detail in Chapter 2, for insights into power relations in the family to help to interpret my observations. In her pioneering book on gender issues in Islam, Leila Ahmed writes:"Family law is the cornerstone of the system of male privilege set up by establishment Islam. That it is still preserved almost intact signals the existence of enormously powerful voices within Middle Eastern societies determined to uphold male privilege and male control over women" (1992:242).I have observed that it is usually fathers and other men of the extended family who make decisions about young women's futures. In this context, I believe that education can give women a voice, an inner strength that will help them take up opportunities in life. As Swain on education as social action writes, "Education is knowledge and knowledge is the source of power ... it is arguably the most important source of human capital. It helps to develop critical competencies, skills, and disposition" (2005:1). This thesis is underpinned by my commitment to education for women, and in particular to improving access to higher education for women so that they can play more effective roles in their communities and in wider society.

1.2 Research Questions

This thesis addresses the following key research questions:

1. Is cultural conservatism regarding female higher education continuing, or has it declined over the years?

2. Have the girls I taught between 30 and 10 years ago been able to fulfil their aspirations, or were their hopes curtailed? In other words, have they been able to make genuine choices about higher education and careers?

3. What prevented these young women from entering higher education and careers after they had finished school? This breaks down in a number of sub-questions:

 i. Did teachers in effect block girls' access to higher education by anticipating failure, by assuming that there was no point encouraging a girl to go to university if she was going to have an early marriage?

 ii. Was it girls' own decision not to enter higher education?

 iii. Was there pressure from fathers, or mothers, or other patriarchs in the wider family?

iv. Did marriage inhibit or facilitate access to higher education?

4. How, looking back on their lives, do women now feel about these experiences?

5. What do women feel about their own children's education, particularly the education of daughters? Are women striving to promote higher education and career options for their daughters, or are they continuing the process of cultural conservatism regarding their daughters' education?

To address these questions, I chose a qualitative ethnographic approach, in which I combined a feminist-inspired auto-ethnography with interviewing as many as possible of the girls I had taught since the 1980s. Chapter 3 provides a detailed account, in the particular context of my close and continuing involvement as a member of the community that is also the site of my fieldwork, of my theoretical orientation, my research sample, the process of data collection and interviewing, and my strategies for ensuring the reliability of

my data and the validity of my analysis.   The rest of this introduction provides key details of the context of my research, of the single-sex schools where I worked a teacher and which my interviewees attended, and explains what I mean by "cultural conservatism" in family background, with particular reference to the notion of family honour (*izzat,* see Holý, 1989). The following chapters present and discuss my data, and finally draw conclusions and make recommendations.

1.3 The "culturally conservative" research context

While conducting this research, I was sometimes reminded of incidents that I had forgotten, in which I had played a part in shaping girls' futures by always encouraging them to aim for higher education and for useful qualifications. One 36 year-old former pupil who is now a doctor of medicine responded to my request for an interview saying "You will always be my inspirational light and of course it will be a pleasure to see you". Another woman, now 33 years old and a university graduate, told me in an interview that she had to leave school because the Head of Sixth Form had refused her permission to stay on to complete A-levels at school. I was really surprised and asked where she went, and what had happened next. She smiled and reminded me:

"Don't you remember Miss? I had to go to college but I was not happy there and when I came back to school one day to pick up something, you saw me and enquired where I was, and when I told you, you helped me to get back in the 6th Form in school again. It was because of you I finished my A-levels and went to the local university".

These examples illustrate not just my own role but also of aspects of the cultural and educational context of this research. My case study is a Pakistani Muslim community in southern England and the 76 women I interviewed are former pupils of two schools in which I worked as a teacher: School A, a state girls' school, and School B, a more recent private Muslim girls' school formed as a consequence of the closure of School A. Although the local Pakistani community comprises people of various socio-economic backgrounds and points of view, most are from unskilled and semi skilled backgrounds in Pakistan and few have professional backgrounds.

My sample represents the experiences of women in these lower socio- economic "culturally conservative" families because these were the families who sent their daughters to the schools in which I taught, rather than to the state co-educational schools or to other private schools in the city (see Abbas, 2007). I describe the majority of families in my study as "culturally conservative" with respect to their attitude to women's rights. Defining such attitudes to women's rights is problematic, for at one pole, a family might prohibit secular education for girls totally or partially, and at the other pole promote and encourage it.   More often these attitudes are defined as "traditional"; as Ahmad (2005) argues, the terms "tradition" and "traditional" are commonly linked with the gender relations and oppressive patriarchal system of the British South Asian communities. "Traditional", used in a negative sense, can give an impression of being non- liberal, anti-Western and backward. This description is problematic as "tradition" also has positive connotations concerning helpful cultural, religious practices and values. Orthodox and strict traditionalist Pakistani Muslim families can have liberal attitudes towards their daughters' education and their marriage choices, as some of my participants discussed. In other cases, families apply a rigid, strict and to my mind unreasonable cultural value system which is not rooted in Islam. Authoritarian attitudes towards their daughter's education and marriage choices was, in general, common among the families of my research sample. I describe these as "culturally conservative", as opposed to my own more liberal family background.

According to 2011 census data, the city's Pakistani population numbered about 5,000, from diverse regional backgrounds in Pakistan such as Jhelum, Faisalabad, Mirpur and Attock (see also Shaw, 2000:17). 95% of British Pakistanis are from the rural areas of Pakistan. Most found manual jobs in Britain in response to the post-war need for labour. "Pakistani settlements in various British towns and cities therefore developed in relation to local work opportunities on one hand along the distinctive lines of kinship and village on the other" (Shaw, 2000:39). Most families in my local Pakistani community are related to each other; each family group or "*biradri*" adheres to its own religious and cultural traditions. Some families are "Pashtoons" from the hilly Attock area, Pashto speakers (a language spoken in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran) who in recent years moved from northern England, to join relatives already established in the city. There was a fair representation of Pashtoon girls in School B (the Muslim girls' school), as this group

practises a stricter interpretation of cultural and Islamic practices regarding females. They run their own taxi businesses and prefer to arrange their sons and daughters' marriages at a young age linking with their villages in Pakistan. These are represented in my sample.

In the late 1980s, when first working with Asian pupils, I was oblivious to the make-up and the background of our local Pakistani Muslim community. I had a rude awakening one day when on the front cover of the local paper some self-appointed local community leaders were protesting about my "encouraging Muslim girls to join the permissive society" (only because we talked about arranged marriages and watched a Bollywood movie). The local Pakistani community was also critical of me wearing Western (albeit modest) clothes in school and not covering my hair. I remember once a father of a girl telling me that I should wear traditional Pakistani clothes (*shalwar kameez*) because I was a role model for the girls in the school and they will follow my example and might ask their parents to allow them to wear Western style school uniform. I calmly replied that I was a married woman and was practising my personal right with my husband's support. Later, some of my interviewees recounted how their mothers and aunties used to gossip about me and my Western clothes.

The relationship between socio-economic backgrounds, culture, family attitudes and religion in attitudes to women's education and women's rights is complex. The relative contribution of these factors is very hard to disentangle, but in this mix the notion of family "honour" (*izzat*) is a central theme. In a culturally conservative family, the concept of family honour has important implications for the activities of both men and women, for gender relations and for interactions with outsiders, including researchers (Ahmad, 2005; Husain, Waheed and Husain, 2006; Mumtaz & Salway, 2009; Kay 2006). Gossip can jeopardise a family's good name, so it is important especially for women to be seen to be appropriately behaved. Family honour is most powerfully indicated by the behaviour of women, in a system where practices of seclusion (*purdah*) govern interactions between males and females, especially after girls reach puberty (Holý 1989). This restricts what women can do, and what they are prepared to tell a researcher. Family honour is a profoundly significant conservative pressure, not just in Pakistan but worldwide (Falah and Nagel, 2005; Gangoli, Razak & McCarry 2006; Thapar-Bjorkert-Bjorkert & Sanghera, 2011). Pakistani Muslim women operate within the rules of family honour for to do otherwise may risk ostracism or worse, even death (Hamzeh &Oliver 2010). Families interpret honour differently, with different tolerances of variation in female behaviour.

Nonetheless, in general girls and women bears the weight of upholding family honour, such that so every precaution is taken to ensure that even the suggestion of shame or dishonour is avoided – by chaperoning girls, for example. Brothers will act *in loco parentis*, and families may prefer to send their daughters to girls-only schools to minimize the possibility of scandal arising from being in the presence of boys. Females are fearful of potentially damaging gossip. *Izzat* also has implications for the ethics of research, as I discuss further in Chapter 3: in brief, I had to take great care to ensure absolute confidentiality, to avoid any hint of gossip. I am the only person who knows the key to the pseudonyms of my interviewees and details that might enable identification have been obscured.

 In the early 1980s, many Pakistani families of lower socio-economic backgrounds did not favour their women going out to work, something which, they said, brought shame on the family concerned (Shaw, 1988). My own mother-in-law did not approve of me teaching, thinking that people will talk in the community and say "can't we look after our *bahu* (daughter-in-law)"? It was a typical patriarchal attitude of the local Pakistani community then which discouraged young women going into higher education and getting employment: there have since been changes in attitudes towards women's employment within the community.   One of the key objectives of this research is to explore how far these attitudes have changed over thirty years, and to understand the role that the changing provision of single-sex schooling in the city, from state-provided to a private Muslim school, may have played during this time.

1.4 Single Sex Schooling in the City

Today, most children from the local Pakistani community attend one of four main state co-educational secondary schools in the city. The local schools with high number of Muslim students normally try to cater for the religious and cultural needs of their students, by providing halal meals, bilingual teaching assistants and even allowing Muslim boys to attend Friday prayers in local mosques. There is currently no state-funded single-sex secondary school to which some Muslim parents would prefer to send their daughters, believing that within a single-sex school environment is would be easier to promote Islamic values and to prevent immodest behaviour (Haw, 1994; 2007, 2009; Shah, 2012;

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Tinker & Smart, 2012). Until 2003, School A was a state-funded girls-only comprehensive school in the city. This is, the school in which I taught until its closure, and where around a quarter of the intake was from a Pakistani Muslim background. The local Pakistani Muslim parents were quite content with the school and felt satisfied with the provision, and there was no discussion of the need for a Muslim girls' school. It was only when this school closed that the situation changed.

When the local education authority decided to close School A in 2003, despite a protest campaign, a group of Muslim parents and teachers decided to open a low-cost fee-paying secondary school for Muslim girls. This is School B, which was open for seven years. I was Headteacher from 2003 to 2008. I was initially reluctant to take up this role, for reasons that I discuss below, but I did so to ensure continuity of the education of those girls who might otherwise have missed the opportunity, by being kept out of school or sent to Pakistan. I insisted that School B followed the National Curriculum and entered the girls for at least ten GCSEs. Our hard work, for which we were seriously underpaid, produced better results than any other city state school over the same period of time (see Appendix 3). Always on a financial knife-edge, since many parents could scarcely afford the low annual fee, and with insecure governance, School B closed in 2010 for non-educational reasons. The reasons for School B's closure were very similar to those that Hewer (2001:518) describes: "Many such schools are small and have to exist in inadequate buildings with modest resources and facilities". There were no financial means of paying the teachers proper salaries and the buildings lacked basic and safe facilities. Our management consisted of just one man, "The Proprietor", who insisted on having complete control of every aspect of the school, which proved to be the fatal flaw in school governance. Fortunately, the fact that we had insisted that the school follow the National curriculum rather than an Islamic curriculum enabled the pupils to move back into the co-educational state school system – often with excellent GCSE results – when School B closed.

My decision to work here was not easy to make. In her book *Educating Muslim Girls, Shifting Discourses* (1994) Haw argues that Muslim parent's concern about the "apparently lax sexual mores" in mainstream schools and British society in general, makes many parents consider alternative options for their girls' education. In this context a small Muslim school providing Islamic and moral educational guidelines to their children, seems

attractive. However, the emergence of an increasing number of Muslim Girls' Schools has sparked political debate, pushing the issue into the public eye. Overt displays of Islamic identity by young Muslim women wearing the hijab (headscarf) and covering themselves in long dresses have been the subject of intense debate in relation to Islamophobia, especially after 9/11. Many have argued that mixed schools aggravate racial and ethnic tensions and do not necessarily promote harmony (Gillborn 1990, Troyna and Hatcher 1992). On the other hand, Muslim pupils face racism and discrimination in mainstream schools (Connolly, 2000, Crozier, 2009; Tinker, 2009; Shah, 2012; Ahmad, 2012), offering some justification for a protective educational environment.

Haw argues that the opening of Muslim schools constitutes a challenge to the British education system in that it "highlights the fragmentations to be found within and between the discourses of feminism and anti-racism/multiculturalism" (1994:2). Undoubtedly separate schools for Muslim girls are a cause of concern for many groups on the ground that they contradict the principles of feminist, multiculturalism and anti-racist discourses. There is even strong opposition to them within the local Pakistani community. As Haw (1994:11) emphasises, "such schools ... raise a variety of seemingly complex and intractable issues and do not have support across the whole Muslim community". Full details of the debate for and against Muslim girls' schools (see Parker-Jenkins, 2002; Short, 2003; Pring, 2005; Halstead and McLaughlin, 2005; Hills, 2015) are not directly relevant to my study, but provide some of the context for understanding my decision to work for School B.

The anti-racist lobby argues that separate schools for Muslim girls deny their emancipation, exacerbating cultural difference, discrimination and racism. Rizvi (2007: 264-5), who studied School B for her MPhil, provides some support for this standpoint by observing that "many parents who chose the Muslim girls' school primarily to help them manage their rebellious behaviour", that is, to relieve family concerns for protecting their *'izzat'* (honour), while girls themselves appreciated the restrictions thus put on them by their parents. She reported that some parents chose this school only to keep girls away from a "culture of boyfriends rather than for careers".

While I was very aware of this these motivations, I also knew that some girls would not be allowed to go to mixed schools in the city, thus depriving them of an English education and the opportunity to improve their social and financial conditions in future. I also knew

of some families who were preparing to send their daughters back to Pakistan and Bangladesh or to board in Muslim girls' schools in other cities. One of the girls from the first year's intake in 2004 said about School B, "This school was opened for me, it was the answer to my prayers because otherwise I would have been sent to Pakistan". Another said,

"My mum said this school opened because of our prayers. It opened just in time for me as I finished my primary school. My father was going to send me to Pakistan for high school and I didn't want to leave my mum. This was the answer to my prayers".

A further criticism of Muslims schools is that an "Islamic system of education brings out profound challenges to any idea of a 'value-neutral' concept of education... [and] raises again the question of the bounds of legitimate diversity that can be supported within a state-sponsored education system" (Hewer, 2001:523). I disagree with this view. The implementation of the full National Curriculum in a Muslim school is achievable, bringing in neutral values where these are deemed appropriate. It is dependent upon the management and trustees and their vision of the school. We had a clear vision to teach the same secular curriculum as that on offer in the local state schools, within an Islamic ethos and an environment that created better teaching and learning opportunities for girls. In this respect our Muslim school was not typical of Muslim schools in Britain. I modeled School B's curriculum on the GCSE offer of state schools, including about as much Islamic studies as a Catholic school would provide Catholic religious education (Burtonwood, 2003). Our pupils came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and each year group had girls from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Middle East, Iran, Sudan, Somalia, and White British Muslim girls. There was external pressure for us to adopt an Islamic curriculum akin to that used in *madrassas* (traditional Muslim schools), but we resisted and were never insular, emphasising that our pupils are part of British society and culture. I believe in Hewer's (2001:324) statement that "A fundamental objective of universal education is to empower the disadvantaged within society to avail themselves of avenues of self-advancement and thus improve their lot". School B succeeded in its short existence to enhance its pupils' educational experiencesand achievement, which can be measured by examination results.

1.5 Chapter Summaries

The rest of this thesis is set out as follows:

Chapter 2 examines two main bodies of literature relevant to the presentation and analysis of this thesis: the research literature on the educational experiences of British Pakistani Muslim, and feminist and Islamic feminist literature on the impact of patriarchy on the life choices of Muslim women. The first part of the chapter discusses gender issues relating to the position of Pakistani women within their ethnic communities; the impact of low teacher expectations and stereotyping in school; the influence of religion and culture; the nature of religious authority in Islam, and issues of segregation including the provision of secondary girls' schools. The second part discusses of feminist analyses of patriarchy, and considers how Pakistani social custom impacts on the social status of Pakistani Muslim women. Muslim feminist perspectives are diverse in their formulations and applications but consistent in operating within the basic tenets of Islam, which makes them especially relevant to my presentation and analysis. I also comment on the reactionary pressure found in *Madrassa* schools, and the need to foster in Muslim women the inner strengths to initiate change.

Chapter 3 discusses my qualitative methodology in detail. I use ethnography as my overarching umbrella, and within this include autobiographical observations on educational topics, reflection on living in the field throughout three decades, and in-depth life history interviews with 76 informants. I approach the analysis of data using open coding relating to Grounded Theory, and note a synergy between Grounded Theory and Phenomenology to contribute to a discussion on the nature of happiness in sexual and family life, and personal agency (and of course their opposites). The elicitation of memories achieves crosschecking, correction and reflection. This chapter addresses validity, reliability and triangulation.

Chapter 4 begins the presentation of the qualitative findings. It analyses data on gender and family relationships. I analyse forms of patriarchy, whereby males in the family make decisions which impact on women's lives, usually negatively. The mother's support can make a difference but usually is neither given or not listened to.

Chapter 5 analyses data relating to the experiences of interviewees on their schooling and progression after school post-16. The chapter is divided, describing School A, the state comprehensive school (5.1) and School B, the Muslim girls' school (5.2) since staff-pupil relationships and values differed between the two schools. The sections examine prejudice, careers education and guidance, home attitudes, parents' fear of losing control, and

negotiating strategies used to secure permission for higher education. The chapter explores the extent to which overall attitudes are changing.

Chapter 6 explores the consequences of marriage for education and careers of marriage, especially marriage arranged at a young age. In my sample, divorce has been on the increase, as is by marriage to someone of choice. Again this has implications, usually positive, on education, especially access to higher education. Women brought up in England tend to find that marriage to a husband from Pakistan decreases their educational and career opportunities.

Chapter 7 examines the attitudes of women who have been educated in England towards the education of their own daughters. The two main issues, on which there are differing opinions, concern single sex education and Muslim schools. This chapter ends with a discussion of the recent move towards homeschooling.

Chapter 8 discusses agency, in terms of the extent to which women are able to make their own decisions and control their own lives. There is an emphasis on negotiation within patriarchal families, and with husbands. The chapter emphasises that education strengthens female negotiations.

Chapter 9, the Conclusion and Recommendations, describes how I have answered my research questions, details my contribution to knowledge, establishes the boundaries and limitations of my research by reflecting on my methodology and the trustworthiness of my data, sums up my debts and contributions to theorizing, and finally makes recommendations for policy and practice.

Chapter 2

EXISTING RESEARCH ANDTHEORETICAL ORENTATION

2.1 Overview

British Muslim Pakistani parents and school-going girls reportedly have high expectations for girls' higher education and careers beyond the school years (Basit, 1996, 2005, 2012; Haw, 1998; Shain, 2003; Bhatti, 1999). Yet in practice certain groups of British Muslim women have limited choices regarding higher education, life choices, marriage and careers (Dwyer, 2000; Ahmad, 2001, 2003; Archer 2002, 2010; Hussain & Bagguley, 2007; Shaw 2013). The reasons for a gap between aspiration and achievement are complex; they include factors such as racism and teachers' low expectations of their pupils, as well as the conservative religious and cultural attitudes towards female higher education, marriage, and life choices that can be found within British Muslim communities.

This chapter sets out in more detail what is already known about these factors, their relative contributions, and their intersecting effects. I identify as central to this discussion the tensions between structural demands of a patriarchal culture, and the issue of female agency. I look for synergies between feminism and Islam through the contributions of Muslim feminists, particularly in connection with disentangling "religion" and "culture". I use the ideas of Muslim feminist to highlight the continuing efforts by Muslim women to broaden their choices within their communities, to strengthen my argument about the rights and status of Muslim women and to explore the complexity of gender relations and its effect on the lives of my research participants. In so doing, this chapter also establishes the broad theoretical orientation of my research.

2.2 Culture, racism and stereotyping

Studies of South Asian girls' school experiences show how teachers' negative expectations combine with family pressures negatively to affect girls' educational experiences, despite girls having high motivation and aspirations (Basit, 1996, 1997, 2013b; Haw, 1998; Archer 2002, 2010; Shiner and Modood, 2002; Shain, 2003; Ahmad, 2003, Bhatti, 1999, 2006; Crozier, 2009). Race, ethnic background and gender all play significant parts in

establishing patterns of educational choice among British Pakistani girls (Archer, 2010; McIntyre, Bhatti, and Fuller 1997). In other words, factors "internal" to the families and community, and factors "external" to it, such as racism and stereotyping, tend to combine in their effects on girls' educational experiences. It is nonetheless helpful to start by considering these factors separately.

"Internal" factors include cultural and religious considerations, which are often "conservative". Brah and Shaw (1992), for example, posit that Pakistani women's reluctance for employed work is due to heavy household duties. Early anthropological studies of British Pakistanis provide useful insights into the role of family and community in influencing girls' educational, marriage and career choices. These show, for instance, that gender roles are strongly differentiated, and women's roles tend to centre on maintaining social relations within the community, through extended family weddings, birth ceremonies, death and after death ceremonies and "laina daina" – giving and receiving presents (Shaw 1988, Werbner 1990). Ballard (1982) adds that South Asian families have traditionally focused ideologically on the "whole family" with little regard for individual liberties. Many participants in my study commented on the influence and interference of not just their fathers and brothers but also of family members such as grandfathers and uncles in the matter of girls' education, dress and marriage (see also Thapar-Bjorkert & Sanghera, 2011; Shaw, 2014). The family plays a pivotal role among British Pakistanis, as it does within Muslim communities generally (Menski, 1999; Baror, Bradley, and Fenton 1999), even as this role differs from family to family, because some families enthusiastically support their daughters' education and future choices, while others may not do so, regardless of their socio-economic background.

The early portrayals of British Pakistani Muslim family life have tended to be specific to families of particular social class positions and regions of origin in Pakistan. Although gender differentials pervade most Muslim families and communities, gender discourses vary from one section of the community to another, depending on class position, region and religious convictions (Ahmed, 1992).Nonetheless, media discourse tends to exaggerate "differences" from mainstream British society, particularly with respect to gender and marriage practices. Ahmad (2005) criticises the trend in popular literature to highlight the negative outcomes of British Asian arranged marriages. She stresses the importance of the South Asian family system for individual lives, the diversity of attitudes within it, and

process of continuity and change. She appears to equate any criticism of patriarchy with racist criticism of arranged marriages, suggesting that to critique the family as "a repressive and constraining structure" (p.278) is inherently hostile to the South Asian family system. She problematises terms such as arranged marriage (distinguished from forced marriage), *izzat* (family honour, shown as potentially flexible and dynamic), and *sharam* (shame, which depends on circumstances). She asserts that media hype does not match real situations, suggesting that most families behave honourably, even where marriage arrangements go wrong.

Recent studies point to changes in Pakistani women's life choices and family practices. Some of this is the result of changing socio-economic pressures. Abbas & Ijaz (2010), Thapar-Bjorkert & Sanghera (2011) Qureshi, Charsley & Shaw (2012) and Basit (2013b) document a change in the attitude of some British Muslim parents towards their daughters' education because of current socio-economic and cultural factors. Undoubtedly women's earning power has brought some changes in family structure, encouraging more nuclear family units where women exercise more control and personal choice (see Bhachu, 1999, Kabeer, 2000).

The research literature on the education of Muslim girls has been characterised by a "cultural pathology" that emphasizes the problems of living "within two cultures" and portrays girls as suffering from identity conflicts when attempting to juggle the freedom of Western life and education against an authoritarian, restrictive home life (e.g. Ghuman 1991). Disagreeing with this discourse, many writers such as Brah and Minhas (1986), Basit (1997, 2012), Mirza (1992), Brah (1992), followed by Bhatti (1999, 2003), Shain (2002), Ramji (2003), and Shah (2012) argue that Asian parents' desire to protect their daughters has been misinterpreted by educational establishments as "oppression". They move the emphasis away from the supposed helplessness of the Muslim girls towards girls' active involvement in negotiating their roles through complex struggles (Mahmood, 2004; Bhimji, 2009; Haw, 2011; Ahmad, 2012; Qureshi, Charsley & Shaw, 2012; McGrath & McGarry, 2014).

The dominant culture's representation of British Asian/Muslim females as oppressed has generated prejudice and discrimination in schools, and produced resistance strategies among school pupils anxious to defend faith and identity (Parmer, 1982, 1988, Crozier &

Davies, 2008). To self-identify as Muslim, as the women in my study did, has social consequences. There is a literature on western countercultural resistance starting with Willis (1977) on working class "lads" opting out of intellectual work to emphasise their masculinity. McLaren (1986) discussed resistance in a Catholic school, emphasising the ideological battles between schools and pupils. For my argument, this illustrates that implicit messages conveyed by teachers' attitudes, and teachers' low expectations of their pupils may negatively influence pupils' motivation (Basit, 1997a, Bhatti, 1999). Some of my interviewees described creative strategies through which they resisted the pressures on them, even using divorce as a coping strategy and negotiating access to further and higher education. Resistence is present, but can take unexpected forms.

In the 1990s, the analytic focus in the literature on Asian schoolgirls shifted to their "shaping" of Islamic identities, adding another facet to the racialized, classed and gendered identities that they negotiate in the context of their educational experiences, with parallel discourses on black youth (Shain, 2003). After the 7/7 London bombings, Muslim youth have been presented as "terrorists" and "fanatics" and against its backdrop Muslim girls have been seen as oppressed, thus strengthening the stereotypes about them. Dwyer (2000) speaks of the complexity of diasporic identities in which race and gender stereotypes intertwine. But where education is concerned, many studies show that the parents of Muslim girls are often highly motivated to secure professional status for their daughters, for example in medicine or law, although these aspirations are not always supported by the educational institutions (Ahmad, 1999; 2002; Basit, 2012). Archer (2010) blames teachers' low expectations and stereotyping for having a detrimental effect on Muslim girls' post 16 educational choices and employment prospects, an observation also highlighted in my study.

Despite their increased presence in public life (Ribbens, 1989), concerns have been raised about Muslim women's absence within high profile professions. Shiner and Modood (2002) examines the reasons why students of South Asian backgrounds fail to enter the prestigious universities and thus alter their long-term financial prospects, and labels this as institutional discrimination. Bhatti (2006) shows how students from low socio-economic backgrounds, including young Muslim women, attend lower status universities and, despite their determination to get a degree, find it difficult to compete with graduates from more highly valued universities. She is critical of teachers' low expectations of pupils from Pakistan and Bangladeshi backgrounds and argues that educational disadvantage continues

into colleges, universities and jobs. Thapar-Bjorkert & Sanghera (2011) agree that negative assumptions by teachers about Muslim pupils impede their progress through the educational system.

Additionally, Shain (2002) argues that patriarchal cultural attitudes put Muslim girls in an "inherently troubled and problematic" position by depriving them of educational opportunities. Archer (2010) agrees that their post-16 choices are limited. Abbas, 2003, Falah and Nagel, 2005; Aston et al., 2007 also agree that Muslim women do face cultural and religious restrictions when negotiating opportunities for higher education in their families. Bhatti's (1999) statement that young people from second and third generation of South Asian families do not want to be seen as "victims", pathologised or pitied is appealing. She claims that they are capable of making a place for themselves in British society, but still very much appreciate their families' support and enjoy a strong bond with the family unit. But then she questions whether the fact that young people live within the confines of their social class or "caste and community" affects their future life chances. This is the question I am investigating.

Basit (1995) when discussing Muslim girls' aspirations for higher education argued that alongside prejudice and discrimination by schools, "social class variables such as home background, parental attitudes and the education and occupation of the father and mother also impinge on a girl's aspirations" (p.47). But she notes that education is regarded highly among the different generations of British Asians, regardless of their social background and strong support from the extended family members is willingly forthcoming in raising the aspirations of the young people in schools. Education is perceived as a means of improving one's changes of upward social mobility, especially in the Asian families from lower socio-economical background (Basit, 2013b). I agree that this rhetoric exists and test it in detail through my data.

On higher education choices, Archer (2010) notes gender differences in the reporting of female agency. She (2010:367) found that her male respondents "located girls' options in terms of parental choices and the maintenance of 'traditional' gender roles, but the young women emphasised their own agency and choice in post 16 decision making" (2010:367). She confirmed that young Muslim men "tended to construct young Muslim women in passive terms as they argued that girls' post 16 educational participation is a matter of parental, not personal choice" (p.371), re-enforcing my findings on the role played by

patriarchal traditions in determining the Muslim women's educational choices. But she argues that lack of educational choices for Muslim girls should be not attributed solely to "cultural factors", but that women must be seen as "negotiating their choices within their specific British Muslim context" (p.372).Archer (2010) confirms the claim that most Asian girls say that their parents "wanted the best education for their daughters", commenting that "restrictions" are the result of parents' fears concerning educational environments, and not education itself. This resonates with Basit's (1997) point that within Islam "not too much freedom" is a response to arguments presented within Islamic feminism.

My study seeks to understand these interacting variables and women's negotiations of them with regard to Pakistani Muslim women of low socio-economic status, by focusing on their educational experiences, their successes and failures in personal and professional lives and their hope for their own children's education. I have no intention of extending the stereotypical view of patriarchal influence on the lives of Pakistani Muslim women. My study seeks to emphasise the diversity and complexity that exists within different sections of the local Pakistani community. However, I argue in this thesis that interrupting education for marriage would seem to suggest a misunderstanding of educational processes. I reject those analytical frameworks that suggest that Pakistani Muslim women need to abandon their cultural and religious values in order to achieve agency with respect to education and life choices. Numerous studies (Brah, 1996; Shaw, 2000, 2014; Ramji, 2003; Ahmad, 2005; Mahmood, 2001, 2004; Qureshi, Charsley & Shaw, 2012; Basit, 2013b among others) report various forms of agency exhibited by South Asian Muslim women. In this thesis, I take forward Archer's insight about the importance of recognising female agency in my exploration of the extent of masculine hegemony in the processes through which decisions about Pakistani Muslim women's educational futures are made. It is important to consider young women's struggles and negotiations to gain status and opportunities, despite the prevailing patriarchal traditions.

2.3 Gender and women's status in Muslim societies

I now widen my discussion to examine ways of conceptualising the relationships between gender norms, patriarchy and female agency in Muslim families, in Pakistan and elsewhere in the world. Within Muslim societies there exists a practical as well as "figurative curtain

separating the everyday worlds of women and men" (Weiss, 1998: 125) who argues that patriarchal power and control over women within a family comes from the perception of women as the responsibility of their male relations, and as "the repository of their family's respectability" (p.126). A woman has little agency or status as a woman, in her own right (Eltahawy, 2015) but has rights only as a mother, daughter, sister and wife.

It is against the backdrop of such observations that Muslim scholars and feminists have grappled with the issue of gender difference and equality in Islam. Discussing women's rights, Badran (2011) observes that the preservation of masculinist power in the 21st century creates conflicts for modern Muslim women and so a change in certain patriarchal practices is desirable. She argues that *"Ijtihad"* (Islamic independent reasoning) should be employed in re-reading the *Qur'an* and other religious books to "expose patriarchal interpretations and to advance more gender-just understanding of Islam" (2011: 232, see also Weiss, 2014).

Abu-Lughod (2013) strongly criticises the language used to advocate Muslim women's rights and counter patriarchy in Muslim families, arguing that words such as "choice" and "freedom" do not truly reflect the reality of Muslim women's lives. Such language presents patriarchy in negative terms, ignoring the complexity of women's social lives. She (2013) rejects the concept of universal gender equality by arguing that factors such as social class, racial prejudice and geographic locations differentially shape Muslim women's experiences. Kandiyoti (1988), Mahmood (2004) and Abu-Lughod (2013) emphasise that Muslim women themselves are capable of fighting for their rights, within their own heterogeneous social and cultural contexts of their lives, and do not need "saving" by outsiders who show little understanding of their geographical, religious and historical backgrounds. Kandiyoti (2000) and Mahmood (2004) agree that the social and cultural practices of gendered power in Muslim families can be contradictory as well as complementary. Kandiyoti suggests avoiding the concepts of "male dominance" and "patriarchy" opting instead for a broader analysis of "gender relations".

However, gender relations in Muslim households and societies are complex (for example Gangoli, Razak & McCarry 2006; Badran, 2006; Gohir, 2008; Verkuyten and Slooter 2007; Cheruvallil-Contractor 2012). Muslim men often justify their hegemony in ways that create inequality (Shaikh, 2005), and this is strongly contested by Muslim feminists (Mir-Hosseini, 2006). Sahgal and Yuval-Davies (1992) and Khan (2003) both agree that

women's "empowerment" by religion has limitations. That Muslim men exercise patriarchal power in order to have a significant influence over women's life choices is a common thread throughout the literature (see Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2012). The Human Development Report in Pakistan (UNDP, 2014) states that in South Asia, after Iran and Afghanistan, Pakistan is the third highest country for gender inequality (30.1%).Mumtaz and Salway (2009),writing on women's reproductive health in Pakistan, emphasise the incompatibility between the concept of women's individual freedom, and the gendered social and economical realities of Pakistani women's lives. They call for a more nuanced conceptualisation of gender inequalities.

Kandiyoti (2000) advocates avoiding binary thinking, such as in terms of religion versus secular, western versus non-western ideology and global versus local; it is only via a more thorough, methodical analysis that the complexities of gender politics can be understood. Family cohesion and assumptions constrain individual freedoms for women, but while younger women are normally supervised and guided by older women in a family, as they are considered more experienced and wise, many analytical frameworks fail to note that this also constitutes an important support network among women in a patriarchal system (Kandiyoti 2000, Shaw 2000, Qureshi 2013, Abu-Lughod 1993, 2013). I have reservations, however, about the extent to which female networks are supportive. Senior women in the family can also jeopardise the happiness and agency of the younger members through a patriarchal way of thinking. Wilson (2006) observes that while there can be a supportive power structure among women of the household, senior family women can assert patriarchal power over younger female members, for example on matters of marriage. As Shaikh (2005:148) observes, some Muslim women "have internalised the patriarchal dimension of the heritage and become its proponents"; others in contrast struggle against unjust patriarchal traditions affecting women. A support network beyond the family might be more effective and objective.

Mahmood (2001, 2004) advocates thinking carefully about how to conceptualise women's agency and gender relations in the Muslim countries beyond the set terms of submission and patriarchy. She argues that although some elements of the mosque movement she discusses were grounded in Islamic orthodoxy and male hierarchy, the movement should not be understood only in reference to patriarchal authority. For example, Muslim women in different countries have voluntarily taken on the veil for many different reasons, not as a symbol of patriarchal oppression. Mahmood invites her readers to understand agency as

not just as a "synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create and enable" (2004:18).She suggests that, as feminists, we should rethink notions of freedom and resistance and ask ourselves if our commitment to gender equality should allow us to expect the same from others. But it also does not mean that we should "abandon our critical stance towards what we consider to be unjust practices" (p.39).

Many people use a "separate but equal" ideology to discuss gender relations in Muslim communities, but Kandiyoti (2000) suggests that this tends to divert attention from how Islam can be used to legitimise certain practices that might be considered harmful to women in particular Muslim countries. Yet she also observers that while Muslim women tend to attract attention as "victims", they frequently reject the freedoms being pressed on them (see also Abu-Lughod 2013). Mahmood (2004), discussing Egyptian women, suggests that rather than expressing (in order to reject) the negative valuation of women by male domination, feminist strategy should consider possible alternative representation of women's experiences. She calls these different "modalities of agency" and investigates how two of these modalities, "suffering and survival", affect women's lives living under the pressures of a rigid patriarchal system. Women survive quite well, despite conditions of gender inequality in their communities. Mumtaz and Salway (2009) emphasise that women find coping strategies, finding safety and solidarity with other women.

My study explores the issues related to gender relations within a strong patriarchal and family orientated community where family obligations sometimes inhibited women's life choices (see also Brooks, 2003, Christie, 2009, and David, Ball, Davies and Reay, 2003 on family involvement in university choices). Yet most women found essential support and encouragement from their sisters and cousins within their extended families, and a strong and reliable friendship network outside their families, so they did not feel the need to be rescued by "outsiders" such as social services and other agencies and individuals.

2.3.1 Religion versus culture

Disentangling religion, politics and family is difficult. Bolognani & Mellor (2012) argue that the issue of religion versus culture has been insufficiently analysed: Islam does not deny women rights such as the right to educate themselves, and restrictive cultural

traditions are frequently wrongly identified as Islamic. Shaw (2000) makes a similar point about aspects of British Pakistani Muslim family life. Regarding Islam as a source of spiritual guidance cannot become an excuse for discriminatory practices justified in the name of Islam (Shaikh, 2005). Muslim feminists argue that the status of women in modern Islam in general conforms not to Qur'anic ideals but to prevailing patriarchal cultural norms. As a result, improving the status of women is a major issue in modern, reformist Islam (Ahmed,1992). Haddad (1998) notes that what is demanded in the name of Islam is not necessarily demanded by Islam itself and protections in Islamic teachings are often ignored.

Muslim feminists therefore base their critique on the *Qur'an* (Ali, 1983; Mernissi, 1991a, 1991b; Wadud, 1999; Barlas, 2002; Hassan, 2004; Badran, 2011). Hassan and Menon (2004, 2005), and Khan and Zia (1995) also argue that in many societies, local cultures and traditions, class and patriarchal principles override the teachings of Islam, and this explains the lower status of women in those societies. Muslim communities often relegate women to a second-class status whilst claiming that Islam elevated women 1400 years ago; but ever since the time of Prophet's early companions, cultural and tribal practices have been none too friendly towards women (Mernissi, 1991a). Ahmed (1992) argues that women's participation in community and public affairs became restricted with the expansion of Islamic empire, basing the new definition of marriage on male rights (1992: 62). Female seclusion was a consequence. She admits that though Islam has "instituted marriage as a sexual hierarchy in its ethical voice", there is another voice that stresses the importance of spirituality and equality of both sexes, regarding this as prescribed by the *Qur'an*, but this voice is often dismissed, and is not reflected in the political and legal heritage of Islam. Lack of educational opportunities exacerbates this situation in most Muslim societies. I am attempting to inquire through my study whether young Pakistani women today confront religious and cultural pressures similar to those their mothers faced.

Muslim feminists assert that the lack of social justice and equity concerning the place of women in society is a matter of local custom rather than the demands of the key teachings of Islam, notably the teaching in the Qur'an. Local customs differ from area to area, country to country, so differences for example between Indonesia, Britain, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are likely; equally there will be differences within countries influenced by social class, Islamic groups or denominations, and even personal disposition. This has also been true in Christian countries, including in the west. Equal rights and equal pay has

required hard-won victories. The men required to relinquish a degree of hegemony are not always willing in this process. Islam today needs to ask itself some profound questions about women including a rigorous examination of the *Qur'an*, hadith and legal texts, seeking to work out what is truly Islamic rather than mere custom, however deep rooted.

2.3.2 Patriarchy

Patriarchy (a concept pioneered by Millett, 1969) has been identified in feminist research as a key hegemony that controls women's freedom (Evans et al., 2014). Kandyoti (1988) argues that feminist writers often use the term "patriarchy" to describe and explain any form of male domination, but that this usage, in her opinion, fails to the culturally and traditionally embedded close relationships between the genders. There are, she maintains, "different forms of patriarchy" and argues women use different strategies to "bargain" with patriarchy, whilst living within the fully established patriarchal constraints. This bargaining is apparent in "specific forms of women's active or passive resistance in the face of their oppression" (p.275), constituting flexible bargaining strategies that over time reveal new forms of struggles and negotiations between genders. Kandiyoti thus invites us to examine patriarchy through women's specific cultural positionings and negotiations. I agree that an examination of women's strategies and coping mechanisms can reveal the nature or form of patriarchy associated specifically with their culture and class based practices, disclosing specific gender related rights, resources and responsibilities. This does not of course justify oppressive patriarchy.

Ahmad (2005) argues that "patriarchy theory" has limitations when used uncritically to explore British Asians' cultural and marital practices, for it fails to account for the diversity of South Asian communities but within the individual families (also McGrath & McGarry 2014). She warns against promoting the "colonialist inspired discourse of Western cultural superiority" producing "seriously flawed pathologized analysis of Asian women in Britain" (p.282 and see Mohanti, 1988, 2003). Mahmood (2004) asserts that any study of Muslim women risks being judged simplistically in terms of popular Western stereotypes, which is developed over the long period of colonialism. Westerners as "civilised" treated the occupiers of local cultures as "inferior", assuming that women needed to be "rescued" from oppression (Abu-Lughod, 2013).Mahmood (2004:197) argues that since feminists have a political perspective, they should tread carefully when seeking to understand women "whose lives contrast with feminism's emancipatory visions".

Ahmad (2005) further claims that patriarchal theory is normally regarded as a Western feminist concept and may not be applicable in other cultural contexts, a view Keddie (2011) endorses. The important point here is to acknowledge diversity and variations within patriarchal traditions, and in the case of British Muslim women, to explore how being exposed to new educational and employment opportunities in UK is enabling Muslim women to re-negotiating their choices and becoming active agents (Aston et al., 2007; Ijaz & Abbas, 2010; Haw, 2011; Thapar-Bjorkert& Sanghera, 2011; Qureshi, Charsley & Shaw, 2012; Basit, 2013b). It does not necessarily follow, however – as I show below in the discussion of Islamic feminism – that these women are seeking emancipation in their lives that is equivalent to the female agency to which western feminists aspire.

While patriarchal practices exists in many societies, I present evidence in this thesis that patriarchy – male domination – within British Pakistani Muslim families is a key pressure on British Pakistani women's freedoms and I examine the nature of this pressure. Bourdieu (1987) used the term *habitus* for pressures to reproduce past custom in the present and future: the pressures on young women to do what is expected come into this pattern. It is nevertheless possible to hold out and negotiate personal choices and opportunities with family support (Kandiyoti, 2000; Mahmood, 2001, 2004) – I offer examples of this in the following chapters. My study investigates how British Pakistani Muslim women are changing the cultural parameters to gain acceptance for themselves at home and outside, and I acknowledge that educated women from middle class backgrounds will have experiences that differ from those of the women from "culturally conservative" backgrounds in my study. I thus endorse the insight that patriarchal practices vary greatly among Pakistani families, and not all patriarchal practices are contested as having negative effects.

2.3.3 Custom, Agency and Habitus

Agency refers to an individual's ability to control their own actions and lives: "agents" act rather than are acted upon (Frank, 2006). Macmurray (1995, Conford, 1996) defined the "self as agent" as a person acting dynamically in relation to others, that actions of personal agency need supporting by friendly others. Ortner (2006) critiqued "practice theory", that is, the theorising of cultural practice – which encompassed the work of Bourdieu and Giddens, among others. She sees Bourdieu as offering an anthropological structuralism that is more concerned with the working of the macro or the overall structure, and with

how these workings are come to be seen as natural, than with individuals within it, whereas Giddens advocates a process model where structure and agency (free expression) influence each other. Bourdieu's *habitus* describes the impression of "just the way things are" though in fact there are "constant processes that naturalize them" (pp.78-9). People internalize structures which "incline actors to act, think and feel in ways consistent with the limits of the structure", which "establishes a range of options and limits for the social actor" (p.109). Subjectivity emphasises the people within the structure, the "acting subjects" who, with Giddens, are "knowing subjects", at least in part understanding and reflective. Therefore, for Ortner, assuming culture as homogenous is wrong, because individual responses within culture are important (pp.110-12). She argues for "a robust anthropology of subjectivity, both as states of mind of real actors embedded in the social world and as cultural formations that (at least partially) express, shape, and constitute those states of mind" (pp.127-8). The "agent" (the person making choices of action) is socially embedded, "they are always involved in, and can never act outside of, the multiplicity of social relations in which they are enmeshed", sometimes for solidarity, sometimes "within relations of power, inequality, and competition" (p.130-1). The interactions between agency and power are what she terms "serious games".

Bourdieu's (1986) concept of *habitus* (commonly accepted attitudes and behaviour), is relevant to my discussion of gendered differences in educational choices, as is his concept of "capital" (material/economic/social/cultural/symbolic) and the "reproduction" of attitudes towards "capital" over time (see Modood, 2005; Portes, 1998; Loury, Modood, and Teles, 2005). Commonly accepted gender norms constrain women's choices. Kabeer (2000:43-47), interested in agency, spoke of a middle ground in which structure meets agency, allowing possibilities for a range of responses within the limits of *habitus* (social acceptability). Women therefore have room to negotiate, albeit within broad cultural expectations (Butler, 1990). *Habitus* is unspoken, unwritten, so can be rewritten over time and circumstance. *Habitus* representing *structure* and *agency* representing *dynamic process* intertwine on a continuum. In education terms, however, the reluctance to engage with education that Bourdieu found for white French working classes is different in ethnic minorities, where parents often push their children to succeed. Modood (2004 and 2012) coined the term "ethnic capital" as a combination of cultural and social capital to explain why working class ethnic minorities pushed their children educationally. I explore below how this played out in my sample.

In Pakistan, patriarchy is the norm (Khan and Zia, 1995; Hasan with Menon, 2004, 2005; Gangoli, Razak & McCarry, 2006; Aston et al., 2007; UNDP Human Development Report Pakistan, 2014). Many Pakistani women have little choice but to accept the decisions made for them by their fathers, brothers, husbands and other male relatives in the hierarchy, making the struggle for agency particularly difficult. Kabeer (2000) argues that such women use various concealed ways to secure their own interests while still complying with cultural traditions and constraints. She suggests that despite having covert bargaining power, in reality such women are unlikely to achieve outcomes that reflect their own individual interests.

Ahern (2010) argues that the probability of agentic change is quite low as "individuals will be predisposed to think and act in a manner that reproduces the existing system of inequalities" (2010:32), reminding us of the constraints on a person's thoughts and actions, and thus on the hope of resistance or social change. On the other hand, Michel Certeau suggests, and I agree, that ordinary people employ strategies "to carve out a semi-independent domain of practice within the constraints placed upon them by the powerful" (Ahern, 2010:33). Giddens (1984) argues that power is constantly changing as a result of challenges by the subordinate groups.

In patriarchy, men dominate, they have 'hegemony' – a term was used in the 1930s by the Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1971, 1999) focusing on the hegemony of the Christian Catholic church in Italy in society and politics. Those with power will always try to maintain power and resist 'empowering' the disempowered. This has been applied in a variety of ideological situations, to many disempowered groups, including women. Feminists focus on the struggle against male hegemonic patriarchal power (Cook and Fonow, 1990; Morley, 1996; Bourdieu, 2001). In this thesis, I am interested in how Pakistani women negotiate more agency and opportunities within their families and communities, not necessarily rebelling but working within family structures (Basit, 1997; Shaw, 2000, 2014; Bhatti, 2006; Abu-Lughod, 1993, 2013). Parker-Jenkins and Haw (1996, 1998) agreed that Muslim girls' wanted equality only within the boundaries of Islam. Fighting against the status quo is a big task: my data enables me to find mechanisms of empowerment and agency and its opposite.

2.4 The rise of Islamic feminism

Since the mid-nineteenth century, many Muslim scholars have questioned the legal and social restrictions on women in Islam, especially concerning education, seclusion and *purdah* (veiling), thus strengthening the argument of Muslim feminists. Ali (2003) argues that Muslim women had greater social visibility and more economic and social powers during the Prophet's lifetime. The historical account shows that women enjoyed a status during the early years of Islam that was later undermined when women were restricted to domestic life, and that the subordination and unfair treatment of Muslim women is the outcome of socio-economic changes in different Muslim societies (Ahmed,1992).

To assess the status of the Islamic Feminist movements, and of the status and conditions of Muslim women, across the Muslim world is impossible, given the vastness of the geographic area (King, 2009, Esposito, 1998). While Tunisian women have had legal and civil equality with men since the 1950s, women in Saudi Arabia are still denied basic civil liberties, such as driving and working in mixed environment, and in Pakistan women are still being killed in the name of cultural traditions. Today's Islamic Feminist movement is a reaction, in the postmodern world, to conservative Islamic society where male elite and fundamentalist religious scholars use their position to interpret Islam to propagate their own agendas (Mernissi, 1991a). Most Muslim women view their religion as their champion and strength, in contrast to the Western Feminist movement where religion is viewed as a chief enemy of progress (Barlas, 2002, 2008; Hassan, 2004; Badran, 2006; Mir-Hosseini, 2006).

Islamic feminism emerged from 'political Islam' as a response in different Muslim states to the return to Shariah laws, to classical texts, to restrictive laws about women, and to ignoring various laws advantageous to women (Haddad, 1998). Muslim women started asking questions about justice and equality for Muslim women (Mir-Hosseini, 2006; Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2012). Activists then brought classical teachings of Islam, Tafseer and Hadith to the public debate, presenting alternative interpretations of foundational texts. Muslim feminists re-interpret religious teachings that have affected local custom in ways they deem patriarchal and discriminatory. They aim to encourage gender equity and justice for women within Islamic teachings properly interpreted (Al-Sharmani, 2014).

Islamic feminism is diverse, and Ahmed-Ghosh (2008) argues against homogenizing Muslim women through the lens of religion or extremist Islam. Western educated Muslim

feminists normally base their feminism on the human rights discourse (Jalal, 1991; Jilani, 1998; Moghadam, 2002, 2003; Jamal, 2005; Hussain, 2010). For same Islamic feminists, their "strategy" of "re-interpretation" of the *Qur'an*, and critical reading of Hadith and Shariah laws, is based on the belief that the *Qur'an* – properly interpreted – does guarantee equal rights to women (Mernissi, 1991a; Ahmed, 1992; Wadud, 1999; and Hassan 2004). Hasan with Menon (2004, 2005), together with Khan and Zia (1995), focus on the local cultures of the Indian sub-continent and argue that patriarchy, not Islam, explains the lower status of women in those societies. These theorists seek rights for Muslim women within Islam "whether progressive, modernist, traditionalist, pragmatist, neo -Islamist or fundamentalist" (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008:103).Sheikh (2006) criticises some Muslim scholars who, while responding to the Western feminist attack on Islam based on inaccurate stereotypes of Muslim women, have "unwittingly become equally reductionist by romanticising the Muslim legacy is one that has unequivocally empowered Muslim women" (p.150).

Muslim feminist theologians do not consider the Qur'an the problem but rather its many interpretations (Barlas, 2002). The prominent Pakistani theologian Riffat Hassan questions the claims that human rights can only be discussed in secular terms, listing the rights ascribed to women by the *Qur'an*, calling them rights to life, rights to freedom, rights to justice (Hassan 2004). She recognizes the atrocities committed against women in Pakistan such as honour killing and discrimination against female children, arguing that these practices are un-Islamic, not found in the *Qur'an*. She hopes that socio-economic and political change in Muslim countries will enable a better understanding of the *Qur'an* that will result in a more just society.

2.4.1 Status of women in early Islam

Fatima Mernissi (1991) has argued that in early Islam women held a more favourable position than they do today. Since the early days of Islam, says Ali (2003:81), "women took part in war and commerce, practiced nursing and medicine, instructed the people privately and in mosques. Khadija the Prophet's first wife, was a merchant who employed the Prophet himself". At this time, women not only contributed to the social and economic life in their societies, they enjoyed social power, visibility and freedom (Mernissi, 1991). But, Ali (2003) argues, the Arabs who conquered new lands were greatly influenced by the social practices of those people which included the seclusion of their women, which then

applied to "only the upper-class Urban Muslim women during the Umayyad (661-750) and Abbasid (750-1258) centuries of Islam" (p.83).

Thereafter, the rights of Muslim women were permanently undermined. Restrictions were imposed on the role Muslim women played in the public life, and they were excluded from the major domains of activity in their society (Ahmed, 1992). The status of Muslim women further deteriorated in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries when the political and economic climate worsened in their own communities, and when men started to use and manipulate religion to restrict women's role in their societies until the increasing influences of the Western economics brought social changes to the Muslim nations. At this time, argues Ali (2003), some Muslim male intellectuals began to raise their voices in support of emancipation of women in their countries. This provided women with an opportunity to play a more active role in the social and political changes taking place in their societies. For example, the social and political reformers in Turkey and Egypt campaigned for the veil to be banned and for women to be granted more freedom. This social and political awareness of the rights for Muslim women took another turn when Imam Khomeini's revolution in Iran in 1979 gave rise to 'fundamentalist Islam'.

Ali (2003:86) writes, "We live in a male dominated world. Men make and break the rules. The fact that any achievement for women throughout the world has got to be either granted by or forcibly taken from men, is enough proof of international male dominance". If so, Muslim women can take courage from other women and continue fighting for their rights, for social justice and against those old patriarchal notions which contradict with the Islamic values (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008).

Badran (2006) argues that Islamic feminism aims to expose and eliminate patriarchal ideas and practices improperly disguised as Islamic, "naturalised in the religious guise, and to recuperate Islam's core idea of gender equality" (p.1), the equality which was radical in its day when it was introduced in the patriarchal Arabia by the Qur'anic revelation in the 7th century (C.E). She notes that Islamic feminism promoted women and men for whom religion is important in their daily lives and who strongly oppose the inequalities and injustices Muslim women are facing in the name of religion will also aid the enhancement of social justice and equality in the African and Asian Muslim societies.

The theoretical core of Islamic feminism is grounded in Qur'anic interpretation. "Islamic feminism is now an acceptable ideology and also part of the movement of 'Progressive

Islam', a term first used in South Africa 1990s" (Badran, 2006:3). She notes that Muslim women are actively engaged in new interpretive communities, producing important *tafsir* (analysis) on gender issues. These new Islamic theorists and interpreters include Asma Barlas and Riffat Hassan (Pakistan), Ziba- Mir Hosseini (Iran) and Amina Wadood (from South Africa). While these female scholars have commanded considerable respect in the international horizon and in the Muslim world, they have also been "discredited and maligned" in some Muslim circles, making it apparent that it is still very difficult to address Islamic notions of equality and justice for women with the "patriarchal, hierarchical, conventional, religious male authorities in most Muslim societies" (Badran, 2006:4).

Muslim women scholars claim that Islam gives them equality: that *Qur'an* gives a different message from the one given by orthodox religious and political leaders (Badran, 2006; Mir-Hosseini, 2006; Mahmood, 2004; Ahmed- Ghosh, 2008; Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2012). Mernissi (1991) considers carefully the contexts in which certain Qur'anic verses concerning Muslim women were revealed. She investigates the sources of Hadiths (sayings of Prophet Mohammed), which are often cited to legitimatize the subordination of women. Mernissi argues for more intellectual efforts in the Muslim jurisprudence to move the discussions about women's issues even further. She presents *Qur'an* Surah 33.35 as an absolute affirmation of the rights of women in the eyes of Allah.

"Verily, for all men and women who have surrendered themselves unto God, and all believing men and believing women, and all truly devout men and truly devout women, and all men and women who are true to their word, and all men and women who are patient in adversity, and all men and women who humble themselves [before God], and all men and women who give in charity, and all self-denying men and self-denying women, and all men and women who are mindful of their chastity,   and all men and women who remember God unceasingly: for [all of] them has God readied forgiveness of sins and a mighty reward".

However, women's rights in Islam have always been a contentious issue: religious leaders and the Qur'anic interpretations done mostly by men against the advocates of Muslim women's rights. Muslim women who challenge male hierarchy in the Muslim communities are always frowned upon (King, 2009), to discourage others Muslim women from raising their voices. I believe that Islamic feminist movement fits very well with Islam's original teachings, but Muslim feminists face tremendous difficulties when trying to reclaim their

rights, which have been erased by the tribal and cultural traditions. Most people (including women) in the Muslim communities are afraid to speak out, and be critical about insecure teachings relating to women that are taught to them by those considered more pious and knowledgeable *ulamas*, (religious scholars, who are always men) because being critical may be associated with being anti-Islam, challenging the very core of the faith, being named as a *kafir* (non-believer) and ostracized from the community (Badran 2011). This is more a matter of repression than reproduction.

The work of Muslim feminists fighting for human rights, social justice and equality is often ignored and discredited by Muslim men and some Muslim women, who have accepted patriarchal ideology (Shaikh 2005) berating liberal minded Muslim women as brainwashed by Western ideologies. I had to endure the same treatment from my own community in 1980s when I started working with Muslim women, providing them with the information and better awareness of the opportunities available to them in this country to make a better life for themselves.

2.4.2 Diversity among Muslim Feminists

Ahmed-Ghosh (2008) claims that Islamic Feminism is fragmented along the lines of "equity versus equality". She argues that Islamic Feminist scholars who are trying to prove that the *Qur'an* supports gender equality do not adequately deal with verses reflecting gender hierarchy in Islam. She suggests that these scholars may be being used by certain religious groups to convince the Western world that Islam gives equality to women when, in reality, women continue to be oppressed in the name of religion. Ahmed-Ghosh (2008) further argues that most Islamic countries have family laws that perpetuate a gendered family structure that can easily inhibit women's rights and choices, preventing women from accessing socio-economic and educational opportunities. On her view, in the current male hierarchy, the status of Muslim women will not change, though Western democratic systems do not guarantee gender equality for the oppressed either.

Other Muslim Feminist scholars attempt to establish Islam's compatibility with the emancipation of women, and it is somewhere between these two views that the reality of a Muslim woman's life plays out. Kandiyoti (2000) argues that women themselves know what is best for them but she suggests that even women at times seem to sacrifice their own welfare and rights for the sake of their families, or to ensure their own future prospects and security. We therefore need to differentiate between women's perceptions of

their welfare and interests and outsiders' perceptions of these issues. Kandiyoti adds that gender relations fluctuate during a woman's lifetime, making it possible for power and autonomy to be shared between the dominant and the disadvantaged. Therefore women's subservience to patriarchal traditions may provide them a stake in 'certain positions of power available to them'. This debate relates to my research with Muslim women as I try to discover the extent of patriarchal influences on women's lives and the different modalities of agency (according to Kandiyoti's framework of analysing agency) used to "bargain with patriarchy".

Fernea (1998) argues all women confront the tradition of male supremacy, not just Muslim women, but this tradition is being contested as women are becoming more aware and visible in the public sphere. She asks whether Islamic Feminism represents a "militant fundamentalist movement which denigrates Western methods to improve women's lives and argues [for] a return to older ways, where women are seen as centre of the family unit, staying at home, veiled and secluded from public view" (p.415). I discuss the responses of my interviewees to questions about these issues later in this thesis.

2.5 Influence of *Madrassa* education

McDonough blames *madrassa* education (strict Islamic schools) for damaging women's rights by providing a form of education "which requires familiarity with the many texts of medieval law and with the reasoning of those early schools of law. It does not however encourage re-thinking of the applications of the legal principles" (1995: 135). She also states that modern Muslims now believe that Muslims should establish the specific applications of the basic Qur'anic principles like justice and equality from different perspectives, looking at the different historic contexts. Swain (2005:105-131) sees *madrassas* for girls as a conservative process of reproducing traditionalist values.

Narrow definitions of Muslim women's subordinate role in society are transferred through *madrassa* education where men are trained to become *molvies* or *imams* (religious teachers) who will teach and preach through mosques and public gatherings, including the UK. The audience of these imams and scholars are mostly men, the patriarchs who accept these teachings as Islamic and non-negotiable, and then implement and enforce them in their families. I have attended a few women's gatherings where a female *aalima* (religious

leader educated in a *madrassa* in UK or from Pakistan) was invited to talk about Muslim women's role and responsibilities as a good wife, mother and daughter. These women were preaching the same material that their male counterparts teach. The audience of Pakistani Muslim women was very impressed and affected by what they heard. I was surprised to learn that a recent gathering in a local school hall had been organised by some of the younger women whom I had interviewed for my study (hence my invitation to attend). I feel that unless a more balanced view of Muslim women's rights and responsibilities is taught and presented through these *madrassas* and gatherings, patriarchy will carry on gaining more strength in the community and having negative effects on women's life choices.

2.6 Women's strengths

Marchbank (2000) examines women's strengths in their domestic responsibilities in different societies. Mernissi (1991) emphasises the independence Muslim women had in their own inner circles. Shaw (1988, 2000, 2014) also discusses this aspect of Pakistani women's life in Britain. While these strengths in women's roles are present in many Muslim societies, but Mernissi (1991) never states that these women themselves recognised their strength in the male dominated, patriarchal societies where men have always held the absolute power. Mernissi, Kandiyoti (2000) and Mahmood (2004) feel that women can utilize their strength within the family in public as well as in the domestic realm. Fernea (1998) agrees, suggesting that this hidden aspect of Muslim women's lives is overlooked by the western feminists, because of "the paradigm developed by male anthropologists, who when faced with the need to study a sexually segregated society and the fact that one half of the society was closed to their (male) eyes, implicitly judged that hidden half to be the less important one" (p.420). Shaikh suggests that rather than making sweeping claims about Muslim women, Western feminists should recognize and acknowledge the "necessary levels of complexity" (2005:151).

To tackle women's poverty, literacy, social class, domestic violence, use of veil and the appropriate interpretation of the *Qur'an*, Islamic feminists are adapting some elements of Western Feminism for their own social and religious purposes, and with a sense of responsibility towards their wider society (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008). This relates precisely to my research question as I explore the educational experiences of the Muslim women in my

study and the process of negotiation they have used to overcome the obstacles that have influenced their life choices, including patriarchal traditions. As I shall show, the Muslim women participants in my study espouse feminist ideas without labelling themselves as feminists. Being labelled as a feminist in the Muslim culture is not viewed favourably (Barlas, 2008, Contractor-Cheruvallil, 2012). Research from a feminist methodological standpoint should provide an understanding of women's experiences as women understand them (Ramazanoglu, 1989, 1993; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994; Badran (2011), which is then interpreted in the light of feminist conceptions of gender relations (Letherby, 2003). I have therefore drawn on the voices of Muslim women not only to describe what has happened to them but also to record and express their own opinions about issues relating to women in family life.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has reviewed a range of academic literature on the ideals and realities of educating Muslim females, on the influence of patriarchy practically and sociologically, on prejudice and low expectations of Muslim girls in schools, and on feminism and its "cousin" Islamic feminism. This latter diverse movement asserts the importance of women receiving more equitable treatment within the tenets of Qur'anic teaching, demanding a detailed open reconsideration of religious sources concerning women, and a separation of Islamic faith from discriminatory local custom and attitudes. This establishes ways of interrogating my complex data, for examining how a desire for female emancipation can play out within the mix of Islamic teachings and family values that British Pakistani Muslim girls and women must negotiate. Having established my theoretical orientation in this chapter, I explain my choice of ethnography as my main research method in the following chapter, where I also describe the range of techniques I used to achieve an accurate and trustworthy analysis of data drawn from three decades of working with Pakistani Muslim girls and women.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

In this study I use qualitative ethnographic research methods as these are the most appropriate for eliciting women's views and experiences, and I interpret my data with a critical feminist gaze (Harding 1987). As Oakley notes, "the appropriateness of the method to the research question" is critical (1998:724); choice of method should "depend on the topic and scale of the study in question" (Letherby 2003:87). I use an interpretative paradigm with critical theory, aiming to draw out the implications of my findings for improving Pakistani Muslim women's educational experiences and life choices (see also Basit, 2010; Cohen et al.2011: 31-45). This study does not claim "objectivity" in the way scientific objectivity is usually understood, such as by the experimental testing of hypotheses. My data are largely verbal, drawn from interviews with 76 former pupils as well as from my own observations and recollections from being "in the field" over three decades. I have thus been closely involved, the processes that I describe and analyse in this thesis. As someone who already knows the languages, attitudes and social mores of the sample group I have been an "insider researcher" while also remaining an "outsider" perspective because I do not share the cultural attitudes towards women and education that many adults in my researched community accept without question (see Chapter 1) and this thus minimizes the insider "halo effect" (Basit, 2010: 65).

This chapter sets out my research strategy, methods of data collection and data analysis. I discuss my use of auto-ethnography in the creation of fieldnotes. I describe how I recruited former pupils to be interviewed for this project, and detail the process of conducting life-history interviews and the ethics of the research. I then discuss my methods of data coding and analysis, reflecting on the advantages and challenges of interpreting narrative data. Finally, I describe how I have sought to establish that my data have descriptive validity and that my analysis and interpretations are valid, in the light of my commitment to a critical feminist paradigm.

3.2 Ethnographic methods

Victorian comparative ethnology – the study of non-Western peoples – entailed anthropologists going into "the field" to report back on so-called "primitive" marriage systems, myths, lineages and power structures. The results were "ethnographic", that is, largely descriptive, and based on observation, listening and reporting (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007), and were interpreting through the theoretical orientations of the time (Layton, 1996). Theoretical orientations have changed substantially since then (see van Maanen 1995, Layton 1996). Today, sociologists make extensive use of a range of ethnographic methods in studying modern societies. The purpose of ethnographic fieldwork is to observe what people do, ask them why, and to try to explain the "culture" that emerges – that is, the set of implicit values (e.g. Bolognani, 2007) – in analytic terms to illuminate human sociability (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, Hammersley & Atkinson 2007).

I used a range of ethnographic methods for data collection. I created fieldnotes from my own observations and memories as a form of "auto-ethnography". I conducted informal face-to-face interviews with former pupils and other key informants during the main phase of data collection. Less often, I gathered data from telephone interviews, emails, other secure electronic networking and occasional informal meetings. These conversations and interactions built up for me a dynamic picture of the lives of my former pupils and their families, constantly refined as others added information and interpretation.

3.2.1 Auto-ethnography and fieldnotes

To reconstruct as fieldnotes my experiences of being in the field over a period of thirty years and of my teaching in schools between 1987 and 2012, I used memories, written records, and conversations with former colleagues and pupils that stimulated my recollections, helped me recover lost details, and served to correct inaccurate memories and misunderstandings (Radstone, 2000). This reflective process of eliciting memories prompted further questions to be asked and conversations to be had. Reflective autobiographical accounts of personal life history are increasingly classified as "auto-ethnography" (Denzin, 2013) and as interpretive because of the emphasis on reflexivity (Steier, 1991).

My reflective observations were naturalistic, for they concerned the everyday functioning of the task of teaching, and in this way produced a form of "insider ethnography". These

observations would be very different and more nuenced as compared to observations that an "outsider" researcher might make should access prove possible. At the time of teaching, I was actively involved in living through a series of ordinary and critical incidents, sometimes at school, sometimes in the community. These incidents have a pre-history and post-history and are not isolated points of time – thus they are diachronic rather than synchronic. For example, a young woman undergoing a family crisis might turn to me – in my role as a teacher in School A, and Head teacher of School B – and return with updates several times over a period of years. I include some accounts of such crises, and their aftermaths, which give my account authenticity, to reflect the raw feelings of those involved, including myself as the participant-researcher. Auto-ethnography has become closely associated with feminist research (Bochner and Ellis 2006: 111), allowing the researcher to reflect upon inner feelings, beliefs and experiences, though my use of it is less intraspective.

There are dangers in using personal life history in research, though these do not outweigh the profound loss of not taking this material into account (Geiger, 1986). Goodson and Sikes (2001) root their research in teachers' biographies (in their terms, life histories). Personal history is commonly interrogated in feminist methodology (Letherby, 2003). Ethnography is also used in feminist methods (Skeggs, 1994, Millen, 1997, Stacey, 1988). Indeed, feminist research has been in the forefront of qualitative research because of their interest in women's stories, experiences and concerns (Harding 1987). Feminist research has also stimulated interest in writing about the self, whether through autobiography or auto-ethnography.

I have guarded against the dangers of faulty understanding and memory, personal bias, and unwillingness to challenge 'tacit knowledge' (Polanyi 1966) by crosschecking my memories and interpretations with teaching colleagues from my different phases of teaching, and by interviewing former pupils. Heeding Delamont's (2007) critique of over-introspective autoethnography, I have contextualised setting my professional experiences within a multi-voiced account using new data.

I am mindful of Stanley (1992: 128) when she says that "Memory is selective; paradoxically, a defining feature of remembering is that most things are forgotten". Memories are fallible, for when we try to gather together our recollections of the past, the

process in itself is highly selective (Ellis, 2004). Autobiography needs therefore to be reflexive and triangulated, openly discussed and challenged, with attitudes and values problematised (Oakley, 1992; Wall, 2008).An autobiography is not a chronicle but a journey in which past practice is put under the microscope and relationships are open for critique.

One problem of classic ethnographic fieldwork is to know what to observe. The insider researcher has at least not to worry about acceptance or language, and my study had a clear and manageable focus on female educational opportunities, careers and life choices. The women I interviewed often wanted to talk about much more besides what I report here, and listening to them was important to me for my understanding of the wider picture (see Ludhra & Chappell, 2011).In the analysis presented here, my analytical focus is on mature women's retrospective recollections of education, through the critical lens of my own theoretical orientation. As the title of her book, Malinowski's student Hortense Powdermaker (1966) used the phrase "stranger and friend" of the balance that the field researcher has to achieve: the outsider is a stranger and needs to become a friend, whilst the insider needs to become more of a stranger.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were my main method of data collection. These are commonly used for collecting qualitative data (Briggs 1986; Weiss 1994; Seidman, 2006). Basit (2010: 110) writes, "in-depth interviews are particularly suitable for case study and ethnographic research as they offer a multitude of opportunities to researchers to achieve depth". I found them particularly valuable, in that they allowed interviewees to make free comments around the issues of school effectiveness, motivation, support for pupils, ethos, empowerment and achievement, giving my participants freedom to be open about their experiences, empowering them to stay in control, reveal only what and how much they want me to know about their personal lives. It also gave me flexibility of having in-depth conversations with my participants but still following my own agenda and asking appropriate supplementary questions when required, and as Basit (2010: 104) explains, "the beauty of a semi-structured interview is that unlike a questionnaire or a structured interview, there is no need for equivalence for asking the same questions of all participants". I discuss the interview process in more detail below.

3.2.2.1 Recruitment of interview sample

To recruit mature women and invite them to reflect on their earlier experiences of education in the city since 1987, I contacted as many of the Pakistani Muslims among my former pupils as I could locate, and invited them to participate in this study. I contacted potential participants by phone, e-mails or social media. I explained the purpose of my study and assured the women that their identities would be protected. I also used a snowball sample technique (Morgan, 2008) whereby interviewees told their friends about my research, often through social media. Of the women I contacted, 5 declined the invitation to interview, by saying "if you don't mind Miss, could you please find someone else?" I knew these women well, and respected their wish not to be interviewed, though most of them do talk to me informally.

These strategies yielded a sample of 76 women. Of these, 46 were former pupils of School A (now generally in the 30-40 age range), 26 were former pupils of School B (now generally in the 19- 25 age range), and three were friends of women who had attended school B, and who had attended other city schools (see Appendix 1). Across my sample, most of the women who were now in their 30s had experienced state education, whilst those in their 20s had mostly attended School B, the Muslim girls' school, though a few had attended both.

I did not set out specifically to select my former pupils, since I wanted to investigate general experiences of schooling but nonetheless three quarters of my sample were my former pupils. Recruiting Muslim women for interviews about their careers, marriage choice and childbearing experience is difficult (Basit, 2010) and requires tact and patience to build trust (Ribbens, 1989; Roderiges, 2007; Hampshire, Blell and Simpson 2011, 2012).

The women who responded to my request for interview were all from lower socio-economic backgrounds, so I decided to focus on this demographic and not to attempt to balance it with women from professional families, since these women tended to do well in their personal and professional lives (Abbas, 2007; Basit, 2013b). My sample is thus purposive and focused, and my aim in selecting this group was to give these women the opportunity to voice their concerns and future aspirations for their own daughters, to enable social justice and freedom of choice to reach this particular group of women.

For both Schools A and B, I also interviewed some staff members: 3 members of staff who taught in school B (from the period 2003-2008) and two key teachers from School A (1987-2003), including the former deputy head. This helped to give a degree of confidence both about the memories of the former pupils, and for my auto-ethnographic account. I treated these as transcribed interviews.

3.2.2.2 Interview process

I first piloted my interview schedule with three participants. As a result I changed some of my questions. I also changed from using a digital voice recorder to using a cassette recorder with 90-minute cassettes. This meant I could offer to return the recorded cassettes to my interviewees when my research ended. I conducted all interviews in English. In some interviews, interviewees' mothers made comments in Urdu and Punjabi, which I later translated into English. Most interviews were conducted face-to-face, and the rest were conducted by telephone, and recorded (see Appendix 1). I followed a semi-structured interview schedule, asking women about their educational and post-school experiences as regards careers, marriage and childbearing (see the schedules in Appendix 2). Interviewees were asked the same questions with a few changes in wording as necessary, depending on which school a girl had attended, and her marital status.

Some interviewees chose to visit me in my home and I recorded their interviews in a relatively relaxed atmosphere. Some invited me to their homes, giving me the opportunity to talk to their mothers or husbands, and this proved productive in that they all felt more in control of the information they were passing on to me. One mother was very keen to stay with her daughter throughout the interview but this did not deter the daughter from being very open, at times implicating, even blaming, her mother when we were talking about issues to do with education and marriage. Sometimes I was able to interview two or three women in one of the women's home: these women had been school friends and they talked about what they remembered about their schooling – triggering each other's memories – and also about their plans for their own daughters. I treated these as group interviews and carefully steered these discussions towards the issues relevant to my study. On the whole I considered these to helpful ways of working.

I started each interview by telling each woman, to put her at her ease, that the interview is not "formal" but an opportunity for me to learn about her life since I last saw her, either in school long ago, or more recently. I asked questions designed to interrogate women's

educational experiences, to identify obstacles to education, gender roles and future prospects regarding the choice of schooling for their own children and women's emancipation. I sometimes asked additional questions to elicit more information about issues under discussion, but this depended very much on the women's responses. The interview recordings usually lasted between one to two hours but many women continued talking and discussing the issues afterwards, so to capture those unrecorded conversations, I wrote down additional notes whilst the memory was fresh.

Interviewing women on their personal histories requires openness and trust (Oakley, 1990; Cotterill, 1992; Cotterill and Letherby, 1993; Harris, 2002). Most of my interviewees had a good rapport with me and were open and confident when talking to me about their personal lives, having no hesitation to reveal all they wanted to. They seemed uninhibited by, or unaware of, the student-teacher relationship when we met, though they casually called me "Miss" or "Mrs T", acknowledging this by laughing that after all these years, "it is a habit to call you Miss". Some women had expressed caution before meeting me for the interview, thinking that I might disapprove of their current appearance, worrying, wrongly, that I might have become "too religious" (as I was required to cover my hair in School B) and might therefore be judgemental towards them now. Many women had changed, some becoming more traditionally devout than they were as schoolgirls, others removing their hijab and defying cultural norms. However I feel confident that both devout and less devout women felt comfortable with me when talking about their life choices and certain events in their lives.

I assured each woman about confidentiality, being myself very aware of the importance of each family's reputation in the local community. Being already a member of the community I was studying, with all the emotional involvement and accusation of subjectivity that this creates, I did not approach the interviews with a feeling of detachment. The women also acknowledged in their conversations that I was "one of them" by saying, "you know Mrs. Tenvir what it is like?". Often, their conversation slipped into Punjabi or Urdu especially when they were talking about the matters like the concept of *izzat* (family honour), community's pressure, gossip about girls and their mothers' traditional ways. Clearly they expected me, as a Pakistani woman and thus as an "insider" to understand the full meanings of such remarks (see Kallivayalil, 2004). Most of them remarked that they were only talking to me about their personal lives because they have known me for a long time and that I have helped and supported them in the past. This

"wider" position was very useful for me, enabling me to keep the flow of our conversations and obtain a deeper insight into the issues under discussion (Basit, 1997). Most interviews lasted between one and half to two hours, often continuing after the tape had stopped running. I also met most of the women on many social occasions after I had finished interviewing, so our conversations about the issues we discussed are in fact continuing.

3.2.3 Value of life history interviews

Life history narratives are valuable in research on topics that involve life experience, in which people's memories of events or circumstances, or their opinions of it, contribute to our understanding (Letherby, 2003). Usually, research is focused on a particular aspect of life experience. Using phenomenology, Moustakas studied loneliness, creativity and love through interviews (Moustakas 1994; Moustakas & Moustakas 2004). Feminist research focuses on aspects of life experience as a woman; my focus is to explore working class Muslim women's experiences of education and career opportunities alongside the pressures of family, marriage and childbearing. Previous research on this topic (Shain, 2003; Basit, 1995, 1997, 2005, 2012) has focused on interviewing school pupils who have aspirations rather than life experience. My research adds to this by focusing on how aspirations measure against later life experiences as mature women.

 Sandelowski notes, "A life history, or a self story or any other personal account, is still a story, a representation of a life at a given moment/stage, rather than the life itself" (1991:63). A life story approach gives personal narratives prominence. Whether or not interviewees remember events accurately is not important: witnesses to a crime or event fail to notice and remember even recent events and the same may apply to memories of the past. The object is not to recreate an historical timeline, but to examine underlying issues. As Stanley (1992) argues, although life story, biography and autobiography are standard feminist methods, a writer is not simply chronicling the truth but is expressing beliefs, views and assumptions.

Biographical data are therefore to be discussed and not necessarily taken as historically true, or as the only expression of truth (Stanley 1992). People project themselves as they want the world to view them, or as they want to view themselves. Their views might be negative, coming from lack of confidence, and the reader or listener can challenge this in discussion. To talk about one's own life in an interview is really to talk about issues, such as prejudice, discrimination, oppression and so on. Thus, biographical and

autobiographical accounts are ideological accounts, which reflects on everyday understandings, attitudes or behaviours; since auto/biography "encompass all these ways of writing a life ...[it] is particularly suitable ground for a feminist cultural political analysis to be built on" (Stanley 1992:3).

Discussing their uses of life history methodology in teachers' life stories, Goodson and Sikes (2001) comment that narrative information needs to be elicited by appropriate questioning, which in part is semi-structured and in part unstructured, since the interviewer has to follow the interviewee's flow. This biographical narrative is dynamic and develops over time. It involves dialogue: "A narrative is a joint production of narrator and listener, whether the narrative arises in naturally occurring talk, an interview, or a fieldwork setting" (Kemmis & McTaggart 2005:657).

Qualitative research in general, and feminist research in particular, aims to uncover the voices of the participants (Parr, 1998), allowing them to speak in their own ways (Stanley 1990; Maynard and Purvis 1994; Letherby 2003). Thus the concept of "voice" is important in my project, especially the seldom-heard voices of a hard-to-reach underclass of Muslim women who have concerns and opinions on the position of women in their community that are rarely articulated. These are concerns to do with women's status, freedoms, agency (as power or lack of power to change their situation), access to higher education, and their abilities or otherwise to transform the aspirations of their children.

The stories of our lives "bring order to our experiences and help us to view our lives both subjectively and objectively at the same time while assisting us informing our identities" (Atkinson, 1998: 122). Life story interviewing has become commonplace in educational research (Bruner 1997; Goodson and Sykes 2001). It is "an important means for finding out how we 'construct' our lives" (Atkinson, 1998:123). Research can be enriched when it draws on the unique perspectives of individuals, using their own voices. Writing of research participants, Atkinson comments, "It is through their construction of their realities, and the stories that they tell about their realities, that we, as researchers, learn what we want to from them" (1998:124).

"Experience" is not necessarily "truth" (Collins 1990; Brah 1992), as experiences are subjective; nevertheless experience is important "as a practice of making sense, both symbolically and narratively, as struggle over material conditions" (Brah 1992:141). Experience is both individual and collective as in individual biography or collective

histories, which enable us to see how groups are positioned in social structural terms (Brah, 1992). Life history research investigates the subjective meanings of lives, and examines the manner in which social and individual lives intersect (Fine 1994). My own life interweaves with the lives of my interviewees. Similarly Contractor (2013) weaves part of her own story as a convert to Islam alongside the stories of other Muslim women. In educational research, the collecting of life stories is a technique that enables silent voices to be heard, and hidden social and educational experiences while growing up to be articulated. As Mohanty (2003:231) points out, making visible otherwise obscured workings of power is key to developing a more inclusive and democratic vision of justice.

3.3 Robust data

Ortner (2006:127-8) advocates "a robust anthropology of subjectivity... within a world of wildly unequal power relations, and about the complexities of personal subjectivities within such a world" (see above pp.28-9). The process of interviewing itself was for me a key element of "reflection on action" (Schön 1983), because through it three decades of professional work were put under a critical spotlight. I have checked every detail in my data against criteria ensuring validity and reliability, so I can claim that my data are trustworthy.

3.3.1 Validity

Cho & Trent (2006) divided qualitative research validity into transactional validity (ensuring accurate data) and transformational validity (ensuring emancipation) before offering their own process model where these work together. Cohen et al. (2011:181-2) note that validity asks whether research really measures what it claims to. Validity in qualitative research, they note, lies in honesty, depth, richness and scope of data, and the range of participants. In my case, I would claim that the honesty of my research is in my a long term relationship of trust, with life history interviews providing depth of understanding and rich data, and using a broad range of research partners who though mostly former pupils, came forward randomly through snowball sampling. They list:

descriptive validity (accuracy of description),

interpretative validity (ability to understand undercurrents and less obvious details, and see through superficial assumptions),

theoretical validity (the extent to which phenomena are explained),

evaluative validity (offering critique as well as description),

catalytic validity (does the research lead to action?),

content validity (has the same ground been covered with each participant?),

respondent validity (reports shared with respondents).

I would claim that I have established each of these forms of validity in my work. I have already described how I checked the accuracy of my data by checking my memories with those of other participants. I have discussed how my positioning enhanced my ability to understand the less obvious details and to question superficial assumptions. My theoretical stance is discussed in Chapter 2, and articulated again in this chapter and throughout the thesis. In addition, Cohen et al. list:

generalisability (which can be local, regional or global),

transparency (can the reader follow the research process?),

honesty of responses (this includes the Hawthorne Effect where participants react differently because they have been sampled).

I would claim that many of my observations and conclusions are likely to apply in similar populations elsewhere in the UK. I have tried to make my research process clear and open. Since I have known the participants for many years and am trusted and offering support and anonymity, there is a strong presumption of honesty. On a few occasions I suspected evasion and followed up to discover the true picture. Since many participants reported real crises, of which I knew the background, there were few opportunities for exaggeration.

3.3.2 Reliability

I agree with the assertion that the idea of reliability only applies to positivistic research. I draw here on Cohen et al.'s list of "clustered" characteristics of reliability in qualitative research to comment on the applicability of each cluster of characteristics to my research:

dependability, trustworthiness, credibility, authenticity (replacing objectivity), honesty/candour (replacing verifiability: My long-term relationship with participants places the research process in the real world, representing an authentic relationship, a

naturalistic process. The transcripts are accurate and shared (by respondent validity) with participants.

stability, fidelity to natural situation, comprehensiveness, richness, confirmability: the research is embedded in the real history of the community over three decades; the findings can be confirmed not only by the participants but also by women in the wider community.

thick description, depth of response, context specific, multiple perceptions/viewpoints, emic participant voices, multiple interests represented: the multiple interests of Pakistani Muslim women are discovered, drawn on and evaluated specific to the target community.

applicability, meaningfulness to participants, generalisability , transferability: bring together a large group of female experiences is meaningful to other women in a similar situation. Its broader generalisability cannot be assumed but is possible.

replicability: in the narrow sense of me replicating the study with another 76 similar participants from this community, replicability is possible. However an outsider researcher may not receive honest and open responses.

3.3.3 Triangulation

I have emphasised that details have been cross-checked as far as possible. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 315) call triangulation "a check on data". Triangulation has a literal meaning in surveying, where it refers to checking coordinates. In educational research triangulation refers to methods of checking and confirming data. The purpose is to ensure that a singular subjective approach does not give a biased and false impression of the topic under investigation. Since ethnography involves observation, and that what is looked for and what is seen are both subjective, obtaining a range of different perspectives adds to trustworthiness.

My view over a thirty-year period offers the opportunity for time triangulation: data were obtained across time using a range of methods, a process usually referred to as methodological triangulation. These methods, detailed above, constituted observations over time and life history interviews. My observations across the three decades were elicited and confirmed in dialogue with former colleagues and pupils who were also present at the times being recalled. Appearing on Cohen and Manion's (1994: 236) original list as "investigator triangulation", this process might be more accurately described as "participant triangulation". This is similar to Basit's (2010:68) "sample triangulation", using a broad range of participants. A fourth form of triangulation I use is "theoretical triangulation", applying not just one theoretical model but looking at the data through feminism, class reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), structuration (Giddens,

1984), social justice (Freire, 1973, 2014; Arshad, Wrigley and Pratt, 2012, Griffiths, 1998, 2003, Griffiths and Troyna, 1995) and anti-discriminatory practice (Thompson, 2012).

3.4 Data Analysis

Fine (1994:22) argues that research involves 'carving out pieces of narrative evidence that we select, edit and deploy to border our arguments'. This requires the researcher to set out the research procedures clearly. In my data analysis, I began by reading interview transcripts many times to get a clear idea of the themes and issue emerging from the data. I then coded the data, using "issue focused" analysis, reflecting my research questions (Weiss, 1994). I used open coding first, to break down, examine and categorize data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Charmaz 2014). I selected quotes and extracts from my participants' narratives to use to establish and illustrate themes and issues relevant to answering my research questions. I tried to present differing points of views wherever possible, although some participants said more than others.   Five major themes ran through all the transcripts, with some additional themes. I read all the transcripts again in their entirety to ensure that them thematic analysis represents accounts narrated to me by my participants.

In a sense ethnography is a descriptive methodology, recording observations and transcribing interviews, rather than theory-driven. Grounded Theory encourages one's own theory to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Bryant & Charmaz 2010, Miller, 2000). I recognise Thomas and James' critique of Grounded Theory (2006), which emphasises the qualitative and interpretive nature of analysis, rather than theory construction. Nevertheless theories are always in the background, suggesting what to observe and what questions to ask. Blumer (1954) called these "sensitizing concepts" (see also Bowen, 2006) that provide orientation. In my data analysis, I used thematic coding, while opening the analysis to "sensitizing concepts" from critical social theory.

3.4.1 Concepts from social theory

I draw on Pierre Bourdieu's description of social class processes. Bourdieu describes *habitus* as an individual's expected behaviour. For Bourdieu, *doxa* (ancient Greek for belief, as in 'orthodox'), is the experience by which "the natural and social world appears as self-evident" (1977:164), a reference to implicit knowledge and values. Bourdieu argues

that individuals collect objects (and other things) as bearers of prestige and calls this "capital", which can be economic, social, cultural or symbolic. He describes a tendency for status and class to reproduce itself across the generations making it is hard for people to break away, and focuses also on the working of symbolic power, and its related practices.

This gave me questions to ask of my data. The wealthy who gain advantages from "purchasing superior" schooling (Basit 2013b) gain "cultural capital", while some Pakistani girls, by being deprived of opportunities for higher education, become deprived of economic capital because it is difficult for them to obtain reasonably paid jobs and careers (Shiner and Modood 2002, Bhatti 2006). In terms of the theory of capital, many Pakistani women will be disadvantaged economically, giving men greater economic power in the family. However, resistance is possible: many Pakistani families lacking economic capital use other social capitals to support the education of their children (Shah, Dwyer & Modood 2010, Thapar-Bjorkert & Sanghera 2011). A few participants in my study who were deprived of higher education by their families were working in different capacities in their children's schools in order to acquire what Bourdieu (1977) defines as "cultural capital'" so that they could support the "institutional" cultural and educational needs of their own children, which challenges social attitudes and expectations (*doxa* and *habitus*). My research looked for tendencies inhibiting change ("reproduction" in Bourdieu's terms) whilst looking for instances where the status quo is challenged allowing change to happen.

I also use Anthony Giddens (1984) "structuration theory", which balances social structure against individual agency as a constant social process in which structure and agency vie to find some sort of equilibrium. I explore whether Pakistani Muslim women are able to demonstrate agency in the face of strong pressures to maintain and reproduce a patriarchal family structure. Giddens (1992) explores sexuality though with western assumptions: the assumptions of Pakistani young women differ, since marriages are mostly proposed by their relatives, to men they might scarcely know, perhaps even at a young age. My concern in this thesis is to understand how this situation affects educational opportunities, and thus to test Giddens' analysis against a different social worldview. As much of Giddens' thought is described as "the middle way", I will examine whether a middle way between traditional and liberal mindsets is a useful departure.

3.4.2 Feminist perspectives

My methodology involves remembering my professional life autobiographically, with others. Memories of incidents in school and the community were elicited during the interviews, following interviewee comments such as "Miss, do you remember..". leading to a combined exercise in "memory work" (Haug et.al.1987). In Haug's project to bring together a group of women to discuss their memories of being sexualised, memories were discussed openly and new memories triggered by the discussion (Haug et al. 1987). The result was a group autobiography around the theme of sexual identity. Similarly, my interviews brought to memory both educational experiences and issues relating to it, again a constituting a form of group autobiography that everyone added to and triangulated. Since marriage loomed large in these discussions, it was at times a sexualised discussion.

In this way, I used a feminist perspective by encouraging them to reflect on issues in their feminine lives. I am not "essentialising" femaleness but discussing a group in a particular situation. Aware that "mainstream feminism" has been faulted for not considering historical and cultural specifications of women and therefore, for making generalization about "all women'" (Kallivayalil 2004: 536; see also Kandiyoti, 2000; Mahmood, 2004; Keddie, 2011; Abu-Lughod, 1993, 2013), I acknowledge the specificity of my own research community, as one section of the socio-economically, regionally and linguistically diverse Pakistani population in the UK (Shaw, 2000; Rizvi, 2007; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008).

Feminist theory draws upon the broader "critical theory", which explores how power is organized and distributed in society, and how institutions can lead to the oppression and mistreatment of particular groups of people or individuals. "Critical theorists are concerned with equity and justice in relation to issues such as race, socio-economic status, religion and sexuality" (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 633). Critical methodology relies on dialogic methods that foster conversation and reflection. This theorizing not only searches for what is disabling in society, but looks for ways of constructing with informants routes to empowerment, consciousness raising and politicization. Paulo Friere (1970, 2000) and his successors emphasized the need to raise awareness and political consciousness of the underclass through education (Shor & Freire, 1987).

 I am aware that in any good qualitative research, we seek the truth, but truths are partial, incomplete and complex. Schwandt (2005) offers helpful criteria for judging social inquiry

– the use multiple perspectives, asking questions about who is not being heard, and for society to learn something practical (Guba & Lincoln, in Denzin and Lincoln 2005:206). My analysis interrogates data from a critical studies' perspective emphasizing social equity in issues of gender dominating and race, class and religion. I link this with feminist research within which the focus on Muslim women would be a useful addition to debate. Looking at the issues and experiences of Muslim women and being part of those experiences myself will produce new knowledge difficult otherwise to access. Skeggs (1994) suggests that feminist ontology should access to the discursive positions of diverse groups, which very possibly may produce different versions of reality. She argues that male researchers do not regard their gender as an issue; my feminist agenda is explicit in focusing on the experiences of Muslim young women *as women*. Skeggs (2001) argues that neutrality has to be replaced by "conscious partiality" towards the oppressed and in their struggle for change. In this thesis I am interested in exploring how Muslim women may be empowered through education and careers to be able to change their lives. The rest of this thesis explores how far this change has occurred over the thirty-year period that my study covers.

3.5 Ethics

Applying critical theory sets the bar high for ethical research and this is my standard. Gossip in the local Muslim community, and the concept of family honour (*izzat*, see Chapter 1, also Holý, 1989, Halstead 1991, 1992; Shah 2011) make it extremely important to ensure confidentiality. I was often asked advice and entrusted with confidential information. Even before the current research started, I routinely applied high ethical standards, knowing that a person's life might be compromised through rash gossip (Thapar-Bjorkert & Sanghera, 2011).

The ESRC, covering research in education and the social sciences, declares six key principles of ethical research (Economic and Social Research Council, 2005): *integrity, transparency of information, consent, avoidance of harm, and freedom from partiality*. Other associations, BERA (2011) for education, BSA (2002) for sociology, and BPS (2014) for psychology set similar guidelines. To make my findings usable while maintaining confidentiality (Basit 2010: 56), I have used pseudonyms, even in my transcripts and fieldnotes, with a protected key. I edited location and family details to

protect identities, for example by not naming the schools and not specifying the number and gender of children, or the women's current places of residence. By listening to suppressed and ignored voices, I hoped that something positive may come out of this experience for all concerned, without putting anyone in any danger. Most of my interviewees already knew me as a teacher, and community activist, so trust has been built up over many years. I also have a relationship of trust with the older generations, and this was important in obtaining permission to meet young women at home with their mothers and siblings. Sometimes, interview discussions became quite personal, in ways that might be inhibiting and embarrassing to an outsider researcher, for example, when a younger woman blamed her mother for the fact that she married too young and was prevented from continuing her education.

To protect confidentiality, I offered all interviewees a choice of suitable venue for the interview, in their own homes or in mine. While conducting the few telephone interviews, I sought permission from the women for the interview to be recorded, stating that the recording could be stopped at any time during the interview; in three cases I paused the tape recorder because those participants wished for an item not to be recorded. I have not used data on confidential matters where it was not directly relevant to my topics.

Gaining women's full informed consent to participate in the research involved my securing women's agreement to share sensitive information about private topics. Researchers talk about "entering" and "exiting" the field (Letherby 2003) but in my case, exiting the field is neither a possibility nor a wish. I was aware that by encouraging personal reflection on life experiences may have unforeseen consequences for women in the future. Some of my interviewees have already returned for (non-directive) advice on their life choices, and will continue to do so long after the research is over. In a real sense, this research will continue long after the PhD is completed. In the spirit of feminist research, I have felt that my research participants should themselves benefit from the research process, and I enable this by continuing to allow women to discuss with me matters they feel they cannot discuss with family, such as marital breakdown, domestic violence, mental health issues or simply academic study advice (see Skeggs 2001).

Although the word "data" means information "given", research is a two-way process producing a relationship between the researcher and the researched. Peggy Golde's (1986) compilation of the work of female ethnographers suggests it is often natural for female researchers to want to "give back" in return. My interviewees told me about the worries and concerns that were affecting their well being and causing marital problems. I always listened and offered emotional support, spending more time than I intended. Researchers establish relationships with their collaborators and some of our interventions can be constructive and often have to give as well as take (Ludhra and Chappell 2011). If research opens up a personal reflection that later has consequences, the researcher cannot ethically remain unsupportive. The British Sociological Association (BSA) ethical guidelines explicitly discuss this. On the positive side, such research can begin a change process that, with support, can build up self-esteem and self-reliance.

3.6 Summary

This qualitative study uses ethnography as its overarching umbrella, within which there are autobiographical observations on educational topics, reflections on living in the field, and in depth interviews with 76 informants. I developed fieldnotes by combining substantive and reflective observations covering my three decades in the field, reconstructed through a process of reflecting on memories with key informants representing former pupils and former colleagues. This elicitation of memories, checked with others, corrected and reflected on, leads on to a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of events and relationships, and the complexity of interpretations. I approached data analysis using open coding relating to grounded theory and I have noted a synergy between Grounded Theory and phenomenology to contribute to a discussion on the nature of happiness (and discontent) in sexual and family life, and personal agency. I present the findings of my thematic analysis across the following ethnographic chapters

Chapter 4

PATRIARCHY AND MALE HEGEMONY

4.1 Overview

This chapter explores my interviewees' responses to questions concerning issues of authority, permission and consent within the family, with particular reference to decisions about girls' schooling and education. Women's responses demonstrate the existence of patriarchal practices in Pakistani family affairs, showing the balance of power is in favour of men within my participants' families of origin, and that this tends to shape decisions about girls' schooling and gender relations. Many women accept this hegemony without question. I also discuss instances where women use Islamic teaching, and the *Qur'an* in particular, to resist unjust patriarchal practices. I draw examples from women's responses to specific questions about who decided which school they attended as girls, and whether they consider themselves to be more assertive than their mothers in their marital relationships. I explore their responses as women seeking contentment and fulfilment. I recall a personal experience: myself, a woman approaching sixty: I had on occasions to demonstrate the approval of my father (now dead), my husband (not available in that situation) and finally my brother. If I had a son (which I haven't) presumably he would have come next, demonstrating that a woman's word has little value in a male dominated society. This ideology has enormous implications within the lives of most of the women in my study. I use my data to explore Mahmood's (2001, 2004) model of agency, discussed earlier (in 2.3), that female agency can exist within a context of male hegemony.

4.2 Gender hierarchy in the family

The topic of gender relations is controversial in Islam generally as well as in educational circles. Esposito explains that the status of women in Islam "was profoundly affected not only by the fact that Islamic beliefs interacted with and was informed by diverse cultures but also that the primary interpreters of Islamic law and tradition were men (religious scholars and ulamas) from those cultures" (Haddad &Esposito, 1998: xiii). The *Qur'an*, he argued, clearly maintained women's religious and moral equality with men, in front of

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Allah (God) but, reflecting the realities of the patriarchal society that they were living in, women were still regarded the responsibility of their men, taking on a subordinate role to men in their families. Qur'anic ideals and Muslim practices in the Prophet's life time do seem to have been more favourable to women than in later Islamic theology; as in all major religions in pre-modern societies, tribal traditions and practices had a profound influence on social attitudes and "reaffirmed a male dominance that perpetuated the inequality of women" (Haddad & Esposito, 1998: xiii).

There is a polarized view of Muslim men as fundamentalists or drug traffickers, and as oppressors of women in their homes and communities is an exercise of patriarchal power (Yuval-Davis, 1992; Macey, 1999; Ramji, 2007; and Cheruvallil-Contractor 2012). In this curtailment, control of women's life choices may be undertaken in name of religion. Later I discuss how the lives of Pakistani Muslim women can be affected by male hegemony. In contrast, the preferential treatment of Muslim boys in their families enables them to construct a religious and cultural identity with few restraints and restrictions placed on them. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) presented a more complex general model of gender hierarchy, emphasizing the agency of women and moving to gender democracy. I examine this through my data.

For many UK Muslims of South Asian heritage, traditional attitudes are still strong influences within the family. Ballard (1982), Shaw (2000), Gangoli, Razak & McCarry (2006), Aston et al., (2007), and Thapar-Bjorkert& Sanghera (2011) have highlighted two main features of such traditions: the gendered structure of family and its "collective" nature with little regard for individual choices or self interest, also outlining the privileged position held by men. These studies show how daughters and sisters are not considered as permanent members of the parental household because daughters are parents' responsibility until they get married, and then they belong to their husband and his family who then take on responsibility for them (Falah and Nagel, 2005). Many participants commented on the influence of not only their fathers and brothers when making decisions about their education and life choices, but also other extended family members such as uncles and grandfathers.

Haddad, discussing gender roles, argues that while "many continue to reassert traditional values and perspectives that promote the 'macho myth' of the strong, aggressive, dominant male, the unquestionable head of the household and leader in society, others are willing to

accept Muslim women's right to education and employment" (Haddad & Esposito, 1998: xvi). Badran (2011) asserts that the present political climate in the West is contributing to further alienation of young Muslims from Europe and USA in favour of conservative Islamic patriarchal hierarchy. Since recent Islamic resurgences, Islamists preach for the Islamisation of their society, believing that cultural dependency on the West destroys Muslim identity and *Ummah* (Muslim nations as a totality). Consequently, Muslim families often regard "protecting" women from westernisation as a priority (Falah and Nagel, 2005).

As a preface to the observations presented below, I reiterate that my findings are not generalisable to all British Pakistani Muslim women, because Pakistanis in the UK and in Pakistan socio-culturally and socio-economically diverse. My observations are drawn from interviews with and personal knowledge of women whose families are of lower socio-economic status, where fathers and husbands – with the exception of four younger British-qualified men – were in non-professional jobs and lacked educational qualifications, and who originated in from rural areas of Pakistan.

4.3 Influence of Patriarchy on women's life choices

Patriarchy and male hegemony influence family life with considerable impact on the life choices and chances of Muslim women. This is much in evidence in the lives of the women in my study, including in the decisions made for their schooling. In this section, I describe how it was mainly fathers who chose which school their daughters should attend, and their choice was made on the basis of gender. I discuss the disadvantages of gender-based decisions. I also discuss the mothers' role in decision-making in the family, and the extent to which the women I interviewed see themselves as more assertive than their mothers.   Although I conclude, in line with all other research literature, that patriarchy is a substantial pressure, I link this to the meeting (or otherwise) of women's educational and vocational aspirations, and their wishes for their own children are discussed in Chapter 7.

4.3.1 School Choices Made on the Basis of Gender

The older women in my sample (over age 30) generally reported that male family members made decisions about their schooling, preferring the option of a single sex girls' school.

The younger women who attended School B, the Muslim girls' school, reported the similar views about decision making at home, especially decisions about the choice of school in their families. Of the 27 interviewees who attended school B, most said their fathers or brothers sent them there, only four girls said that it was their parents' joint decision, and four said that it was their mothers' choice (of these, two did not have a father).

I noticed that it was mostly fathers who came to school meetings and to admit their daughters to School B. From my conversations with them when they brought their daughters for admission to the Muslim girls' school, it was obvious that motive for sending their daughters to this school was to protect the girls from Western influences. Very few mothers attended parent's evenings and my interviewees confirmed this observation in the interviews. Rizvi, (2007), studying School B, attributes mothers' absence from parents' evenings to language issues, but I disagree, since this was an all female environment and all the teachers were bilingual, speaking the relevant languages. We had about 30 Pathan (Pushtoon) girls, originally from North-West of Pakistan: Pathans in the local Pakistani community are considered strict about traditional Islamic beliefs and practices, often not regarding girls' education as a priority, marrying both boys and girls as soon as they turn 16. Many interviewees stated that their families were strict about sending their daughters to a single sex school and not mixing with boys. While talking about the choice of school, 34 years old Nina with two school-age children, said, "My parents chose School A, because my cousins went 'off the rails' so I had a lot of restrictions put upon me because of that. My mum was very traditional and felt I might become like them". 38-year-old teacher Sabeera is married and has two children from her second marriage. Her answer was typical:

"Because it was a girls' school and I didn't have any choice in going anywhere else. Whether it would have been good or bad, highly academic or poorly rated, the fact that it was a girls' school was a good enough reason for my parents to send me there. There was no other consideration, no other choice, the next school would be that girls' school".

She continued,

"Higher education was rare but it was normal for girls not to study and from all of us Muslim girls, myself and one of my friends continued into higher education, the rest went on to work or stayed at home".

Sabeera also confirmed that her father made all the decisions at home. 27-year-old Pathan Shahana, married with three daughters, gave a common and most popular reason for choosing the single sex school for girls, "Because my cousins were going there and also it was closer to our house and also they didn't want me to go to a mixed school. That was the only girls' school". Faizahad has 3 daughters in a local primary school. Her reply shows the pressure on girls to attend the single sex school and the difficulties she encountered when adjusting in a mixed working environment after leaving school.

"My parents decided I went there even though it was further than the other upper schools. If I had a choice I probably would have chosen another school. It was such a hassle because my brother had to drop me off and pick me up and when he couldn't I would have to catch two buses or walk half way and catch a bus. I think most Pakistani parents wanted their daughters to go to this school because it was a girls' school. I didn't really understand the pressure of this because I knew later on in life I would work in a mixed environment and meet different people. This made it difficult for me later when I did work because I felt uncomfortable and shy. It was harder to approach male colleagues and talk to them as I was not used to it".

I asked 32-year-old Freeha to tell me who chose her school for her:

"My father! Because it was a single sex school and he thought I would benefit from that, being away from boys. It made no difference if it was a good school or not. I wanted to go to a mixed school because my friends were going there. I knew that only Asian girls were going to the single sex school, because it was the same mindset, keep them away from boys".

Freeha comes from a large extended family. I taught the girls from these families and was aware of the fact that girls' education was not a priority for them and girls married as soon as they left school. She was the eldest and her father was very supportive, wanting her to be a doctor but when she didn't get the desired A-level grades, he really was very upset and gave up on her. This was a devastating blow for Freeha and she also gave up on education, (though she finished her degree later on).

Seerah, and Suman (ages 28 and 29), and Kauser and Humaira (ages 34 and 33) similarly said that their fathers decided their schooling and their mothers had no input in the decision. Talking about who made the decisions in her parental home and chose her school, 38-year-old Zainub answered, "My mum's friend told her it was a girls' school and it

would be better for us, but the thing is if you are going to do something bad you would do it anyway. My husband decided to send our daughter to the Muslim girls' school but only so she could learn more about her religion". Zainub is clearly influenced by her husband to follow his chosen life choices for his children; she didn't say what her choices for her children would have been.

Rukhsar, a modern-thinking 21-year-old young Muslim woman in the last year of her nursing course, who attended School B said,

"A respected man from our community came to our house and convinced my dad into making me go to this new Muslim girls' school, mum didn't really have a say in it. The women on my dad's side of the family are quite wild stallions and my dad was worried about me, my mum did say that I am her daughter and I won't be like them".

This young woman overcame many problems at home and twice gave up her education in Year 11. Malika, 20 years old and now a university student, said her father drove her to School B from a town 40 minutes away. She was sent to a Muslim boarding school first but could not adjust there.

"I came home in the summer holidays after telling my dad I didn't like it and when I came back, I wanted to go to a normal school but my dad wanted me to go to another Muslim school. Then it was against my wishes but now I feel happy they sent me there".

Eight other girls attending School B similarly travelled similarly daily from the towns beyond our city, showing how far parents were prepared to go to obtain single sex education for their daughters, for religious or cultural reasons.

An overwhelming majority of interviewees, from both schools A and B, stated unambiguously that the men in their families – mostly fathers but brothers and uncles also sometimes – had made the decisions about their schooling. This reflects the continuing male hegemony in evidence in local Pakistani families. Mothers were sidelined when their daughters' schools were chosen, and the sole consideration seems to have been the preservation of their family's name and honour (so also Shaw, 2000; Ahmed, 2005; Archer, 2010). Single sex girls' schools kept girls away from boys, to ensure the good reputation of the family; education was never on top of the agenda for daughters.

Decisions were also made to send girls to co-educational schools, but these are not contrary to my argument. Amna and Aseel (ages 19 and 20) both went to a co-educational school. Aseel commented that the decision was made by

"My dad mostly, but wherever all my relatives went, that was where I had to go, I had no choice if I didn't want to go there, If there was one (i.e. a Muslim girls' school) then yes, whether you like it or not, but when it closed no-one made an issue that you have to go to a private girls' school, but they did say keep yourself to yourself".

Amna added that although her Dad made the decision,

"I had a choice to go to Muslim girls' school or mixed comprehensive, I went to mixed school because I had relatives there and it was easier to adapt to. When you're younger it doesn't matter too much about where you go. It wasn't such a bad thing, because the fact that we already had relatives at the school made us more willing to go to that school".

It was the fathers of almost all the young women who went to the Muslim girl's school who decided to send their daughters there. However now that some of these women are married themselves, they express the hope that they will have more say in their daughters' education.

Of the women whom I interviewed formally, thirty-eight said that at home, fathers were the decision makers, particularly regarding girls' education, choice of schooling and options of higher education. Ten women stated that they themselves and their mothers had some power to determine their education and choice of school, nine women said their parents had jointly made decisions about their education, and three told me that their grandfather and their uncles had influenced their father's decision. This exhibits strong patriarchal influences on these women's choice of schooling and thus on life choices.

4.3.2 Other Males as Gatekeepers

A few interviewees mentioned that brothers, uncles and other male relatives had influenced school choices. Jabeen, aged 20, said that she would have never gone to the Muslim girls' school if given the choice, but her older brother decided that she would go to School B and so her parents followed his decision. I remember she was never happy in that school and always showed her resentment in different ways, as she recalled,

"To be honest, Muslim school was no less like than a state school. The only Islamic things we done there was prayer and a few extra Islamic lessons. Overall I enjoyed it. Most teachers were nice and all the girls I never got along with I realised after leaving year 11 that they were the good influence and the ones I did get along with were the wrong ones. The good thing was the teachers were strict when it came to studying, they made sure we got our work done".

The inter-related Pathan girls were brought in by their fathers to gain admission to the Muslim girls' school. They were often lively and academically good, but were not allowed to continue with their education after secondary school. Some were married in year 11 after their 16th birthday, even if that interfered with GCSEs. Divorced Pashtu-speaking 21-year-old Bisma remembered,

"My dad made the decision but actually it was my uncle. When I was in Bradford, I went to a Muslim girls' school there and my uncle told me there was a Muslim girls' school in here as well so when I moved over here, I went straight to this school".

Mirian, age 20, couldn't complete her education either. She told me.

"Thanks to you and the Muslim girls' school (school B), I did manage to get some GCSEs. I have always wanted to study further and become a policewoman so I enrolled in a course to help me to achieve my goal but when I told my family about it, they all objected to me starting the course. My brother said that I should forget about the education business and think about settling down with my husband. My father told me the same thing and even my mother took his side when he told me that the family will disown me if I started my education. If I didn't send my application forms within a week, I will lose my place in the course. I am so close to fulfilling my dream but my family is stopping me from doing so, this is why I want to leave home because no one is supporting or listening to me. I thought I will come and see you, you will understand".

This was quite a disturbing situation; I was faced with the dilemma of how to stop her from leaving home. We met a couple of times and worked on different solutions to resolve this issue. It was only two months previously that her older sister Shahana had been telling me that things are changing in their families and that women were more in control of their destinies,, but her younger sister's situation was contradicting all this, and all that she had said earlier. The patriarchal influence on decisions concerning women's life choices was again evident. I had seen this contradiction between statements and reality before, when talking to my participants about the extent of the power held by their fathers, husbands and brothers in their families (see Basit 2013b on intergenerational issues).

I asked Mariam if her brother who was married to an English woman, was more sympathetic towards her, she replied:

"Oh no! He is just like my dad and other family members. He told me that I was wrong wanting to study and not settling down with my husband like other girls do. No one has

asked me the reason why I don't want to live with my husband, they don't care about my happiness, their honour is more important, to bring my husband over here is more important".

4.3.3 Impact of Family obligations on women's education

Talking about the family pressures, particularly the pressure of arranged marriage, 30-year-old Alia commented, "I used to agree with my parents because I didn't want them to end up in hospital because of me. That's the reason I took a lot of things and in our culture, we do have that pressure". I understood that she was referring to the emotional pressure that parents exert especially on their daughters to get their agreement in issues like higher education and when arranging a marriage for them. This is the "patriarchal mindset" (Dweck, 2006, 2012), which Alia had escaped from. Carol Dweck's models of self-theory and mindset contrasts a *fixed mindset*, accepting the status quo unthinkingly, with a *growth mindset*, reflecting, testing, developing and renewing. Akhtar, age 32, informed me,

"My family wanted me to get married but the boys in our family were very dominating and wanted me to leave work and stay at home, I refused to give up work and they in turn turned down my proposal for marriage. I left school because of my father during my first year of A-levels, I wanted to stay and study but because of him at the time, I made a sacrifice because I didn't want my bond with them to break".

Akhtar is from a large extended family and as well as having nine brothers and sisters has many cousins. The boys were often involved with the police for public disorder and fights in school. The girls' behaviour was quite undisciplined and non compliant in school and Akhtar was the only one of them who showed an interest in education; but she was stopped by her father. "From a young age, I knew (like my cousins) where I was heading, our parents had set in their minds we would get married and have kids, that's it". She continued, "we all thought we would have no future so we didn't bother doing much in school". This mentality breeds an inequality that goes against the principles of Islamic feminism. This excerpt also indicates pressure being put on during marriage negotiations.

When I met 35-year-old Sana, for the first time after her leaving school, she told me she has a teenage daughter but after 16 years of unhappy marriage, had decided to get a divorce.

"My dad said I had to get married before I was 18, as he had already found someone for me when I was 13, so when I was 16, I thought what is the point of starting something in school or college if I would have to leave halfway through".

So she left school and her education, even though her father had studied up to college and her mother had done O levels. Deprived of education and future opportunities, she commented sadly: "I was never allowed to go out, not with friends, I felt isolated as my parents were strict with me, I didn't have any freedom at all and I accepted it at that time". This demonstrates patriarchal control almost to the point of *purdah* (seclusion of women). Shahana left school in Year 10 to go to Pakistan and I remember pleading with her father to allow her to complete her Year 11 and sit GCSE exams. When I reminded her about this she said, "I think in Year 10 I lost interest in education, that was the main year but I lost interest in lots of things because I knew I was going to be married next year". "Why was your education disrupted then?" I inquired,

"I left right before we were going to start our GCSE courses. What happened was (and which we don't speak of anymore) that three girls from our extended families had decided to run away from home, and as soon as that happened, our families thought we will get all our girls married off before they go off track as well".

This demonstrates a reactive patriarchal action in response to a family crisis. Issues of consent for these marriages are unclear, but the girls resisted and later demanded divorces. Shahana continued,

"They blamed it on the fact we had a lot of freedom and that we had gone to school but things have changed now. It's been three or four years when women in our families got control. Most of our girls got divorced apart from me, they refused to be bossed around".

The phrase "women in our families got control" is a sign of resistance. In some cases decisions made by fathers had very negative effects on the young women's lives. 38-year-old Farkhanda's father withdrew her from school when she turned 16, and refused to allow her to go out to work. She married soon after leaving school and has four children now, and a very abusive husband. Both she and her daughters are forced to lead restricted lives. Her husband went to Pakistan for over six months leaving her struggling alone with the children, being on her own, emotionally and financially. Her father wishes to bring her husband back to UK, despite knowing his abusiveness. She had tears in her eyes when she told me one day that she wishes every day that had she been allowed to complete her

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education, she could have looked after herself and her family better in their hour of need. Higher education would help Pakistani Muslim women like Farkhanda provide for their families. Muslim feminists like Mernissi (1987,1991), Ali (1983), and Badran (2011) believe that their religion grants them this choice, but cultural patriarchal practices stop women from having this opportunity to make better life choices for themselves.

The journey to Pakistan for marriage happened to several women.19-year-old Latifa was offered a university place near her home town. A bright student with excellent GCSE and A-level grades, she was taken to Pakistan because her father would not allow her to continue with her education. She told me that she rejected the boy her father had chosen for her in Pakistan and now she was going to marry to one of her cousins from UK. When I met her and inquired about her future, she had no plans to return to education. Nazneen (age 34) had a similar story,

"My father wanted me to go to the girls' school but I got into trouble and was kicked out of the school, I didn't study after [School A], I did go to another school but was shipped to Pakistan before I could take my GCSE exams and stayed there for 3 years and got married. I would have studied to be a solicitor, had the brains but no family support".

4.4 Power balance

This pressure on Muslim girls was even more evident in 35-year-old Khursheed's experience, which resulted in her leaving home and settling in another city with her husband. "I went to a girls' school because my dad made the decisions. He always made the decisions about our future and my mum just went along with it, whether it was the right or wrong decision", she reported. Akhtar said, "My mum was stronger but my dad made the decisions". Reflecting on the gender relations that had impacted on her life, she said, "My mum was stronger but my dad made the decisions and had the power, my mum always supported him". There is some contradiction here; many other women in my sample had similar opinions about the balance of power within their families. Aliya (age 27) for example, married with two girls, said about her father. "My mum had the power but my dad had the final say. My mum has always been very loud and forceful and my dad is very gentle and quiet, but still when it comes to the decision making, it is my dad". Shabeena (age 39) commented, "My dad was the educated one and he always made the

decisions, he would never let my mum make any decisions. She took his side and didn't argue with him. My father gave me the choice to go to a mixed school which was closer to our home but I didn't get a place there, so then I went to the girls' school".

There were however other arrangements. Nina firmly declared that her mother was the stronger partner in her marriage and her father allowed her to make all the major decisions. Nina's mother's older sister also lives in the city and has five daughters."What about your own family? Who is stronger in your relationship?" I asked. She smiled:

"I make most of the decisions which is good, but when it comes to our children, we both do. Our relationship is more loving whereas I think my mum and dad's relationship was that they were just married".

She also told me that she and her sisters felt freer after her father's death a few years ago,

"My sisters who are not married yet have become really westernised, they have degrees and go for clubbing and even drinking. I can't do that because my husband who is from Pakistan, won't like it, I have my limits".

Nina is a modern and liberal minded woman who had a strong mother but felt bound by the traditions when she was in school. She found more independence after her father's death and feels more in control of her life; but her husband from Pakistan limits her own actions. She talked about one of her cousins who decided to marry a local man of her own choice: disowned by her father, she is forbidden to meet her parents. This family is seen as a modern and liberal family in the local community but despite their image, the actions of their menfolk reflect traditional patriarchal attitudes toward women; Shaw (2014) also discusses these dynamics in the process of cousin marriage.

Faiza said: "my mum had the power, she made the decisions and my dad went along with them but if he totally didn't agree with something, then he would make his point clear, this is when she gave in". Her school choice was limited and the decision was made for her to go to School A, though she needed two buses whenever her brother or father couldn't take her to school. She remembered how her father was strict towards her,

"He wanted me to wear *shalwar kameez* (Asian dress) and headscarf which I didn't when I was outside, I did it in front of him and family. My dad really didn't want me to work, until I had to, meaning I had to work to bring my husband here from Pakistan".

Here is another pressure, the young woman funding her new husband's expenses and her wedding arrangements: Suman, age 29, claimed to belong to a very strong matriarchal family where women had the decision making power. She explained that the women in her family have been quite strong, even her grandmother was a strong lady. This may be rose tinted, since this was not the case in her marriage: she said, "But in my own home it is my husband who makes decisions but that just came naturally. I do like to have my say and luckily my husband is really understanding".

21-year-old Leila commented without hesitation:

"My dad always, he wears the trousers, although nowadays, it's women who do make the decisions more, even though islamically, it has to be the man who has the upper hand".

Leila belongs to a big extended family group in the city, at least ten households and their descendants, all related. This may be an indication of change in the direction of greater conservatism, but this woman and her cousins were not allowed to go on to further or higher education. When the Muslim girls' school closed, her education ceased. She told me that apart from one cousin (her father's younger brother's daughter) who was allowed to go to the local university, no other girl in the family has gone further than A-levels. Kandiyoti (1988) and Wilson (2006) argued that patriarchal attitudes are internalised by some women, who although strong reproduce and perpetuate patriarchy.

The dissonance between aspiration and experience could be destructive. Sana described her mother was the stronger spouse, yet it was her father who made all the decisions regarding her education and marriage. Her husband was controlling, and she recalled,

"I felt like I was going back in life instead of forward. It was like being a kid again, like you are not allowed to do this and that and it got to the point I wasn't even allowed to see my family, I feel like I was robbed of my teenage years".

When talking about her brothers and different treatment for them, she said, "It's a man's world, my brothers went into education because they could. They had arranged marriages but they were allowed to get to know the girls over a few years". "What about your marriage?" I queried.

"I was obviously the stronger partner because my husband didn't know English well so I did everything for our home and our business, I suppose he didn't like my dominance but after the few years when he found his feet and he did not need me, his attitude started to

change to a typical Pakistani husband, expecting me to do everything for him and acknowledge his supremacy".

Challenges to patriarchal practices are reported (Bhimji, 2009; Ahmad, 2012; McGrath & McGarry, 2014), but it is evident that negotiating personal agency is a constant struggle for many (Mohammad, 2005; Falah and Nagel, 2005; Thapar-Bjorkert& Sanghera, 2011; Basit, 2013b; Abu-Lughod, 2013). Kabeer (2000) commented that individuals have "internalised the norms and values of their society, so that the individual behaviour is merely a re-enactment of social norm", a good example of Bourdieu's 'reproduction' model. She also described how women are controlled by *'purdah'* and *'sharam'*.

27-year- old Shahla, married with a daughter, declared that going to a single sex school was her decision because all her friends were going there, but when talking about who had the final say, she was a bit coy, "*My mum understood my dad on a level*" (meaning she knew what he wanted and acted according to his wishes). I personally knew her parents very well, her mother coming from a village from Pakistan and uneducated, her father UK educated without any qualifications. What about her own relationship? Who is the boss? She laughed at my question, "Do I need to say Miss?" she said that she has the upper hand in her relationship, but during her conversation, hinted at domestic conflict arising because of it.

40-year-old Bina remembered that it was her father who made all the decisions when she was growing up because "it was in our culture then", but with her own husband, she declared, "things are different now, my husband and I jointly make decisions regarding family and children". Ironically, they arranged their daughter's marriage before she went to university in case she wouldn't afterwards agree to marry a man of their choice after finishing her degree. Haseena (age 28) who is unmarried and working as a teacher reported that her mother made most decisions, including the decision that Haseena should go to School A and then to university, but when it came to gender discrimination, she said, "My brother even now can go on holidays abroad but I can just go on day trips", she laughed.

Naz (aged 38), married with a teenage son, agreed that in those days most Asian girls were expected to go to the girls' comprehensive.

"Dad had the main job and mum worked part-time. In major decisions dad had the last word. Now it's equal footing, you have got the education, you can put your views across, things have changed from mum's generation to ours".

"What about you and your husband?" I asked.

"We have this debate amongst ourselves but I always look at it that you both got to make it work. I want my way regarding the way our house looks and things, but when it comes to major things, I like to leave it for my husband, that works well for us".

This was her solution to a successful marriage, acknowledging and accepting her husband's decisions in the matters of importance, although this particular attitude is not necessarily Muslim or Pakistani.

I asked 37-year-old teacher Sultana about who held the power and made the decisions in her parents' house:

"My father, my mum had no idea. She didn't defend us, she left everything on him because he had achieved so much. In my own marriage I made a lot of decisions, my ex-husband resented that I think. He wanted to keep me under his control. I think that because my mum and dad never really had a good relationship, that made a difference in my life I suppose".

Sustana's independence had caused and Sultana had struggled with depression after her divorce, but her confidence was returning and she was thinking about future positively. 39-year- old Shabeena still lived with the tension:

"I am close to her [my mum] and I can go to her if I have a problem. Our mum supported our dad but I am different because I will support my husband when he is right but not when he is wrong. It didn't matter what she said, he always got his own way and mum went along with it. In my marriage, my husband is stronger but I will say what's right but my mum said nothing so I am stronger than her".

She might challenge a decision, but her husband was dominant. Maria is 34 and is on a career break after having her second baby daughter. She married after doing her A-levels because she was already engaged to a cousin in Pakistan and the boy's side was not prepared to wait. She said that her mother wanted her to complete her education but her father was less committed. I asked, "So it was your father's decision to stop your education then?" "Well", she said, "my dad was the stronger partner when it came to certain decisions, my mum is strong. She just wanted us to stay focused on our studies

when we were in school. Now they make decisions together but when we were younger, my dad did". I asked, "What about in your own relationship now?" She replied, "I would say ME because in our relationship I am more focused but he can feel strongly about something and not know whether to say it to the person's face or not". Maria and her family demonstrate a loosening of patriarchy over time, and the beginning of cooperation. Khursheed also confirmed the male hierarchy in her family, "My husband! I am more calm and listen and then if I want to say something I will, but he actually wants it to be more equal. We both make decisions about our children's education and schooling". This demonstrates that it is not just a matter of men giving up hegemony, but of women becoming more assertive.

When I asked Sabeera about decision-making in her own marriage she said, "Well actually both of us, we are both equal". However, because I see them quite often, I know that she always considers her husband the ultimate decision maker and has compromised on many occasions by putting his wishes first. Rhetoric and reality can be hard to balance. Divorced 30-year-old mother of two Maira argued:

"Mum's generation didn't know the language of this country and had to depend on others, that's why husbands had more power but I am stronger than my mother. I make my own decisions and am prepared to face the consequences. I did not allow my husband to mistreat me like my father did to my mother".

She was expressing her anger quite emphatically, "Why should boys be treated differently? My husband expected me to do everything, they are brought up to expect women do all this for them". So where cooperation is impossible, divorce becomes possible if the wife has expectations of better behaviour. The battle is exemplified by 28 years old Seerah who replied that she has an upper hand in her relationship with her husband but it is an ongoing battle of will power.

"I think me because my husband was brought up in Pakistan and has a totally different outlook. Education is different there and he doesn't know things as well as me. My dad was a strong character so my mum had to go along with him but my husband is different so I find it easier to give my views, so I am stronger than my mum".

The issue of the different expectations of husbands from Pakistani emerges in various interviews.

I remember Humaira as an intelligent student in school, a delightful girl from a very traditional family background where girls' education was a low priority and I always wondered if this bright young woman would face the same future as the rest of her sisters and cousins. About power relations in her parents' house, she replied "My dad had the power in our home, he made the decisions. Men wanted to do everything before, my dad was like that but now women can do everything men do. I am stronger than my mum due to the fact that I am educated". This empowerment of Pakistani Muslim women can only take place if young women are encouraged to educate themselves beyond school level.

36-year-old Meena's answer about who made the decision about her education and other matters in her parents' home was quite amusing, hiding certain realities about the power balance in her home.

"My mum was the stronger partner, dad is quieter, mum knows what dad wants and expects. Dad won't say anything to us but mum will, mum respects what dad says and wants. Sometimes mum might not agree with what dad wants but she will stand by him, she will change her opinion for him".

"In my own marriage", she continued, "I am very strong in my marriage, I want my opinion accepted and if I disagree with my husband, we will discuss it. I make the decisions with the kids' school and things". When talking about the different roles and expectations about boys and girls, she commented,

"My son goes to after-school club so he can do activities, we never did that…well my brothers were allowed to go on to trips and things but we were not but if I have a daughter, I would be more protective, I wouldn't be really strict but I also wouldn't want her to go out all the time either".

This way of thinking about wanting to "protect the daughters" and not worrying about the sons was still prevalent among the second and third generation women, and they were knowingly or unknowingly following the cultural/religious traditions acquired from their parents (Shaw, 2000; Kabeer, 2000). I witnessed the examples of this attitude on many occasions while talking to my participants.

It is quite evident from these women's account that some of the women who were brought up in Britain were beginning to question and renegotiate the social and cultural patriarchal

set up in their families (see also Qureshi, Charsley & Shaw 2012), and gender hierarchy in their own marriages (Haw, 2011, Ahmad, 2012). I also met 31-year-old Seema with her mother. They are from a large extended family with many relatives living in close proximity. Seema commented on the gender hierarchy in her family, "Of course boys get away with everything in our families and girls suffer. I left school at 16 and straight away my dad fixed my marriage with his brother's son". This marriage collapsed after a few years because according to Seema "My marriage failed because my husband wanted to control me, he objected to me wearing Western clothes and going out to work". I also found out from Seema that four other women, Seema's cousins, were also divorced and now married to husbands of their own choice, one cousin even courting an English man. I asked Seema's mother, "Is this why girls in your families have rebelled against the imposed restrictions?" She thought for a few moments and then replied (in Punjabi) "not really! Our daughters have done it because we made them marry our choice, we didn't realise that they have changed because they went to schools here, we forgot this fact and wanted to keep the old cultural traditions alive". This shows awareness of the inevitability of change.

4.5 Importance of maternal support

Mothers play a vital role in transferring religious, cultural and gender values to their daughters, Kallivayalil (2004) argues, referring to the South Asian families, that the role of mothers and other senior women in the family becomes more important when it comes to offering support to the younger women in their families (Thapar-Bjorkert& Sanghera, 2011; Qureshi, 2013). When I asked the women about their relationship with their mothers and how they compared themselves with them, most of the participants reported that they were in a better position than their mothers.

34-year-old Nazneen, working for the NHS, found that her arranged marriage failed. She married again of her own choice, without her family's consent:

"No matter how well things worked out at the end, it hurts to know I could have been someone! My father was never there for us and my mother always sided with him, not us. She is a good mum now but a little too late, I went through a very tough time Miss".

She told me that her older sister was also taken out of education and had a 'forced' arranged marriage. I clearly remember that in their families, all the girls were married early

and education was not a priority for their fathers. All of her cousins (apart from one) only studied to A-levels and then married. I discuss this issue of early marriages in Chapter 6.

Shahana informed me that she was happy and settled with her husband now and was going to start her Social Work degree course soon. "I am the first to break that wall, my parents are really supportive now about my education," she said excitedly, but I later discovered from her younger sister that Shahana was pregnant and had left the course. When I contacted her about this new development in her life, she assured me that once the baby is bit older, she intends to go back to her course. Describing her relationship with her mother and her mother's role, Shahana said,

"My mother had lots of stresses because of our dad when we were growing up, you know about my father's affair Miss. Well it reflected on the way she raised us. We were allowed to have anything we wanted but my father was not there for us, he just made the decisions to show my grandfather that he was in control. My mum is a lot stronger than me and she still supports me. She was very strong because she raised us alone like a single mum".

Shahana's was not the only story showing strength and determination to get higher education. This shows the complexity of patriarchy, where authoritarian decisions can be made to impress rather than because they are well considered.

Iraj, now a medical doctor in hospital, had to fight for the position where she is now. I remember her as an ambitious and determined pupil from her school days. She said:

"You know very well Miss, my father made all the decisions but things have changed in our family now, it was my mother who stood up for her daughters and supported us in our decisions".

However, Sabeera said of her mother,

"Her views are extremely different to mine and I think she gets on well with my other sisters, because academics are so important to me and for our mum, education and studying are not something she is keen on so we never saw eye to eye on that. I am completely opposite to her".

"Who is stronger then?" I enquired – her response was typical of many interviewees:

"Actually my mum is a strong person in herself but it's different because my strengths are about what I am interested in, actually maybe we are quite similar but just have very different views on what we think is important".

She did not mention the difficulties and struggle she had to go through to marry the man of her choice, despite tremendous opposition from her family. She didn't acknowledge her own strength though I knew how hard life has been for her. But she had succeeded in life.

 I asked Kauser (age 34, married with one daughter) about her relationship with her mother?" She thought for a moment and then replied,

"I couldn't relate to my mum because at times we had to spend more time on our homework and she didn't understand it. Once I started work, she didn't really encourage me but things have become better now, especially after the birth of my daughter".

For some mothers, grandchildren are the only common ground. Several reported that their mother's attitude loosened over time. Alia remarked on her relationship with her mother,

"Our thoughts are different but as I have got older and have my own daughters now, I do understand her point of view better. It was difficult when I was in school because it was harder to persuade my mum. She has changed a lot now but at that time I was the first daughter, I had to do all the trials, it was easier with my younger sisters".

What local people think is a significant factor. When explaining their relationship with their mother, the two university student sisters Mani and Qamar (19 and 21) said, "We get along but have our differences because our mum really cares what the people in our community would say. Our mum is very strong and wants us to have our education". This was not however true for all. Leila (whose father married a second time when Leila was in Year 10) was quite firm in her attitude "I am definitely stronger than my mum, I would support my children's decisions more than she did". Mothers may be less passive now. Zainub used to be a boisterous girl in her school days. She normally had a lot to say on different issues and our 'talk' lasted a long time. I also taught her daughter in the Muslim girls' school so it was useful to get her views from two different perspectives. I asked, "How did you get on with your mum?" "I wish my mum would have talked to me a bit more, like I talk to my daughters. Our thinking was different, I am more religious than my mother, it is because of my husband and his family". I noticed that she has become more conservative in her religious beliefs after her marriage. Strictness could seem too strict. Bibi (age 20) felt considered that her strong willed mother (her father left them when she

was 12 years old) was an important influence and could be quite strict: "I [as a mother] would be less of an authority figure and more like a friend, definitely less bossy with my children".

Sometimes these young women did not realise that they are stronger than their mothers, their mothers being role models. When talking about her divorce, Bisma told me that she feels she hasn't got the same strength of character as her mother, but she was in fact taking a stand on an unhappy marriage against her family's wishes. 20-year-old Arhaz told me: "I think my mother is a very strong person, we are very alike, we argue a lot because we are so similar. My mother is actually louder than my dad, I am strong but not as strong as my mother, because she has been through a lot, but I want to be treated equally when I am married". Possibly it was not character that mothers lacked but knowledge. 32-year-old-Khadija is now a successful business woman who has achieved this success all by herself without any assistance from her family. She belongs to a conservative Pathan family. I never saw her mother during her school days, it was always her father who showed interest in his daughters' education and was very encouraging. When I asked about her mother's role in her life, she surprised me with her answer. "I don't think I am stronger than my mother, I am just more aware of the outside world because I have lived on my own". Khadija is a strong willed and determined woman who not only gained higher qualifications but also married a man of her own choice. She is a good example of someone who negotiated her life choices with her parents with a great determination and achieved personal, economical and emotional independence, but by living within the family and cultural social system (McGrath & McGarry, 2013 give a parallel example in Ireland). This demonstrates that education is absolutely vital for Muslim women if they are to get equality of opportunity.

It was also interesting to note that many women thought their mothers were the stronger partner in their families, but when talking about who has the final say in the family matter, the answer was mostly "my dad" or "my husband" or the other men in the family. "I think my mum is amazing". Rafiqa (age 19) claimed, "her role is the main role, the house is under her control", and when I asked the question about who really held the power in the family and made the decisions?, the answer was "my dad has the final say but mum has a lot of influence". About her own marriage, Rafiqa said: "I would be just as family orientated as she is but I think our future goals and aims are very different".

Although many women participants touched upon the issue of having different values, especially regarding marriage and education of their own children, mostly there was a good understanding between these interviewees and their mothers, saying that they understand their mothers' point of view better now than before since becoming mothers themselves. Many women, although being complimentary towards their mothers, also reported their despondency because they felt their mothers did not support them when decisions about their further education and marriage were taken. I heard the statement on so many occasions that they felt let down by their mothers, because the mothers supported their husbands rather than taking their daughter's side (see Gangoli, Razak &McCarry 2006 on forced marriage and domestic violence).

Mother and daughter relationships can be difficult but can also be influential when mothers support their daughters. It was intriguing to hear my participants discussing their mothers' role in the family and their own relationship with them. One thing that most of the women agreed upon when comparing their own lives with their mothers was that they thought their mothers were stronger in character than them (see Aston, Hooker, Page & Willison, 2007, in the government research report on south Asian female attitudes to work cited earlier). This was an unexpected outcome for me because knowing the struggles and turbulences in my interviewees' lives, I thought they were much stronger than their mothers. They had in many cases fought hard to gain the freedom and opportunities for themselves yet they saw their mothers as stronger women.

Many participants claimed that their mothers were strong women because they felt their mothers had to endure hardship in their family and were therefore more tolerant than their daughters (though several participants themselves had lived difficult lives). This strength is normally attributed to *sabr* (patience) and strong belief that it was "Allah's will", (Mahmood, 2004, Qureshi, 2013). Where these women use *sabr* as strength in their own traditional system, others might consider it as a failure to take action in an oppressive cultural system. Women in their own way engaged in the process of changing life choices, *sabr* not stopping them from resisting the unfair conditions that they live under; rather it is achieved not by completely rejecting and resisting their social/religious/cultural value system, but trying to achieve agency working within the social structures or through what Mahmood calls "background practices".

4.6 Gender bias

While discussing gender hierarchy, Dr. Iraj gave an interesting insight into her own situation of trying to find a suitable husband for herself,

"Well mostly they were not of my standard, but one proposal came from a doctor but after meeting me, he said that he didn't like my confidence, he was not impressed with my educational achievements and qualifications, he wanted me to sit at home and don't do any work. Our men have a typical mentality, wives should not be highly educated, I want someone, a Muslim man who will help me to follow my dream, I have not yet met any Muslim man who can accept me the way I am, liberal, modern, confident and professional. Am I ever going to meet someone who will value my education which I have gained after a long struggle?" She did marry recently.

Kauser commented on the gender bias in her family: "My father not so much but my mum was different. She was lenient towards our brother, if he wanted to go out rather than do his homework but towards me, girls stay at home and do the housework and read *Qur'an* etc". Suman's comment on the different treatment of her brothers was, "Yes, we sisters had arranged marriages but both our brothers had a choice". Not having choice does not necessarily lack of consent, but we have to see this as the acceptance of the inevitable rather than real choice. Some women used the word "forced" of marriage, Faiza making a thoughtful observation:

"Men are looked upon differently in our community because when my husband left me, I was the one who had finger pointed at me. He was the one who left home but people said I shouldn't be living on my own with two daughters and I was made to feel uncomfortable. Later even my husband realised women in this country actually have a lot of support and rights which is different as in Pakistan where men have more power".

Faiza was confirming the patriarchal hierarchy and cultural norms in our community, even with second and third generation women born and brought up in UK. Alia said,

My mum favoured my older brothers more, they were always allowed to do what they wanted but not us, I don't want to do it with my children.

Khursheed complained, "My parents definitely treated their daughters and sons differently, not education wise, in other things too, like school trips, out of town, we were not allowed.

Even if something was going on in the evening, we were not allowed to go". Khursheed suffered because of her father's views about daughters and is still barred from visiting her own family home. The sisters Mani and Qamar expressed guarded optimism: "They have started to develop a better society and make more decisions for themselves". However the younger sister commented, "I can't imagine equal rights, women are not totally in charge. She may make a decision but the husband gets the final say". Bibi agreed and was very critical about how gender differences exist in her family and her feelings towards the women's status in the Pakistani community:

"As I grew up, I started noticing the small differences. Our community has a tendency to want to control women, have their say in how we behave, guidelines set, even if we are allowed to study, work, go out now, we are still expected to cook, clean and look after everyone, I doubt this will change very soon".

Sabeera commented, "My brothers are younger and one older than me, they were pushed to study. My parents went to all their parents' evenings to know how they were doing. With me! Well! If I did well, that was good, if I didn't it didn't matter and the same with my sisters. Our parents never encouraged any of us girls to study".

Rukhsar obtained good GCSE grades. After leaving the Muslim school, she went to a local school and took three AS levels but left again. She then completely transformed herself into a modern, liberal young woman, removing her hijab before starting her university course. This was a major change in her outlook and she consequently suffered from the negative gossip from the local Muslim community, who disapproved of her new attitudes and choices but she is happy and confident with her new approach to life. She told me that a Muslim man would not have received such criticism. Arhaz feels that her parents were very strict with her two older sisters, who were never allowed to go out of the city although her brothers were. But she fought her corner and being the youngest, has more freedom, and was allowed to go to a university out of town.

The participants from School A, who were all married, engaged or divorced, had a different outlook on the issue of male dominance and gender differences in their parent's family, compared to their own marriages and relationship with their husbands. They described a firmly established patriarchal system where fathers as heads of families mainly took the decisions and where mothers mostly did not have an effective voice. Although I

was encouraged when talking to so many women who in their own lives were showing signs of change in this traditional system, I came across many cases where the old status quo persists.

4.7 Summary

The Muslim women I interviewed wished to achieve a better future for themselves and their families, a rise in social and class status and financial security through education (Abbas, 2010; Basit, 2013b). However extended family members, especially males, often intervene and affect their life choices. My participants confirmed that men are still able to exert substantial control over the women in their families and their access to the opportunities and instruments of social change. Bourdieu spoke of the "reproduction" of traditional attitudes, and by keeping women financially dependant, males have and use economic capital (Aston et al., 2007) whilst also using female earning power for their own purposes. That patriarchal culture affects the educational opportunities of Muslim women has been recently by Shaw (2000), Khan (2003), and Shain (2003). Ethnicity, class and cultural backgrounds critically influence the experiences of Pakistani Muslim women and specify the different ways and particular traditions that affect the discourse on gender in the local communities.

Mothers mostly followed cultural norms and restricted their daughters, stopping them from gaining higher education qualifications and university. There were exceptions, with one participant's mother going to great lengths to send her daughter to the local university, hiding this from her husband for three years, coming up with different excuses to cover her daughter's absences from home at times when her father arrived from his business trips unexpectedly. He was against girls' education. I have always admired her courage putting her own life on the line to educate her daughter and kept delaying the marriage. The girl was taken to Pakistan later by her father and married to a boy that he had chosen for her. Her mother was not consulted.

Some of my participants showed respect for their mothers yet knew their mothers gave them a secondary position when it came to decision making and having a final say in any matter. Third generation Pakistani Muslim women participants in my study were clearly determined to be heard and to be accepted as more equal partners in their own marriages, preferring divorce to frustration. Their future expectations and values are quite different

from their mothers in many cases because of their wider exposure to other cultures and because of their increased confidence due to gaining education. I discovered that whilst Pakistani Muslim women from School A do not directly question male hegemony, younger women from School B, the Muslim school, are seeking to bring greater balance and equality in their lives by challenging some of the cultural/religious aspects that affect their lives in the West. The following chapter presents findings related to women's educational experiences.

Chapter 5

EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL AND POST-16 PROGRESSION

5.1 Overview

More than half of the participants in this study dropped out of education before or after completing secondary education, a finding that is consistent with other reports showing that women of Pakistani heritage are underrepresented in higher education and in professional careers in Britain (Modood 1993; Ahmed 2001, Hussain and Bagguley 2007, Archer, 2010). This chapter presents participants' own experiences of school, including careers guidance. I focus on three themes: the attitudes of the home, the attitudes of teachers, and the quality of careers guidance. Irving & Malik (2005) discussed interconnections between careers guidance and social justice. I explore how the women, years after leaving school, judge the careers education they received (or did not receive) and the influence it had on their lives. Most women from School A reflected on their experiences by recalling different incidents with vivid details, incidents to do with teachers' attitudes, discrimination and expressing regrets for not taking their education seriously. The first part of this chapter considers the responses of women who had attended School A, the state school, and the second part those of the younger cohort of women who attended School B, the Muslim School. As I will show, experiences of each school were very different.

5.2 School A: Experiences relating to education and post-16 progression

This section presents and analyses data from the interviews on what the women thought about their schooling, their families' interest in their education, and their progression thereafter. This section includes an analysis of racist attitudes, and accounts of the value of careers guidance; the impact of home attitudes and parental preferences for girls to study particular school subjects; parental fears for losing control of their daughters; the consequences for girls of breaking patriarchal rules and the strategies through which some daughters negotiated access to higher education. I comment where appropriate throughout

this presentation on where my findings resonate with or challenge observations made in the recent research literature on the education of Muslim girls in Britain.

5.2.1 Prejudice and racism

Nina became angry and frustrated at times when recalling her educational experiences. She talked about the stereotyping and prejudice she faced in school,

"Socially I had fun, academically now I realise I didn't do as well as I could have. I have my degree now but I did that after marriage and two kids. When I started the girls' school, I was in the bottom group, along with the other Asian girls but I couldn't understand why I was there. It took me a year to climb back to the top group. I left school with my A-levels. There was prejudice, not racism, I think we were looked down upon because we were Asians".

She came from a very traditional family background; her parents didn't allow her to wear western clothes though she wanted to. When she came to see me for her interview, she was wearing western clothes with beautiful long open hair. "I didn't do well in my GCSE exams, though I got a 'B' in English with you Miss", she smiled. She did two A levels in IT and Business Studies, but didn't do well in them either. There was no support or encouragement from the teachers or from home, she told me. Parker-Jenkins and others (1999) argue that Muslim girls can be left out from the 'main stream' opportunities because of the lack of understanding about their cultural conditions and 'complex' background.

Nina blamed her failure in school on the teachers having low expectations of her.

"I was fine in my middle school but I was put in the bottom group in my upper school, that meant I was not capable of achieving well in school but I proved them all wrong later by going back to education with my husband's support and alongside bringing up my children. I did a degree in Business Management at our local university. I am thinking about doing further courses to get more qualifications in Accountancy and Finance".

She was working as an estate agent, managing ten houses and their tenants. "I did my degree for my children Mrs T" she said, looking at me with obvious pride.

"I thought to myself that my school had failed me, convincing me I was not capable of getting into higher education, so I did it to prove to myself that I was not useless. I got a 2.1 degree, this is the proof I wasn't thick. If my teachers had shown some faith in me, I could have done it before my marriage, it would have been easier that way. Now I can tell my children to get higher education because I did it".

Nina is a good example of how teachers' low expectations can destroy girls' aspirations in schools. Others have pointed out the need for change (Bhatti,2006; Archer, 2010; Keddie, 2011; Basit, 2013b). Shahla, my student in School A, later taught in School B so could compare educational experiences. She had positive memories of her school days, went to university and spoke highly of the teachers. Similarly Aliya, who was in the last year before School A closed, had fond memories of school where, because of low student numbers before its closure, girls had close contact with their teachers. Though full of praise for most teachers she remembered an incident involving one teacher,

"I remember one teacher in particular who was quite racist. I know sometimes people misinterpret when teachers are strict as them being racist but this one definitely was. Once we were asked to design a perfume for our projects and mine was based on the night, so I did stars and moon but she said I was not allowed to have 'Islamic symbols', but it was night perfume so what else was I supposed to do, she just ripped up my work, I was so upset that my parents got involved and she had to apologise".

The medical doctor Iraj experienced prejudice and low expectations from her teachers that nearly destroyed her aspirations. She arrived from Pakistan, very bright girl with some English language difficulties, and showed great determination in acquiring a good standard in English very quickly and did exceptionally well in her GCSE exams, getting A and B grades in all subjects. She was highly critical of teachers' low expectations of her:

 "The one thing I will always remember is that after my GCSEs, I wanted to do A-levels in Sciences but because my English was not very good, they knew I could do it as I have done well in my GCSEs, including English, I was not allowed to take Sciences for my A-levels. They judged me only because I had come from Pakistan and my English was not that good. I think if the teachers had more confidence in my ability and allowed me to take Sciences A-levels then it might have saved me five years of extra time and hardship. This is my only regret of my school life".

She ended up doing three other A-levels and then did a degree in Psychology in the local university. She added,

"I did a degree in Psychology but my heart wasn't in it, I wasn't enjoying it. I didn't give up when it was difficult at home. There was a lot of pressure on me to get married as I was the eldest in the family. My personal life was very unhappy but I continued with my psychology degree. I just knew I wasn't going to be happy with the rest of my life like that, I had to do something else".

She did not give in to pressure from her parents over marriage and decided to start again. After doing her Science A-Levels, she managed to get a place to do Medicine and graduated in 2009, she told me,

"Now I have achieved what I always wanted, I am complete. It would have been a lot easier for me if I could have done this in school, would have saved me lots of hardship but better late than never".

We started talking about prejudice and racism, she added,

"What would you call what happened to me in school? Wasn't it racism? You helped me in your lunch hour so I could get an A grade in my GCSE English which I did, you always believed in me but not the other teachers. Teachers knew I could do it but they didn't give me a chance. I have proved them all wrong now I have done it. It still exists! It still happens though no-one calls you names in front of you but there is racism".

Bhatti (1999) explored the incidents reported to her by Asian children, which caused substantial distress to them, including racism and teachers' low expectations. Brah and Minhas (1985:21) and Archer (2002) among others have argued that Asian girls are often 'discouraged from pursuing more academic careers' because of the stereotypical attitude of the teachers. Basit (1996) argued that because of the importance given to girls' marriages, teachers normally feel that careers are not considered as a high priority by the Muslim parents.My interviews provide further examples of this.

While discussing racism, Iraj recounted an incident that took place during her house job in one of the hospitals.

"My grandmother passed away and I needed time off so I arranged it with one of my colleagues to replace me for a day but when I asked my supervisor, I wasn't allowed to go. So I arranged my duty with a friend and went for the funeral. When I got back, I was

reprimanded and given a warning. It came to so much harassment that I decided to complain to the higher authority and after the investigation, I was cleared of the alleged misconduct and my supervisor had to make an apology to me. It only happened when I threatened to go to media to make my case public. I thought I didn't face much racism throughout my educational life after school, being very fair, dressed in modern western clothes, I blended in as well but I suppose I have a Muslim name so it does make a difference".

Kauser described prejudice in teachers' attitude and about Asian girls being put in lower sets in school. Asian girls feel that teachers expected less of them academically because of their ethnic background.

"Prejudice wasn't in your face sort of thing but you had to read between the lines. I was in the top set and teachers were supportive but the other girls in lower sets would come to us in break times and say things are complicated. It didn't feel like they were being supported or encouraged much. I think a lot of that was reflected in girls' attitude. 4 out of 20 of us Pakistani girls were in the top set, the rest were in lower sets".

She also remembered that there was subtle prejudice towards Muslim girls and Muslim faith from some teachers, especially during Ramadan. Muslim pupils were often questioned and told off for not taking part in sports, PE or other activities. They were also getting negative comments about taking days off to celebrate Eid.

Sabeera was not only my pupil in School A, but she was also a colleague in School B. When talking about prejudice, stereotyping and racism, she said,

"I think it was purely because I was an Asian girl, because while I was in school, may be a lot of the Asian girls weren't inclined towards education but for me academics were extremely important. It wasn't something that was promoted or encouraged by my family. My parents were never interested in my studies, how well I did or didn't, what my grades were, hence the reason I did History and then people said there is not a career in that".

She not only faced the prejudice of 'being the Asian girl' and associated stereotypes associated regarding education, the apathy of her parents is also apparent. When talking about teachers' attitude and low expectations, she said,

"Only me and an Indian girl were in top sets, all my Asian friends were in 2nd or 3rd sets, so socialising was a bit difficult because we were together during breaks and then they went

to their lessons and I went to mine. It was quite depressing to see most of the Asian girls in lower sets".

5.2.2 Evaluation of Careers Guidance

Khadija felt that teachers' expectations of pupils were low and careers guidance poor: "I think that was lacking in the school, I really didn't have any and I feel the careers' guidance was very poor". Suman complained that she didn't get any careers advice or help from anyone and talking about teacher's attitude towards Muslim girls, she said that they expected us to get married early.

"I used to have this discussion with my friends and we remember some teachers thought that we were there to pass time and will get married after leaving school. Some girls did get married after Year 11 and did not go to the 6th Form. It was quite a lot of 'Pathan' girls who did and said that it was a cultural thing in their families but many more other girls also got married at a young age too. I remember one teacher never even bothered about us and looked at us in a weird way, but you never really realised it then".

The literature also points to tendencies to discourage high career aspirations in Muslim girls, such as Parker-Jenkins and others (1999), Ahmad (2003), Archer (2002, 2010), and Bhatti, 2006). I therefore asked my interviewees how effective they felt careers' guidance in school had been. Most women's assessment of the advice they received was critical and pointed to the need of improvement. Naz replied,

"Well you went and looked at what you wanted to do in the future, not what you could potentially do. I saw it as come and get help with your CV, so I didn't ask what my options were for higher education. I decided what I wanted and followed that".

When I asked Naz about going to university, she answered, "I don't know, maybe I would have, it was never suggested or offered and I never really looked into it. I was bit frightened myself at that time because you didn't talk about it then. I think it was also the situation I got into". She explained that she wanted to finish her A-levels and go into Accountancy by taking employment with a company in the city and follow that career path but things did not happen as she had thought. After finishing her A-levels, she went to Pakistan and was married.

36-year-old Warda reflected on the lack of careers' advice and its impact on her life choices,

"I was in top sets and did two A-levels in school and one in college. I was confused about what to do after that but there was no help, not even from teachers and I definitely don't remember any careers service. I think if I had someone to guide me and show me the options I could take, it would have been easier. I went to university because I wanted a degree and went on to work. I have been in various jobs and have been learning along the way too".

Faiza's comments about the careers' education in school were also unfavourable:

"There was no guidance or support from the teachers about what I could do, I didn't see any careers' counsellor either so it was very much like you'll do what your friends did, so I ended up going to college".

Kauser took A-levels in English, Chemistry and Urdu and got top grades in all these subjects. Her views about careers' help were not complimentary; like many other of my interviewees, she felt she had received   very little useful advice from the careers' service in school.

"Careers' advisers were limited, it was kind of self-help, go to the careers room and find out information. If you wanted advice you had to make an appointment and that wasn't readily available to you. Any advice would have helped, I wasn't interested in Chemistry but I only chose it because my friend did it. It wasn't like I had help to choose what I'm good at or interested in doing, it wasn't about planning".

Kauser told me that she is glad she was given the opportunity to educate herself because it has given her knowledge and skills to research for herself about women's rights in Islam. Maria gave a thoughtful opinion about the careers service in school: "No, I didn't get any, there were like careers' days, but you need mentors, coaching, especially in our generation". She worked her way up to project manager, but stopped working when her children were born. 37 years old Sultana, now divorced with two children, made a sarcastic remark about the careers' advice,

"We had these short sessions, once a week, when we went to the careers' room and flipped through a load of books and wondered what we could do with our lives! Work experience was another joke, I felt really lost".

Careers advice was crucial for girls like Sultana who needed very focussed and personal guidance about their future prospects, taking into account their personal and cultural

difficulties, but they were failed by the service in most cases that I have encountered. She was bitter about her experiences at school and about her family's support.

Sabeera, asked her about her school and earlier educational experiences and career's advice, said:

"I enjoyed it in terms of school environment, it was good, I think I finished school in 1992. I always wanted to do A-levels and chose Economics, Geography and Urdu and I really don't know how my parents allowed me to do Economics in a boys' school".

She told me that she had no support from school or home when choosing the A-level subjects, there was no guidance on which subjects to choose or which subjects are beneficial for which career.

Seerah was quite complementary about her educational experiences. She felt comfortable in the single sex school because of her shyness. Teachers were encouraging and helpful towards her. She did well in her GCSE exams and then moved to a co-ed school to take A-levels as by then the girls' school was not offering many A-level courses because of its uncertain future. After taking A-levels in Maths, Further Maths, Economics and English, she went to the local university and started her degree in Accounting and Finance.

"I did get some careers' advice and it helped me decide what I wanted to do. I wasn't bothered about going to my local university; you don't have to go out of town to enjoy yourself. I loved university, you meet all sorts of people to be honest".

However, she married and did not complete her course. There was some good practice, if tokenistic. Shahla, educated in School A, and who taught ICT in School B, said:

"I remember a careers' advisor in the library, a gentleman used to come every fortnight and it was beneficial. After school, I went to Further Education College and started a course but one year through it, I changed to Business and Information Technology. I am working, I did my degree but got married during my course and then completed my degree after marriage. I was the first girl in our whole extended family to go to university, to drive and to work".

Aliya was quite satisfied with the career advice she received in school and out of school career's service. These cases suggest the importance of right guidance for Muslim girls while in school, without any prejudice and taking their personal family and cultural

circumstances in consideration which supports other research emphasising proper careers advice (also emphasised by Basit, 1996, 2013b; Bhatti, 2006; Archer, 2010).

5.2.3 Impact of Home Attitudes

Family pressures and cultural conditions played a big part in shaping girls' education and future prospects. Family circumstances can have a major influence on women's decision to work (Shaw, 2000 discusses this in relation to my target area). I have known Akhtar's family for 32 years and her relatives for 25 years, all living within a close proximity of each other: the girls attended School A and were remembered for their loudness and carefree attitude towards education.

"I remember having a good time with my cousins because our parents had set in our minds that we would get married and have kids, that's it. We all thought we would have no future so we didn't bother doing much. This is what our parents wanted, getting married young, having kids and staying at home".

She blamed traditions and their mother's influence denying them the opportunity of getting education, rather than racism in school, in her case, affected by very strong cultural values where education was not given a high status. She continued:

"My mum knew I was different from my other cousins and that I wanted to study, she knew I had a chance and wanted to go further. My father was influenced by my aunties and uncles and felt differently so I left school because of him in my A-level year. I left and worked in retail. I started working in a dentist's surgery and also bought my own house but I was studying for my A-level Biology as well as working. The boys from my relatives turned me down because of it, but I carried on. Now I am going to marry a white man".

I saw Akhtar again a year after her interview, she was still planning to continue with her course to become a Dental Nurse.

Faiza was a shy pupil and not very noticeable in school. She laughed when I told her my memory of her in school.

"After school I went to the local College of Further Education. I had my basic GCSEs and I was hoping to do A-levels at the school too but the headteacher did not allow me to continue in the 6th form. I wanted to do Art, along with some of my friends but she told us there were limited places and we didn't get a place. My parents really wanted me to complete my A-levels in school but I wasn't given the opportunity".

She said that her father was supportive towards her education, was strict but wanted her to get education. Her mother didn't see the value of education. There was little aspiration: her elder brothers did not complete their education and started work. She explained,

"Then it was me, after my brothers and I think if you are not really allowed to do something, you want to do it even more. It's like rebelling against something and in my heart I wanted to study. I was going to do A-levels but the thought of exams scared me so I did the GNVQ course. There has been a stereotype that all Asians do Business, but I had a genuine interest in this subject".

When talking about higher education she told me that she was not allowed to go out of the city.

"I knew if I didn't pass, I will not be able to continue with my studies. This was a dream for me to get my degree but my mum only saw me getting married, having a household and children. So I did a HND and the third year to complete my degree in Business Management in the local university".

She said proudly,

"For my satisfaction I applied to other universities even though I knew I would never be allowed to go there, the irony was that I got accepted everywhere. I became the first girl in my family to have a degree".

She did not follow a career and was also having difficulties in her marital life. She did accomplish her goal but was being held back by family constraints.

Home background can be complicated and affect a woman's aspirations regarding education and work. Sultana has been going through rough times for a few years. Her husband left her four years ago with two children, which left her emotionally devastated. I have been asking about her and meeting her from time to time to offer support. When she came to see me recently, she sounded more optimistic about her future with her two children. We started talking about school days and her experiences there. She gave me this thoughtful insight,

"If you split the girls into two categories, there were the Pakistani girls in one category and they were there just to complete their education to GCSEs and then get married. It was really difficult being with girls with that mindset, because you wanted to be with them,

because they were the same culture as you but their attitude to education was different to mine".

I was not surprised with her response because her father really valued education and wanted to educate his daughters, so he encouraged Sultana, being the eldest and wanted her to study Medicine. She recalled,

"He had it mapped out for me, I was clever, I was going to be a doctor, he was very good to me but after my A-level results, which weren't very good, my dad was extremely disappointed with me and lost his interest in my education so I started working. I was working part-time but I decided to take on a lot of hours, just to keep me busy. Then I had you in my life to help me. You contacted me and asked me what I was doing and then encouraged me to pick myself up and study. You arranged an interview for me at the local university and I got in to doing a Foundation year of Physics, but after a term, they pushed me into the first year of the Physics degree course".

She finished her degree and then did PGCE but after teaching for just one year, she gave it up. I tried to involve her in our Muslim girls' school project but she only taught Science for few months and then decided to stop. I was really disappointed with her decision to leave teaching because we desperately need more Secondary school teachers from the Muslim community, so I asked the reason behind her decision.

"I didn't like the lack of respect that kids show teachers, that wouldn't happen in our religion, you would never bad-mouth a teacher. Also I got married to someone from Pakistan, then my ex-husband wanted me to be the breadwinner in the household. I was trained in teaching but I didn't want to teach in a mainstream school and there is a level of selfishness there".

She is still not sure what she wants to do, now both her children are in full-time education and she needs to find work.

Sana recalled, "I remember the building more than anything else", and smiled sarcastically when thinking about the school.

"There were certain things that I was good at, like Biology and when I asked the teachers what I could do, they would start telling me what was available. But if I said I would probably be married by the time I was 18, they took a step back and thought they are not going to bother with this person".

I sensed certain bitterness in her tone when she talked about teachers' low expectations and uncaring attitude towards her and other Asian girls in her position. She then explained that family pressure had also stopped her from doing well in school.

"It's kind of my fault as well because from a young age my family literally ruled what I did. I think I wasn't strong enough at the time to take a stand about my education, I didn't want to go against my family's wishes for education".

I took her back to her school days and asked what she did there and what happened afterwards.

"I did my best but I don't think I pushed myself enough, knowing GCSEs will be the only qualifications I would get. I didn't have that in my mind at all because I was just thinking about my marriage. I regret not pushing myself but it was more the culture issues, it was thought girls who went into education would not find a suitable match for themselves later".

27 years' old Faheema's story was quite different in the sense that she had the opportunity to go to university but she decided not to:

"I went to two different schools, my parents wanted me to do well but they weren't that bothered about it so I decided to do everything myself. I knew I won't be allowed to go out of the city so I had to study in our local university. I wanted to do a Primary Teaching course but the one in the local university wanted an A-level in English for it so I applied for a History course which I got into but decided not to do it".

Aliya, who had valued the school and city career advice, had married and had her daughter while she was in university. I was keen to know what happened to her after leaving school, knowing that her family did not have high aspirations for her education:

"It was planned that I would get married to my cousin who also lives here when I was young. I was told by my parents that I would get married by 16 but things got complicated and my brother got divorced who was married in the same family so my marriage didn't take place. It was a lot to take in when I was in school but I never used to talk about it. I was quite rude to teachers and had an attitude because I thought I was just going to end up getting married at 16, I really worked hard and did so well in my A-levels".

This happened to many women in my study. I was always aware of this social and cultural dilemma faced by the girls in schools and tried to offer support in whichever way I could.

Aliya went on to explain her struggles to marry the man she wanted, and the complication of becoming pregnant during her university course. After her degree she secured a permanent job in a language school.

Khadija, who had complained about poor school interest in Muslim girls' futures, also mentioned home attitudes as an issue:

"Teachers' expectations I think were low but that already came from the girls themselves from home. They were looking at their sisters and cousins and expecting to finish school and get married and that's it. There wasn't any vision beyond the cousins, family and community. However, from my year, quite a few girls did go on to university, so things did start changing, not as much because they were still confined to local university".

Seema showed little interest when in school. I didn't know much about Seema's family apart from the fact that there were many relatives living together in close proximity, and the parents sent their boys and girls to single sex schools. The boys were often involved in gang fights and disturbances in and out of school, and their sisters in the girls' school where I was a teacher were labelled loud and arrogant, showing no interest in their education. Seema admitted:

"I was very feisty and strong headed girl and used to get into trouble quite often. I really wasn't interested in education and like other Asian girls, I wanted to finish school and start working".

Then she revealed the reason behind her and her other cousins' behaviour in school.

"I wish I would have taken my education seriously when I was at school, now I feel I could have done better for myself. I could have taken A-levels and gone to university and done Law but the teachers didn't care that much about us, especially me as I was quite naughty. I left school at 16 and straight away my marriage was arranged, I knew this was going to happen, we all knew our future, leave school and get married".

Her mother, who also sitting there, listening to our conversation, commented, "Yes, it was my father, Seema's grandfather who arranged it with his younger brother's son". I could feel the regret in her voice, especially when Seema said, "I did get some GCSEs, especially I got B and C grades in English and English Lit, because of you" (I was her teacher).

"But now I have done a couple of courses, I want to become a hairdresser and beautician and want to run my own business, my second husband is very supportive and mum looks after my kids when I am working. I will be 30 years old soon you know".

That first marriage clearly had not lasted. She was doing some beauty treatment in her mother's house when I went to see her. The woman having treatment to her face was former pupil from School A. 26 years old Maham, the youngest of the sisters, used to be very quiet and shy but good in her studies. Education was not a priority in that family and her other two sisters were married after leaving school. Maham too was married soon after school: her parents did not support her ambition to study further. She recalled, "You know Miss, I remember you telling my father in one of the parent's evening that Maham is quite bright, please allow her to go to the 6th Form". Seema's mother interrupted our conversation again in Punjabi "But they took you to Pakistan to get married instead, they didn't care about what the teachers said to him, did he?" Clearly she regretted having had no say in this. Maham informed me that her eldest and the middle sister were married straight after their GCSEs.

Sana told me that she married at 18 years old and helped her father in his shop. She was quite familiar with the business. Her parents and relatives helped her and her husband to set up a shop where she worked until she had her daughter. She felt left behind when talking about her career.

"When I meet new people and they say what did you study, I tell them I went to the 'University of Life' because of what happened to me later in life. I want my daughter to go to university and I have been telling her for years, because I didn't have that opportunity".

Sana was doing everything possible to support her daughter who was in a secondary school but had learning difficulties, but was critical of school provision.

I asked Zainub about her educational experiences. Her reply pointed to the continuing trend of early marriages in the community:

"I think teachers tried but we didn't have the drive to do it. We were thinking more about when we're going to get married and go to Pakistan, it wasn't as important as it is now but I'm surprised some girls still do the same things their parents did. I did go to college after school but didn't continue because I got married after that. I was 20 years old but I really

didn't know what to say. I am not working, I am looking after my children, my husband is a taxi driver but my children are studying in university".

She was quite content in her life and saw her future in her children but she told me that after her, all her younger sisters went to university, and one even did a masters degree. She said, "Things have changed now". But Zainub sent her daughter to the Muslim girls' school (against her wishes) because she wanted her daughter to learn about her religion, which was very important to Zainub (though not to her daughter). Zainub told me that her daughter is in university now.

Maira contacted me through Facebook and invited me for dinner at her home. She reminded me, "Do you remember me Miss, I used to be very naughty girl in school". I did remember her well because she went through tragic family circumstances and was brought up by her grandmother. She recalled her school experiences,

"I was not interested in studies then, I used to mess around in school and after leaving school, went to college for further education in the city to do a GNVQ course. This didn't interest me either so I left. Now I regret that I didn't complete my studies and no-one cared, I won't let it happen to my children though".

She told me that she was working in a departmental store currently but have changed several jobs since leaving school. This sums up the themes of this chapter: the careers choices available to Maira were reduced because "no one cared" at home or in school about her education and career. The expectations both at home and at school were that, as a Pakistani girl, she would marry young and become a housewife. She is determined as a mother herself to break this cycle with her own children.

5.2.4 Parental preference in choice of school subjects

I have known some very intelligent Muslim girls who were denied the opportunity to educate themselves because their families, especially their fathers, gave so-called "religious" cultural traditions more importance than education. A memorable group of very bright Muslim girls in one year-group in school A comes to my mind. They shared my love of poetry and literature and as predicted, they all achieved top GCSE grades. Three of them were not allowed to go to 6th Form to do A-levels, and one girl who did do A-levels, gave up after that. I discovered that one who left after GCSEs continued studying at home through home study courses and completed a couple of A-levels but the others married. One very bright, confident, feisty and witty member of that group was Humaira; I could

only interview her over the phone because of her commitments. Humaira now 33 years old with three children, remembered her school days positively and pointed out the advantages of been educated in a single sex girls' school:

"I am fortunate to have no bad memories of my school, they were the best days of my life because I loved the all-girls' environment and felt liberated by that. I felt confident and comfortable being on an all-girls environment and I also found a good group of friends. I had a good mix of friends, Asian and English. My friends had the same likes and wanted to all achieve the same thing, that was important to me because my friends in the middle school, by the time they got to their teens, they were into music and boys, staying out late and that wasn't where I was coming from".

This statement clearly shows her personality and her ambition. She also remembered the teachers in favourable terms apart from the Headteacher, who according to her, "wasn't very open minded". She achieved eleven A* grades in her GCSEs and then did her A-levels in English, Biology and Chemistry and achieved two Bs and one C grade. When talking about the choice of subjects in A-levels, she told me,

"I preferred my Arts but there wasn't enough interest for History in the school, I wasn't too keen on Sciences but I didn't want to go elsewhere to do other subjects. I would have done English, French and History, but ended up doing Sciences which I did because I had nothing else to do".

"What about your family? What did they want you to do?" I enquired.

"My parents were like most Pakistani parents, they knew I was doing well in school so they let me make my own decisions. There were one or two uncles who asked what I was doing and told me to pick the typical subjects that educated Asian parents want you to choose, like Maths, English and Sciences. I like them but they weren't something I wanted to do, my uncles said that the other subjects were not very credible so I thought about it, it made me choose the Sciences. My parents weren't bothered about my education, I remember my brother getting married the same week I had my Chemistry exam, so they didn't really support me in that respect".

Humaira explained that there was a lot going on during that week, her sister was also getting married and alongside all that, she had to focus on her exams as well. "It was all down to me to get my grades", she said. I was keen to know what she did after A-levels: did she go to university or leave education like her other friends?

"My friend wasn't looking to go to university so I never had anyone to talk to about what I wanted to do next. I sort of wanted to go into teaching and applied to our local university after A-levels and when I started, 90% of the people seemed to be below my level. So I made the totally wrong choice, it was too easy and I needed something more challenging so I dropped out after a few months and my sisters do say that I could have been qualified by now".

Humaira was thus another very bright girl lost in the system, failed by university and the family. She couldn't talk to anyone at home because there was no sympathy for her aspirations, education was not valued and there was no one to pick her up and support her in the university. "Why did you leave university? You could have considered another course rather than giving up completely". I could barely hide my frustration at this stage.

 "I talked to my best friend and she suggested Open University because her sister had done it, [these were the other intelligent sisters who stopped education after GCSEs because of their father who was not in favour of girls' education]. At that time, there was a lot going on at home and my dad was giving me money for the fees and I wasn't getting the attention from my parents about university and how it was. I was struggling with my unhappiness about the course and I just totally left the idea. I did Open University and I did enjoy it, it was the right course. I did two years and then left it but I do want to finish the last year. I was 22 and I got married, but it's still there so I can finish it when I have the time".

Humaira will find finishing her qualification difficult. She ran a Saturday club for Muslim girls and later worked as an Asian youth worker for girls for four years. She was out of employment when I spoke to her and also expecting her fourth child but she seemed happy in her married life and in her role as a mother.

Sultana's comments also point at the Asian parent's stereotypical views about careers and certain subjects.

"I don't think I was given the opportunity to do what I wanted, I remember thinking at A-level, if I hadn't chosen Sciences, what else would I have chosen? Because it was drummed into me from day one that I must do Sciences, if you enjoy your profession, then you can be good at it and it doesn't matter what you do, whether you are a hairdresser or a doctor. I was pushed into Sciences and until this day, I don't want to look back at it. I get people begging me to teach but I don't want to do it".

Aliya also made similar comments about parent's view on certain school subjects,

"I did get help from you and one other teacher though I didn't work terribly hard in my GCSEs but I just about made it to A-levels. I did RE, Drama and Urdu A-levels. Drama was my passion and I always felt I wanted to teach it, but my parents weren't too happy because they couldn't see me having a career out of it".

Kay (2006) reports similar sentiments about studying Sport.

5.2.5 Parental fear of losing control

Maham's comments clearly expressed the dilemma facing most Pakistani parents, that of losing their family honour in the community if their daughters misbehaved while at university, the fear of 'what will people say' (see also Shaw, 2000; Ahmad, 2005; Wilson, 2006; Archer, 2010):

"The thing is our parents didn't give education much importance then, their priority was to arrange our marriages quickly so we won't go '*kharab*' (go astray, become involved with boys and destroy family's good name), to relieve themselves of their responsibilities concerning their daughters but we are different now. I take full interest in my son's education".

I met Meena in the shopping centre and interviewed her in my house nearby.

"I started the girls' school [School A] in 1994 and did my GCSEs, none of my friends went there, they all went to another co-ed school, even my best friend but because my sisters went there so did I. Education wasn't a really big thing then, teachers didn't bother either, it was just where you went till you were 16".

This was Meena's assessment of her educational experience in school. She said it wasn't considered important in her family, and she especially mentioned her elder sister who managed to get a place in the local university but wasn't allowed to go because of her mother's fear of losing control and people talking about her daughters. Meena reflected,

"That put me off, I thought what is the point of working so hard, she didn't get the chance. I did my GCSEs and started temping, university was not an option".

Meena had two school age children, and is into make-up and fashionable clothes. I asked if she has any regrets about not studying,

"We didn't know why we were going to school, if I knew it was so important, I would have tried harder. Anyone can get a good job with education but you need good back-up.

We need to push our children and talk to them about their education. I would like to have a good job but you need education for that but no one was there to say something to me".

She was honest about her feelings of regret, and told me many times that she would have liked to get a decent job and earn good money if she had taken education seriously, but as she said earlier, when she saw her family's response to her sister's plea for higher education, she gave up any hope of going in for higher education and settled for marriage and children.

Sabeera, married and has two children from her second marriage, was in School A, and also a colleague and Deputy Head teacher of the Muslim girls' school, School B. She went to the local university but in the first year of her degree course her father decided to arrange her marriage with his sister's son (no consideration was given to her own feelings or her education in this matter).

"My degree wasn't important to my parents. After I got married I wasn't their responsibility any more so I continued with my degree. I got divorced in the 2nd year of my degree so I moved back home and did my final year here and managed to graduate".

After listening to experiences like Sabeera's, I feel great admiration for the women who never gave up on their education, clearly showing the strength of character and aspirations to educate themselves and have personal independence and choices in their lives as she quite rightly stated,

"I think it gives you a lot of confidence, makes you feel better about yourself, until you don't go out there, you don't realise your worth. All my different educational experiences have taught me there is so much more I can do rather than babysit. I am doing home-schooling business at the moment, I would never have thought I could do it".

I feel this is what the feminists' struggle is all about, especially Muslim feminists' who believe in the equality of choices for Muslim women.

Suman explained why she had not done well educationally and blamed it on the parental reservations about co-education and fear of losing control:

"At that time I wasn't that bothered because all my friends had left and gone their separate ways. If it was a mixed school, I think it would have been different but that's why I wasn't

really bothered. I could have done NVQ but my parents didn't really want me to go to college, so the only other option was to stay in school. A lot of Pakistani parents were against college and it was like parents were worried what others would say if they sent their daughters to college".

Suman has three young children to look after so she is not working at the moment but when I asked her if things were different what she would have done regarding her education, she said,

"I would definitely have studied more, I am studying now though. I have done my Teaching Assistant course but I want to be a Primary teacher so I am following this route. My husband encouraged me to study and become a teacher. I would have been financially better off if I would have studied".

Suman's mother walked in with tea when we were talking about this, Suman looked at her mother and said with frustration, "It's all your fault, you wanted us to marry and didn't allow us to make something of ourselves, now I have to do it with so much stress of marriage and children". Her mother heard this but didn't respond and quietly walked away.

In yet another case where girls were forced out of education by the parents and now regretting the missed chance and lost opportunities, Suman's sister, 34 years old Rida, joined us but preferred to listen most of the time, apart from once when I asked if they had a chance to change the past, what they would change. Rida's response was,

"Probably stand up for myself, if my parents said I was wrong, I didn't answer back. Like when they said get married, I should have said let me get education first. I did say this to them but I didn't really push it, because my dad did want us to study because he didn't really get to do it, but my mum didn't listen".

In Rida and Suman's case, their father wanted to support his daughters but their mother, a domineering matriarch, insisted on getting her daughters married.

A common perception in the 1970s and 1980s that is still prevalent in many Pakistani families is that girls who go to university become too independent and arrogant and do not follow the family's wishes regarding marriage (Shaw, 2000). This therefore becomes a strong obstacle when it comes to girls' higher education. Parker-Jenkins and others (1999), Abbas (2003), Archer, (2010) and Basit, (2013b) argue that although parents value education highly, they still view it within the context of religious and cultural traditions (see also Haw, 2011; Shah, 2012). I remember when talking to Nina she reminded me of

an incident which I had forgotten. She told me how her mother and other aunties used to talk about me (I was teaching in School A at that time) that I was a bad influence on Muslim girls. When once I invited an educated Pakistani woman to talk to girls about higher education and the opportunities it can bring to them, the girls went home and talked about the session. Nina said,

"One girl told her parents about this and next morning a group of Pakistani aunties came around to talk to my mum, saying things about you, like 'she is telling our daughters to rebel against our traditions and our wishes, we must stop her'".

We both laughed about it, and she continued,

"You didn't do anything wrong Mrs T when you were trying to encourage us and inform us about university and professional education and the opportunities it could offer us but our parents were not educated and trapped in the time when they left Pakistan. They couldn't understand what you were trying to do then".

5.2.6 Consequences of breaking patriarchal rules

Social media helped my snowball sample: one day I recognised a name from the past and asked the woman if she remembered me. In return I had a lovely message from her, informing me that she was married with two young daughters, working in a bank in Yorkshire. Nazneen told me that she didn't study after leaving school: she was forced to marry but it didn't last and she divorced. She married someone she chose which didn't go well with her parents and she was forced to leave her family and the city. Similarly, Afshar (1985, 1989, 1994) argues that though women are trying to assert themselves in different ways, but those who dare question the patriarchal traditions of their families often face consequences not only from the family but also from the wider community. Nazneen explained:

"I went through a lot Miss T, got the scars to prove it. I am so happy you got in touch, it means so much to me. No I didn't study after I left school in Year 10, went to another mixed school but was shipped off to Pakistan before I could take my GCSEs. I stayed there 3 years then came back, did a Secretary Diploma and now work for a bank, not ideal, but it pays. I would have studied to be a Solicitor, had the brains but no family support. It's so nice to know you thought about me".

I couldn't stop thinking about how brave she has been to face all these parental and social pressures all on her own. Neither racism nor education was to blame in this case as it was

her father and uncles, through the traditional family hierarchy and emotional blackmail, who had crushed her spirits. Consequently as a result of her circumstances, she has been suffering from depression and often posts very negative statements about life. Her last message said that she changed her job and had another baby. She told me that she was much happier as her circumstances were changing for the better. Her mother is trying to establish a relationship and she is beginning to see some of her cousins now.

Khursheed's name came up on Facebook one day, so I asked if she was my former pupil. Her affirmative response came quickly and she told me what has been happening in her life since leaving school. I remember her as a quiet, polite and very pleasant girl. I used to see her time to time as she lived in my locality but she just disappeared. She had several close relatives in the city, all with a traditional outlook. I asked what she did after A-levels. She replied,

"I went to our local university and did a degree in Educational Studies/ Childhood Studies. After that I worked in childcare for a while and got married but my first marriage failed".

I was pleased to hear that she had completed her studies but she was forced to leave the city by her parents because she divorced and married a man of her own choice, so she is still living in another city without contact with her family. Women in her situation are under pressure to continue with their marriage for the sake of family's honour in the community (see also Gangoli, Razak & McCarry, 2006).

5.2.7 Negotiating strategies with parents for higher education

Archer (2010) points to alternative models of "choice" in which "young Muslim women experience and negotiate educational choices within the family context, rather than as solo individuals, enjoying both support from families and retaining 'freedom' of choice" (p.369). Warda's case is a good example and in a way it opens possibilities of getting higher and professional education for the other Muslim girls in her position. She achieved it despite having a very strict, traditional and dominant mother. Warda and her three sisters managed to negotiate a way that allowed them to go to the university. She is the youngest of three sisters who went to the girls' comprehensive school and did really well there. They went to university and are professional women now, all having Science degrees. "Although my mum wasn't educated, she always pushed us. She felt that because you don't know what the future holds, you have to be strong enough to look after yourself. Education plays

a big part in that because you can get a good job". we will see this below as an example of ethnic capital (p.134).

When talking about going to university, Warda said,

"I took Science subjects in A-levels, because again, this is what my other sisters did. My eldest sister went to a university close to our home city to study Chemistry. My second sister decided to go to London. My mother wanted us to go to the university my older sister went to because she thought it was 'SAFE' to go there as my eldest sister has been there and did well, she didn't end up with a boyfriend or messed around. That was good enough reason for my mother for me to go there as well, but I decided the university for the right course".

I expressed my surprise at how easy it was for them to go out of the city because I knew their mother well. Warda explained,

 "Oh it wasn't that simple! There was one condition we had to agree on before we were allowed to go to the university. We had to agree to get our '*Nikah'* done (religious marriage). This was in a way my mother making sure that we won't go astray while in university, I did it as well, have the *Nikah* done with my auntie's son and went to university".

This did not surprise me at all, I would have expected this from her mother – as many participants reported, parents do employ this strategy often to ensure girls will not go astray while in Universities – but later on I found out that this marriage did not last long because as Warda puts it,

"I got married young because of mum, it was okay to start with, we continued phoning and writing to each other but university life had changed me. I could feel the distance growing between us and by the time I finished my degree, I had completely gone off him but I fulfilled my promise to my mum and got married to him, this marriage lasted less than two years because I had changed".

This was quite clearly a case of girls negotiating a strategy to go to university and agreeing on the terms and conditions set by their mother, which clearly went in their favour. I came across this condition set by the parents before allowing their daughters to go to university on many occasions. It shows parents' fear of losing control over their daughters after they have been to university (Falah and Nagel, 2005), therefore arranging their marriages is a

way of securing their loyalty to the family obligations (Thapar-Bjorkert& Sanghera, 2011; Shaw, 2014).Aliya also negotiated the chance to go to university with her parents before marriage, "One of my conditions was I would go to university even if I did get married early".

My next participant, Khadija belonged to a Pathan family with very traditional outlook but her father was supportive of girls' education so she was able to complete her studies. After achieving good grades in her GCSEs, she did A-levels and got mostly B and C grades, especially a C in Physics. She then went to University to study Computer Sciences for 3 years. "How did you manage to go out of the city?" I enquired. "My dad knew I was very stubborn so he let me go and told me not to let him down", Khadija cunningly smiled, according to her, her father accepted her decisions because "he was given no other option by me, he knew I will do it".

5.3 School B: Issues for younger women

This next section looks at the educational experiences of the younger women in their early 20s who studied in School B. The school was not typical of Muslim girls schools since we taught the whole National Curriculum and GCSE. We used qualified teachers and ensured that teacher expectation of academic progress and careers guidance was high, but there were similar issues of home attitudes to girls' sexuality and marriage. There were some lingering effects of racism, stereotyping and low expectations of teachers in their previous schools (Bhatti 1999, 2006). School B staff had to raise their pupils' confidence in their own ability and convince them of the value of education, even while knowing that their families may not allow them to complete their education. For some parents, marriage took precedence over education so they did not show much interest in their daughters' educational achievements and demanded that we should concentrate more on providing the Islamic education. We had to fight the attitude that some girls possessed, "Miss what's the point, we're going to get married at 16 anyway".

5.3.1 Adjusting to different schools

The move to the Muslim school from local state schools required adjustment from some girls. After the later closure of Muslim girls' school, girls faced the dilemma of moving back in to the mainstream co-educational schools in the city, causing distress and anxieties

among a few girls, although the fact that we had followed a similar curriculum in school B minimized this disruption.

Qamar and her younger sister Mani were very bright and had the full support of their mother who wanted them to go to university. It was their mother's choice to send them to the Muslim school, a choice that the sisters did not particularly welcome. Qamar told me:

"I had to adjust to that as I had it in my head that I would go to a mixed school but thought I will still get the education that I need. Some girls found it harder to adjust because they were so used to being with their non-Muslim friends who have a different lifestyle. Maths and English was the best thing I got out of there".

Mani also commented on the shortfalls of the Muslim school,

"Academically there wasn't a strict structure and necessary equipment wasn't there either. Some teachers were really good but others weren't. We left after GCSEs [she achieved all A and A* grades in her GCSEs] because we wanted good A-levels for university".

Actually the school did not offer A levels so pupils who wanted to do A-levels left the Muslim school. Both sisters went to a good co-educational school and took Science A-levels. Qamar told me,

"It was adjustment again, but more academically than socially, it took quite a while to catch up. In the Muslim school we were seen as being 'clever' but we weren't, it was just that most of the other girls didn't want to learn but in the mixed school, you were competing against other schools and children".

It is true that being a small school, there wasn't much competition, no Science lab or suitable equipment to conduct science experiments. Experiments were done in another school that allowed us to use their labs when needed.

Bisma found the adjustment in to a co-educational school quite challenging:

"It was a big change for me personally because my whole life I have been around Asians and then going to a school where there were lots of English people. Half of the year I felt uncomfortable and I didn't know how to act around them and what to say and there were boys as well, even though I was in the 6th Form, they were the first English people I'd come across since first school".

She carried on talking about her experiences in the comprehensive school, hinting at certain stereotypes about Muslim girls,

"I felt uncomfortable with boys being there but later when four of us from the Muslim school became friends, the Asian girls there, they told us they felt threatened from us, they felt a barrier between us because we wore hijabs and we felt a barrier from them too. English girls were not as open with you if you wore a hijab. One thing I found funny was their reaction when they found out we listen to music. I said that just because you wear hijab doesn't mean you don't listen to music (she laughed). People thought because we were from a Muslim school and wore hijabs that we were really religious".

Arhaz remembered her experiences in the Muslim school,

"It was quite a big chunk of my life and I did not enjoy it at the time. I didn't like the fact that there were not certain subjects there for my GCSEs but other than that, it was not a bad experience. I am glad I went there".

She also left the Muslim school after GCSEs because of the uncertainty about the school closure, deciding to go to a local secondary school with some of her friends.

"It was more relaxed and the teachers were good. I managed to learn a lot. I found it hard fitting in at first but after a week or two, I fitted in quite well. It is a big school but once you have lots of friends, its fine. I think it depends on your personality. I found a group of Asians and we stayed together in a group for the whole of Year 12".

When comparing her educational experiences in both schools, she said that she didn't have the same closeness she had with teachers in the Muslim school, but she learnt a lot being in two different schools.

When recalling her experiences in the Muslim school and in co-educational school, university student Malika said,

"I felt more comfortable at the Muslim school because you know everybody, everyone was from the same culture and the ways of thinking were the same. It was different at the mixed school, it took me a while to get settled in, I felt really different. I didn't feel any prejudice at this school but when I started my A-levels again, I went to a different school, the children were quite racist. They didn't do it directly but they would say things in a rude way. I got my A-levels and left".

I asked nurse trainee Rukhsar about how she felt when she joined a big co-educational school,

"It was really difficult for the first few weeks because it was such a drastic change. I found it intimidating at first but I settled in well and I knew some people already so I had friends there. I started four A-levels and stayed there for about four or five months before leaving the school. The teachers were so understanding but unfortunately my family life has always been complicated".

Rukhsar was full of compliments for the Muslim school and described it in very positive terms but also added,

"Maybe a bit more exposure because when I left there, I was really taken aback because I was so used to it. If we had some different backgrounds and interactions, it would have been easier adjusting".

She was satisfied with the careers' advice she received in both schools.

I received a request for reference from 20-year-old Aleema and took the opportunity to interview her. She was not pleased with her mother and sister's decision to send her to a Muslim school as she was not sure about the environment there,

"It took me a while to settle in, the atmosphere and just everything about it was very different than what I was used to, so in the beginning I felt very uncomfortable, didn't quite fit in. My first experience of a single sex religious school in England wasn't positive but once I got used to the differences, it was like any other school, the girls were like other girls of that age, in fact everyone had more in common with each other so we all got along better than we would have in other schools".

Aleema left to do A-levels in a co-educational state school. She remembered her experiences at that school,

"It was fairly awkward first as I had got used to the sheltered atmosphere of the Muslim girls' school. It was strange seeing boys around as well as male teachers, but like in all situations you adapt to your new environment so soon everything felt normal. My parents were fine with me going to a mixed school again, perhaps because they felt I was old enough to look after myself then and didn't need as much restrictions as I did when I was younger".

While talking about her experiences in the co-educational school, she said,

"I became increasingly shy, be it the teachers or just students, I was uncomfortable and avoided boys altogether. I realize now it affected me more than I probably thought at first.

Also it was very different mixing with people of other religions and race again and often I wasn't sure how to act around them, especially with the western things such as clubbing and boyfriends". She completed her A levels and her later career is discussed on page 122.

"I would like to be a career woman, something in Psychology *inshallah*, I don't think I could just sit at home and do nothing or be a housewife. I have done it for a year now and am desperate to get out there and do something".

However she is still living with her brother's family because her mother doesn't live in this country; she has never spoken about her father, and she recently married.

20-year-old Michel left Islamic school with top GCSE grades and did her A-levels in the local school in her hometown. She also faced some initial difficulties in adjusting to the co-educational school.

"After leaving Muslim school, I went to study at a mixed state school 6th Form. After being in an all-girls Islamic environment, the state school felt really different, as there were both male and females in the lessons. I had to get re-accustomed to the idea of being taught by male teachers, as this was completely different to my experience in the Muslim school. However, after a while this became the norm and I managed to mix in well. My parents did not feel much different about the change of environment I had been to a mixed English school in Pakistan as well".

5.3.2 Parental fear of losing control

Mani and Qamar confirmed what many other participants from School A had earlier told me that most of them were sent there to protect them from the influences of Western society and more importantly, keep them away from the boys (see also Basit, 1997, 2013b; Falah and Nagel, 2005; Aston et al., 2007; Archer, 2010).

"We went to Islamic school to learn Islamic education besides the academic education but lots of girls were there because their parents wanted them to learn the bare minimum but stay away from the male population, from the attitudes of the girls and from what they said. It was because their parents wanted them away from boys".

20 years old Hafeesa has a large extended family in the city, considered modern and liberal among the Pakistani community; so I was surprised when she was enrolled in the Muslim girls' school. She found it hard to adjust to the strict regime of the school at first, wearing

hijab and covering herself completely, especially as her other sister went to a mixed state school and didn't wear *hijab*.

"It was a complete change of atmosphere at first but I felt confident and secure. Also with the good comes the bad, at times I felt like I was isolated because of my personality but when I found my ground, I did enjoy the fun experiences I went through with the teachers and students. When I left after GCSEs and went to the other local school, I didn't feel unusual as I had friends there. My parents were okay with the decision I made then".

She points to the parental fear of their daughters going astray in state schools so that they try to protect them from boys and western cultural influences until they can be married off.

Asel also discussed this pressure, saying that in their families (there were several related extended families living around that area) the menfolk are against girls' higher education and girls are not allowed to go to university. "My two sisters went to university, but they were the exception. Our parents worry about the girls going to university because they believe that they will lose control over their daughters. Their daughters may have boyfriends there and end up marrying them against their family's wishes".

"But surely things have changed by now, this was true 15 to 20 years ago", I enquired.

She protested emphatically,

"No Miss, it's still the same, maybe things are better for some girls but I know my own cousins and some other friends whose parents won't allow them to go to university, for the same reason that they might lose control over their daughters but they don't think the same for their sons. Parents can lose control over them too but it never stops them, it makes me so angry. But my sisters have both got degrees. It was hard for them, even though they were really bright, they really had to speak up. My uncle told my dad not to let them go to university, because his son told him that girls who go to university will get 'messed up' which I think is quite hypocritical. My sisters got married and completed their education after they got married. They didn't get the support when they needed it, but now they have degrees everyone respects them. They showed a lot of courage and my dad wasn't against it, he wanted them to get an education, it was my uncles. They were the obstacles and in our culture, people get influenced by each other and my dad supported his brothers".

This shows how young men try to intervene believing that an uneducated wife will be easier to handle than an educated one – in this case their intervention was ignored.

5.3.3 Teachers' attitudes and expectations

Relationships between teachers and pupils were very close in School B and we were always encouraging, supporting and helping them to continue with their education, but Qamar noticed the change in the attitudes of teachers in her new co-ed school,

"No, I wasn't close to the teachers! I think some of the teachers were disheartening and didn't know us well enough. They kept asking us if we were actually sure about what we wanted to do (meaning Sciences). Some teachers did show prejudice but not others. My physics teacher was one of the best teachers ever, but I told another one what I wanted to do at university and she told me I wasn't capable of doing that! It didn't dishearten me thankfully, it made me angry. I still feel like I could have done better. It either toughens you up or you could settle for less and I didn't want that".

This kind of racism is damaging as it can destroy the aspirations of young Muslim women of going in to higher education where they are already under-represented. Shiner and Modood (2002), Bhatti (2006), Hussain and Bagguley (2007) among others have argued that young South Asian women are disadvantaged, so average ability but ambitious Muslim girls might be put off by such comments.

Qamar did well in her A-levels and is currently doing Bio-Medical Science at university but she clearly felt that she wasn't being supported as some teachers had low expectations of her. She also wasn't satisfied with the careers' advice she received and had to do the research for appropriate courses herself.

Leila, newly married, did her GCSEs in the Muslim school and when it closed down, went to a co-educational school to do A-levels. I was surprised to hear that she was allowed to go to a normal city school because of her family's very restricted views about girls' education. She was a shy girl, needing constant emotional and academic help, but achieved six GCSEs with C grades. She recalled her experience at the Muslim school very favourably but when she went to a co-educational school, "the students and environment wasn't friendly enough there. There was prejudice and you felt like you were being judged. I was alone and I really didn't have much social interaction. The teachers were not bad".

Bisma did well in her GCSEs, getting A, B and C grades and after that decided to go to her local secondary to do A-levels after the closure of School B. She chose Biology, Sociology, Psychology and Philosophy& Ethics for A-levels but left half way through the course (her other friends also dropped out). She left her studies because she went to Pakistan to marry aged 17 and on her return felt uncomfortable when her class fellows asked questions about her marriage.

"Why did you leave school?" I enquired.

"I went to Pakistan for six months when I was at the Muslim school for my sister's wedding, I was doing GCSEs first year at the Muslim school and then when I came back after six months, my teachers didn't make me feel like I could deal with the tests. They encouraged me to do extra work at home but when I came back from Pakistan after getting married this time, my new school told me I couldn't do my exams. That totally put me off education. I had spent so long studying, keeping up with my studies, doing my mock exams. I sat the Sociology exam, but even though I said I would do extra work at home, they said no".

I could feel her disappointment.

"I did continue with my education later but it wasn't in the direction I would have wanted to go. I wanted to do Psychology but because they put me off education, I thought you put so much effort in and they can stop you in an instant. It was April or May and I didn't go back to school then. I just left because I didn't want to repeat a year".

She told me that she tried to talk to her teachers and tried to persuade them that she has gone through similar experience in her GCSEs in the Muslim school and caught up with her work and will work hard to do well in her AS level exams but was told that she has missed too much.

"They said I missed too much, even though I missed two or three months. I think the Muslim school was small, the teachers and students kind of understood each other on a personal level but in my new school, there was no personal understanding or encouragement so I left and started to work for two years. I had dreams of becoming a Psychologist or something and going to college or university after completing my A-levels".

Bisma therefore was unable to get her qualifications to enable her to progress, being caught up in the school's inflexible policies.

5.3.4 Negotiating strategies for higher education

I asked the two sisters, Mani and Qamar, if it was difficult to persuade their parents to let them study out of the city. They replied,

"We really had to push our family and show them everything we wanted to do because they wanted us to stay near. Sometimes you just want independence and have that life experience, taking them to open days helped and just saying we want to educate. Family did ask mum why we were going away to university, but we told her not to listen".

The girls succeeded in persuading their mother to allow them to go to universities out of the city. That their father was not on the scene may have helped. Arhaz is the youngest in her family and is using that position to delay her marriage in order to complete her education, especially as her father is quite supportive towards her education.

"My parents let me choose the subjects what I like but didn't want me to go out of the city but I didn't get a place at my local university. I wanted to be more independent and live alone before I got married. My sisters got married at 18 but I am very different to them. My mum and dad are not educated but my brother and sisters all went to university, even though my sisters got married, they still continued their education".

Negotiation was needed when a local university place was not secured and they needed to look further afield.

5.3.5 Impact of home attitudes on women's education

Leila stayed in the Muslim girls' school in the 6th Form but did not achieve anything so when the school closed down, she tried to do A-levels in the big comprehensive school but felt completely lost and left that school without any qualifications. Her father's influence on her education choices shows very clearly in the following statement, "Well I didn't do well in the exams and got all ungraded results in my A-levels. I really wanted to do Nursing but my father didn't like it, so now I just help my dad by doing his accounts". Her father has two shops in the city. She said that education was important to her mother but not to her father, "To my dad, only if it helped him, like he would prefer if I studied at home with household jobs too".

Bisma was one of a group of cousins from a Muslim school in a northern city who enrolled in School B. "It was mainly Asians and we had about two English students. The teachers were mainly English and in my class there was only one English girl, so it is very different here" were her comments about School B. She loved being in a more mixed area with English people living around them. In her opinion, School B was more 'liberal' than her previous school. She decided on a Childcare course but later became interested in hair and beauty. She was planning to start her own business of doing hair and make-up for the Asian brides in the city, when I met her. While talking about education, she said,

"It has always been seen as an important thing in our family, my dad has never said don't study but no-one has ever gone to university and there is no one to look up to. The typical thought is that you are going to get married and have babies anyway so why study so much, it's from the last generation to this one and it may change in the next generation".

Her statement reflected the present harsh reality about the state of some Muslim females and the uncertainty of opportunities of higher education. Though she was referring to the situation in her own family, Pakistani Muslim young women often say similar things about post-16 education.

Arhaz was critical of the careers' advice she received or didn't receive at the school and wasn't sure about her choices after A-levels. She dropped out of an English Literature degree after a term and after spending a year at home, decided to study Psychology in another university. Malika is reading Law at her local university and has just completed her first year. She left School B after GCSEs but had previously boarded in a Muslim girls' boarding school, which she did not like.

"I liked the environment but at times it was really strict because you were not allowed TV, hair straightner and it was just a completely different lifestyle for me, compared with what I was used to. I came home in the summer after speaking to my dad because he knew I didn't like it and when I came back, my parents sent me to another Islamic school. This was against my wishes but now I am happy they sent me there".

Malika explained that her parents were not 'that religious', according to her 'not practising', her mother never covered her hair with the headscarf. After leaving the Muslim school, she went to a mixed school in her hometown to do A-levels but as she puts it, "I didn't do well because of my family situation and took a gap year". She was taken to Pakistan in 2011 and thought she would get married,

"I think my mum's intention was to get me married but we came back and I did my A-levels again. My family didn't want me to study at first but when they saw my grades they were happy. When I got good grades and wanted to go to university, my dad didn't object but he did prefer me to study at home (local university)".

After university she wanted to combine a career with married life.

I was curious to know the reason why Rukhsar left in the first year of her A-levels in her new co-ed school after leaving School B:

"My dad and uncle just took me out of school and I went through hell for about six months. I broke down because I didn't want my education to suffer so I ran away and stayed with my aunty in another city. My dad and uncle were really aggressive and threw horrendous accusations at me, but my aunty supported me".

I was aware of the domestic disturbances in her home and their effects on her when she was in the Muslim school. She continued talking about her educational experiences in the Muslim school,

"Mrs B really helped me because she encouraged me so much not to give up, so I applied to university and at first I was told to wait till the next year, then I received a phone call for interview for the Nursing course. I don't know what they saw but they agreed but I thought whatever I do I want to help Asian women. I understand that if you want to get anywhere in life, educate yourself".

The family problems that this young woman had to face were horrendous (details are beyond my ethical brief) but she overcame them all with creative determination and brought greater stability to the whole family.

Difficult fathers are a continual problem. Freeha (age 20) was among the few young women interviewed who completed her A-levels after leaving the Muslim school and is in the local university doing a Science degree (against her father's wishes). She told me that her father wanted her to get married but she did not want to, so she asked her mother to support her. Her mother put her marriage at stake to allow her daughter to go to the university, even though Freeha's father refused to support her financially. Freeha said that she applied for a loan and is grateful that she had a strong mother, otherwise she would have been married by now. Kalsoom, 22 years old, joined the Muslim school in Year 11,

but left after GCSEs when School B closed. She was not allowed to continue with her education in a normal state school so she decided to do some home study courses. Girls in her family are not permitted to go to university, but are allowed to do home study courses. I am in contact with this family and know for certain that the younger girls face a similar future.

5.3.6 Changing attitudes

Malika is currently enjoying university life, not wearing *hijab* and dressing in modern western clothes. She said with a certain pride, "I love it, I really enjoy it because you can just go in and keep yourself to yourself, there are actually a lot of Asians there so it is good. My aunty went to university and now me" but she told me that her friends do not approve of this change in her character. Rukhsar, whose family problems are described above (5.2.5) has just completed her Nursing degree despite acrimonious family and community pressures. She had left School B after GCSEs, unsure about the future. She went to a mixed comprehensive with a group of other pupils.

"After leaving the Muslim girls' school, I really wanted a change, my parents weren't too keen on sending me anywhere else in the city. I wasn't too keen on college because you don't get the support and I wanted to be able to approach the teachers in the 6th Form, I didn't feel I was ready for college and independence".

I clearly remember that she was constantly seeking support and reassurances from teachers. She then commented on facing prejudice during her educational years,

"Not really but once at my other school, a woman teacher patronised me so much, she asked if the 'Iraqi school' (referring to the Muslim school) was some sort of 'military school' and I thought she was so ignorant and arrogant, but she did apologise afterwards. Nobody is judgmental at university and it's weird because I thought everybody would be like my uncles. I came across as the rebel in our family but my close friends understand me".

Rukhsar has changed her appearance completely, so I didn't recognise her when we met. She comes across as a modern, liberal minded, happy and confident young Muslim woman. She was dressed in a tight short skirt with thick black tights and loose blouse when she came to see me. Her beautiful hair was uncovered: previously she always covered it with *hijab*. This was a complete transformation from her previous self and she said that some people in the Muslim community did not approve.

5.3.7 Prioritizing family life over careers

Malika said about her future plans:

"I am not going to be a career woman, I think you have to have a balance in your life, you have to be a housewife too, but it is hard to do both at the same time. I want to get my degree, get married and work for a bit and then if I have children, that's it! I will stop working".

I have come across this sentiment before when talking to other young Muslim women, who give great importance to their role as mothers and wives and work or career becomes secondary after marriage (see also Basit 1996; Salway, 2007; Aston et al., 2007). Hafeesa left school with few GCSE grades and then completed her Level 3 Diploma in Childcare, but she was always interested in fashion. She told me she doesn't wear *hijab* because no-one else does in her family. On careers, she said,

"I feel like with the qualifications I can be more independent and be able to face the world by myself, I feel stronger. I would love to work for a couple of years before I have a couple of children to look after".

Seerah told me, "I am not bothered about a career but generally I want to have more children and focus on them but eventually I will work to pay for certain things". Michel expressed similar views about having a career. She is currently studying Law in her local university: she is the only child in her family so her family is very accommodating to her needs.

"I also see myself as a career woman, *Inshallah* after finishing my degree. I hope to become a Solicitor and specialise in Family Law. However, once I am married and have children, I will be more than happy to be a housewife and spend time with my family and look after them".

This sentiment was in line with what many other young women told me. I have to acknowledge the fact that despite the common experiences of these Muslim women, not all are prepared to engage in a 'liberal dynamic interplay' and would be quite satisfied to accept a more traditional role of being a housewife and a mother (see also Basit, 1996, 1997).

I am also in touch with some other young women from School B. Nazish, Jabeen, Neesa and Nisbah left after GCSEs, all in their twenties now. Nazish is working in a care home

and also doing an IT course. She told me about her experience of going to a co-educational school after leaving the Muslim school:

"The experience was good, it was just different being around a large number of students as well as with guys. My parents did not mind me going to a mixed school, to be honest I didn't really face any difficulties at all".

She said she would love to work alongside being a housewife, as many other participants also said. (Dale, Shaheen, Karla & Fieldhouse, 2002, echo this in their survey of Pakistani and Bangladeshi education and employment).

Shabeena went to the local College of Further Education and studied Beauty Therapy, then worked for a while as a counter manager at the post office. She gave it up recently and has decided to run her own business of doing hair and make-up from home while waiting to get married. Neesa and Nisbah started work after GCSEs. Neesa married age 17 and has a baby, while Nisbah is working as a sales assistant. Another girl Rani (age 20) went to a local school to do A-levels but left after a year and is now working in a Children's Nursery, waiting to be married soon. Muskaan, Fakiha, Zainum and Maleeha (also in their twenties) left the Muslim school with GCSEs but did not continue with their education and all are married with babies.

5.4 Summary

My study highlights reasons for the under representation of Pakistani women in careers and in higher education (as does Archer, 2002, 2010). It is clear that prejudice, and teachers' lower expectation of Muslim girls played a role in their educational experiences (echoing Shiner and Modood, 2002; Bhatti, 1999, 2006; Shain, 2003; Basit, 2005) but it is quite evident from the women's accounts that patriarchal and cultural traditions were highly significant factors in depriving many Pakistani Muslim women from my sample of higher education and careers in the UK. An overwhelming majority of my participants were unsatisfied with the careers' education they received in schools or in university, and by not receiving appropriate help and guidance at the crucial times, many struggled to find their way in to the higher education.

I also discovered that participants from both schools faced similar pressures regarding patriarchal traditions and parental attitudes towards higher education, and families' priority for their daughters' marriages are critical in explaining this educational outcome as listed

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below. The following figures (data up to 2013) show the participants in both schools who either continued to higher education or dropped out at 16 or 18.

School A:

59% young women dropped out of education between the ages of 16-18.

41% young women went to university and gained qualifications.

School B:

61.5% young women dropped out of education between the ages of 16-18.

38.5% young women continued to university.

The dropout rate is higher among the younger women who went to School B as compared to School A, which reflects the parental attitudes of those who opted specifically for Muslim schooling. The difference is not great, because there were similar reasons for choosing School A as a girls' school, and because some went to university when older. Of those who graduated, this chapter has described their struggles throughout the post-16 education process. The following chapter explores issues around the age of marriage including the increasing frequency of women divorcing their allotted husband.

Chapter 6

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

6.1 Overview

Education is the "most decisive of our life chances, the key to equal opportunity and the ladder to advancement" (Weiner, 1985:5), the key to what kind of job one has, one's class position and also very often, to whom one marries. She emphasised male advantage. For many of the women in this study, marriage often interrupted their education and career training, consequently limiting their opportunities to earn. This chapter details the consequences of early marriage for the education and life choices of the Pakistani Muslim women in this study; other aspects of arranged marriage are discussed in Chapters 4, 8, and 9. I show in this chapter that early marriages are shaped largely by family strategic interests and are not love relationships; often they are entered into with only the illusion of consent. Early marriages can significantly hinder women's education and employment prospects and are also often unstable. These combined effects have significant socio-economic and emotional consequences, because a separated or divorced woman may become effectively the sole supporter of her children but is fitted only for low paid work.

My interviewees regarded marriage as the key event in their early lives, saying that their marriage took place either while they were at school, as soon as they left school, before they went to university or while they were at university. Women who were married while at university often then abandoned their courses, terminating their education to fulfil their families' wishes, as the marriage took priority over education (see also Dale, Shaheen, Kalra& Fieldhouse, 2002; Aston et. al. 2007; Hooker, Page & Willison, 2007). Early marriage encourages meek compliance, and is intended to protect *izzat* – family reputation or honour (see 1.3 above). Parents may regard it "their duty to ensure that their children marry as soon as possible" (Basit, 1996:5). If a daughter does something which is not permitted and considered immoral, she can destroy her parents' social standing in the community (Kay, 2006). Daughters are considered '*parai*', meaning not belonging to their own family but to their husband's family (Falah & Nagel, 2005), so parents often consider it preferable to arrange their daughters' marriages as soon as they can. I argue here that marital decisions are taken primarily to protect a family's reputation rather than through concern for a daughter's future welfare: this consideration is what underlies many of my

participants' accounts. Shaw (2000:175) described girls as "shaped by their parent's concern to protect their daughters' marriageability" with higher education only allowed if parents think their daughters are mature enough to be trusted to go to college or university. Some women attributed their losing interest in their studies to this parental attitude, and later regretted not having pursued their education. "Early marriage" of women is generally considered a thing of the past, and the trend in British society is towards a later average age of marriage for women. However, I found that many women I interviewed from both Schools A and B experienced early marriages, indicating that, at least for women of the backgrounds described here, early marriage continues to be a habitual class practice – in Bourdieu's terms, a *habitus* – within the present generation. My analysis indicates that the experiences of early marriage of the younger women in School B were very similar to the experiences of women who attended School A: for all these women, with marriage in general taking precidence over education. This chapter therefore sets out the way in which early marriages disrupted the education of many of my interviews, regardless of whether they attended School A or School B, and indicates the extent of this disruption on women's subsequent life choices.

6.2 Early Marriage interrupting education

6.2.1 On father's orders

Shahana left school in year 10 (before GCSEs), married by her father's order once she was 16. She said,

 "I knew what was happening, I was nervous because I didn't know anything about him. There were two other girl cousins getting married too. There were lots of divorces in our relatives, girls got married with men from Pakistan but then ended up getting divorced. They didn't like their life partners that were chosen for them, they only said yes due to family pressures but later were not happy".

She had initial problems, but is still married to him. Marriage stopped Akhtar from getting to higher education. She told me that she made the sacrifice for her parents and left school after GCSEs. I clearly remember a bright girl, unlike her cousins, wanting to do A levels in school, but her father stopped her attending and she started working. Suman married young and without completing her education. She has three young children so she is now working part-time. She openly blamed her mother for denying her the opportunity of

higher education and a career. I remember during the conversation about the importance of the education, she snapped at her mother who was also present and said, "You made us marry at a young age, and I could have made something of my life if I would have been allowed to continue with my education".

Seema married a cousin from Pakistan after finishing school at 17, an arranged marriage which she expected, as did her cousins who showed no interest in education while at school because as Seema said, " we all knew we will get married straight after school so why bother". She said:

"I left school at 16 and straight away my marriage was arranged, I knew this was going to happen, we all knew our future, leave school and get married. They told me that my husband won't come over straight away, it will take him at least 2 to 3 years to get a visa so in that time I could work and also I will be 19 by then, but this didn't happen. My husband got his visa straight away, I was thrown by this and struggled to cope".

Leila became engaged whilst attending School B and married when she was 20 years old. She always knew her father and uncles would not let her go into higher education and like most other girls in her family, she would marry a UK cousin. Two other pupils, two sisters, Latifa and Fahmida, (now age 19 and 20) were also forced out of education after A levels because of their father's insistence on marriage. The older sister was bright and studious and did really well in her GCSEs. The first time I met their parents was when they came in for their admission. As their mother was not wearing hijab, and I knew that the girls' had been born and brought up in the UK, I asked the parents about their preference for a Muslim girls' school for the daughters. The mother replied that it was her husband's decision; the father responded that he came here from Pakistan to get married and believes that girls should be educated separately in a single sex school. He was prepared to pay the school fees but when School B closed down the girls went to the local co-educational comprehensive to take A level examinations. I later inquired about the girls' A-level results: as expected, the older girl did really well so I assumed that she must now be at university. She said that she was offered a place in a local university but is not allowed to go there. Their father told me that he wants his daughters to get married first because this is more important than being educated in the university. The elder girl was clearly unhappy about the situation. I found out a few months later that the girls were back from Pakistan

and the older girl had married a UK cousin; her friend told me that she likes her husband. Nevertheless, their father had prevented these girls' continued education and careers, and their mother had no say in the matter. Although the father was prepared to pay for girls' schooling earlier to keep them in a single sex school, this was to control them and not to give them career opportunities.

There are many similar examples. We had one exceptionally gifted pupil who achieved 11 GCSE A* grades. We encouraged her to apply for a top University and she was offered a place but I later found out that she declined her place in the University and had married, as was her father's wish. I know of at least 20 such families whose daughters were not allowed to pursue higher education. They were all engaged whilst still in school and expected to marry at 16. Now, a few years on, they are married with one or two children and settled in their roles as mothers and wives.

Bisma was aware that she would be married after finishing school because this was a normal practice in her family: "In March, I went to Pakistan and got married which was quite uncomfortable because girls were asking questions like was I getting forced [she was by then in a state comprehensive school as School B had closed], I was 17 then when I got married". She told me that she had just finished the first term of her AS levels when three cousins were taken to Pakistan because the boys' families were getting impatient, "I had no option and the boys were old enough to be married so they wanted us to come. I am no longer married though and a lot has changed since I left education".   She said that she really wanted her husband to study but he didn't and things started going wrong so she came back. After a year she realised it wasn't going to work, and luckily her parents were quite supportive about the divorce. She also hinted about a change in the attitude toward divorce in her family, "My older sister and my brother also went through a divorce and that time it was rejected by the family but now when I'm going through it, it is different, everyone is being supportive". I saw her again after her interview; she told me she was getting married again, and that her prospective husband is a relative from her mother's side of the family in Pakistan.

Seerah too was half way through her university course when she married, and as a result was unable to complete her education. Her father had been very supportive of girls' education until it interfered with Seerah's marriage arrangements. Seerah did not completed her degree:

"No! I got married in my 2nd year of university. I got engaged from Pakistan and then got married, I really liked university and wanted to complete my studies but he came half way through my second year at university, so I left and did a few temping jobs while looking for a permanent job and after 5 months, I got a job at the local hospital in research and development and finance and I loved it. I left that job after my baby because I miscarried in the 7th month. I will work eventually but I definitely want more children".

As this indicates, when children arrive after and early marriage, it is particularly hard to get back into study. One day I received a surprise call from Mariam a School B pupil, married at 16 alongside her cousins and leaving school. The marriage was unhappy and Mariam had suffered from depression after giving birth to a daughter. We met at my home. She had lost weight and had started smoking, she confessed. She talked about her experiences after marriage. Her husband was still in Pakistan, his visa application refused. She told me that she didn't want him here and had written to the Home Office to veto his application. But, I said, surely her mother and older sister Shahana would have supported her, because I can recall Shahana's words that things were different and women had more say in their personal affairs. I wondered, why then does Mariam need to run away from home? "Things are same Miss", she replied,

"My mother and father are forcing me to stay with my husband, even my sister and my brother who is married to an English girl, are telling me that I am wrong. I have different views about my marriage partner, he is definitely not what I wanted. I cannot stand him touching me, let alone spending the rest of my life with him but my family is putting pressure on me to get him over here and try again. I am stressed out as his appeal hearing is soon and I don't know how to stop him without my family knowing about it".

Such young women often have no one to listen to their anxieties and offer support.

6.2.2 A husband's power

Marriage installs a husband as a male gatekeeper and potential constraint to opportunity (see similar observations by Husain, Waheed and Husain, 2006, and Aston et al., 2007). Nevertheless some interviewees reported that their husband encouraged and supported their wives to complete their education after marriage. Aliya told me,

"University life was good but because I got married, my parents said it was down to him now, I was lucky he was so down to earth, more than I thought. My dad had told me to enjoy life as much as I could before I got married because he didn't know what my

husband would turn out like but he turned out so down to earth. My mum never allowed me to wear English clothes but he likes them and said I could do whatever I want, just respect his family".

Fortunately for her, her husband *allows her* to do what she wants, a continuation of patriarchal traditions and she admires him for being "*supportive*". It could have been very different. She also confirms the parents' traditional way of thinking in the Pakistani community, that when she marries she is out of their control, and under the authority of her husband and will need to adjust to his way of thinking. We find this too in other studies (Ballard, 1982; Shaw, 2000; Hussain, Waheed, and Hussain, 2006). Nina's education was also interrupted because of marriage at the age of 19 but she is one of those determined women who completed her degree after marriage. She also gives the credit to her husband, an educated man from Pakistan and who supported her ambition to study at university.

Farkhanda's father was not in favour of girls' education and I remember she was taken out of School A at 16. She went to Pakistan and married her cousin. I often visited her parents and her mother especially used to cry telling me how unhappy her daughter was because of the way she was being treated by her husband, a very strict, devout, and religiously minded man. Farkhanda would often come to her parent's house after arguments with her husband. She met me in a shop and described her very unhappy marriage, but wouldn't think of leaving her husband. "Where will I go with four kids?" she asked me with tears in her eyes. She said that her husband wants her to leave this country and go and live in Pakistan because he did not want to see his daughters growing up in a "promiscuous western society". She didn't want to go because all her family lives in UK. She wasn't allowed to work at first by her father and now by her husband, so had to be dependent on her husband or her father, which in a patriarchal social system, suits men as they can establish and maintain their authority over women. "I wish I was allowed to get some education, it would have helped me so much now. I just feel useless", she told me that she is completely trapped in an unhappy marriage without hope of escape. Her family is very aware of all her situation she has been in for 18 years now but though they all support her financially and emotionally, they will not allow her to leave her abusive husband. She put her eldest daughter in the Muslim girls' school, only because her husband wanted her to be kept away from normal schools and boys, but when the school closed down, her daughter (with behavioural and emotional problems)was sent to a local co-educational comprehensive

school. This is a classic case of family attitudes having disastrous consequences for the woman.

6.2.3 A mother's influence

Although the mother's voice is not necessarily or often strong, her decision to support either her husband or her daughter can be crucial. Aliya's education was disrupted by her marriage though she persevered and completed her university education in most challenging circumstances. I was keen to know what happened to her after leaving school, knowing that her family did not have high aspirations for her education, and I also did know that she had married and had her daughter whilst in university. She explained:

"I was 18 years old when my mum gave me a list of people from Pakistan and I liked my present husband because he was educated, but my aunty was still keen on my *rishta* (proposal) which ended up in a huge argument and I got married to who I wanted in Pakistan. This was all during my A-level exams and my results were due to come days after I got married and came back from Pakistan. I was studying and working in a nursery but then during my course I became pregnant and had to take a year out. After my degree I started working for a language school in the city and I am still working there".

Because of family politics, she triumphed in demanding to choose a husband, and in obtaining degree and career in spite of pregnancy.

Maheema is 28, married to a man chosen by her parents from Pakistan. She did well in her GCSEs and A-levels but her marriage put a stop to her education. I remember her aspirations of becoming a teacher but after starting her degree course in the local university, was not allowed to complete it. Her marriage failed and her husband was deported after getting involved in illegal activities. Maheema is now torn between the two countries, she feels loyalty towards her husband and doesn't want a divorce so spends half a year with him and half in UK because she told me she just cannot adjust in Pakistan, and every time I see her, it reminds me how yet again, the aspirations of an intelligent girl were destroyed because of early marriage. She had her mother's support who wanted her to do her degree and then teacher training but as it happened to so many girls in my study, father's authority could not be challenged as he made the final decision about her future. I met Maheema and her younger sister at a wedding reception recently and found out that she had just returned from Pakistan, her younger sister Naeema informed me with great excitement that she is now a primary teacher and teaching in a local school. She

commented with sadness, "Maheema would have been a teacher by now Miss if she would have continued". Naeema told me that after ruining Maheema's future, her mother's support was invaluable in her case because she started challenging her husband and made sure that the second daughter will complete her education before marriage. She reinforces my findings about how mothers' roles in shaping their daughters' futures can be crucial.

6.2.4 "So girls don't go astray"

I met another ex-pupil (Rabeea) at a pre-wedding function, having not seen her for more than twenty years. She was sitting beside two young women and her mother and we talked about school days. She told me that she was married soon after leaving school and the girls were her daughters. One daughter, aged 19, was married with a little baby and the other was 18 years old and was getting married soon. I asked her why they were getting married so young and didn't she want them to complete their education first? She just smiled and said,

 "It's better if girls marry early, they don't go astray and marriage stands a much better chance of success. University educated girls become far too independent and do no listen to their parents".

This answer really took me thirty years back when this was the thinking of most Pakistani families, but this answer was revealing that there are many families who still believe in protecting their daughters from western influences by arranging early marriages. This tendency is reported also by Shaw (2000); Dale, Shaheen, Kalra, & Fieldhouse, (2002); and Ahmad, (2012).

I was invited to a former colleague's daughter's pre-wedding function recently. The daughter is 19 years old and has just started her degree in Economics in London. I questioned my friend's decision to interrupt her daughter's education; couldn't she have waited another two years? She replied that her sister-in-law (also my interviewee) had taken her daughter, who is also in the first year of her university degree, to Pakistan to get her married, so my friend had decided to do the same:

"We all went to attend her wedding, my daughter was engaged so relatives put lots of pressure on us to have our daughter's marriage done as well so we agreed. We will allow her to come back from Pakistan after a term and complete her studies. I think it is better this way, girls know they are committed and won't go astray".

This view, expressed by a professionally educated mother, was further confirmation that this trend of early marriages is still very much alive in the local Pakistani community.

Nevertheless there is a possible counter-narrative. Shahla married before her degree course, and was happy with her husband. She was sure that she would have chosen differently after three years at university, so was glad to have married when she did. She said, "You know Miss, I am glad I got married when I did because once I completed my degree, I realised I would not have chosen my husband as my life partner". This is precisely the reason why so many parents arrange their daughters' marriages before they are allowed to start their university courses, because of this fear that they may decide to reject their parent's choice of their future husbands.

6.2.5 "There should be more to a daughter's life"

Faiza had similar experiences when it came to her marriage, which was arranged in Pakistan during her studies, and she had to cope with all those stresses and family pressure while studying. She said,

"From us brothers and sisters, three of us have arranged marriages from Pakistan and the younger three want to get married from choice. This has caused some conflict and my mum's family is not as close as it was after that. I got married in 2002 and my husband and I have had issues since then in our marriage".

Women married at that time often reported marital difficulties and that they felt they had little agency in addressing them, though there are signs that the younger sisters, married across the subsequent decade, have been able to exercise a greater degree of choice in negotiating marital problems. Sabeera had a difficult time regarding her marriages but she is also a good example of achieving agency through negotiation. She was made to marry her father's relative's son against her will when she was in university, disrupting her education, even though her parents knew that she liked a Pakistani young man from the university who wanted to marry her. Her parents refused this proposal and she was married against her choice and without consent. This marriage ended after a year and she started her degree course again. Once again, her parents refused her chosen partner and she was taken to Pakistan to marry her cousin. She was against this marriage and told her second husband that if he leaves her alone, she will get him to the UK but then he will have to divorce her. This is precisely what happened, so after a year, she was divorced again. After all this time, she finally persuaded her parents to allow her to marry her first and only love.

She is married to him now but I know the stresses and tensions and she had to go through all this time because she stayed in touch with me and asked for my help from time to time. This is a not unusual case of Pakistani parents putting their own wishes before their daughters' happiness. Sabeera gave this thought provoking statement which touches the core beliefs of a feminist or anyone who believes in the dignity and human rights for women, "I think it would be nice to be given more importance, rather than you grow up, cook, clean and get married, there should be more to a daughter's life".

6.3 Rebellion

Rukhsar, a nurse, who fought for the opportunity for higher education, even left home and went to live with a cousin in another city without informing anyone in her family, just to make her parents realise that she didn't want to get married and wanted to go to university. She commented, "I can never do what my mum did or be like her. I don't want to get married because I am scared and because of my experiences, I think I ask for too much!"

Aleema is of the same age and in a similar position. She lives with her brother who is her legal guardian as her parents divorced and mother normally lives in Pakistan. She did not go into higher education after leaving school and is still looking for work. She told me that she would have a say in her marriage:

"I am not sure when I would get married but I would like to have a stable job so that I can stand on my own two feet and support myself without depending entirely on someone else. Since I live with my brother and he has already discussed it with me, it would be my choice as long as I inform my family that I have met someone. I would like someone who would make me want to be a better Muslimah and help me achieve that".

When I saw her a year later, she was still unmarried. Aleema is a modern looking girl, blond hair, western clothes, sleeveless blouses and tattoos on her arms, not the traditional Muslim girl that one would expect. But her last sentence surprised me! She went to the Muslim girls' school, became very liberal after leaving it, took her headscarf off and shocked her friends by wearing very revealing clothes, hair and make-up, so why is she hoping to meet someone who would make her want to be a better Muslim? I discovered she feels she is wrong by acting the way she is and faces community's pressure to conform:

"In our community, girls are judged entirely on their clothing, *hijab*, jeans etc. and very little attention is given to their behaviour as all the focus is given on what they wear on their heads and body. In fact in my personal experience, I found people who didn't know me, or my family, actually come up to them and complain that they saw me in town without a scarf. I found this very strange as my family are not strict on clothing but these community people thought of themselves personally responsible for the type of clothing I wear".

In her case, this attitude led to a backlash, but she now wanted to obtain a more balanced understanding of her religion. It also recalls Bhachu's (2004) study of "dangerous" designs.

6.4 Women's views on husbands from Pakistan

Unmarried Arhaz is the youngest in the family at 20, and was given more choices than her sisters had. She is in university and when talking about her marriage, said,

"I would never get married from Pakistan [her two elder sisters married husbands from Pakistan] because I think they are more controlling and their way of thinking is so different. I don't think it is good to get married really young, some girls are happy but some girls are more independent on their own".

I wondered if she would get her own way. Malika, enjoying university, focused on personal qualities but with more positive thoughts about husbands from Pakistan:

"I think boys from Pakistan are hardworking, boys from here make their wives work and pay for the mortgage and do the housework. They start to rely on their wives to work but as long as the guy is religious, he can be from anywhere".

She further added, "I would like to get to know the person but I trust my parents, my dad wouldn't choose a wrong person for me". She became engaged to a young man from Pakistan of her parent's choice but is allowed to complete her education. Her trusting answer reflects many other participants' similar answers about agreeing to marry according to their parent's wishes (also reflected in other studies – Basit, 1996; Ahmad, 2005; Shaw, 2014).

Meena is the youngest of three sisters, her two older sisters marrying husbands from Pakistan after leaving school, Meena marrying a British cousin. She said,

"I told my parents I wouldn't be able to get on with someone from Pakistan, so I didn't want to get married from there. I was the youngest and very different from my sisters. I have my own opinions. Their mentality and their way of thinking is different, they expect you to change for them".

Meena told me that she was happy with her relationship with her husband but then during our conversation, she said,

"If you get married from here, you have an understanding with your husband, he will let you use your voice, with someone from back home, he won't let you do it. They work, work and work, don't give their wives money, they just want her to cook and clean for them, they want control over their wives. They want their wives to stay at home and not go out but they go out and look at other women".

An extreme view, but then she criticised her own British born husband similarly:

"My husband doesn't like me going out with my friends and doing things because he says he left his family for me so I should stay within my own family, we go out together. He doesn't like me driving around and going to cousins' homes".

She also added that she lived with her in-laws after her marriage but started having problems especially with her mother-in-law and she made her husband move out of his family home to save his marriage, so now he uses this against her. These contradictory statements display the firmly established gender hierarchy and the traditional status of husband in her marriage. She is pleased that she can have some control in her marriage because her husband is from UK so will have similar cultural understanding but unconsciously she admits to internalised patriarchal conditioning of male supremacy in family decision making (see also Wilson, 2006).

Seema, who married at 17, told me that she suffered for 8 years in her unhappy marriage because of the family pressure.

"Family tried and kept on trying to patch things up between us. There were times when I just wanted to run away from it all but I thought about my mum, I didn't want to give her grief, but I knew I couldn't live with this man. I wanted to work but he objected me wearing western clothes, then I wanted to do a beautician's course but he didn't like this job and didn't want me to do this course".

She met another young man while still married and decided to get divorced.

"I started seeing another Paki boy, he was from North and very well educated. He told me that we won't run away, we will wait until my divorce and then marry".

Her mother was listening to the interview, and commented in Punjabi,

"Our daughters have done what they have because we made them marry of our choice. They have changed because they have been to schools here. We forgot this fact and wanted to keep the old traditions alive. Well it didn't work, did it? All the people I know of, they have gone through like us, their girls divorced their husbands who came from Pakistan and found their own husbands from here".

Seema is happily married her second husband, with a very young baby girl and has started her own business as a beautician working from home and peripatetically, her mother child minding. She agreed that men from Pakistan have fixed views about their wives, so I asked her why families arrange marriages with relatives in Pakistan? She replied,

"It is still going on, the reason is family relations, people here want to keep a bond with their relations in Pakistan and also there is a lot of emotional blackmail involved in these matters as well. Brothers and sisters in Pakistan put pressure on their relatives here to get their sons and daughters over here in the UK, so in a way parents feel trapped and arrange these marriages".

Thus marriage is part of a strategy of migration. This agrees with Shaw (2000), Charsley (2005), and Qureshi, Charsley and Shaw (2012). She reiterated familiar views about fiancés from Pakistan:

"It's cultural differences you see, it can't work because the boys who come over here do not want to change their views, they want to control their wives, which is not possible here, girls won't have it and this causes the marriage break-up. My ex-husband objected me wearing western clothes, going out to work, he also wanted me to hand over all my wages to him and when I fought back...well".

She divorced and then married a Pakistani student who was studying in a university in UK, against her family's wishes, but told me that she was very happy with her second husband who allows her to wear western clothes and work as a beautician. She gave me several examples from the local Pakistani community where arranged marriages have ended in divorce. There is a growing lack of patience concerning extreme attitudes in marriage. Once divorce becomes popular and easy, wives are less likely to put up with unhappy

relationships. As family ties weaken, divorce becomes attractive, and in turn divorce weakens the family bond. But this social change will take time.

A husband's divided loyalty was an issue in many cases, giving insufficient support for his wife and children when sending back money to his parents in Pakistan. Suman said she was content in her marriage but was not happy with the fact that her husband, like other Pakistani men who come to UK after marrying a British Pakistani girl, normally work hard but send money back home to support their parents, which causes friction between husbands and wives over here. Shaw (2000) has also identified this as one of the reasons for marital instability in the Pakistani community. This seems to be a common concern among the women because many interviewees felt that sending money to Pakistan causes financial hardship in the UK. Faiza, Sultana, Seera, Maham, Farkhanda, Maheema and Aliya expressed similar views.

6.5 Delaying marriage and marriage of choice

Unmarried at 28, Haseena, a reception teacher, commented:

"Oh yes! My marriage! Everyone in the community keeps asking my mother why aren't I married yet? I heard gossip about me that there is something wrong with me, or something. My parents are feeling the pressure and it does get to me sometimes. I wanted to be a teacher so I have spent all these years getting here, now I am ready to get married and I will".

She is quite aware of the situation regarding her marriage and feels pressure, as her friends are all married with children. I asked her if it will be arranged, she told me that it would not be completely arranged as her parents have liberal views on this matter:

"I know what I want from my relationship with my husband but I also know that it might not be the case in some families in our community, among my own friends, not all of them went for higher education, most of them got married after leaving school and then started working to support their husbands and children. I know quite a few of them have got divorced now, mainly because their parents arranged their marriages in Pakistan, in their families because they want to bring over their *bhanjas* (sister's sons) and *bhatijas* (brother's sons) over here, to keep the family links in Pakistan but girls of my generation are more aware of what they want from marriage".

Qureshi, Charsley and Shaw (2012) discuss marriage fragility further. She was among the few participants in the forefront of social change who were strong enough to hold back the marriage pressure and complete her education.

Kauser kept on delaying her marriage so she may find a suitable educated life partner but at the end married a cousin from Pakistan, marrying two years ago.

"We had a lot of discussions over marriage and that is why I got married quite late because my parents wanted me to marry someone they were happy with but I wanted it to be someone I was happy with, but eventually I just did it anyway. I was waiting for someone educated but in the end it didn't matter".

She is an intelligent woman with a 1st class degree, and obviously wanted to marry someone like her but her parents only wanted to bring a relative's son from Pakistan, despite the fact that their eldest daughter's marriage failed after three years and she is still single. Khadija succeeded in marrying a man of her choice, which is not a common practice as she is from a Pathan family who have a strict moral code of behaviour for their daughters but her father was in favour of girls' education and both sisters managed to get higher education and followed professional careers. I was surprised to find out that she persuaded her parents to marry a non-Pakistani Muslim. She told me that it was because she was stubborn but I feel the reason was her confidence and financial independence. She knew how to fight with the help of her education. "My parents didn't say we could marry whoever we wanted to or do whatever we want". So restrictions were there, she knew her limitations but when it came to her marriage, she knew she had a big fight on her hands to convince her parents but it has turned out to be a positive experience for her. She was happy that her parents have accepted her choice.

Humaira, married with three children, came from a traditional family background where cultural traditions and a narrow interpretation of women's role and responsibilities took precedence over girls' education) so girls were normally married straight after they turned 16. She told me with a big smile,

"I was 22 when I got married and it was my husband's choice who is my cousin from here (UK). We were quite close growing up and I knew he liked me. There were a lot of issues

because his family wanted him to marry out and he wanted to marry me. It didn't happen in the best of ways but we are very happy, he is the perfect guy for me".

I attended Iraj's wedding (36 is considered old for a Pakistani woman's first marriage), her husband also a doctor. They met in medical college and as Iraj put it, "He decided to take me on", she laughed. Iraj is another example of a Pakistani woman using negotiation to have agency in her life; she was able to delay her marriage to pursue her goal by keeping her parents on her side.

Akhtar was taken out of school when 17 to be married, but for some reasons, the marriage didn't take place. She met a white English young man and married him in her 30s. She commented, "Only my sister supported me in my decision (to marry a white man), because my family obviously wanted an Asian person and they feel that white people are not really reliable and maybe he won't care". Akhtar moved out of her parent's home to live with her husband in a nearby town. She told me that a few other young women in her extended family behaved similarly, three getting divorced and re-married to husbands of their own choice (a point confirmed by her cousin Seema earlier on). Seema's mother commented sarcastically in Punjabi: "We are not happy but we are bearing it! Girls are doing what they want, things have changed now".

6.6 Divorce

The women's account of their marriages also brought to my attention the fact that there is a growing trend towards divorce. This was an unexpected finding of my study, as I had not expected to hear details of women's marital circumstances. According to 2001 Census, the percentage of lone parent families among British Pakistanis has at least doubled since the mid-1990s (see Qureshi, Charsley and Shaw, 2012). The divorce rate among the participants from School A in my study was 34.8%, and even among the younger women from school B, not all of whom are married yet, it was 15.2%. I only brought up the topic of marriage during our conversations to ascertain the information about whether marriage disturbed their educational plans and experiences. It soon became clear that this was an important aspect in their life choice with educational and career relevance that I could not ignore. Divorce was a strategy to overcome oppressive and abusive behaviour in marriage, not a matter of fickle choice. Remarrying a partner of choice may have allowed the woman to return to education and careers.

Divorce affected the women in different ways but there was one common thread running through most of their accounts, that marriage had disrupted their education and caused them to abandon their education completely, only a few carrying on. For example, Maira told me:

 "My mum took me to Pakistan when I was 18. I went happily because I was so naive, I didn't know she was taking me to get married. I got married there, came back and started working. He came over when our son was born. Living together, I realised he was very different from my expectations. I still kept trying, but with every passing year made me more and more unhappy, there was a bit of a gap in our understanding. My mum and family's pressure was also there, telling me not to divorce, they were all concerned about what people would say. I did get divorced in the end, despite the pressure and I am a single mum now with two boys".

Alas she is a single mum without benefit of a career. Sana's marriage was arranged when she was thirteen. Married at 18, she divorced after sixteen years of unhappy marriage with one daughter.

"My mother was very much like that what will people think, family did worry and tried to get involved, like my uncles, but I told them it's my life and I am living it. Look at my daughter, she is not allowed to leave the house, not allowed to go to her friend's house, not allowed to go to birthdays. I want my daughter to have the opportunity to do her best. It got to a point where I thought I have had enough and even if the family doesn't speak to me, I don't care, I just wanted him out of my life".

She talked about the pressure that was put on her by the family trying to persuade her not to divorce her husband. Despite seeing her suffering and unhappiness in her married life, the family was more concerned about people's reaction. "My husband was my father's sister's son and because my father's sister was poor in Pakistan, he wanted to bring her son over here by arranging his own daughter's marriage with him" Sana explained. She is living alone with her daughter and was quite pessimistic about the prospects of finding another husband because marrying a divorced or a widow is not seen desirable for the man in most Pakistani families.

Warda's mother followed the thinking that early marriage would 'save her daughters from going astray (Shaw, 2000), so they fulfilled her condition of having *Nikah* (Islamic

marriage) completed before going to university. I was delighted that all three of them went to university. Warda later informed me that her first marriage to a cousin in Pakistan didn't last because she felt university education has given her different outlook on life so she could not relate to her husband from Pakistan. She said her two other sisters accepted their mother's conditions but she could not.

"The girls in my generation got married quite young and from back home. Some people carry on with their marriage just for the children's sake but the generation's mentality is changing now and I think as the youngest in the family, I was allowed to get away with a bit more".

Warda met and married her second husband (7 years younger than her), a Pakistani overseas student living in the city. She said that her family was not happy or supportive about her divorcing her first husband, or her remarriage, for fear of community gossip. After six years and two children, she stopped work to bring up her children.

Bisma is working with her sister as a make-up artist and was waiting for her divorce to come through. The marriage that had destroyed her educational aspirations did not last long. She wanted her husband to be educated but he didn't think education was important so the things between them started to go wrong and at the end, despite the family's pressure, she asked for the divorce. Nazneen told me some disturbing details of her first marriage and how she had to fight to get out of it: at the end, leaving the city to marry her present husband without any support from her family. This case also shows her agency to turn her life into a happy one.

 "Things are really good for me now, I have a fab husband and lovely children. I have my own home, which I bought with my own money and my husband helped me to do it up before we got married. My husband has been my rock; I love him to pieces. I do feel, despite the problems we faced in the family, and forced marriages, I came through it stronger and more determined. My older sister was also forced to marry a cousin whom she didn't like".

Another woman who faced similar circumstances was Khursheed, who had been allowed to attend the local university and complete her course on the condition of having an arranged marriage:

"After university, I worked in childcare until I had my boy four years ago. Then I started working with my husband in the jewellery shop as an assistant, then I was managing one of

his shops, at the moment I am on maternity leave, my little one is 8 months old now. And in between all that my first marriage broke down, I got married to a man from Pakistan and it didn't work out, it was domestic violence and when it all got too much, I wanted out and family had a big fall-out and since then we are not on talking terms. I have tried but my dad is a bit stubborn and won't forgive me. I met my second husband here, he has got 3 businesses but when we met he had nothing, he wasn't good enough for my dad really but Alhamdulillah, he wanted to prove them wrong but in our community people don't really like giving others a chance".

I witnessed a conflict between the families' traditional and religious values and women's aspirations on many occasions. In most cases women's desire, especially regarding higher education was ignored in favour of marriage. Others have observed this also (Shain, 2003; Archer, 2002, 2010; Shiner and Modood, 2002; Falah & Nagel, 2005; Gangoli, Razak & McCarry, 2006).

I have followed the progress of two sisters I taught in School A closely: Reema and her older sister married after leaving school. I remember her mother telling me that she was taking then 18 years old Sabiha and 16 years old Reema to Pakistan to arrange their marriages (they are 36 and 32 years old now). She was planning to stay there for six months to find suitable husbands for both of them. She informed me later that both girls married and remained there. Sabiha was content with her life but Reema refused to live with her husband and told her parents she wanted a divorce. She had decided not to live in Pakistan with her husband so she returned to UK determined never to go back and nor to sponsor her husband. Without home support, she ran away and after some years the parents only found out her location from the police when she was arrested for prostitution. In this long and tragic story, its roots were her refusal to accept her youthful marriage. Refusal to accept family demands is agency of a sort, but left a young woman in a very vulnerable life, caused by the lack of respect for her right to consent, and the inflexibility generated by a narrow view of *izzat*.

6.7 "Why waste time studying if you're going to be washing dishes?"

Kandiyoti (1988) spoke of bargaining with patriarchy (see above, 2.2), when deliberate compromises are made in order to safeguard one's own position and material interests. Women in general conform because they have been taught to internalise patriarchal

assumptions (see also Wilson 2006). Many interviewees were willingly compliant and conditioned to accept the gender hierarchy and their family choices, a point made by other studies (Basit, 1997; Shaw, 2000; Parker-Jenkins and others, 2005). 36-year-old Shabeena, who left school without qualifications, explained:

"I got married quite late from Pakistan and didn't study, but I am happy in my marriage. Girls need to change to make their marriage successful, but they don't want to change, they want their husbands who are from Pakistan, to share responsibilities, like changing nappies and stuff. You can't expect men to change girls' nappies, men can't do everything ladies can, the ladies are made for that. You can't expect men to cook and change nappies after coming home from work".

Seerah agreed: "No matter how much things change, the main jobs of the women remain, like knowing how to cook, cleaning the house", she commented when she said that she should have learnt these basic things while she was studying, but instead she just spent all her time either studying or later on working before she got married. Zainub, mother of five children told me that though her marriage was also arranged from Pakistan, she is happy with her husband.

"My parents didn't just bring him here, they thought about it at first and asked me. Our background is same as we both have religious backgrounds. I am the only one married to someone from Pakistan and I am the most content in my marriage. Everyone was surprised because they thought I would be the most difficult person to compromise. I got married and decided to stop working".

She follows her religious principles strictly and has found this mutual interest as strength between her and her husband. She sent her daughter to the Muslim girls' school and her son went to a *madrassa* in UK. She did not work after the birth of her first child and decided to spend time on her family instead as this, she believes, is the main role of a Muslim woman.

Sultana married after obtaining a degree in Physics when her parents took her to Pakistan. She stayed there for six months and during this time her uncles found a husband for her. She was quite happy with her relationship when she visited me after her marriage, but few years later her husband became quite violent and left her with two children. She talked about how difficult it has been for her but now she is trying to build her life again with her

children. This was a sad situation but what Sultana said next surprised me because she had shown strength throughout this time. She told me that 'maybe she had been wrong to fight'. She was strong headed and always ended up arguing with her ex-husband, maybe she should have accepted his authority and let him have the upper hand and control, which he wanted whilst she wanted equality and respect from him. She was afraid of remaining alone all her life. This proves my earlier point that cultural and patriarchal conditioning is still strong among the second and third generation of Pakistani women: despite suffering in an abusive marriage for many years, Sultana is questioning if she was right to have a voice in her marriage. Two of her friends I interviewed raised her situation with me when discussing divorces among their friends and thought that she should have kept quiet for the sake of her marriage. "Who will marry her now?" was their main concern. These attitudes force women to remain in unhappy marriages for the sake of their family reputation.

Humaira was happy that she married the person of her choice. About the cultural attitudes towards women, she said,

"The men in my family would say I have done well in education and I need to move forward and the aunties would say, 'well, can she cook and clean and will she be able to look after her husband?'. I knew my cousin wanted to marry me and I didn't want to marry from Pakistan so I changed my focus for him. I didn't want the family to say I couldn't cook and clean. My sister was naturally very good at cooking so I learnt from her, just watching my sisters in their married lives wanted me to have that life as well".

I know she could have used her abilities to complete her degree course if she had stayed in education, but the preference for marriage (her own choice), overruled educational aspirations.

I have known Rafiqa's family for many years and was aware of the daughters' strict upbringing, where girls are not allowed to study beyond A-levels. I meet Rafiqa's older sister quite often, who was taken out of school after GCSEs and married a cousin in UK in 2002. Rafiqa was expecting the same predicament after her A-levels in 2012. Their fathers and uncles determined their futures. Rafiqa's family expects her to be married very soon to one of her cousins, like most of her cousins before her. This is their family tradition and uncles (father's brothers), especially the eldest and the wealthiest uncle dictates the future of all of them – according to one of my interviewees, "This is because he brought us all to this country". The gendered family hierarchy often gives men a privileged position of

control over women, restricting women's education and career opportunities in many cases. Other studies comment similarly (Shaw, 2000; Gangoli, Razak & McCarry, 2006; Contractor- Cheruvallil, 2012).

Aseel added,

"My extended family knows education is important but girls get married at a young age, so if you are not married by a certain age they start talking. When I was about 16 or 17 my aunty started saying to my mum that she should be married by now and there is a 'motto' in our family like 'why waste time studying if you're going to be washing dishes?' My aunties used to say that a lot to us".

Aseel started in her local university but last time I met her, she was thinking about giving up.

Hafeeza from School B is twenty, from a large extended family in the city, several uncles, aunties and cousin, generally liberal and westernised. Only she was sent to the Muslim girls' school. She completely transformed herself after leaving school, interested in fashion and beauty and looking like a very slim beautiful model. Yet when I asked about her marriage, she said,

"I would get married soon, InshaAllah, probably in my early 20s where I feel more mature and feel 100% ready to commit. I will be happy with my parent's decision, they would find me the best husband who can treat me well, InshaAllah".

She is not studying but working part-time. She told me that she would work for a few years until she has children to look after. Michel is the only child in her family so has had a great deal of freedom and choice, as she said once, 'spoiled by everyone'. She goes to the local university, studying Law, but when talking about marriage and career, she said, "Once I am married, I feel I will be like my mum and be able to care for my husband and family the same way my mum does, InshaAllah". I am certain that she will be allowed to complete her degree course before her marriage is arranged because of her position in the family. I met Rani in town who after A-levels married her cousin from Pakistan and was working in a children's nursery, heavily pregnant with her first child. Asked about her married life, she smiled and said, "Not bad! But lots of responsibilities, I do all the cooking and cleaning and am living with my in-laws". It was hard to imagine that this was the same girl who I knew couple of years ago, feisty and rebellious, always in trouble in school. She has become quite strict in her religious beliefs, with a completely changed personality

because of her husband's influence. She said she accepted her arranged marriage happily and hoping to make a success of it in the future.

6.8 Summary

Some young women successfully negotiated favourable terms regarding their arranged marriages and have managed to gain financial and emotional independence. The few women who fought against inflexible patriarchal hierarchy and rebelled, faced castigation not only from their families but from the local Pakistani community (see also Shaw, 2000; Kay, 2006). There are definite signs of change in attitudes towards arranged marriages (see Abbas & Ijaz, 2010; Ahmad, 2012; and Basit, 2013b) but in my sample it is slow and often complicated process. The statistics are as follows:

School A,

Girls married during education   = 29%

Girls married after finishing school= 46%

Girls married after University   = 25 %

School B

Girls married during education   = 19 %

Girls married after finishing school= 42%

Girls in University, unmarried   = 39%

These numbers demonstrate the early marriage taking precedence over education when combined the marriages after and during schooling, and though there are more young women in university education from the younger School B participants: this may hint at progress, but not all of these will finish their courses, especially if marriage intervenes.

My participants' experiences reveal that it is still difficult for women from culturally-conservative families of lower socio-economic status to move on to university education, and for those women to develop successful careers thereafter also proves difficult. This provides an explanation of the shortage of Pakistani women participating in higher

education and the professions described in the literature (for example Shain, 2003; Archer, 2002, 2010; Shiner and Modood, 2002; Bhatti, 2006). In my sample from culturally traditional families in Pakistan, only a few women have achieved agency in their own lives. Modood's (2012) vision of ethnic capital (that is, ethnic families pushing the young into educations and professional training) is only skin deep with my sample, since poorly-timed marriages make qualifications very hard to achieve.

Bourdieu's model of class reproduction seems to apply, as young women find it hard to oppose family expectations (and especially those of their male relatives, supporting Millett's(1969) theorising of patriarchy, see 2.3.2 above). There is nevertheless evidence of women developing some personal agency through negotiation within the family's traditional system, especially their growing willingness to demand divorces from unsatisfactory husbands (supported by Qureshi, Charsley and Shaw, 2012); I explore this further in chapters 4, 8 and 9. This increased agency contributes to social change, as a number of women participants said, girls are "different now". In terms of Giddens' theory of structuration, social structure has a dynamic relationship with personal agency, which drives change forward by setting new expectations for those following. This is certainly happening, except that those escaping patriarchy are few in number, a trickle only. These are the women who gain qualifications, and obtain careers, which they don't abandon when babies arrive. A key question, still unanswered, is what will it take for more thorough social change to happen? A key part of the process will be education, detaching young women from the expectation that education is pointless, that their only contribution to life will be cooking and washing. An uneducated mother will produce under-stimulated children; and unqualified women will have limited means of supporting their children in tough times. The road to equal opportunities in qualification and career terms will be long; but establishing the staging post of regarding education and qualifications as important in their own right is manageable.

Chapter 7

WOMEN'S ATTITUDES TO THE SCHOOLING OF THEIR OWN CHILDREN

7.1 Overview

In this chapter I discuss interviewees' responses to my questions about their preferences for the education of their own children. These 2nd and 3rd generation Muslim women expressed their concerns and hopes for the schooling of their own children in the present education system. Close to two thirds of interviewees were quite certain that their children will attend a mainstream state school and did not favour Muslim schooling, while the remainder favoured Muslim single-sex schooling provided that it offered 'good education'. Older interviewees had children needing education; younger women were reflecting on their own experiences of being educated in School B, an atypical Muslim school.

My study suggests that although the second and third generation British-Pakistani interviewees have a positive attitude towards the education of their own children, they are still influenced by the traditions and feel protective of their cultural and religious values, as also noted by Bhatti, (2006), Basit, (2013b), and McGrath &McGarry, (2014). The increase of 'homeschooling' by Pakistani heritage parents (see 7.6 below) to provide Islamic education is a significant development (McCreery et al. 2007, Abbas, 2010, Ahmad, 2012). My aim for this chapter is to explore the interviewee's views and their educational preferences for their own children, especially daughters, in the light of their own educational experiences. I had no preconceived ideas in inquiring whether these Muslim women might be more open and liberal towards the educational choices, and I had interesting responses with most women determined to provide better educational opportunities for their daughters. Faiza's statement is representative of this, confirmed her dedication for her girls' better future than herself.

"Apart from myself, even my friends are more concerned about their children's education. Our parents were more concerned with the household, now children are the main priority. I go to their parent' evenings, read them a book before bed, which our parents never did. I want to be there for them when they need me which is something my parents could not

always do for me. I would like to be there for them academically because growing up, I did not have the help I needed".

Whatever their choices therefore, we can confirm that they are taking their children's education very seriously.

7.2 Opposition to Muslim schools: School A interviewees

School A interviewees had attended the state school but had children of their own and needed to consider how they should be educated. By the time of the interviews, both schools (A and B) had closed. These parents therefore were limited in their educational choices for their children.

7.2.1 Happy with State Schools

Rida represented many other women's opposition to Muslim schools by saying that she was happy with her children's state education and said that if there was a Muslim school in the city, she would not take her daughter out of her present school to send her there. Her thinking was educational: she was not convinced about the effectiveness of single sex or a Muslim school:

"I know it's said it's not allowed in Islam but in a mixed school you learn some things from the boys and it is the environment you are learning from as well. In girls' schools, girls will mess around; I suppose boys together would mess around too. So either way it's not an advantage going to a single sex school".

"I have looked into it", commented Sana, a single mother with a teenage daughter, "To be perfectly honest, I don't really favour them because they force you to wear hijab, tell you who a perfect Muslim is and they are more Islamic orientated than they are educational. Wearing the hijab does not make you a better Muslim".

She was not convinced that Islamic schools would necessarily deliver good education or encourage independent thinking:

"I think they should teach girls how to be more independent and encourage them, respect that they have certain restrictions. I want my daughter to be able to go to school herself and to be pushed, she's not just a pupil, but a person".

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Sana had concerns about her daughter's main-stream education because she believed her daughter was not being given the appropriate help that but still wanted her to be in mainstream education.

Local primary school teacher Haseena was adamant in her opposition to Muslim schools:

"I think most girls are sent there by their parents, same as single sex schools, I don't think I will send my children there because I believe religion is not just wearing a headscarf and praying, it's about being a good person".

She herself went to a single sex school and worked in a Muslim school for few months as a PE teacher, but was not convinced about the necessity of either single-sex or Muslim schooling. She used to complain to me about the girls' negative attitude towards education in School B. Meena, having two children told me

"I think mixed is better because when they grow up, it's going to be mixed. I went to a single sex school and you wonder what life would be like out there. Muslim girls' schools are good as long as they are run properly. Would I consider one for my children? I don't know! If there was one, maybe I would consider it".

However, being "run properly" is a huge issue: she told me that she was more interested in a normal state school which provides a good education to her children so they can achieve better academic qualification than her and her husband, who both only managed education up to GCSE. 28 years old Tayyaba after completing her law degree was married few months ago. She was adamant that she will not send her children to a Muslim school but would give them a choice about going to a single sex school when it came to it. Faiza has different aspirations for her daughters than her parents had for her education, she said that she lets her daughters go to school trips because she was denied that opportunity and felt left out so now she doesn't want her daughters to feel the same. When talking about the choice of schools for her daughters, she said,

"I would like my children to be in a mixed environment so they don't feel uncomfortable later in life. I was not even allowed to sit next to my male cousins, my dad didn't like it so going from a single sex school and having restrictions at home, then college but still being very restricted, then getting married to a total stranger, was hard for me. I think if they are comfortable with it at a younger age, they will find it easier when they are older".

Aliya is very supportive of her children's education. She commented:

"I am not so bothered about that because later when they go to university that will be mixed, we just have to keep an eye on the fact we are Muslims so the limits of Islam, they have to keep in mind what they are and are not allowed to do".

Many women expressed the similar sentiments about sending their daughters to co-educational schools but being wary about their conduct in those schools. Her youngest sister attended a Muslim school and Aliya took great interest in her education, being quite critical about the Muslim school:

"I think a lot of parents forced their girls to go there because there was no single-sex school and I heard stories about girls doing wrong things, like talking to boys on the phone. They were forced to read *namaz* (prayers) and things and they were rebellious against things. With my parents, they read *namaz* but didn't force me to read because they didn't want me to resent it. The girls in the Islamic school were fighting and swearing and so rude and I didn't understand why they were there".

So, forced attendance at a Muslim school can cause resentment and resistance that leads to poor attitudes and behaviour. The emphasis is on children getting a good education.

7.2.2 Concerns about standard of primary education

Maira was not in favour of Islamic schools but was adamant that she will do whatever necessary to help her children to do well in school.

"I take full interest in my children's education, unlike my parents, I want my children to succeed in life so I am not going to send them in any inner city schools in my catchment area. I want them to go to the best school in the city, away from the main Pakistani community. I don't want them to be like many other Pakistani children who are messing around, my own two brothers have messed up lives".

She raised an interesting point about not sending her children to inner city schools because there were too many poorly committed Pakistani children there, and concern was shown by many young mothers about the low standard of education and commitment in city schools. Aliya, with two daughters, was very concerned about primary school education and especially the under-achievement of Pakistani children so decided to enrol her daughter in the village school where she worked in the nursery.

"I did want my girls to go to private school and they have gone to a private nursery school but finances are the problem and we struggle every month but I think they could go to a state school for primary education and private for secondary education. Now my eldest daughter goes to a very small state school in a small village and I am happy with it. I help her a lot at home and so does her father. We are quite lucky she got in, I don't know if my other daughter will get the same chance but with secondary school, it is also taking a chance".

Maria's little girl is in the local primary school. She contacted me, wanting to discuss her daughter's education. She was not happy with her daughter's progress in school and wanted me to explain what she can and cannot do to help her daughter without coming across as a 'pushy mother'. When I asked her preference for her daughter's school, she replied,

"I would send her to a mixed school, although her father would prefer a single sex school. I think it depends on the area you live in and it's a sad truth for Asians because they don't appreciate the life they have and how hard their parents have worked to get there. I would have liked to send her to private school but depending on my situation if I can't do that, then I will send her to a good grammar school".

She explained that 'good education' and higher academic standards were more important to her when choosing a school, similar sentiments being expressed by most interviewees. She said that segregating girls could have a detrimental effect on their lives.

7.2.3 Concerns about segregation and integration

28 years old Muzammal, who was a former pupil and later a Head teacher of a different Muslim girls' school in the county, commented:

"I struggled because I was shy from men but I was fine at university and never struggled there. I think Islamic schools are overrated as a solution to problems, but if you have a girl with difficult background, it's no good putting them in an Islamic school".

She told me that in her experience, girls lacked motivation and her staff had to work hard on raising their aspirations but said that she did not receive any support or encouragement from the parents regarding their daughters' education: they wanted them to be safe until they were 18 and to learn about Islam. Therefore, the issue of whether to send girls to a

Muslim school is a complex one, since many Islamic schools find it difficult to offer a rounded education. After the closure of single sex schools, parents were happy to send their daughters to a co-educational school, and many recognized the advantages of girls becoming confident by mixing with males in an educational context. This concern about not having social confidence of mixing and working in a mixed environment was highlighted by several women in their interviews.

Faheema, 27 years old mother of two (who has worked in a Muslim school) came wearing a long black *abaya* (coat) and *hijab*, said, "I am not that keen on Muslim schools though"; this response surprised me because she is a devout practicing Muslim. "Why is that?" I asked, seeing the expressions of surprise on my face, she laughed and said,

"I think we learn a lot about other religions and cultures by going to a normal state school, by integrating with other communities, you are more likely to teach them about your beliefs and customs. We should not isolate our children by sending them to Islamic schools if we are to live in this country".

Expressing a strong argument for integration, Nina also opposed the idea of Muslim schools,

"I am against such schools, I will not send my children to an Islamic school. I believe that my children need to integrate with the whole society. When children grow up and go to work, it will be a mixed environment".

Nina was very keen that her children should get the best education possible. She wasn't very happy with her daughter's progress in the local primary school so she decided to send her to an independent school.

"In our family boys were always favoured more than girls so I had seen that and all our boys had private education. When I had my daughter, I said I would send her to a private school. My son was not planned, but I knew if I had money and choice of sending one, it would be my daughter, and I did. My mum and my brother paid for my son's private education".

It is interesting that, with scarce resources, she prioritised her daughter, knowing that funding for the son would be less problematic. She explained that her parents were uneducated and could not do what she is doing with her children. Therefore Nina is

committed to her children's education and would do anything in her power to help them achieve better education. She concluded,

"Our parents gave us Islamic teachings and I want to do that and also do things I missed out on. I missed having the support from my parents and them saying I could do whatever I want to. I tell my kids and let them know I am there for them. Education is very important because it is so competitive out there".

Faiza with 3 primary age daughters expressed her opinion on the subject by saying, "I actually don't support the single sex schools either because in the outside world, men and women work together, work environment is mostly mixed, so girls need to be confident". I asked Seema how she felt about sending her daughter to a Muslim school. Her mother who was also present, interrupted emphatically,

"No, I am very against them, they are divisive, you are trying to separate and isolate yourself from the main community we live with. We need to mix up more, in my opinion, these schools will create more trouble".

My interviewee fully agreed with her mother while she was doing make-up on Maham, who had also been my student in the state school. Maham commented, "Yes, I agree. I think normal schools are doing a great job these days, they are making sure all children do well".

"You have a young son, which school is he going to?" I asked.

"There was a time we thought about sending him to a Muslim school in London because my in-laws are quite religious. My husband's younger brother's daughter went to a Muslim girls' school until her GCSEs but then she had to go to a mixed 6th Form in another school. Well, she just couldn't cope with the mixed environment and completely lost her confidence. She was a bright girl but now is just sitting at home (pause) you see, Muslim girls, schools shield girls, they are secluded from other communities so when they are out in the wider community, they face difficulties, like my niece".

"But you went to a girls' school", I reminded her.

"Yes, well not really because it was different, we were in a girls' school but not a Muslim girls' only school", she replied.

Bina, with 3 grown up children, expressed concern about her daughter going to a university outside the city, though she was quite liberal minded and working as a Teaching Assistant in a local secondary school.

"Everybody wants their children to do well but Muslim schools are still on an experimental level so I won't send my children there. We are living in this country so we should bring them up and educate them with other communities equally".

She sent all her children to a co-educational school, opposing Muslim school education:

"No! My eldest daughter was very shy, like me and I didn't want this because they have to work one day in a wider community. Even now I still feel a bit shy, even in college I used to find it hard to mix with both boys and girls. I still feel uncomfortable if I have to work with Asian men because I didn't have that opportunity at school".

She expressed her concern about the primary school education in the city and wanted more honesty between parents and teachers.

"In primary schools you are told everything is well but it may not be. I had a few issues with my child there but not in the secondary school".

Her eldest daughter had an offer from a university in London, which presented a dilemma for her because she really didn't want her to live away from home, so at the end the solution was found that she would commute.

"Even for my son, we want him to commute but he said he wants to stay there. I can't help it, my feelings are hard to change and my daughter was less confident so she commutes".

I later found out that Bina has arranged her daughter's wedding just after a term in the university. When I asked her about it she said that her daughter has taken a break from university for a term but would continue with her education. She explained that it was the insecurities she felt, like most Muslim Pakistani parents in the community, about her daughter being in higher education that had led her to get her daughter's marriage arranged so soon. This is what I call *cultural expectation rooted in patriarchy*, reproducing cultural ideologies and practices regarding girls' education that sometimes impede the educational aspirations and opportunities of Pakistani Muslim women. There is a continuum between protecting one's daughter and oppressive social constraint. My data has shown many examples of arranged marriages causing the woman problems rather than protecting them.

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Akhtar, assistant in a Dental Practice, told me she was not in favour of single sex girls' schools but thought they might help girls to settle down better than the mixed schools. She thought that with Muslim schools, 'people find it hard to adjust afterwards'. When talking about the education of her own children, she said, "If finances are not an issue then I would like to send them to private school, because I think it's a lot more strict, you are pushed harder and you get more choice". This reveals high educational aspirations. Shahana, now having three daughters, was taken out of school in Year 10 when she turned 16. I asked her years later if she would send her daughters to a single sex or a Muslim school, she answered adamantly,

"I don't agree with them, even though I am a Pathan Muslim, I think you can do well in other schools, it's important to send kids to a mixed school. As far as education is concerned, I will push my daughters and make sure they have completed their education before marriage. Single sex school or Muslim girls' school are important but I wouldn't send anyone there because of my experience".

She clearly considered the termination of her own education negatively and would not perpetuate it.

Medical doctor Iraj presented an interesting unintended consequence of attending a Muslim school,

"Believe it or not Miss, you are judged on which school you went to when applying for university places and job promotions, this is how this society is and I am afraid that girls going to a Muslim school might not get the opportunity when looking at their education record. We should be making an effort to assimilate not isolate. I would have liked to go to a mixed school because it makes things less mysterious. In the single sex school, girls just dream about boys, anything and everything to do with boys, phoning them, meeting them in secret".

Iraj had negotiated education successfully, but had experienced prejudice and racism so was very concerned about the future prospects of the girls wanting to go in to higher education or in to a good profession.

Nazneen, with two daughters, emphasised freedom of choice:

"I think Muslim schools are okay for some if they want their daughters' upbringing to be isolated from the rest of the world, but they are most definitely not necessary. I feel a normal mixed school is healthy for Muslim girls as they mix with different backgrounds, learn more about other cultures and races and thus have respect for others. Muslim girls that go to all Muslim schools are ignorant to the world around them; all they see is their own culture and say they are better than everyone else. My parents were not educated enough to know the difference between schools and sent me to any school near to residence and there weren't Muslim schools in them days. We had Mosques for that, which my girls do every day and love it. I do not wear hijab, if my girls want to wear it they can. I won't force them but I will support them".

Khadija, a professional photographer, married with no children yet was quite certain that their children will be sent to 'normal' (that is, state) schools. On the Muslim girls' schools, she commented:

"I guess it depends on the mission statement of the school and the purpose of it. It is good to have Islamic education and to keep girls away from boys at that age is a good idea. I think there has to be a balance between how much you focus on the curriculum and how much you focus on Islamic teaching. They might find it hard to integrate in the 'real world' later and might not be able to compete at the same levels as normal school children".

This is a mixed response, but underlines that the Muslim school would need to be effective. Many women participants commented on the issue of integration and socialization of Muslim girls and expressed their concern about possible outcome of isolating them in the Muslim schools. Shahla explained that she is not in favour of Muslim schools because children do so many activities in 'normal' schools that help them integrate with others and gives them the confidence they need for interaction with other children from different backgrounds.

7.2.4 Providing Islamic Education

Some women argued that parents and mosques should provide Islamic education. Faiza agreed with the idea that Islamic education can be provided at home:

"I want my girls to have Islamic education and the knowledge, but I don't really like the thought of Islamic schools. I know some girls who have been to an Islamic school and there was absolutely no difference in them apart from the headscarf obviously".

Faheema explained,

"Children do not necessarily get the complete Islamic education in a Muslim school, it is a parent's responsibility as well. It is not the responsibility of a Muslim school to teach and make children obey the Islamic manners, it is up to the parents".

I was interested to know Shahla's plans for her daughter's education since she was educated in a girls' school and taught Information Technology in a Muslim girls' school. She said:

"I have taught in a Muslim girls' school so I know that most of the girls that went there were forced by their parents and it didn't help at all. With my daughters, I want to give her the choice, like my dad gave me. Parents were protecting them by sending them to a girls' school but little did they know teachers were there to teach and not babysit. I feel my daughters can get the Islamic knowledge at home so they do not need to go to a particular school to learn it".

Zainub sent her daughter to the Muslim school thinking that she would learn about the religion:

"I wanted my children, not just my elder daughter to have 'deen' (religion) in them first, before they became British. My daughter had some problems because there were some girls who picked on her. The only reason my husband wanted her to go there was to learn 'deen' but you also pick up culture too and because we never had differences in culture at home, she found it very hard. She left that school and we ended up sending her to a mixed school, she went to university after that".

"Were you afraid to send her to university?" I asked.

"There was a fear, it's there! I think we were the last generation that listened to what our parents wanted. We cannot make the decisions for our children; we must compromise with them. I will let my children make their own decisions but within certain limits and rules".

The overall impression is that children should be allowed to choose, naturally with discussion and guidance. However there was a strong emphasis on Islamic education. Zainub and her husband sent their daughter to the Muslim school seeking better Islamic education but did not feel satisfied with the amount of Islamic education being given in the school (the curriculum was balanced) so she was then sent to a local comprehensive to

complete her education. The daughter is in university now, away from the city. Zainab wants to give her children Islamic education so they can be good Muslims and find their own ways of practising their beliefs and hoping that they will follow their religion like she has done. She told me that they sent their son to a *'madrassa'* (religious school) because they both wanted him to follow Islam and become an Islamic scholar, but they did not much concern about their daughter because she will not be their responsibility after her marriage but their son being the Islamic scholar will give the family more respectability in the community. She is reinforcing the patriarchal practices in her own way by following her husband's wishes regarding their children's education and by setting different standards for her son and daughter.

7.3 Opposition to Muslim schools: School B interviewees

This section explores the views expressed by the ex-pupils of a Muslim girls' school (School B). They are young women now, in their early 20s, some still in education but many in employment or married. Many of these had direct experience of both Muslim and state co-educational schools. Their insight and views on Muslim schooling were honest and critical at times. The participants were from the first two years of School B who completed their GCSEs while I was there. Most interviewees agreed that choosing a single sex school and not necessarily the Muslim school, was a major factor for their parents when making a decision for their schooling. It was very much influenced by the cultural expectations and religious requirement of segregation at puberty.

7.3.1   Chosen for gender segregation

 The educational quality of the school was a key concern. Qamar and younger sister Mani achieved top grades in their GCSEs in the Muslim school. Their opinion about Muslim girls' school was quite realistic. "If they are properly run then it's ok but I don't think I have come across a Muslim school in the UK which operates properly", Qamar said. Mani joined in,

"There is an independent single sex school in the city which is just for girls but they do interact with boys too. I found out at the mixed school though you could have a perfectly fine conversation with a guy and it didn't have to be about you know what, and they didn't judge you".

Qamar said she would not send her own daughters to a Muslim school.

"I understand the mentality behind the reason, our parents want us to go there but you need that trust, it could just backfire anyway. Our siblings have more choice, like to go on trips and things".

Both girls were quite firm in their opposition to the Muslim girls' schools because they felt that parents used the school to keep their daughters away from boys, which in their opinion was not a good enough reason for the choice.

Recently married Leila agreed. She comes from the family where girls are not allowed to go on to higher education. She and her cousins were sent to Pakistan to get their school education. She commented,

"I would choose a mixed school for my children and I would teach Islamic knowledge at home. Some girls are sent to single sex schools to stay away from certain things but still end up doing those things, so you think what's the point? Then they get sent to Islamic schools and end up continuing those things and you don't find out about half of the things they do".

She said that she would trust her children and will bring them up in a proper Islamic manner, she continued,

"I would give them support, education, love and not give them to anyone, like my younger brother is in boarding school in Pakistan but I think that's wrong".

Leila and her cousin were also in Pakistan when the Muslim girls' school (School B) was opened, so they were brought back to the UK and enrolled in that school.

Malika had a negative view about the Muslim school and always resented being there.

"Actually no, I think there is no difference between girls that go to an Islamic school and girls that go to a normal school, in fact there are some girls that go to Islamic schools and are a lot worse than other girls. I feel that the more parents try to keep you away from the world; it's human nature, if you are told to keep away from something or told not to do it, and you want to do it more. I don't think they should be stopped, there are girls who want

to learn more and go towards their '*deen*' (religion) and there are good girls out there who are interested in their religion more, the option should be open to them".

She was commenting on the fact that some of her friends in the Muslim school had boyfriends and they were seeing them without their parent's knowledge, though there were strict restrictions on them from their families as well as from the school; nevertheless they found a way to contact these boys.

20-year-old Nazish also commented that girls in the Muslim school, even her friends were no angels, but were normal teenage girls, getting up to normal mischief. I remember parents criticised the school and girls for not displaying the ideal Islamic behaviour in and outside school, but despite having strict checks, rules and presenting them with the Muslim role models, there are limits to school influence. Nazish is married now so when I asked her if she would consider a Muslim school for her children after her own experience, she said,

"Not really, because most Muslim schools are not close by so you don't really know what your kids are getting up to and some Islamic schools are extremist but I would make my decision depending on how the future is like".

Jabeen a 21 years old beauty therapist also questioned the effectiveness of the Muslim girls' schools and its influence on their character,

"Well I don't feel it's necessary to have a Muslim school because if you see a lot of girls from the Islamic school now, you would be surprised. If I was given the choice, I would choose a mixed school because they also have Islamic studies and you can also pray there. I would give my kids a choice, *insh'allah* (God willing)".

Michal (age 20) is the only child in her family but always had mature attitudes. She felt that many girls did not benefit from what the school had to offer,

"I personally believe that parents who force their daughters to go to Muslim schools should not do this because girls can attend mixed schools as long as they remain true to their faith. I have not experienced being forced to attend a certain school but girls who are forced to do this, may be more rebellious in order to get revenge for being sent to a certain school without their agreement".

Would she consider a Muslim school for her children? She replied,

"Yes, in the future I may consider sending my children to a Muslim school. However, my decision will ultimately depend on how established the school is, because based on my own experiences of upheaval and changes during school years, adds to the pressure of exams etc".

She was reflecting on the fact that during four years she was in school, we had to move the building three times, staff turnover was fast and there was always the uncertainty of school closure hanging over our heads. It not only added to staff's stress but obviously affected the pupils also.

7.3.2 Limits the range of social exposure

Arhaz also based her objections on social integration, saying:

"I don't think so because most parents just sent their daughters to a single sex school to be away from boys, but unless it's an Islamic girls' school, I don't see the point. Muslim schools? Yes! Definitely! I think I learnt a lot more about Islam at my school, but personally I think mixed schools are better in that your children are able to socialise more and they are exposed to a huge range of people. When I went from a Muslim school to a mixed school, I found it difficult to fit in for a while".

Aleema also felt that schools should have social and educational purposes, and also mentioned boyfriends:

"If it's for the education, extra help in Arabic and more knowledge on Islam, then I think it's very useful. However, if it's to control their behaviour or stop them mixing with boys, then I see no point because schools are not prisons and forcefully trying to stop someone from doing only makes them more determined to go out and do wrong things. I also feel that mixed schools are better for children as it prepares them for the reality of the world outside, sooner or later they will have to leave school and will be exposed to worldly things. So it is to get them ready for it from a young age instead of sending them somewhere extremely sheltered and have them struggling later on".

So, if the parents' purpose was to shelter girls from boys, they failed. 20 years old Nazish emphasised the social benefits of mixed schooling, though in her case she perceived some benefits from the experience:

"Girls then do not know how to communicate with the opposite sex if they go to a girls' school all their life, also if a girl wants to mess around, she still will in an Islamic school. She'll just do it discretely. I may have preferred going to a normal mixed school myself but now I find myself lucky for having the opportunity to be able to study in an Islamic school".

Hafeesa was taken out of a mixed school and put in the Muslim school by her parents. Her sister carried on attending the co-educational school. This always unsettled her and when the Muslim school closed down, she returned to the same co-educational school. She wrote,

"I think every individual has their own opinion, it depends on what they want. It's a good experience for a Muslim, but I would like it to be in a mixed school due to the fact that being in a society where you have to interact with the opposite sex. Since I've started school, I have been mixing with multi-cultural people and I have been used to it. I think there are advantages of being in a mixed school but also there are some disadvantages such as not being able to read *salah* (prayer) on time as well as having the option to select Islamic subjects to your curriculum".

20 years old Shahida is also married now, having left the Muslim school after her GCSEs and went to her local co-educational school to do A-levels. She has taken three years to do her A-levels and is uncertain about her future. When I spoke to her recently about the importance of Muslim girls' schools, her comments were not very favourable; she seems to have gained socially from attending a mixed school.

"In my opinion, Muslim school is good to have but with all the facilities a normal school has. I believe if I did my GCSEs in a normal school, I could have got better grades than I did in the Muslim school. Mixed schools are not bad if one knows to stay according to their religion. I have personally gained a lot of confidence by going to a mixed school".

Affordable private Muslim schools like School B are unlikely to be securely resourced. Actually School B's GCSE results in these years were better than those of state schools locally. Yet it is hard to guarantee the dedication and enthusiasm of the underpaid staff available during those early years, and these women are right to be cautious and insist on good education.

7.4 Favouring Muslim schools: School A interviewees

This section highlights those older interviewees who would opt for a Muslim school if possible, explaining their reasons.

7.4.1 Advantages of single sex education and Islamic education

One of the main reasons for favouring Muslim schooling was the interviewees' desire to provide more Islamic education to their children, as a defence to the secular culture and maintaining the religious integrity. Other studies have also emphasised this (Basit, 2013b; Meer, 2007; Shah & Conchar, 2009; Tinker 2009; Ahmad, 2012; Shah, 2013). Kauser agreed that girls do better in single sex schools, but she also said that she would prefer Muslim schools, as they are the means of providing Islamic education for the children. A single mother of two primary-aged children, Sultana is a qualified teacher who decided not to teach in state schools. She was unhappy with the way one of her children was treated by the school staff and the general lack of support. She also supported single sex and Islamic schools:

"It's a good thing. I think especially secondary ones because that's when your hormones kick in. I believe it's good for the prevention of a certain amount of *fitnah* (moral disturbances). I loved working in the Islamic school and felt wanted and secure".

Discipline problems in her classes caused her to lose her confidence in a state school and she left teaching: I invited her to teach in the Muslim school, assuring her of full support, and she enjoyed teaching there.

Humaira was the only one from her extended family who continued with her A levels. We once met in a shopping centre and she told me that they were thinking about moving to Leicester because of good Muslim schools there but when I interviewed her a year later, she had prevaricated. She talked about her daughter's education and single sex schooling,

"She has expressed that she wants to be in an all female environment since she was about 6 or 7 (she is 9 years old now) and that's not because of us parents. She would like to go to the independent girls' schools in the city but if I am not working then it is not financially possible. If we stayed in this city then there is a single sex school in a nearby town so my daughter is thinking about that. We want to start encouraging *hijab* (headscarf) for her and

we are all still considering a Muslim school. My sister has moved to Leicester for her children's education".

I asked her how she sees the future of Muslim schools,

"There are religious schools for other religions and there are a lot of single sex schools around that are private. I don't know about this city but the future of Muslim schools in other towns is good and it is going in the right direction. Now parents are a lot more liberal and send their kids to a mixed school because everyone else is".

Sabeera is in favour of single sex and Muslim schools,

"Because they perform better and I think girls are more comfortable around girls and based on the environment and the society we live in I would be happier and more content with sending my daughters to a Muslim or a single sex school".

Since there is no state girls' school nearby, or a Muslim school, her options may be restricted unless she moves house and location.

7.4.2 More discipline in religious schools

Warda with two young children was concerned about the negative effects of co-education and favoured Muslim schools,

"Definitely yes! I am in favour of the religious schools in general, the fundamentals of most religions is respect, which is lacking nowadays, so they teach this in Islamic schools. I think they are more structured and I feel they teach more discipline and respect. We don't have to be segregated but you need a platform to learn and I think that platform is Islamic education. We can interact with people from other religions and maybe they will learn from our religion, that's where liberal aspect comes into it. I support religious schools as they have more structure than normal state schools".

Respect presumably means respect for elders and family traditions, and discipline means obedience.

7.4.3 A balanced approach

Shabeena, who has one daughter, left school without qualifications but feels that education is important for her daughter. She had mixed feelings about it:

"I would let her do what she wants as long as she is following what we tell her to do as well. We would give her choice. I would personally like her to go to a Muslim girls' school but it wouldn't bother me too much if she went to a mixed school. You have to be more careful about what she does there!"

There was some concern therefore concerning potential problems, which might affect family reputation. Seerah was always a timid girl in school. She went to her local university to do a degree in Science after her A levels but didn't complete the course because of her marriage. She was hoping for a balanced education for her daughter,

"It won't be possible all the way, like at primary school. I feel that it helped us from 13 to 16 years to be at the girls' secondary school because that's the age you want to experiment and try different things and it shuts us out from lots of things. I would be quite keen for her to study but I would like more religion in her life and more understanding. I grew up a lot at university, with my own responsibilities and deadlines, that helped a lot and I want her to have a balance of education and religion".

She expressed her views about the Muslim girls' school where she also taught for a while, in these words:

"If I had to send my daughter there, I wouldn't just send her there because it's a girls' school, I would be interested in its OFSTED reports and teachers' qualifications. If they are good teachers then it would be the same for any school. I definitely think it's a brilliant idea, its ethos would be better than a state run school".

So the quality of the school is for her more important than the general principle.

7.4.4 Dissatisfaction with the state education system

The majority of interviewees expressed a great concern about the state of current schooling and underachievement of Pakistani children in the city schools. Many other studies echo this– Shain, 2000; Bhatti, 1999, 2002; Abbas, 2004, Bagguley and Hussain, 2007, Crozier, 2009; Shah, 2009; and Phillips, 2011. I met few women who were prepared to either take their children out of schools to provide home tuition or move to other cities but see 7.5 below). Naz expressed her dismay with the current education system, saying that much is left to the students themselves and that, from her own experience, her daughter was not

guided properly in school. Also teachers do not have many rights over the children and students and their parents are always ready to blame the teachers. She complained about the lack of respect for teachers in schools these days and said she was in favour of Muslim schools because "within normal schools, the teacher-pupil relationship, the values aren't there".

Suman was outspoken about this issue, she told me that she had moved to another town after marriage and expressed her concerns about her children's education there, she said, "Well there are too many Pakis and other foreigners in the schools there". The phrase just came out and she was embarrassed.

"Well what I mean is that there were lots of Romanian and Polish immigrants and their children could hardly speak any English so they were taken out of their classes, same with Pakistani kids, so there were 5 or 6 children left behind in the class as a normal lesson. How can children make satisfactory progress in schools like these?"

She later moved back to her hometown in her parent's house while looking for a house to buy, her husband had started working as a taxi driver, and she was happy with her children's new school. She told me, "It's really not that bad here. I have put my children in a school which is in the outskirts of the city, hardly any Pakistani children there". I asked why she had to do this? She replied, "it is a worry because wherever there are a lot of Pakistani kids in a school, its education goes down". Several other women also made similar comments about the inner city schools, which is a sad reflection on our education system and a big concern for Muslim parents in the city.

Suman is also in favour of single sex education for her children. She has four children – three in primary schools. She told me that if her old girls' school were there today, she would have sent her daughters there happily. She commented on the Muslim schools:

"I think if it was a good Muslim school, I would be happy, in other towns I know they do, my cousin's daughter goes to an Islamic school and it is good both Islamically and education-wise too. Usually Islamic schools do have English education and if it is good, I would choose it for my daughter but there isn't one in our city and people just don't want to get involved in that sort of thing, even though they would like it for their daughters".

7.5 Favouring Muslim schools: School B interviewees

Some younger women favoured Muslim schooling, having experienced and benefited from a particular one (School B).

7.5.1 Comfort and commitment

Bisma was in favour of the Muslim schools "because there are no distractions and it's just girls", and also "people don't question about who you are", hinting at racism in state schools, but when I asked her which school she would choose for her daughter, she said, "I think I would leave it to my daughter to decide". Freeha's parents were planning to send her to Pakistan for her education but allowed her to stay in UK because of opening of a Muslim girls' school (School B) in the city at that time. She expressed favourable views of Muslim schools:

"I think that a Muslim girls' school provided Muslim girls with a firm basis from which they can prosper, it all depends on the school, the teachers and the environment. If the environment is good, girls will definitely find it easier to achieve what they want to achieve and will be able to become confident individuals so they can face any problems in the outside world in the present and in the future. I would definitely send my daughter to an Islamic girls' school as my experience wasn't that bad, I enjoyed it and was able to feel more comfortable in an Islamic environment but I know there are many girls that are against Muslim girls' schools and say they will never send their daughter to one".

Noreen (age 21), who married when she was 18, favoured Muslim girls' schools. She was a gifted student, producing work of the standard of a graduate at the age of 14 and was offered a place at a top University in UK but due to a very strict religious family background, wasn't allowed to accept that place and instead her marriage was arranged which she accepted happily. She made interesting observations about the Muslim school when she wrote to me from Middle East:

"Observing the indefatigable educators of this institution, working long hours and reducing the highest setbacks to mere hiccups, instilled in me a strong work ethic and a burning desire to succeed in life, in both academic and personal development. A key lesson in that school, that with motivation, there are no boundaries that cannot be transcended, was reiterated time and time again. Constant encouragement was given to all students by my

teachers in the Muslim school and I have no doubt this has been instrumental in the successes of my previous classmates both at the school and after leaving".

A hugely talented young woman, she recently had a baby girl and has not been engaged in any work or education after her marriage.

7.5.2 It Provides Islamic Education

Neesa married at 17 and had a baby girl quickly. Although she didn't achieve academically in the Muslim school, she feels positive towards it and told me that she would happily send her daughter to one. She feels learning about Islam is very important and Muslim schools provide that necessary knowledge. Many other young women interviewees expressed the similar view about Islamic education for their children.

Rukhsar, a nursing student emphasized the point about Muslim schools providing Islamic education and felt that "although people only see the negatives, they are important if you don't have the opportunity to get Islamic education at home". She said she would send her daughter to a Muslim school because, "We live in a British society and because I don't want her to be completely English". This surprised me as she was educated in a Muslim school at first but later went to a co-educational school and completely changed her outlook and personality, gaining more independence and confidence but didn't want this opportunity for her daughter. She points to a complex issue of protecting Muslim identity and prevalent attitude of most young Pakistani women in my study towards the provision of Islamic education for their children, clearly suggesting, "Be like me and don't be like me" (Basit, 2013b). I asked her if single sex schools are better than co-educational schools, she said,

"From my experience, I would prefer them more. If I had a rubbish day, I could tell myself that all girls that are here are in the same position but they are here, carrying on. I would like my daughter to go to one until she accepts certain things".

By 'certain things' she is referring to a moral code and rules set by the cultural and religious traditions, restrictions she had to face by her own family, reproduction of cultural values, emphasizing Bourdieu's model of transmission of the familial norms and reproduction of social advantages or disadvantages. She was also speaking from her personal experiences because she had to endure many family problems and needed help

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from her friends and teachers when she was in school, enabling her to continue with her education.

Nabiha (age 19) also feels very strongly about Muslim schools and said that though she would like to give her children a choice, if she needed to, will "force her daughter" to go to one, "because they would learn so much about our religion, as a parent I would force that choice on them. It's something personal for me to say this only because I was forced but didn't ever regret it once being sent to a Muslim school, I enjoyed it even though it wasn't my decision".

To "force a choice" is an expression that several of my participants used when talking of parental involvement in their daughters lives clearly indicating the importance placed on maintaining their religious and cultural values. 21 years old Maleeha (married with a baby daughter and expecting her second child) also favoured Muslim schools. She exhibited extremely challenging behaviour in School B, protesting that she didn't want to be there. She wrote to me from London:

"It was good that I went to that school, it made me confident amongst other things. Everyone were girls and some of the teachers you could talk openly too. But I do think the segregation on girls and boys made the girls curious, like some girls' schools have boys too, so it will be a norm and you wouldn't need to look. So when the restrictions are there for not seeing boys at all, it makes them all mad, that's when they fall into sin but if it was balanced out then fair enough, they will grasp the logic of it, rather than be shy of any man. I want my daughter to understand that, yeah there are boys there but have Islamic knowledge of why you're meant to keep distance. The teachers should've dealt with certain situations with an Islamic view too. I would send my children to an Islamic school as long as the teachings and the way things are done are based on the Islamic view so they could understand, rather than rebelling".

In general the model of Islamic schooling she experienced was a positive one, in which teachers were supportive, patient and reasonable. She could see a benefit to herself personally pulling her out of rebellion into piety, and she wants this for her own daughter. That these young women were recently married may have an influence, as compared to those twenty years older. We can hear undertones of Bourdieu's reproduction of class/cultural assumptions and norms, being passed from generation to generation. The reproduction is made firm by a particular view of Islamic requirements.

7.6 Popularity of home schooling

Humaira explained that 90% of the time, she provides Islamic education to her children because her husband is working. She also informed me that her husband wants her to home teach their children,

"So that is a pressure on me because I don't know if I can handle the stress. I worked at a primary school before but once you have taken that kind of responsibility, you can't turn back from it so easily, it has to be a 100% commitment. I think people just stick to worrying about girls but nowadays it is more about boys going off track. I am there for my daughter and I ask my husband to be there for our son".

Humaira was not the only one who was thinking about taking her children out of state education system, the teacher Sabeera was already doing it. She has boundless enthusiasm, concern and commitment towards the education of Pakistani children in the city. Dissatisfied with the current schooling system she decided to home-teach her daughters because of the combination of general school environment and standard of education being provided in local schools.

I met a group of professional young Muslim parents who were already keeping their children at home but running a rota system so children visit each family once a week and they provide the subject knowledge assigned to them. This way their children do not study in isolation. My former colleague from School B is also homeschooling her daughters, devising study plans for them. I was informed that there were around 15 such families educating their children at home. A former headteacher of another Muslim girls' school who is beginning to home school, added:

"At the moment I'm thinking of homeschooling in the beginning, with a few other families. So it's one morning at one house, one morning in another. That's the plan because I used to think homeschooled children lacked social skills but they are more confident, they are around adults and they don't experience bullying and those types of things".

This method of providing education at home is gaining popularity among the more educated, professional and committed young Muslim families in the city, which shows lack of confidence in our state education system (see further McCreery et al. 2007).

7.7 Summary

Nearly two third of the participants said that they were against the idea of sending girls to Muslim schools and that they would not consider this option for their daughters or sons, even from some interviewees who attended a Muslim girls' school themselves. But despite their opposition to Muslim girls' schools, they all agreed on the importance of providing Islamic education to their children and were adamant in their endeavour to preserve their Muslim identity in the process. We see the same attitudes in other studies (Haw, 2011; Basit, 2013b; McGrath & McGarry, 2014).

With life experience (most are married with children or soon to be married, some working and few in the university), they had a broader perspective on the place of education in their lives, which is really important, especially given that much other research to date has concentrated on schoolgirls' aspirations. Intriguingly, many women, when talking about state schools, called them as "normal" schools, as if viewing Muslim schools as "abnormal". Most women had more faith in the "normal" state school education, though many had issues of detail. It is also important to be aware of the distinction between what people say and what they do, the young women who went to School B and who said they would prefer a non-Muslim state education for their children may later find themselves under pressure to send their daughters to a Muslim school.

There is evidence in the women's accounts that "reproduction" of traditional and cultural attitudes is still taking place, but there is also evidence that these young women are active agents of change which is taking place around them, playing an instrumental and motivational role in the education of their children (so also Thapar-Bjorkert & Sanghera, 2011). There are dynamic models of social structure, where people with agency transform old assumptions into new positions (Giddens, 1984). Of course such changes are not made easily, and resistance to change is strong. Many were quite determined to support their daughters' education despite not having strong financial resources (Bourdieu would say economical capital) to do so (see also Aston et al., 2007; Basit 2013b).

Some women participants were even involved in acquiring what Bourdieu identified as the necessary 'institutional form of cultural capital' to help their children to do better in school, by working voluntarily in schools (see also Shah, Dwyer &Modood, 2010). Nevertheless a gendered hierarchy still exerts considerable influence on aspirations for their daughters' education (so also Abbas 2003, Archer 2010). Pakistani parents from lower socio- cultural and economic background express high aspirations for the education of their children (as shown also by Aston et al., 2007, Modood, 2012 and Basit, 2013b) though I have shown that with young women, marriage often interferes in practice. Schools can also interfere, often dismissing the pupils' spiritual and religious needs, and offering poor advice based on stereotyping. In my next chapter I consider agency and change in greater depth.

Chapter 8

CHANGING EXPERIENCES OF AGENCY

8.1 Overview

This chapter examines my interviewees' perceptions of generational change in the agency that women seek and exercise in decisions about education, employment and marriage. The concept of agency in popular usage suggests the personal exercise of choice and of having power of refusal. However, the research literature on agency (see 2.3, especially 2.3.3) emphasises that although the concept of agency denotes the exercise of choice, indicating dynamic rather than passive action, this choice always occurs within a context of social relationships and assumptions (Mahmood, 2001; Ortner, 2006: 129-153). It is therefore misleading to view agency as total individual freedom; rather, agency is best understood as choice that is exercised relationally (Mahmood, 2004, Macmurray, 1995) and to varying extents across different works of social relations. As Giddens writes (1979: 72), "all social actors, no matter how lowly, have some degree of penetration of the social forms which oppress them".

Muslim women in Britain are frequently depicted in the media as having little agency, as being the pawns of men in patriarchal families. Rightly, critical academic literature takes issue with stereotypical portrayals of Pakistani Muslim women as lacking agency, but also raises important questions about the realities of the degree of agency that young Pakistani British women exercise in their day-to-day lives, and in critical life decisions (see e.g. Ijaz and Abbas, 2010). The issue, then, is to identify where – for my interviewees – agency occurs, and against what competing pressures. As previous chapters have indicated, the extent to which agency is exercised will depends a range of factors, which include the girl's personality, the relative dominance of the father and other men in her family, the role of the mother, and other considerations such as educational or marital decisions already made and actions already taken by other family members.

In this chapter, I explore the extent to which my interviewees feel that women's agency in educational and life choice decisions has changed over time, within the culturally conservative milieu of my particular research community. As I have shown, the general expectation in this context is that women should comply with the wishes of their extended families. Below, I examine perceptions of change over time by comparing my interviewees' perceptions of their mothers' agency. The generational comparison also constitutes a reflection by the British-born women who comprise the majority (all except one) of my interviewees on a previous generation of women, of whom many – but not all – were born in Pakistan.

Any simple generational categorisation of my participants and their parents is complicated because of the diversity in migration status at each generation. Here, 'first generation' refers to being born in Pakistan. There were only two first-generation women among my interviewees, both former pupils of school A, whose parents were pioneer generation migrants. The remaining interviewees were British-born, and most were married to 'first generation' migrant men from Pakistan. In some cases, when I asked women to reflect on their mother's agency, I was in fact asking younger former pupils to reflect on the agency exercised by older former pupils. I invited women to compare their lives with those of their mothers, to reflect on whether women's agency in matters of education, work and marriage has changed significantly over their lifetimes, and asked them if they feel optimistic about the changes in women's lives.

8.2 First generation women

8.2.1 A note on first generation women's agency

Most first generation Pakistani men in Britain were from rural areas of Mirpur district in Azad Kashmir and from some areas of the Punjab. They came to Britain for work with little money and basic or no educational qualifications. Their wives arrived later as their dependents, mostly from those areas as well, where they were mainly leading a domestic life and where men were always considered the breadwinners (Dale et al. 2006).

This gendered division of labour continued upon women's arrival in Britain. Pakistani women of the first generation played an important role in establishing the social networks in the newly established community, promoting their cultural and religious customs and traditions, and

seeking to ensure their continuity within the second generation being brought up and educated in Britain (Shaw, 2000). In general, this generation of women was not well prepared for facing the challenges of living in a foreign country, with a different language as well as different educational and value system, but despite these difficulties, they conducted their domestic affairs with great efficiency while their men folk went out to work.

Kandiyoti (1988) observes that Muslim women within strongly gendered households and societies are not helpless or passive; rather, they use certain strategies within the constraints of their lives to negotiate agency for their own advantage. She provides as an example the fact that in Muslim countries where classic patriarchy dominates and prevailing social norms restrict women's choices (this would include Pakistan), older women can have a commanding authority over the younger women within the extended family system. Shaw (2000) also confirms this aspect of women having their own special roles and agency within their households, which gives them complete control over certain aspects of their families' lives.

8.2.2 Changes in education and work

When comparing themselves with their mothers, most of my interviewees indicated that they feel that education and life in Britain has improved their life choices. It was also noticeable that many participants who did not use higher education for upward social and economic mobility, used work to find financial security and independence. "I don't think we are helpless, maybe my mum's generation was because they didn't know the language and had to depend on others, that's why husbands had more power" 30-year-old Maira (divorced) commented. Maira is a modern, outgoing woman who did not do well in school. Her mother suffered from terrible physical abuse from her husband. Maira said work has given her independence and she feels more in control of her life.

36-year- old Warda is a Science graduate, the youngest in her family, who is divorced but remarried. Her mother is an uneducated woman from a village in Jhelum but despite marital problems and having no education, raised all her children well. They are all educated and professional people now. Warda herself felt her work and education has given her freedom of choice:

"My mum's generation who came from Pakistan with no education, they couldn't drive, or speak much English, they were dependent on someone else and they may have felt helpless. Education

gives you independence and you don't have to rely on someone. If you are working, you are financially independent too".

Shabeena, 39 years old and married with one daughter, left school without any qualifications. She said confidently that Pakistani women now have more choices and freedoms because "now they go out to work, everybody is working". She spoke about the financial gains that working outside homes has brought for Pakistani Muslim women, making the point that it was not so much education but jobs/financial gain that has changed women's lives.

Hummaira (age 37) with basic school education saw change in her generation: "women are driving cars now, shopping on their own and have their own bank accounts". When talking about women's rights, she stressed that if women knew about their rights in Islam well enough, they can challenge anything or anyone, echoing the views of Muslim feminists such as Mernissi (1991) and Mahmood (2004):

"Men used to have more power but now things are different. Our parents had to stay together and make things work but now a lot of girls get divorced and married again and girls work more. I don't think just because you are a Muslim woman, it should stop or label you otherwise".

She endorsed the point of view of the previous participant that it is work rather than education that has changed women's lives.

32-year-old Akhtar commented on the difference of Pakistani women's life style in UK and in Pakistan and was determined that she would have more agency in her own family when she is married. She also felt that her job has given her more confidence and financial security:

"I think in England it's ok, in Pakistan there is a lot you can't do, like go to the shops, you have to be covered, you can't have men near you. It's a lot safer here; I know I have a lot of rights. I think girls have become more brave. My grandfather and my dad had more rights and I think my brother will follow the route but I will change that for myself and my kids".

Akhtar married an English man and is working in a Dental Practice.

This hints that it is women who will change the practice. 34-year-old graduate Nina, with teenage children, agreed that Pakistani women 'can do it'. They can stand up for themselves. She gave me the example of her own mother (a first generation woman) who is a 'strong' lady because she was the stronger partner in her marriage and also how she has managed her family after her husband's death. Nina also commented on her two older sisters who are single, and

living independent lives after their father's death, not caring for the 'cultural restrictions'. Primary school teacher Haseena (25) also thought that there is more independence for Pakistani women now, and more things easily available to them these days. She thought that women of her age group are more in control than their own mothers but also accepted the fact that men will always have a preferential status.

Qamar, 21 years old and the eldest of 5 children, was studying in a university. She strongly agreed that there is a gender hierarchy in Pakistani families but added, "They (women) have started to make more decisions but husbands get the final say. I can't imagine equal rights; some communities don't want to open up to others. Men feel intimidated by females that are educated and can speak for themselves and establish a role".

She argued that education plays a big part in changing the situation for Pakistani women, but much depends on their family background. She and her sister successfully negotiated their way to university despite the strong opposition of their extended families. Qamar admitted that her mother would not have been able to do what they have achieved, regarding their access to higher education.

Rukhsar is 21, a trained nurse, emphatically expressed the importance of education for Pakistani women so they could achieve more agency. Education, she said, "would make a massive difference, because once you are educated, it makes you strong. I am really passionate about asking other people to educate". She argued that some Pakistani women are not treated well by their husbands but "partly it's their fault because they accept the unfair attitudes and injustice, some by choice and others because they are illiterate". This is where education is important "because it can help you in good times and bad times, this is the only way women can improve their lives and bring in the desired change". She was among many others who stressed the importance of education and saw it as the only means of bringing positive emotional and financial changes in their lives.

20-year-old Arhaz is the youngest in her family and was doing a degree course in psychology. She observed that Pakistani women were not helpless unless they are being controlled by their husbands, that most women in her generation are powerful because they go to universities and have jobs, "I think going to university does make you stronger". She also complained that people mix culture and Islam in the Pakistani community. When talking about her marriage, she told me that she does not want to marry a man from Pakistan because in her experience, "They are controlling and I want to be treated equally". She was generalising from the experience she has

gained from watching her two older married sisters whose husbands came from Pakistan.

I heard this from other participants too, indicating the change in their outlook, especially among young women who have managed to obtain a university education. They feel more confident that they will be able to live their future lives according to their own wishes and will have more financial independence, thus a better status in their marriage. She also added: "Our generation is changing because they have a different mentality. The way people think is changing a lot and husbands are not as controlling but I think parents are more strict". She was pleased about how things have turned out for her, but then sadly mentioned her best friend who is not allowed to do anything, not even visit female friends, but is always kept at home.

8.3 Changes in practices and expectations of marriage

Most interviewees commented on the changing attitudes towards marriage. 27-years-old Aliya felt that divorce had changed the game: "There was a time when there was pressure but now things are different. In our family the big argument was divorce, it opened up our parent's eyes and now we have all gone out of the family for marriage". She explained that marriage was an aspect where girls in her extended family did feel parental pressures but things were beginning to change. She told me her father wanted her to marry his nephew in London but things didn't turn out as he wished. She later got married to a young man from Pakistan with her father's consent despite her mother's protests.

 Seema, at 30 years old and in her second marriage, agreed that things were changing but didn't want too radical change, echoing comments by Bhatti (1999) and Basit (2013b):

"It is true that things have changed from our days but not necessarily for the better. Girls have taken it too far. They are not using this change and freedom for their and others' good, they are abusing it. We must watch and respect our traditions and our families but this is not happening. Girls are becoming completely westernized and doing things they should not do, like having boyfriends, drinking and making their own decisions without their families. This is going too far, I think like this maybe because I am a mother of two children myself, I would not like my children to do things this way".

This statement shows the tension between freedom and propriety. Seema is very aware of her cultural values and restrictions set by her elders. However it was a different matter that when she

was 16 or 17, for she violated most family boundaries; but now being a mother has made her appreciate those rules and traditions.

40-years-old teacher Sabeera felt that Pakistani British young women are "undersold and only valued as just a homemaker though women can do so much more. So many girls are wasted though there is so much potential among Muslim women, which is not explored". She argued that her generation has more agency (she divorced her husband without her parent's consent), that girls whose husbands came from Pakistan felt superior to their husbands because they know the system in this country and how to get help from the outside agencies, and so now the situation is different from the women of the first generation. Dale & Ahmed (2011) give parallels.

8.4 Religion as a resource

My data shows that Islamic knowledge is being used as a significant resource by many young Pakistani women in their struggle for empowerment in their roles as mothers and wives, much more so than their parents' generation (see also Bhimji 2009, Shaw 2014). Many participants from both second and third generations agreed that Islamic knowledge has been helpful in gaining more agency and choices in their lives, and it has enabled them to negotiate options with their parents to create an atmosphere of trust(Qureshi , Charsley & Shaw 2012).The following show Islam being instrumental in gaining agency, in tune with the arguments of Muslim feminists such as Hassan, Badran and Barlas, discussed above.

Kauser, a 34 years old Science graduate married with a daughter, said that she researched her rights given by her religion to convince her family to delay her marriage so she could complete her education: "I started reading about it because I was having pressure from my mum about marriage, work and what I can and can't do. If I didn't know that, I would have got married at the age of 19. If we had the knowledge of Islam, we would have been more comfortable". (Kauser married when she was in her early 30s) but also acknowledged the change that her youngest sister had more freedom than the older three sisters.

27-year-old Shahana, married with young daughters, left school without any qualifications. She thought it is important that men understand Islam correctly and are involved with ensuring rights for women. She commented that visiting Mecca has made men in her family more tolerant towards their women's choices and freedoms. She argued that the Islam gives women many

rights but unless women read and know about their rights, their men will mistreat them.

 Zainub, age 38 with grown up children, argued: "Religion does not stop us, it does not restrict us, unless your family does. People that learn the Qur'an and stick to it are happier than those who just stick to culture". She was convinced that following Islamic teachings in its true form gives women rights but cultural practices stop them from having those rights (much as Mernissi, 1991a, and Haddad, 1998 argued).

The very independent business woman 28 years old Khadija who lives in London said that Islam gives women many rights and they would have a lot more power if they read Qur'an and understand its context. She commented: "Women don't find out the information which can only be done by getting education and learning more about religion which gives them so many rights". Thus getting education and knowing the Qur'an and the rights it bestows is a significant resource (see also Qureshi, Charsley & Shaw, 2012).

8.5 Negotiating the gender hierarchy

There were contradictions about gendered responsibilities, revealing diversity in the complex relationships within the family structure (see Kandiyoti, 1988, and Wilson, 2006 on UK Muslims). These represent real life competing pressures, in which women may succeed in exercising agency in, for instance, obtaining jobs and education but not necessarily when choosing a husband (see especially Shaw 2014).

37-year-old Sultana, a Science teacher, is bringing up her two children alone after her divorce. When we discussed the changing attitudes towards Pakistani Muslim women, she didn't seem convinced: "The attitudes have not changed if anything because people are fearful for what their daughters are getting up to with all the technology available nowadays". She said that parents do not have enough confidence in their daughters which will make them feel 'safe' about sending them in to higher education (see also Archer 2010)."Parents even in my generation have been brought up that way but we are trying to change that thinking, it's the fear factor, the fear of losing your daughters".

Such parental attitudes can determine the girls' ability to access higher education (Aston et al., 2007). Sultana was of the opinion that patriarchal attitudes and women's status in our community hasn't changed much, especially criticism of divorced women (see Qureshi, Charsley

& Shaw, 2012). She gave me an example of one of her divorced friends who was going to re-marry a single, unmarried man."People were shocked that he was marrying her and their instant response was, if she was that good, why didn't she keep her first marriage going".

Suman who is 29 years old and working as a teacher's assistant said that she allowed her daughters to do things she had not been allowed, like wearing Western dresses, going to friends' birthday parties, school trips and going to town. When talking about women having rights, she thought that things are not as bad as they used to be but that male supremacy is still very much in practice. "It's the way how we have been brought up, to put your husband first". Suman's sister, 35-year-old Rida who was also present added:

"Pakistani women have the same rights as men but our society changes that. Most scholars are men and we do what they tell us. Also people learn from traditions and not from knowledge, we try to change it but people still follow traditions". She was pointing at what many participants called culture versus religion debate, stressing that cultural traditions are more powerful than religious principles".

Both sisters were in agreement that Pakistani women are better off in UK than in Pakistan, because women in the UK know how to get help in case of domestic violence and they can have their own income. She was again advocating that independence could be gained through work and financial security. Suman also pointed at another issue prevalent in the local Pakistani community, that Pakistani women who marry British born Pakistani men were more aware and assertive than British Pakistani women:"Women who came from Pakistan after marriage know they have these rights here in England, like if they suffer domestic violence, they will call the police, but us (British born) think twice about it. One girl left her husband and her family disowned her". She said it was the community's pressure and gossip that made it difficult for many parents to change.

34-year-old Nazneen's experiences made her pessimistic about the change in Pakistani community. She was forced to leave her hometown after her divorce and when she decided to marry a man of her own choice. She was critical of cultural practices misinterpreted as religious traditions, especially regarding marriages:

"I do feel women have no say in most communities but not in all. It would seem that the Islamic culture always has and will remain dominant. Women have no say in important matters and I doubt that will change anytime soon, thus women have no power in the community. Pakistani

men have no respect for the women and ... make it up as they go along. Our religion is not how it is supposed to be, people, especially men have adapted it to their thinking. I hear different views and advice about the same thing every day".

Mani, age 19, who was studying Science in university told me that things are changing for women but wanted to see some limits, "Maybe because our parents get older and get tired or maybe there is a change in society. I do feel too much freedom isn't good but too much strictness isn't good either, we have to find a balance". She thought she would not be allowed to go to university because of her family's strict rules against girls' education but managed to convince her parents to allow her to go to an out of town university. Leila who was 21, left school with some GCSEs and dropped out of her A level courses because she wasn't coping well in school. She was helping her father by doing his accounts for him. She also said that change is coming, women are becoming more assertive but they shouldn't become too independent, because, "in every religion a man should be in charge, not fully but mostly".

 Both young women agreed with the gendered hierarchy and certain cultural traditions. They both are representing a viewpoint held by many women in the community and expressed by several interviewees. Leila stressed the importance of education in bringing the changes in women's lives:"Education helps, if they were educated they would have a wider experience of what the world is actually like rather than what it's just like at home. They would get to see what goes on outside".

She is revealing her own family practices here because girls in her extended family are not allowed to get education after A-levels. Leila was hopeful that she would get more freedom after her marriage to her cousin (she is married now). She also told me that the younger girls in the families can do lots of things that she wasn't allowed to do, "But my male cousins and brothers have said they will keep the younger girls in control". This statement confirms that, certain patriarchal cultural practices are still being practiced and reinforced in some Pakistani families, with the male members having the final say in matters, but despite this, Leila and other participants felt that change is coming.

21-year-old Bisma who was recently divorced, wanted more control over her life, arguing, "I do think men are more powerful but I don't think women are helpless. A lot of Pakistani women are so successful and some are not even married. If they want to, they can do without men". This strong statement is indicative of the change in women's thinking in her large extended families. There are fifty or more Pashto speaking families in the city. Arranging early marriages for their

daughters and sons is a well-established tradition, which is strictly followed by all these families. Bisma stayed in school for her GCSEs and then stopped but felt she gained a lot from her education, saying that she would have been a different person if she didn't get her education. "It helps you to build yourself, some parts help you learn from right and wrong and some parts help you understand people's views and what's going on in the world and be more open minded". (She remarried and has a two-year-old daughter).

20-year-old Aleema left education after GCSEs and was working in a store, waiting to be married, and though she was pessimistic about the situation, she also agreed about the changes in women's lives:

"Society has a tendency to want to control women, what they are allowed to do and not to do, say or not say, how we behave, guidelines, set of rules, even if girls are allowed to study, work, they are still expected to cook, clean and look after everyone. I doubt this will change anytime soon although things are getting better than before".

8.6 Husbands as facilitators of women's agency

Mumtaz and Salway (2009) discuss the disparity between Pakistani women's individual freedoms and gendered influences on their lives in the social, financial and political spheres. They argue that emphasising women's independence fails to consider the nature of the structural and emotional bonds within the family that influence women's individual freedoms; women's position, and women's agency, should not therefore be considered in isolation from men. Several women commented on the crucial support of their husbands in enhancing their educational and financial aspects, though for some their husband's attitude was a major constraint.

Mina (age 31) favoured choosing a UK educated husband:"Pakistani women don't have a voice, especially if they are married to boys from Pakistan because their mentality is different, But if you get married from here, you have an understanding with your husband, *he will let you use your voice* and give your opinion".

She elaborated:

"There is a change in a few things like more British Pakistanis are getting married to each other and are happier. Generally Pakistani women are scared of other people in the community and what they may say. Girls are getting more freedom. If you keep a girl too close and don't give

her that much freedom, she will do something wrong. She should have some freedom but there should be limits".

All the women in my study were very aware of these 'limits' and the need to pass it on to the next generation (Shaw, 2000), thus continuing the transfer of cultural and religious traditions in the community.

28-year-old Seera, married with one daughter, left her science degree course half way through to marry. She remarked that Pakistani women have rights now, 'especially the ones who have married here', because their husbands are willing *to give them more rights* than the older generation. She said that being in Britain, and being British, generally changes things because schooling is different and the society gives women more freedom. Even if men disagree, women will do what they want unlike the previous generation when 'women listened to their husbands more'. Two things are interestingly mixed here, husbands *giving* rights and wives *taking* rights. The trend to divorce bears this out.

8.7 Summary

My findings encourage a mix of optimism and pessimism on social change. My argument presumes agency to have boundaries, to operate in the context of social relationships (Macmurray, 1995). The findings presented here include examples of women exercising various degree of agency. They suggest that women consider themselves to be not without agency, but sometimes find it difficult for their voice to be heard. Younger women expect to have more life choices than women in the previous generations, but are aware of the boundaries imposed by parental wishes and by social pressure. As Arhaz, age 21, put it, "It's hard being in England and our parents not wanting us to be like English people. I think it's unfair and the expectations of us are unrealistic. Those expectations can work in Pakistan but not here".

There may be some over-optimism in my interviewees' comments. Older women had experienced more constraints and negotiations about their life choices than the younger women, but most of the younger women who displayed aspirations for change had only experienced the process of negotiating access to higher education. Mumtaz and Salway (2009) argue that often researchers fail to comprehend the complexity of family decision-making. They explain that one should be careful not to present a "polarized view of oppressed women" because the situation is not black and white; rather, there are strategies women use to "negotiate gender rules and norms,

and ... to stretch the boundaries of what are considered acceptable behavior and practices"
(p.1354). Younger women may get appropriate support not only from their older sisters and
mothers, but also through a strong network of aunts and older cousins. For instance, the degree
of control that an older daughter might be able to exert over a decision about her schooling may
be quite different from degree of control that a younger daughter might exercise, reflecting
changes in the balance of factors that influence the degree of choice that a woman can exercise
over her education, work and marital decisions.

When talking about gender relations in their families, most participants expressed their wish for
a greater autonomy and more balance of power in their homes but a few women expressed their
concern that 'too much' freedom is not good for Pakistani women either, echoing Basit's findings
(1997b). My participants were also fully aware of the limits set by their families and the
community's social order and in most cases were willingly transferring many elements of those
traditions to the next generation (see also Shaw, 2000, 2014). It is also noticeable to see the
increased confidence and determination for daughters to have a fair deal, by getting higher
education and by working to gain financial security. I encountered a whole range of experiences
underlining that Pakistani Muslim women cannot be stereotyped into strictly defined categories.
Even where their experiences and views were similar there were clear differences in their
personal, cultural and religious conditions, so research has to take account of this diversity (so
also Bowen, 2014).

Chapter 9

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Overview

Restricted access to higher education has consequences for women's careers and earning power later in life and can be especially problematic for women whose marriages end in divorce. The existing research on British Pakistani Muslim girls' education documents the high aspiration of school-going girls and their parents for higher education and careers beyond school. Less attention has been given to exploring the relationship between aspirations, educational achievements, higher education experience and subsequent life trajectories. This is not surprising, for to examine these relationships empirically requires longitudinal research. The research presented here provides one such longitudinal perspective by presenting mature women's reflections on their educational experiences and on the constraints or facilitators of their life choices, alongside the researcher's three decades of community involvement.

My overarching research question asked how Pakistani women's experiences of education in southern England have impacted on their later lives and careers. My focus was a sample of 76 women, from families of non-professional, rural background in Pakistan and of low socio-economic status in the UK. Mine was a purposive sample, in that it comprised interviewees of these backgrounds, whose parents had chosen to send them to girls' schools in the city. I had worked in both of these schools, as a teacher in School A, a state girls' school, and as Head Teacher in School B, a Muslim girls' school. My research participants had for the most part been former pupils of mine, over a period of that stretches from thirty to ten years ago. In my interviews with them, I was interested to explore their own views on how their experiences of education, good or bad, including access to higher education, had shaped their subsequent life and career choices. "Experience of education" in this thesis includes on the one hand factors relating to school experience such as the attitudes of teachers towards their pupils, exam results and careers advice, and on the other hand the expectations of parents and family circumstances, including those that require girls to terminate their education early, especially for marriage.

My study shows that the educational experiences of the women in my sample were influenced by a range of factors that reflect the diverse discourses and pressures associated with their ethnicity and social and economic class in the UK, as well as specific aspects of their family background and religious positioning.   Corroborating earlier studies, I document how school factors did in some cases importantly enable access to education, but that girls were also discouraged from taking school seriously as a result of teachers' stereotypical assumptions that, for example, there was "no point" supporting a girl's educational aspirations if she was going to have an early arranged marriage.   I also found that, for the families in my study, family pressures, especially from fathers and other men in the family, gender norms and early marriage are significant factors restricting educational experiences and career choices; although some girls were able to make educational choices for themselves, in many cases, girls' educational choices were made for them by their male relatives.   Across the sample, marriage, especially early marriage, was a major factor in constraining access to higher education. Some of the women in my sample had managed to continue their education after marriage, while others did not. These outcomes were sometimes the result of school actions, and sometimes of family gender politics.

My study is methodologically unique, in that I have lived among these women for three decades, taught most of them in school and supported them in the community. My findings represent more than the simple analysis of interview data, for my interpretations are also influenced by my knowledge of the context, prior history and the family background of each interviewee. My interviewees are trusted friends, who will stay in contact even now that this particular project is finished: any one of them might ring me up to ask advice, not in connection with this research, but because we already had a relationship initiated in school. I can therefore never exit the field.

Haw (1998) claims that her main interest is to make the voices of Muslim girls heard, but we do not hear these Muslim girls voices in her work. In my work, I enable my readers to hear the often-reluctant voices of Pakistani women from backgrounds that make them one of the groups researchers find 'difficult-to-access'; by contrast, women of professional and middle-class backgrounds tend to be more open and willing research participants and their views have dominated other research literature. Because of my unique positioning in this

research, the women in my sample were able to talk about their private experiences in a context of absolute trust. I have presented these women's voices on their education and career progression, using their own words, so that the reader can hear their views and concerns directly. I interviewed mature women, who have life experience from beyond their schooling, so my findings cannot be compared directly with studies that interviewed schoolgirls.

Since my focus is on a difficult to access group of Pakistanis of non-professional backgrounds, my key findings and conclusions and recommendations, as set out in the rest of this chapter, are not generalisable in an uncritical way to Pakistanis as a whole. My sample comprised women who were former pupils of two girls' schools – that is, their parents deliberately chose single-sex education for them. This marks them out as being culturally conservative, families of rural origins in Pakistan, whose in the previous generations were primarily agriculturalists; by contrast, families from professional background in Pakistan tend, in the city where this study was located, to choose independent schools for their daughters, of which there are many available. My findings thus speak for the attitudes and needs of my particular study sample, and not necessarily of others. However, they do have implications for educational provision for Muslim pupils elsewhere in the UK, where there are many Pakistani families of similar backgrounds to those in this study.

My study reveals that even second-generation parents are cautious of the independence developed in higher education and university, fearing losing control over their daughters (as also observed by Shaw, 2000; Abbas, 2003, Archer 2010). My contribution has been to take a large sample of women who have experienced the pressures and lived through the consequences of sometimes dictatorial family attitudes, having endured marriages they did not want or find rewarding, and in many cases divorcing and trying to take control of their lives again. The women's views are diverse, some breaking out of conservative attitudes, others navigating their lives within a traditional family framework, making decisions for their own daughters much as decisions were once made for them. I have shown how women are trying to make a better life for themselves and their families while struggling with the issues I describe, and repositioning themselves from time to time. I show that at time they have to make difficult choices, navigating a route through the social and cultural constraints they encounter within their communities and the discrimination they often confront in education and work.

9.2 Key Findings

My focus on educational and life choices offers a holistic view of the socially and culturally lived experiences of adult Pakistani women. Despite the hopes and aspirations of Pakistani schoolgirls as studied by others, I have examined empirically the later life experiences and consequences of educational choices, and reached less optimistic conclusions, which I set out here. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, my personal experiences were in some ways similar to and in some ways different from those of my participants, enabling me to feel empathy with a degree of distancing.

9.2.1 Gender relations

My main finding concerns how gender relations in the family impact on education and careers. Archer (2002: 359) argues that "popular public discourses have positioned Muslim girls as having limited 'choices' due to restrictive gendered cultural values and practices" and that "'choice' is intricately bound up with the re/production of identities and inequalities". This was evident in the accounts of my interviewees when they talked about cultural practices that restricted their educational choices (see also Abbas 2003, Gangoli, Razak & McCarry 2006; Aston et al., 2007; Archer 2010). They produced examples of patriarchal power in their families where women played a submissive role when it came to making important decisions regarding their daughters' education. I personally observed fathers taking considerable interest in their daughters' education when I was teaching in Schools A and B. Rizvi (2007), researching School B, noted that "the attendance of fathers was much higher than mothers in parents-teacher meetings" (p.264), and attributed this to lack of language skills or lack of mobility among the mothers. I would suggest that her observation should rather be interpreted as evidence of male dominance, and I would suggest that this is motivated less by a concern with daughters' educational achievement than by a concern to protect family honour (Gangoli, Razak & McCarry, 2006; Thapar-Bjorkert &Sanghera, 2011). Many girls had marriages arranged early and some girls were married before sitting their GCSEs. This establishes a *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1973), a set of social assumptions, which are is not easy to counter. However, I also found that many women were reconstructing and negotiating their own identities in order to respond to the social and cultural changes taking place around them (Haw, 2011). In this context, Mernissi's (1991) work on Islamic texts that challenge traditionalist Muslim scholars

theologically, and invite them to re-open the historical discussion on Qur'anic and legal matters concerning Muslim women, is directly relevant. The influence, for good or ill, of *ulamas* (male Muslim scholars) and mosque *imams* is crucial as these scholars are effectively the guardians of "traditional" morality.

Thus there are examples in which "the cultural pathology discourse", which portrays Asian girls "as the victims of oppressive cultures in which men dominate women", is applicable (Shain 2003: 125, see also Falah and Nagel 2005; Eltahawy 2015). However, such "oppression" needs contextualising (Basit 1997; Shaw 2000; Bhatti, 2002, 2006; Kandiyoti, 2000; Ahmad, 2005; Mahmood, 2004; Abu-Lughod, 2013). There is a vast difference between a forced marriage and a consenting arranged marriage. There is no simple explanation of how Muslim women in different communities and social classes feel about "oppression" and "emancipation" (Abu-Lughod 2013). In some cases, wearing the *hijab* might be a form of political resistance, not oppression (Bigger, 2006; Sakaranaho, 2006; Hamzeh, 2011). Abu-Lughod (2013) comments critically on the tendency to blame culture for bad behaviour when describing the ill treatment of women by men: there are unacceptable individual actions, for which the culture is not to blame.

I highlight the diversity of gradually changing attitudes towards gender relationships because of recent social and economic developments in women's lives (Kabeer 2000; Ahmad, 2005; Qureshi, Charsley & Shaw, 2012; Shaw 2014). However there remain significant cultural restraints upon and abuses of women's rights, and I wish to work towards fairer outcomes and better opportunities, what Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) call gender democracy. That such abuse exists in every culture does not justify unfair practices. Agency can take different forms (Mahmood, 2004: 188) but no model of agency legitimises or should legitimise discrimination against women.

9.2.2 Evaluation of transnational marriages

My research shows that such transnational marriages to husbands from Pakistan are still popular in the local Pakistani community (so also Qureshi, Charsley & Shaw, 2012; Shaw, 2014) as a means of maintaining links with their extended families in Pakistan, and sometimes these marriages are arranged against their children's wishes. Most young men and women are compliant to these marriages under family pressure (Kay, 2006; Gangoli, Razak & McCarry, 2006; Mumtaz and Salway, 2009). Most interviewees thought that husbands from UK would be preferable to those from Pakistan because spouses would

understand each other better, though there were exceptions to this view. Women's educational and work opportunities seem in large part dependent upon having their husband's support and willingness (Aston et al., 2007), and husbands from Pakistan were generally viewed as less supportive. Women's marriages had often been arranged before girls embarked on university courses in order to help parents keep control of their daughters, because after studying at degree level, women are more clear thinking, less likely to be pushed into an inappropriate match (Ahmad, 2012). One told me that she would not have chosen her husband after a degree, but was glad she had married beforehand.

9.2.3 Early Marriage, Increasing Divorce

There is substantial pressure in this population to marry early, in extreme cases soon after the 16th birthday. However, increasingly these marriages do not last, especially where they are to husbands from Pakistan. This leads to rapid divorce and remarriage to a husband of the woman's choice. Early marriage interrupts education and the process of gaining qualifications, curtailing a woman's later career options. The reasons for early arranged marriages are given as keeping the wider family happy, enabling migration to the UK, to safeguard family honour, and to ensure cultural compliance (Falah and Nagel, 2005; Basit, 2013b). I met young women who were in their second marriage by the age of 20. This increase in marital instability and divorce is linked with changing gender ideologies among my interviewees, with younger women more prepared to strive for personal happiness and fulfilment in their marital relationships, with less tolerance and patience (*sabr*) than their long-suffering mothers had had (see also Shah, Dwyer & Modood, 2010; Qureshi, Charsley & Shaw, 2012; Shaw, 2014). Often divorced young women married again locally, and not necessarily with parental consent. One mother observed, "girls are doing what they want, things have changed now".

I also discovered examples of increasingly supportive change and acceptance in parental attitude towards their daughters' divorce (see also Qureshi, Charsley & Shaw, 2012) but some women reported that divorce among many families is still opposed strongly, and some women are strongly encouraged to stay in unhappy marriages (Gangoli, Razak & McCarry, 2006) to keep the family happy and to avoid gossip. My findings highlight the pressure put on women by their families to sacrifice their personal happiness and make compromises in order to save an unhappy and even abusive marriage. Several of my

interviewees have suffered from the physical and mental affects of their unhappy marriages including depression, loneliness and feelings of helplessness (see also Hussain and Cochrane, 2004; Qureshi, 2013) exacerbated by emotional pressures exerted on them by their families and spouses.

9.2.4 Restricted choices in higher education and careers

Although around 40% of my study participants achieved higher qualifications, many as mature adults, the remaining 60% remained unqualified, even though most women in my sample were capable of achieving university degrees. Most women felt that attitudes towards girls' education and marriage in their families were changing, but others confirmed that for many women little has changed with regard to opportunities for higher education. Rabeea, in Chapter 5, aired the conservative concerns that university makes women too independent, an issue expressed positively and negatively. Other researchers (Archer, 2002, 2010; Shah, Dwyer & Modood, 2010; Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera, 2011; Haw, 2011; Basit, 2013b) have reported positive change. Rizvi (2007) interviewed Arab, Bengali, Iranian, Chechen, Afghani and English Muslims as well as Pakistanis in School B concluding that most parents considered higher education important for their daughters. That was the rhetoric but not the reality.

In following the educational and career progress of the girls in this study, I confirm that only a minority of Pakistani girls went to university, and most of them were married between school and university and this interfered with or halted their progress. Rizvi states (2007:274) that most girls resisted patriarchal interference. I argue for a less rosy picture when viewed over the long-term. Over time, girls' educational and life choices were heavily influenced externally by discrimination and teachers' low expectations, and internally by cultural, religious and family pressures. Pakistani women in UK are not a homogenous group; there is great social, religious and cultural diversity. Nevertheless *in my sample*, cultural and social practices undoubtedly restrain women's life choices, even though more women have careers than previously. Most significantly, marriage impacts on qualifications and therefore educational and work opportunities, confirming Shaw's (1983, 2000) argument that family culture still put restrictions on career aspirations. Others confirm this – Abbas, (2003); Bhatti, (2006); Aston et al., (2007); Basit, (2013b); McGrath & McGarry, 2014).

9.2.5 Attitudes towards Muslim schools

A perhaps surprising finding is that a minority – two thirds – of my interviewees said that they would not consider sending their daughters to a Muslim girls' school. However, while they displayed a general confidence in state schools education for educational and social reasons, they were concerned about the quality of state education in local schools. Some women were home educating their children because of their dissatisfaction with the education system (see also Ahmed 2012). All interviewees wished to preserve their Islamic identity and vigorously endorsed the necessity of providing the Islamic education to their children by other means, such as through local mosques, women holding classes in their homes, and Saturday clubs. Bhimji (2009) helpfully explores agency in religious spaces. Even a first generation woman said, in Punjabi, about Muslim schools, "No, I am very against them, they are divisive, you are trying to separate and isolate yourself from the main community we live with. We need to mix up more, in my opinion, these schools will create more trouble".

9.2.6 The rise of conservatism

This period of time represents a complicated crossroads. Young women educated in the UK have more knowledge than their parents and grandparents, and have met a wider range of people and this has broadened their perspectives. To some, this presents a danger that Muslim women will become more "independent". In Africa, brutal terrorists demand No Western Education (Boko Haram in Hausa, literally Forbidden Deception, Newman, 2013). In Pakistan, gunmen shot Malala Yusafzai in a campaign against schooling girls. My contribution is to interrogate this crossroads where desires to reform meet pressures to conform. In Giddens' structuration terms, this represents agency battling with structure.

The recent resurgence of conservative Islamic movement emphasises the role of women as bearers of "collective identity" and "guardians" of future generations, thus legitimising the "imposition of physical and spatial constraints" (Falah and Nagel, 2005:196). Many participants commented on this trend towards radical Islamisation, objecting to the notion of "being judged" by the more religiously conservative. I myself was personally confronted by some school B students in front of others for not wearing strict *hijab* (headscarf). A section of my local Pakistani community has at times pressured me to conform to their interpretation of an "ideal good Muslim woman". Other interviewees also reported similar incidents. It is difficult to ignore the growing popularity of Saudi tribal

modes of religious and patriarchal practices in the local Pakistani community, which promotes a narrow interpretation of women's role in Islam. Many young and educated females are willingly adopting the ideologies of this revival movement (see Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008), claiming that it gives them agency to empower themselves, and increases their rights within Islamic teachings (as argued by Mernissi, 1991a; Barlas, 2002; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008; Badran, 2011; Qureshi, Charsley & Shaw, 2012; Shaw, 2014). My data shows that the journey towards agency is neither simple nor straightforward: preventing women's post-16 education is a clear conservative strategy to restrict women's choices.

9.2.7 Resistance versus cultural conditioning

It would be simple to claim, after Bourdieu, that each generation reproduces the attitudes of its predecessor. In working class 'villager' (or former villager) families, girls are sometimes deprived of education post-11 and more so post-16. My contribution is to tease out the processes involved and work towards solutions. My interviewees reported that family and cultural traditions are still influential in the third generation though variations exist between different families depending on their social and economic background. It was also clear that the younger siblings in most families were given more liberties than their older sisters: one woman commented that as parents get older, younger girls are "taking advantage of that and manage to get their way with them".

I am in agreement with Shaw (2000:166) that "traditional ideas about gender, sexuality and marriage do continue to influence the behaviour and attitudes of the majority of young Pakistanis in the local community" but these traditions and cultural values are not being reproduced without challenge from young Pakistani women. Employment and higher education has provided them with the opportunity of gaining more autonomy (see also Kabeer, 2000; Salway, 2007; Aston et al., 2007) but when considering careers, most women participants gave preference to their family life, raising children rather than following a career, and stopping working after having children. There is evidence of change, but it is slow and patchy.

Resistance requires emotional effort, and women can wonder if it is worthwhile. In chapter 6, I recounted that Sultana reflected after an abusive marriage, that maybe she should not have fought his abuse but accepted it meekly. These attitudes force women to remain in unhappy marriages (see also Gangoli, Razak, McCarry, 2006). My study exhibits change occurring, but that the process of change is messy and inconsistent. It entails an exercise of

agency, involving a complex negotiation in relation to cultural and structural pressures. I found that some younger women are challenging and negotiating the patriarchal system in their families by either abandoning their "Pakistani" cultural identity, others by agreeing to parental demands for arranged marriages but divorcing at an early opportunity and marrying men of their own choice, with or without parental permission (so also Qureshi, Charsley & Shaw, 2012).

9.2.8 Islam: resource or constraint?

One "given" among my interviewees is that they are Muslims with a deep-rooted belief in Islam. Alongside many studies, this study emphasises that adherence to Islam is separate from cultural attitudes and demands. Muslim feminists call for the re-evaluation of relevant Qur'anic texts, viewed holistically.

My interviewees use Islam as a resource, separating Islamic teaching from traditional Pakistani culture, in asserting their rights (see also Shaw 2014). My study confirms that religion plays an important part in women's lives and they feel that their autonomy and choices have to be achieved within their particular religious and cultural setup. They are passionate about protecting their social and cultural family structures as these values "are built on knowledge passed on from one generation to another" (Bhatti, 2002:138). They want a better future for their children but definitely not at the cost of their religious identity. Basit (2013b) found this when talking to different generations of a family about educational aspirations. The older generations wanted their children to be successful and gain better educational qualifications than them but still living within their cultural values: "be like me; and don't be like me", perfectly explains this desire to ensure continuity.

9.3 Reflections on methodology

A PhD requires me to develop and defend a methodology. In some cases this methodology will be a contribution to knowledge. My problem was that I was studying a thirty-year period of my own professional life. It was a period I lived, agonised over, reflected upon, and collected a wide range of data about. I needed to distance the research from uncontrolled autobiographical writing, which might be accused of subjectivity, although

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Norman Denzin (1989, 2013) has championed autobiography when done well, and re-described it as auto-ethnography. Where autobiography has been used, it has been checked and triangulated with other witnesses, some former colleagues and others former students. This has filled out and enriched many points and elicited new memories – "Do you remember when..". is a common elicitation device. I read Bryman's four volume set of core papers on *Ethnography* (Bryman, 2001), and noticed a growing interest in the "native ethnographer" and realised that reflecting on thirty years in the field can be more valid that a westerner jetting in for a brief time, without adequate language abilities, and basing fieldnotes on half understood observations. So I wish both to defend and promulgate my methods as a valid means of reflecting on one's own community, provided that there are safeguards. I deal with these later in this section (9.3.1) but will say generally here that accounts and memories were checked and verified wherever possible. That my basic presuppositions colour my interpretations is true, but this is true of all research. I have taken this into account and have certainly not filtered out voices that take opposite views to mine.

Anthropology and ethnography have evolved rapidly, so my description of my work as (in part) auto-ethnography is more acceptable in 2016 than it would have been three decades ago. There are however other interpretations of auto-ethnography, some introspective and personal, essentially a study of oneself. Denzin's (2013) guide to auto-ethnography illustrates the variety of views. My version is this: much of what I as a *researcher* have observed and heard has involved myself as an *actor* (youth worker, teacher, head teacher). As a *researcher*, I have access to my beliefs, values and life experiences as an *actor*. My voice as an actor is one of many, and not privileged; but like all researchers, my researcher self makes interpretations and reaches conclusions. Early ethnography was a colonial project: my development here of a post-colonial model of auto-ethnography can thus be seen as a contribution to methodology, and in particular to critiques of the work of "outsider" ethnographers (Van Maanen, 1995, 2011).

I refer also to phenomenology as a method as used in psychology (Moustakas, 1994; Smith et al. 2009). This reflects the fact that the researcher and research participants are together constructing and reconstructing conceptual knowledge, that the concepts and words being used are themselves problematic. I have strived to reach a general understanding of *agency* when decisions and choices are made within a context of expectations. I have noted the problematic nature of the concept of *oppression*. The concept of *consent* deserves further

work, since I have reported a range of understandings between forced marriages, arranged marriages and free marriages. A number of my interviewees had to endure marriages to which they had not consented before divorcing and marrying freely.

9.3.1 Trustworthiness

Experimental research uses terms such as reliability and validity as part of its quality assurance, ensuring that the data presented make a valid contribution to the phenomenon being researched, and that particular researchers are likely to generate similar results, and to protect from researcher error. These make little sense in qualitative research if taken literally; but I need to ask whether as researcher I have done a good job, have asked the right questions, have accurately recorded responses and have listened with an open mind. Generally speaking, I recorded my interviews, had them transcribed in anonymised form by two young women who needed the income, checked the transcript line by line alongside the recording and made corrections. There is thus a record of the interviews actually happening. The interview often moved away from education and life opportunities to talk of marriage and family matters but where these comments were relevant (e.g. when education was halted by marriage) I considered them valid and useful. Unused data may be considered for different publications.

On the issue of whether a different researcher would have achieved the same results, I am very clear – no they would not. This is not a problem but the opposite. The women opened up to me because of our prior relationship that established trust. An outsider would not have been given access, and would at best have received superficial and even deceptive replies to protect interviewees from gossip. This is a matter of some relevance when dealing with difficult to reach groups where women may be reluctant to come forward and be open to questioning.

9.3.2 Theorising

I explain above how dealing with women's issues led me towards feminism, and to discover Islamic feminism. It seems to me, as I conclude this study, that the issue of research benefiting women is important. I have made a significant contribution to this, but each form of feminist study comes with baggage. Feminism is diverse, and in a sense every writer is a law to herself. Islamic feminism holds fast to seeking answers that stay within a Qur'anic framework, refusing therefore to consider whether a modern Muslim should be

constrained by old theology or whether more liberal or progressive interpretations are in order.

Reference is made to Critical Theory both via feminism and also social justice. Feminism places female experience at centre stage, critical of attempts to oppress and belittle, giving voice to women without a public voice. Social justice critiques a social order that benefits one sector (the wealthy and men for example) to the disadvantage of another. My interviewees indicated that social justice issues rose out of family pressure to marry early and to marry husbands from Pakistan they did not know, with fixed attitudes on women being denied education and career; and family attitudes demanded they make the best of their situation even when it is unsatisfactory or even abusive. Such husband-wife relationships could vary from happy through to oppressive. A mixture of western education and peer support gave some the strength to divorce and remarry a husband of choice, often in the face of family criticism. Let me again be clear that the women were critical of the *misuse of Islam* and not of Islam itself, which they cherished. Such misuse may fall within social justice critique.

I have also used Bourdieu's general theory about class, especially the reproduction of attitudes over the generations There have been clear examples of reproduction of traditional attitudes, though not as a rule but as part of a continuum. However, the power of reproduction is strong and I found women behaving towards their daughters much as their parents had treated then. This is fueled by concern for keeping some control amid fears of girls becoming too independent. There are examples of agency, and I use Giddens' observations that personal agency can gradually break down attitudes, that 'structuration' is a process of status quo balanced with changes brought about by agency. I have observed acts of resistance, divorces, remarriages without parental consent, and parents moderating over time. Acts of agency rarely step outside Islamic parameters. This is nuanced and is not blind acceptance – a woman can accept genuine Islamic constraints and still reflect and grow.

9.4 Recommendations for policy and practice

9.4.1 Guidance

For the past thirty years I have been an informal mentor to hundreds of women who come to discuss their predicaments and options. This is a role that developed gradually through

friendship and trust built up through community work and teaching. It carries a heavy time and emotional load. My first recommendation is that such counselling and mentoring roles are developed so there are more opportunities for women to get help. Linked with this, charities such as Relate and Citizens Advice Bureau need specific guidance on dealing with women like those in my sample. None of my interviewees had considered using these agencies, so this is an issue in itself. I have over time been involved in projects for Asian women, which could be one model for future action. A recent local initiative by three Muslim teachers (some in my sample) to provide free advice about educational issues to Pakistani parents and students has attracted great interest in the community.

9.4.2 Education

My data indicated a lack of understanding in local schools of the situation of Pakistani Muslim girls, resulting in low teacher expectations. There was a lack of flexibility when dealing with absences in Pakistan, especially when considering examination entry. Perhaps concern for league tables prompts disadvantaging decisions. This recommendation is to develop understanding through staff training and quality associated materials in order to provide appropriate assistance and encouragement to girls after an early marriage.

My recommendation for Muslim Girls' Schools and *madrassas* is that they adopt a broader curriculum, incorporating the ideas of world-renowned Muslim feminist scholars. School inspection regimes should include fair gender balance in their questioning and reporting on Muslim schools and *Madrassas*. The work of female Muslim scholars could be of great importance and more specific to the needs of ordinary Muslim women in today's societies. No doubt strong opposition will continue to be mounted against this idea from the orthodox Muslim male-dominated hierarchy who claim that their narrow interpretation is relevant for all times and should not be interfered with, thus enforcing the extreme interpretations of classical Shariah laws (Islamic laws) for Muslims globally. *Madrassas* need to be reformed so that the *ulamas* (Islamic scholars) graduating from them are able to teach reformed and informed attitudes towards the status of women in Islam, to effect change in the everyday lives of Muslim women by enabling higher education and widening life choices. The writings of Muslim women scholars should be included in the syllabuses of *madrassas* and Muslim schools in UK to bring a more balanced outlook about Muslim women and their role in their homes and the whole society. This will naturally be neither easy nor rapid.

9.4.3 Health and Social Services

GPs and Social Services need to come to terms with mental health issues caused or exacerbated by the marriage and educational issues discussed in this thesis. These include runaway girls and young women, who not only cut themselves off from family but may also live in fear of reprisals. I have met abused wives, depressed, anxious and suicidal women, exhibiting self-harm and other mental health issues. Many of the needs are specific to this cultural community. A separate and culturally appropriate counselling service, and women's shelters will all be helpful, but will need funding.

9.4.4 Career guidance

Most of the women I interviewed had employment and career needs, to supplement family income and/or to provide an income in case of becoming single parent families. My data contain a record of the employment routes women actually followed after school, to education, training, employment and self-employment. I recommend that as part of their continuing professional development (CPD), school careers' officers and school careers' service should be provided with clear guidelines that focus on local Pakistani communities in the UK.

9.4.5 Recommendations for further research

This thesis reports on research in one region with a focused sample of Pakistani-heritage women with culturally and theologically conservative parents and families, that is, the sort who made the deliberate choice to send their daughters to a girls' secondary school. Similar research with young women who went to co-educational schools might be balancing. My own networks contain women from other nationalities whose perspectives are potentially very interesting. These may confirm or differ from the issues raised by the Pakistani women. My interviewees discussed a range of social issues not specifically linked to education and worthy of discussing in another context. High on this list are issues of marriage consent and family use of marriage for ulterior purposes not related to a daughter's happiness, such as to develop extended family cohesion, or to assist migration to the UK.

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APPENDIX 1

Interviewees' pseudonyms, age and interview type

n=76

NAMES	AGE	TYPE OF INTERVIEW
SCHOOL A		
Akhtar	32	Face to face
Aliya	27	Face to face
Ashufta	38	Facebook
Azra	42	Face to face
Bina	40	Face to face
Faheema	27	Face to face
Faiza	34	Face to face
Farkhanda	38	Face to face
Haseena	25	Face to face
Humaira	33	Face to face
Iraj	36	Face to face
Kauser	34	Face to face
Khadija	28	Telephone
Khursheed	36	Facebook
Maham	26	Face to face
Maheema	34	Face to face
Maira	30	Face to face
Maria	34	Face to face
Meena	31	Face to face
Muzammal	32	Face to face

Nadia	32	Face to face
Naz	40	Face to face
Nazneen	34	Facebook
Nina	34	Face to face
Rabea	37	Face to face
Rida	35	Face to face
Sabeera	40	Face to face
Sana	37	Face to face
Seema	30	Face to face
Seera	28	Face to face
Shabeena	39	Face to face
Shahana	27	Face to face
Shahla	27	Face to face
Sultana	37	Face to face
Suman	29	Face to face
Tayyaba	28	Telephone and Face to face
Warda	36	Face to face
Zainub	38	Face to face

I had informal face-to-face interviews with the following. I have known them very well since leaving school.

Hameeda	28
Lubna	39
Naeema	26
Naheeda	37
Reema	32
Sabiha	37
Shama	38

Zeenat	30	

SCHOOL B (Muslim Girls' School)

Aleema	20	Face to face
Arhaz	20	Face to face
Bisma	21	Face to face
Fahmida	20	Face to face
Fakiha	20	Face to face
Freeha	20	Face to face
Hafeeza	20	Telephone
Jabeen	20	Face to face
Kalsoom	20	Face to face
Latifa	19	Face to face
Leila	21	Face to face
Maliha	20	Facebook
Malika	20	Telephone
Mani	19	Face to face
Mariam	20	Face to face
Michel	20	Face to face
Muskan	20	Face to face
Nabiha	20	Face to face
Nazish	20	Face to face
Neesa	20	Facebook
Nisbah	21	Face to face
Noreen	20	Facebook
Qamar	21	Face to face
Rani	20	Face to face

| Rukhsar | 21 | Face to face |
| Shahida | 20 | Face to face |

The following were from other local schools and interviewed with School B pupils'

Amna	20	Face to face
Aseel	19	Face to face
Musarat	19	Face to face
Rafiqa	19	Face to face

Semi structured interview questions, School A

Questions were not asked in this particular order or in these precise words either. They were used as prompts for discussion. Once the conversation started, sometimes these issues came up without me asking the question, other times I asked for further elaboration and one thing lead to another, issues like domestic violence, depression, divorce etc).

1) Talk about the secondary school experiences, teachers' attitudes and other social experiences in school.

2) Who decided which school you should go to? Who supported your educational aspirations at home or stopped you from going to University?

3) Who held decision making power in your parental home and how decisions are taken in your own marriage?

4) Your achievements in school, what did you do after leaving school?

5) Do you remember any prejudice towards you in school?

6) Can you talk about the careers' help you received in school?

7) How was the university experience?

8) Which social/ cultural or religious traditions would you like to continue in your own family, with your own daughters?

9) Can you describe your relationship with your mother? How much are you like her and in which ways are you different? Do you think you are stronger than your mother?

10) What is your identity? How do you feel about keeping link with Pakistan?

11)Your own bringing up/experiences Would you change anything with your own children – especially your daughters?

12) Can you say something about gender relations in your parent's house and now in your own? What are your memories of being a girl at home and in the local Pakistani community?

13) How do you feel about the status Pakistani women are given in our community, do men have more power?

14)Which changes would you like to see in the lives of women of your generation and the   next generation?

15) Educational /social/economic background of mother and father, part of Pakistan they originated from.

16) Their own employment history, their view of having a career before and after marriage.

17) What were your parents' views on their sons' and daughters' education, how do your parents feel about daughters' higher education?

18) Marriage, how and when did it happen? who decided?

19) your preference for your husband, from UK or from Pakistan?reasons? your experiences of marriage.

20) Community people making judgement about girls not wearing *hijab* and gossiping about other women.

21) Your views on single sex and Muslim girls schools.

22) Views on your own children's education in local schools, are things different for them compared to their own school experiences?

23) What does the concept of Family honour (*izzat*) means to you?

24) Is religion important to you? How much importance do you give to Islamic education for your children? How would you provide it? Which cultural and religious traditions are important to you and you would like to see it transferred in your own children?

25) Do you feel your education and having jobs have changed you? How?

Semi structured interview questions, School B

1) Who made the decision for you to go to a Muslim girls' school and reasons for it ? did you agree with this decision?

2) If it wasn't a Muslim girls' school, would you have gone to another school or stayed at home?

3)Did you go to another school after leaving the Muslim girls' school ? What were your feelings of being in a co-educational state school?

4) Did you face any difficulties while settling in the mixed school or college after leaving Muslim girls' school?

5) What were the main differences between both schools?

6) Given the choice now, would you go to a Muslim girls' school or a mixed school? please give your reasons.

7) *Hijab* was compulsory and part of the uniform in the Muslim school, what were your feelings about it? Do you still wear it? your reasons?

8) Do people in our community judge girls/ women who wear *hijab* and who don't wear *hijab*?.Has wearing *hijab* ever caused difficulties for you in mixed school or at work?

9) What are you doing these days after finishing school? are you still in education or working? Do you go to a university? Which course are you doing? Would you have liked to go to university? or have you done some vocational courses in the college?

10) What are your views now that you have been to a Muslim girls' school and a mix school, about a Muslim girls' school? Should Muslim girls be sent there by their parents or do you favour co-educational schools?

11) Who made all the decisions about your education in your home?.who decided which school to go to and which courses to do?

12) Who holds power in your home,mum or dad? Who normally makes the decisions and have the final say?

13) How would you describe your relationship with your mum? How much are you like her and how are you different from her? In which ways you are different from her and her role in the family?Do you think you will be like her or different when you are married?

14) Which religious and cultural traditions you would like to continue when you are married?

15) What is your identity? Who are you?

16) Being female, what are your experiences of growing up in your home and in your community? Do parents and relatives treat daughters and sons differently?

17) What are your thoughts on the position and status of females in our community?

18) Explain the educational/social/economical background of parents.

19) How have you acquired Islamic education? How do you think your children will get Islamic education?

20) Would you send your children to a Muslim school in future? Why so or why not?

22) Can you see yourself as a career woman or a house wife?

23) When did you get married? what are your experiences of marriage? did it affect your education?

APPENDIX 3

SCHOOL B RESULTS 2006-8

First group of student at School B joined in Year 7 and went through to GCSE.

Our assessment and monitoring helped us to tailor make their progression, as you can see most of the students joined us with below average KS2 results, fig 1 and assessment summary sheet Y11RM. By the time they sat their SATs had improved tremendously and the next two years (2006-2008) and achieved maximum 13 GCSEs and minimum of 2 GCSEs, with A*-C grades. The KS3 results show excellent results.

Year 9, 2006 (B.Ave. = Below average)

Year 9 Progress 2005-2006		
Pupil number	KS2 Results E-M-S	KS3 Results E-M-S
01	3-3	5-5-4
02	4-4	7-5-6
03	5-4-5	7-8-7
04	5-5-5	6-7-6
05	B Ave.	4-4-4
06	4-5	6-7-7
07	4-4-4	6-7-7
08	3-3-3	5-6-5
09	5-5-5	5-7-6
10	4-3	4-3-N
11	4-3-4	5-7-7
12	3-3-4	5-4-N
13	4-4-4	5-6-5
14	3-5-5	5-6-5
15	B Ave.	N-4-N
16	4-3-4	5-6-6
17	B Ave.	5-5-5
18	4-3-4	5-6-6
19	3-3-3	4-4-4
20	3-3-3	4-5-5
21	3-3-3	4-6-5
22	3-4-4	5-7-6
23	4-4-4	6-8-7

GCSE RESULTS 2008

Cand.No.	TOTAL GCSEs	A*	A	B	C	A*-A	A*-B	A*-C
1	13	9	4	0	0	13	13	13
2	13	3	10	0	0	13	13	13
3	13	2	7	3	0	9	12	12
4	13	2	6	5	0	8	13	13
5	13	0	9	4	0	9	13	13
6	12	2	6	4	0	8	12	12
7	12	1	3	8	0	4	12	12
8	12	1	1	6	4	2	8	12
9	12	1	0	4	5	1	5	10
10	11	1	0	5	3	1	6	9
11	11	0	5	4	1	5	9	10
12	11	0	2	5	2	2	7	9
13	11	0	0	0	6	2	0	6
14	11	0	0	0	6	2	0	6
15	10	0	1	6	3	1	7	10
16	10	0	1	4	1	1	5	6
17	10	0	1	0	5	1	1	6
18	10	0	0	0	4	0	0	4
19	9	0	1	2	2	1	3	5
20	9	0	0	4	4	0	4	8
21	9	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
22	8	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
23	8	0	0	1	3	0	1	4
24	8	0	0	1	1	0	1	2

Grade	GCSE	%of pupils
A*-A	8-13	33%
A*-B	5-13	58%
A*-C	5 or more	79%
A*-E		100%

June 2008 GCSE data 5 A*-C GCSE including English and Maths Schools in the Local Authority

School B   **58%**

Local Authority average   50.5% (range: 18% to 56%)

England Average (State funded schools)   47.6%

SCHOOL B KS3 RESULTS (YEAR 9 SATS) PASS

	ENGLISH	MATHS	SCIENCE
YEAR 2005-2006	96%	100%	87%
YEAR 2006-2007	100%	100%	95%
YEAR 2007-2008	100%	100%	100%

SCHOOL B KS3 RESULTS (YEAR 9 SATS)
LEVEL 5 AND ABOVE

	ENGLISH	MATHS	SCIENCE
YEAR 2005-2006	75%	83%	75%
YEAR 2006-2007	85%	90%	70%
YEAR 2007-2008	100%	82%	86%