

Me, Myself, I.

A Matter of Becoming, Fluid Identities?

**A Qualitative Study of Female Early Childhood Studies
Students of Bangladeshi Heritage in England**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the experiences of young Bangladeshi women studying on a Foundation degree within a widening participation university. It examines their changing identity on their journey to university as they transition through compulsory and post-compulsory education. The data is collected at key transition points during higher education: on entry to the Foundation degree, as they transition to the Bachelor programme, as they prepare to exit the programme and one-year post-Bachelor study. It examines their experiences within education, employment and within the context of the family. It explores their changing concepts of identity and the mediatory approaches in accessing higher education. As a small-scale study, it engages with seven young Bangladeshi women studying on a Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies.

Data was collected through photo-elicitation, a narrative approach that maximises the researcher's opportunity to enter the world of those being studied. This approach is evident within the presentation of the data, giving maximum exposure to their stories, which reveal the intersectionality of their experience within the context of education and the family. The findings uncovered the changing construct of identity for Bangladeshi women, as a consequence of their mediation and navigation of the barriers presented to them. These women are skilful navigators. Archer's concept of morphogenesis applies to these young women, their families and the Bangladeshi community. The lives of Bangladeshi women and the Bangladeshi community are changing, concepts of culture are evolving, revealing new identities. What emerges is the development of a new cultural identity, an educated, professional, independent British/Bangladeshi women, one who has greater agency, who continues to value and maintain her religious and cultural identity.

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Nomenclature

Several key terms are used throughout this thesis and are defined here:

Bangladeshi: This term used to identify individuals of Bangladeshi descent; this is a self-defining category as used by individuals within the research.

British/Bangladeshi: Individuals of Bangladeshi descent born in the UK.

Bengali: An Indo Aryan language which is primarily spoken by Bengalis in South Asia.

Biraderi: Male patrilineage/kin group.

Deprivation indices: Deprivation is measured utilising a set of indices based on income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation and disability, education, skills and training deprivation, proximity to services, living environment and crime and disorder.

Full time: Full-time study refers to those enrolled in a programme of 120 credits over two semesters, studying a minimum of sixteen hours per week.

Izzat: Honour, prestige.

New University: "New University" refers to the setting within this study, representing a post-1992 university or modern university.

SATS: Standard Assessment Tests which evaluate children's educational progress at the end of Years 2, 6 and 9 at primary school and compare children against the average attainment expectations for their respective age group.

Sharam: Shame.

SOA: Super Output Areas – this refers to a set of geographical divisions used to measure deprivation.

Sylhet: A region in the northeast of Bangladesh which has a distinct language and customs.

Sylhetis: In the context of this study, this refers to children of parents born within the district of Sylhet.

Young – Young defines an individual between 18-24 years of age.

Abbreviations

BA	Bachelor of Arts
BAME	Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic
B M E	Black, minority, ethnic
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CACHE	Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education
DBIS	Department for Business Innovation & Skills
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECU	Equality Challenge Unit
FdA	Foundation degree
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
LSE	London School of Economics
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate of Education
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

Chapter One: The Research Context

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the subject area of this thesis. It presents the background to this thesis, placing the study's motivation into context. Thereafter, the aim and goals are discussed through a consideration of the research questions. Finally, an overview of this thesis is provided on a per chapter basis.

1.2 Statement of Purpose

This thesis represents a small-scale qualitative study of young female Early Childhood Studies students of Bangladeshi heritage studying at a post-1992 university. The institution offers further and higher education and is vocationally focused, thus representing a niche market. This research examines the experiences of seven young British/Bangladeshi women enrolled on the Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies. It collects and considers the narratives of each of these young women as they journey to university. It examines their changing identity and their mediatory approaches in accessing university. Their stories are captured at key transition points during their studies: on entry to the Foundation degree, as they transition to the Bachelor programme, as they prepare to exit the programme, and one-year post-Bachelor study.

The young women within the study self-identified as British/Bangladeshi. They or their parents originated from Bangladesh, primarily from the Sylhet region. The term "young" within the context of this research is defined as those aged between 18 to 24; the term "Bangladeshi" refers to those of Bangladeshi or Sylhet descent.

1.3 Background to the Study

I will briefly provide an overview of South Asian migration to the UK. Migratory patterns differ between South Asian groups, with Bangladeshis' migration following a different trajectory than that of Sylheti's (Salway, 2007). South Asian immigration to the UK has a long history which spans over four centuries, representing a diversity of social and economic backgrounds and migratory experiences (Kesler and Schwartzman 2015). Britain's relationship with the Indian subcontinent developed through trade and British imperialism. It continued post-British rule within the framework of Britain's post-war boom and labour shortages (Peach, 2006). Asian immigrants represent diverse ethnic groups, including Gujaratis, Punjabis, Sikhs, Punjabis, Muslims, and Bangladeshis (Ballard, 2002).

Bangladeshi migration was originally initiated through trade, with sailors (lascars) arriving from the Sylhet region of Bangladesh as early as the 18th century. Large-scale immigration to the UK operated within a complex historical framework. British colonialism, post-war British labour shortages, the patriarchy of India and Pakistan, and the 1970s' civil war all contributed to the large numbers of men from the Sylhet region of Bangladesh entering the UK (Alexander, Chatterji and Jalais 2016; Peach, 2006; Ballard, 1990). They initially found work within the steel, textile, and car industries; however, many people set up small businesses as taxi drivers or within the restaurant trade following the collapse of these industries.

The pattern of single males entering the UK was reinforced by the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act and the introduction of the employment voucher system (Peach, 2006). Many of these men saw themselves as temporary migrants with a vision of returning home (Zeitlyn, 2014). Further legislation implemented restrictive entry from Commonwealth countries, with the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968 and the Immigration Act 1971 restricting family reunification (Dale and Ahmed, 2011 Dench, Gavron and Young, 2006). The British Nationality Act 1981, introduced in 1983, placed a further restriction on migration, affecting the right to

residency in the UK, as non-British citizens could no longer claim the right to abode. Restrictions were placed on automatic citizenship via marriage and those from British territories no longer had an automatic right to citizenship. Initially, the entry of women and children from Bangladesh remained lower than their Indian and Pakistani counterparts, primarily due to concerns about British moral values (Zeitlyn, 2014; Peach, 2006). Bangladeshi migration reached its peak in the early 1980s, partly as a result of family reunification. Approximately 95 per cent of the British-Bangladeshi population originated from Sylhet, a predominantly rural area (Zeitlyn, 2014; Alexander, 2013).

South Asian and Bangladeshi migration thus presented as a pattern of chain migration, sustaining family networks and maintaining “biraderi” – a term used to describe “patrilineage” which refers to kinship networks of those with a common ancestry providing a network of support. This established a model of social networking, enabling the development of a community within the host country. The Sylhet community primarily moved to the urban areas of Greater Manchester (Oldham), West Midlands and East London.

Generally, South Asian groups remained pluralistic as opposed to assimilatory (ONS, 2018b; Peach, 2006).

1.3.1 The Sylheti Context

This research examines the personal experiences and narratives of a group of young women of Bangladeshi/Sylheti origin studying on a Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies, within a phenomenological framework. The Bangladeshi community and Bangladeshi women continue to present as one of the most disadvantaged groups within the United Kingdom. They face higher levels of economic, employment and educational disadvantage compared to other groups. Within the study context, participants’ present as Sylheti in origin, reflecting the long migratory history connecting Sylhet to Britain (Dass, 2013). Although the community

is well established within the UK, Sylheti women's history has taken a different trajectory to their male counterparts. Migratory patterns indicate that the first migrants from the Sylhet region were mainly male, young, and unskilled, and found employment within heavy industries within the West Midlands. Sylheti's male migrants viewed their UK stay as transitional, imagining return to their home country (Dass, 2013). Thus, they continued to send money to wives and families, maintaining households in Sylhet.

Women's migration to the UK from the more deprived rural areas of Sylhet occurred later. This increased during the 1970 and 1980s (Gardner and Mand, 2012), partly due to immigration law changes in 1968 and the accompanied child requirement. These women entered primarily as dependants of husbands or fathers, establishing a history of dependency on the family's male members. The 1971 Immigration Act gave the right of abode to those defined as "patrials" and introduced a system of work permits. Concerns with the perceived growing number of migrants from non-European countries, particularly those on the Indian sub-continent, and issues surrounding spousal settlement increased the pressure to reduce individuals' migratory numbers from non-European countries. This led to the introduction of further restrictions (Alexander, 2013).

Within the context of migration, women and marriage remain situated within a negative framework. Alexander (2013, p.332) challenges the ongoing pathologisation of South Asian women's experience, arguing that migration and marriage provide opportunities for "interaction", "exchange" and transformation. Alexander (2013, p.335) argues that immigration policy focusing on the issue of marriage continues to perpetuate "...racist, culturist and sexist constructions of the position of migrant women". However, Ahmed, Philipson and Latimer (2001) identify that migration for Bangladeshi women can lead to isolation as they leave their families and their established communities behind, increasing the probability of poor mental health (see also Dyson et al., 2009).

Alexander's (2013) comments represent a construction of identity for new migrants entering the UK which continues to affect identity development for migrants and those born to migrant parents. South Asian women remain constructed as passive, voiceless engagers in cultural practices which deny their rights and opportunities, thus being

presented as victims and “other”. Following the Cantle Report (2001) South Asian Muslim communities have been disproportionately identified as problematic and failing to integrate (Kraler and Bonizoni, 2010). According to Alexander (2013, p.337), they represent the “personification of cultural difference” and the negative representation of groupism (Brubacker, 2002). Kraler (2010) argues that migrant families continue to be seen as problematic, as failing institutions unable to provide adequate care and support while contributing to the educational failure of their children. Basit (2009, p.725) argues that there have been only limited attempts to “develop values of citizenship”, which reflect a diverse and multi-ethnic society. The ongoing homogenisation of culture and family life presents a limited and single representation of experience. It fails to acknowledge the evolution of families, communities and individuals. Thus individuals, families and local communities are constructed within an outdated and traditional identity mode that delineates the community’s value and the value of young British/Bangladeshis.

1.4 Motivation for the Study

Engaging in this study was motivated by my working experiences and talking to people from diverse backgrounds. As a lecturer within a new vocationally-based widening participation institution, I have seen the benefits of university study on young women’s experiences. As a programme manager, year manager and lecturer within the university, I have seen how the university experience develops students’ academic and personal capabilities. Students may enter with low levels of qualifications and low levels of confidence in their academic ability. However, the vast majority are successful within their Foundation degree, progressing on to a full Honours programme and leaving the university with increased confidence levels. My involvement with young Asian women who predominantly study on Foundation degrees has developed this, as has my understanding of the complexity and diversity of their daily lives. Despite having a background in equality studies, this research has developed my knowledge of structural and societal inequalities and the intersectional nature of experiences for women of colour.

A dominant rhetoric appears to pervade institutions and society. Bangladeshi females continue to be presented as passive and oppressed, living within a patriarchal system (Mirza, 2013). It discusses the experiences of young Bangladeshi females studying on full-time vocational degree courses (while negotiating their lives within multiple arenas of expectation), examining their concepts and representations of identity, voice, opportunity and support within families, community, and wider British society. The work is positioned against a background of negative perceptions, in which young Asian females are viewed as "... victims of oppressive, male-dominated patriarchal political, social and cultural institutions..." (Lister, 2003, p.6). I acknowledge the societal and political focus on issues surrounding oppression, forced marriage, honour-based violence (Ahmed and Matthes, 2017; Bhopal, 2011; Kundnani, 2007) and radicalisation (Home Office, 2018b; Ahmed and Matthes 2017; BBC News, 2011). However, this does highlight the complexity of young women's lives. (Mac an Ghail and Haywood, 2007). Young Bangladeshi women present multiple identities and experience a different reality than that of their parents. I acknowledge that my story has resonance. My own educational journey, my Master's studies in Equal Opportunities, and my experience of working with these young women in higher education all influenced the choice of topic and my interest in their story. The study reflects my interest in the "... relational property of the social order" (Brock, Carrigan and Scrambler (2017, p.4).

A personal observation working with these young women suggested issues surrounding confidence and anxiety. Their anxiety focused on achievement, even though lower entry requirements enable opportunity. In the minds of students, it is also associated with negative self-labelling and perceptions of capability. These young women appeared aspirational, hoping for success and progression onto a full degree in the programme's final year. Young Bangladeshi women offered numerous explanations for accessing higher education. These included identifying education as a means of negotiating status and choice, thus providing an insight into the rhetoric of discrimination and disadvantage.

Numerous studies have identified the experiences of mature Asian female part-time students on Foundation degrees (Bhopal, 2010; Ijaz and Abbas, 2010; Basit, 2010; Bhopal, 2009; Modood, 2006; Tyrer and Ahmad, 2006; Abbas, 2002). However, studies of young Asian females studying Foundation degrees and transitioning to full Honours programmes remain limited. Tyrer and Ahmad (2006), remark that gendered and racialised experiences affect pre-university choices, expectations on course. This needs to be taken into considers within the context of policies, procedures and strategy to ensure that universities meet the challenges of widening agenda. Consequently, this study seeks to ascertain the relational nature of the construction and reconstruction of self within a hierarchical social framework. Higher education forms part of an arena where “living and theorising produce each other; they structure each other” (St. Pierre, 2001, p.142). Therefore my interests lie in the exposure of a student’s “self-produced biography” (Beck, 1992, p.135), providing an opportunity for the student’s voice.

I recognise that race, class, and gender are intersectional when considering the facets of oppression (Niven et al., 2013). Gender conflict operates within the “liveness of differently positioned femininities in a context of racialisation and unequal exchange” (Lewis, 2006, p.98). This exploration of the intersectional nature of young Bangladeshi women’s experiences offers an opportunity to challenge gendered assumptions (Niven et al., 2013; Lewis, 2007) and a “decentering” of the subject (Brah and Phoenix, 2004, p.74). In the words of Tefera, Powers and Fischman (2018, p.vii), this type of research facilitates an analysis of “the relationships of power and inequality within a social setting and how these shape individual and group identities”.

The presentation of women as the “other” denies opportunities and homogenises groups of individuals. This fails to recognise the diverse and changing nature of individuals’ and groups’ identity within society. Conversations with young Foundation degree students demonstrate that they have been encouraged to attend university by friends and family. Their ambitions lie beyond marriage and motherhood. This study provides an opportunity to explore experiences of young Bangladeshi females

studying on full-time vocational degree courses (while negotiating their lives within multiple arenas of expectation), examining their concepts and representations of identity, voice, opportunity and support within their families, community and wider British society.

1.5 Research Aim and Questions

1.5.1 Research Aim

This research seeks to examine the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender and class as they shape the representation and construction of identities and behaviours for young British/Bangladeshi women studying on a full-time Foundation/Honours degree in Early Childhood Studies at University College Birmingham, a widening participation university.

1.5.2 Research Questions

The key research questions addressed in this study are:

- a. How do young female Bangladeshi women construct their identity within the framework of early education?
- b. How do young Bangladeshi women's perceptions of identity change across phases of educational transition?
- c. What are the interplay and tensions of race and femininity experienced by young female Bangladeshi students?
- d. As young Bangladeshi women navigate space within higher education, are new gendered identities developed?

1.5.3 The Case Study: Research Participants and Context

This study centres on empirical research into seven young Bangladeshi females studying for a Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies within a widening participation university (HESA, 2017). All the participants self-identified as British/Bangladeshi, four were born in the UK and three in Bangladesh. All the participants' parents originated from Bangladesh, with the exception of one participant whose father was born in the UK. Five identified their parents as originating from Sylhet, a north-eastern division of Bangladesh. Corresponding statistical data indicated that, within Birmingham, the Bangladeshi population predominantly originate from the region of Sylhet (ONS, 2011).

According to Gardner and Mand (2012, p.971), these women present within "transnational communities", where individuals' and families' networks continue to maintain strong socio- and economic bonds with the country of origin. Each woman's narrative was explored at critical transition points within the final semester of each year. This included year one of the Foundation degree, year two of the Foundation degree, the Honours degree programme in the final year, and post-qualification. These are considered normative transitions (expected and supported) within the context of the programme. Each stage of the programme facilitates reflection, as students were required to engage in decision making concerning the direction they wish to pursue for the coming year. Student experiences were captured through interviews utilising photographic elicitation, discussed within the methodology section of this work. This capture of personal experiences enabled an examination of the past, present and future, building upon previous research exploring the experiences of Asian women (Bagguley and Hussain, 2016; Bhopal, 2009; Bhopal, 2010; Ijaz and Abbas, 2010; Basit, 2009; Tyrer and Ahmad, 2006; Modood, 2006; Ahmed, 2004). The voices of first-generation young Bangladeshi women entering higher education for full-time study remain under-researched.

1.6 Researcher Perspectives

I recognise that I am an active agent within the research process, so my narrative disclosure represents my declaration of subjectivity. My class, ethnicity, gender, age and educational background, and my ontological position have been instrumental in topic choice and data collection and interpretation.

Bakhtin (1986, pp.125-126) considers that:

“The person who understands (including the researcher himself) [sic] becomes a participant in the dialogue, although on a special level (depending on the area of understanding or research) ...The observer has no position outside the observed world, and his observation enters as a constituent part into the observed object.”

I acknowledge that my personal and educational background have had an impact on my choice of research. My life story narrative reflects a journey that appears present in the experiences of others and my perceptions of race influence my choice of research project (Gillborn, 1998). Neutrality and objectivity, according to Jessop and Penny (1999), is impossible. Hence, the credibility of narrative research lies with the researcher's ability to centre each narrative within social reality and their positionality transparency. Through narrative, an individual develops their perspective, an understanding of the world – not an objective view, but a view generated through the development of ourselves and others. In essence, the narrative presents an event or a series of connected events told through the “eyes” of others, facts based upon an individual or a community perspective of fact, knowledge, and truth.

I consider claims for objectivity unconvincing, therefore, my narrative's exposure provides an insight into factors that may influence objectivity. Through conscious or unconscious action, the researcher models the truth. Based on their knowledge,

experience and interpretation, a storyteller shapes a story in their own way. A narrative provides a personal account, with highlights presented from the individual's perspective. Events and times are highlighted, summarised and presented according to the narrator's consideration of their importance (Hazel, 2005). I recognise that "storytelling" is used to explain everyday occurrences and mediate difficult situations.

1.6.1 Life Story Narrative: A Personal Journey

This section will explore my own education experiences, what I consider crucial personal transition points, and the effect these have had on my personal, social and academic development. It is recognised that personal narratives are situated within social, cultural and political environments. It is also acknowledged that personal narratives form part of, and reflect, the individual's social, moral and psychological development. Barthes (1977, p.79) concedes that narrative is "present at all times, in all places, in all societies... like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural".

1.6.2 Early Life, Education and Decision Making

A series of significant transitions dominated my early life, which influenced my education and learning experiences. During the 1960s, my family emigrated from South Wales to South Africa for what my father perceived would be a better life. My early education journey is one of transience, with my sister and I initially attending school in South Africa. My early experiences in education were neither memorable nor happy. As migrants, my sister and I failed to integrate well within a single-sex predominantly Afrikaans education system. My early memories are of segregation, with limited contact with black South Africans and segregated public spaces. Two years later, my mother, my sister and I returned to the UK. However, reintegration into the UK was difficult as we found ourselves homeless. We subsequently lived with my grandmother for the next six years in council accommodation, until my mother's subsequent remarriage in the 1970s.

I attended a local inner-city primary school situated within an area of high deprivation; the school was ethnically diverse and had a poor reputation. It became apparent that I had severe difficulties with reading, however, due to the staff's dedication and commitment through remedial reading classes, I eventually learned to read at the age of 10.

I attended secondary school within an unfamiliar middle-class area. I view this as my catching-up period; I excelled in a small number of subjects and hoped to continue on at school or college. However, within my family, girls were obliged to leave school at 16 to take up traditional female employment. On leaving school, I gained employment as a clerk in an insurance company. With high UK unemployment at that time, my family considered I was lucky to be in full employment. I disliked administrative work however and, following my 18th birthday, I began training as a student nurse at the local university hospital. After completing this nurse training, I married and relocated to the West Midlands. I continued nursing following the birth of my children, changing careers in 1992.

For many individuals, future career options frequently operate within a default system, with women's choices revolving around family, family expectations, family responsibilities and caring. Women mediate their lives and decisions within a framework of expectation and probability based on the premise of what "women like me do". Within employment, the needs of my family were paramount. However, on several occasions, my choices were motivated by my desire to leave a position instead of following any particular career pathway. I left nursing and became a day nursery group manager, believing that this would give me additional time with my young children and address childcare problems. Through my managerial role at day nursery I engaged with students from local colleges studying various childcare courses. I completed several assessor awards which enabled me to assess students' practice and contact with local colleges.

A vacancy for a visiting tutor at a local further education (FE) college in 1993 coincided with my youngest child starting primary school. As a consequence of my experience of supporting and developing others, I applied for a term-time only post, thus allowing me time with the children during school holidays. Between 1993 and 1995, I completed an Advanced Diploma in Childcare and Education and a further education teaching qualification on a part-time basis at local further education institutions.

Once my children had started secondary school, following considerable encouragement from my line manager, I applied for a full-time lecturing post at my current institution. My experiences of education as a mature student developed my self-confidence and I noticed that fellow students appeared to be like me – female, mature and returning to education after a substantial break. The support of staff and fellow students encouraged me to continue my studies, and I subsequently applied to complete a part-time Master’s course in Equal Opportunities at a local university.

Initially, I worked in further education; however, the introduction of higher education to the institution enabled my transition into working within this sector. I continued to lack confidence though, and avoided applying for promotion. Over the next decade, with my tutors’ encouragement, I continued to study part-time, achieving a further teaching qualification and a Post Graduate Certificate in Coaching and Mentoring at a post-1999 institution. On reflection, I recognise that I chose institutions where I felt comfortable and believed I would “fit in”. The red brick or Russell Group Universities were not for me. These sentiments and my experiences of education have resonance within my career. I enjoy teaching at an institution where students are non-traditional first-generation entrants or mature students returning to education.

1.6.3 A Reflection

My undergraduate experiences enabled a period of personal and professional fulfilment; I have found my niche. However, echoes of childhood continue to affect my

self-confidence in my academic ability. I recognise that I have used various strategies to avert attention from what I view as my shortcomings. Throughout my nursing career, I used questioning as a method of deflecting the tutors' questions. Unfortunately, my fears were compounded when, in the presence of my peers, a hospital consultant took particular pleasure in highlighting my inability to answer a question correctly. The torrent of abuse, his anger and my feelings of humiliation remain imprinted on my memory. I acknowledge that these feelings inform my teaching style and have increased my awareness of students' varying levels of self-confidence.

My desire to be educated continues; I continue to "catch up". A dyslexia diagnosis explained my early difficulties; however, this has had minimal impact on my self-confidence levels, which fluctuate. I concede that my teachers' and lecturers' commitment stands as a testament that individuals can develop with appropriate circumstances and support. My observations of others (staff and students) still inform my belief that individuals continue to negotiate factors of disadvantage to achieve success.

1.7 The Host Institution

The institution has strong ties to the local area. Its focus on practical instruction has origins dating back to the early 19th century. The institution became a technical college in the early 20th century, coming under the local education authority's responsibility in the 1950s. It has undergone several name changes, reflecting the development and diversification of the programmes offered within the institution. It moved to its current location during the late 1960s, continuing as a further education institution until 2002 when its work diversified into higher education. It remained a higher education institution (HEI) until 2012 when it received full university status with degree awarding powers. It is a small institution, offering further and higher education across specific vocational disciplines, with strong employment and vocational practice links. Programmes include apprenticeships, national vocational qualifications, undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees in specific occupational areas. The

university is a widening participation institution located in an area of high deprivation, and local constituencies rank amongst the 10% most deprived in England (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015).

1.7.1 The Student Population

This section considers data for 2014-2015, reflecting the time frame in which the research was conducted.

A large number of students studying at the university come from the local area (67%) and are young, studying for first degrees (97%). Of this group, 14.8% are from low participation neighbourhoods, with 56.4% from NS-SEC Classes 4-7¹, indicating the university's commitment to widening participation and recruitment from underrepresented groups. Foundation degree students generally attend universities within their geographical area; this perhaps is unsurprising for part-time students in employment. However, this also applies to full-time students' financial restrictions, family support, part-time employment and travelling, which present as part of each student's rationale concerning their institutional choice (Schofield and McKenzie 2018).

Across the university, a large proportion of students, 68.59%, present as female, above the national average of 57.7%, reflecting national trends indicating a higher level of participation by women (HEPI, 2014). Within the school of Education, [this increases to 85%, a reflection of the courses offered, which focus on education, health and care sectors, all of which are female dominated sectors. Within the enrolment period 2014-2015, students from BAME groups presented as a minimal majority

¹ The National Statistics Socio-economic classification, used by the Office for National Statistics to measure the employment relations and conditions of occupations.

(57.7%), with British Pakistani (19%) the most significant group followed by Black Caribbean (13%), British Indian (8%) and Black African (7%).

The institution offers a large number of Foundation degrees, with recruitment robust. Numbers on these courses have marginally reduced, reflecting the decreasing enrolment trend for Foundation degrees. Student satisfaction levels remain high (82%), a reduction of 5% on the previous year. Student retention for those studying Foundation degrees during the first year of the course is 4% less than their degree counterparts (95%). Retention equalises in the second year, with final year retention and undergraduate degree completion at 97%. Within the school, internal employment destination data for 2014-2015 indicate that 83% of students with first-class degrees access graduate-led employment, compared to 59% in other schools.

1.7.2 Foundation Degrees within the Institution

The introduction of Foundation degrees replaced the university offer of HNC and HND qualifications. Foundation degrees appear more likely to attract students from non-traditional backgrounds (Morgan, 2015; Herrera et al., 2015; HEFCE, 2010). The numbers of young women from the Bangladeshi community enrolling on Foundation degrees in Early Childhood Studies within the university increased due to a targeted strategy to attract and increase BAME students numbers and reflect the local population. My school engaged in local community networking within low participation areas predominantly populated by the South Asian Community. The development of community trust was viewed as an essential feature in increasing numbers. Parents, prospective students and community members could meet with university staff and were encouraged to visit the university. Visiting the university enabled an assessment of travelling distance, safety and confirmation of its student diversity. The first year of the course was delivered within the community, and numbers were robust. Within two years, provision of the programme moved to full university delivery. Family and community networking operate as one of the factors in university recruitment. Current and completed students appear to encourage others to attend the institution. The

university continues to engage in a wide range of widening participation activities to sustain recruitment.

Foundation degree students enter the course with lower tariff points than those with entering the full degree programme. At the point of research, GCSEs in maths and English were not a requirement of the programme. Upon completing the Foundation degree, students may exit the programme or progress to the BA Honours programme. Students on both courses study identical modules, complete identical assignments and are not required to attend a bridging programme. Differentiation occurs through teaching at the classroom level. Additional support is available irrespective of students' level of study via hour-long timetabled academic support sessions and the university's support services. Foundation degree students receive no further additional targeted support.

The awarding body (a local red brick university) stipulates that, for progression, Foundation degree students must have either full credits (240) or 220 credits and a 50% module grade average within their second year. However, full BA (Honours) students can progress onto their programme's final year with just 200 credits. This would appear to penalise Foundation degree students, however, progression rates remain high for the Foundation degree. The university does offer additional modules via an accelerated programme for students across all courses who have insufficient credits for progression. Historically, lower numbers of students from the Foundation degree programme are required to complete, compared to their BA counterparts.

1.8 Demographics: Populations, Ethnicity and Deprivation

1.8.1 Population of the UK: An Overview

The UK population is currently estimated to stand at approximately 66 million, with a projected growth to 73 million by 2024, with 86% UK born and 90% British Nationals (ONS, 2018a). Over the last two decades, the UK's population has increased in size

and become more ethnically diverse. The Asian/Asian British ethnic group categories significantly increased between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, with those identifying as Pakistani and Indian each increasing by around 0.4 million (0.5 percentage points and 0.6 percentage points respectively), and Bangladeshis representing 0.8% of the population, 46% of whom were born within the UK (See Appendix 1: Ethnicity Population of the UK).

1.8.2 The Local Context: An Overview

Birmingham is one of the largest local authorities in the West Midlands, with 20% residency. The overall population grew by 9.8% between 2001 and 2011, an increase of 96,000. The Birmingham population is ethnically diverse, with 42.9% of the population from BAME groups. Asians account for 26.6% of the population, with Bangladeshis accounting for 3%. A large proportion of the Bangladeshi population in Birmingham originate from the Sylhet region of Bangladesh (Abbas, 2003).

The Bangladeshi community stands at 13,864, with 1.3% identifying themselves as being born outside the UK, and 14,718 (1.4%) identifying as Bengali speakers. An estimated 60% of Bengali speakers live in six central Birmingham wards, with the highest proportion in three main wards – Aston (2,654), Lozells and East Handsworth (2,083) and Bordesley Green (1,389) (Birmingham City Council, 2013). Birmingham ranked 9th in terms of its Muslim population, behind four London authorities, Bradford, Luton, Slough and Leicester. However, the number of Muslims living in Birmingham appears greater than any other local authority district. At 234,411, there are almost double the number of Muslims in Birmingham than those found in Bradford (129,041), which is ranked 2nd in the UK in terms of the proportion of Muslims. The Muslim population is young, with 33% under the age of 15 and only 9% over 65, and ethnically diverse, with 68% identifying as Asian (1.83 million out of 2.71 million) (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015).

1.8.3 Regional Deprivation

Birmingham is the most deprived authority in the West Midlands metropolitan area and is the 3rd most deprived core city in the UK. Birmingham is ranked 6th within the deprivation indices (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015; Birmingham City Council, 2015), with 40% of the population living in SOAs² in the 10% most deprived in England in the 30% most deprived SOAs in the country (Birmingham City Council, 2015). Deprivation appears clustered around the city centre, with Hodge Hill being the most deprived ward within the city, followed by Sparkbrook, Aston and Washwood Heath. Proportionally, each of these wards houses higher numbers of people from ethnic minority groups than others. An estimated 60% of the Bangladeshi community live within six main wards: Aston, Lozells, East Handsworth, Washwood Heath and Bordesley Green (Birmingham City Council, 2013).

1.9 The Bangladeshi Context: Inequalities

Within the Bangladeshi context, migration to the UK is viewed as successful (Gardner and Mand, 2012). However, the British/Bangladeshi population has the highest overall relative poverty rate of any ethnic group in the UK, with 65% of Bangladeshis living in low-income households, despite income poverty falling for all ethnic groups (Dyson et al., 2009; Kenway and Palmer, 2007). Bangladeshi groups identify as severely disadvantaged within the current period of economic recession, with high poverty rates (30%) and the lowest mean incomes across the whole UK population. Inequalities and income positions remain consistent, as do their intergenerational poverty experiences (Platt, 2011). Fisher and Nandi (2015) and Platt (2011) confirm that Bangladeshi and Pakistani children suffer the highest deprivation levels than other ethnic groups.

Within the UK, persistent inequalities continue to operate within the labour market, with ethnic minority groups being overrepresented in certain occupations and suffering

² See the Nomenclature at the beginning of this thesis for an explanation of the term SOA.

from higher unemployment rates, depending on their geographical location (Catney and Sabter, 2015). Despite improvements in employment rates for Bangladeshi men and women over the last two decades, Bangladeshi and Pakistani women continue to experience one of the UK's highest unemployment levels (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2017). Moreover, their employability outcomes remain lower than the general population (Zwysen and Longhi, 2016; Niven et al., 2013; Ahmed and Dale, 2008). In 2017 39% of people in the Pakistani/Bangladeshi ethnic group were economically inactive, compared to 20% of their white counterparts (DWP, 2018). In conjunction with Chinese, Indian, Asian, and Pakistani groups, Bangladeshis experience a steeper age and employment rate profile. Bangladeshi women's low participation in the labour market has been well-documented (Khoudja and Platt 2017; Ahmed and Dale, 2008; Ahmed, 2001; Brah, 1996), with Pakistani and Bangladeshi females experiencing the lowest projected employment rates (Li and Heath, 2020; ONS, 2018b; ONS, 2017; ONS, 2014).

Bangladeshi graduates are less likely to be employed within seven months of qualifying than their white counterparts (Zwysen and Longhi, 2016; Niven et al., 2013; The London Development Agency, 2008). They are more likely to be overqualified for the post they hold (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2017; Rafferty, 2012) and to experience lower pay rates (HESA, 2006; DfE, 2018). Current figures indicate a 26% pay differential between Pakistani/Bangladeshi men and women and their white counterparts (Resolution Foundation, 2018).

Explanations of this phenomenon continue to be explored through the conceptual lens of discrimination based on gender and race (Bhavnani, Mirza and Meeto, 2005; Ahmad et al., 2003; Modood et al., 1997), social class (Tackey et al., 2006; Ahmad et al., 2003), and student identity and motivation [cite some references for this last point].

1.10 The Thesis Structure

The structure of the thesis is outlined below.

Chapter One

This first chapter has provided an overview of this research study, the aim, rationale, and research questions. It provided a declaration of subjectivity through the exposure of narrative. It introduced the participants and the institution, positioned within the national and local context, as well as an overview of the inequalities experienced by the Bangladeshi community within the UK.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The thesis commences with the literature review, which is divided into two main sections. Section One considers the widening participation agenda and the introduction of Foundation degrees. Section Two offers a consideration of the intersectional nature of identity for young Bangladeshi women, examining the context of ethnicity, social class, culture, higher education and employment.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework used in this study. It provides an overview of relational sociology, examining Archer's concepts of morphogenesis and morphostasis. It examines the reshaping of structural relations through discourse, reflexive deliberation and reflexivity. The chapter continues with an examination of ego networks that form a facet of mediatory support within the research context.

Chapter Four: Methodology and Methods

This chapter presents the validation of the methodology and the methods used within this research. It presents a discussion of case study research, the interpretative phenomenological approach and the use of photo-elicitation as a data collection

method. It examines the issue of ethics and ethical research, and considers all aspects of data collection and data analysis.

Chapter Five: Biographies: Individual Accounts

In this chapter, an overview of each of the seven young Bangladeshi women's biographies is presented. These biographies depict the critical moments within each participant's journey, embracing a phenomenological approach and enabling access to significant moments in their lives. These moments have constructed their perceptions of self and affected their journey into and through higher education.

Chapter Six: Identity and Education

This chapter examines each of the participant's accounts and the various ways in which they have constructed their identity as young British/Bangladeshi women. It initially examines transnationalism and the formation of identity for first- and second-generation young Bangladeshi women within the context of migration. This is followed by an examination of their identity within the context of education, referencing their changing concepts of self within a capability framework.

Chapter Seven: Agency, Mediation and Reflexivity

This chapter examines each young woman's transitional journey from further to higher education. None of the journeys is linear; they each demonstrate complexity. However, each stage represents their next step in developing their identity, self-confidence and access to higher education. The chapter considers the multiple approaches to mediation and examines the tools, support and skills used within their journey.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Implications for Research

This chapter presents the study conclusions, which indicate that young Bangladeshi women's identities continues to change within the context of their religion and culture.

These women present as skilful mediators able to navigate and transform their identity. For these women, change does not occur in isolation; families and communities are also changing. However, these women experience multiple barriers within the current education system, where stereotypical identity construction and discriminatory practices perpetuate. The structure of higher education continues to tier their level of opportunity. Still, the resilience and determination of these women results in success. The chapter identifies the limitations and the contributions of this research to the academic and education community.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The Changing Landscape of Higher Education

2.1 Introduction

A defining principle of research is the importance of developing further knowledge and understanding. Therefore, a consideration of existing literature ensures that research advances by testing existing knowledge and developing new knowledge (Walliman, 2018). The legitimacy of any research project is positioned within the quality, validity and ethics of the literature used within a study and its reuse within new research (Cohen et al., 2018). Literature reviews contain the research chosen for analysis from a more extensive range of literature identified and reviewed by the researcher (Hart, 2018). Identifying appropriate documentation is challenging, as a wealth of literature exists and is accessible to the researcher, therefore appropriate research must be undertaken to ensure that the volume of information is reduced. A critical analysis of existing research must be conducted to ensure its suitability to the study.

This chapter examines the changing landscape of higher education, considering the changing policy agenda and the influence of the Robbins and Dearing reports. It explores Foundation degrees' introduction into the higher education sector and widening participation, and examines Bangladeshi women's positioning within the sector.

2.2 Part One. Education: The Widening Participation Agenda

The underrepresentation of those from disadvantaged groups has remained a policy concern for successive governments over the past five decades, with the ongoing debate concerning mass education and the development of a skilled workforce (Chowdry et al., 2013; Croxford and Raffe 2015). Following a long history of growing state intervention and an interest concerning widening participation (Kettleley and Whitehead, 2012), the Robbins Report (The Committee for Higher Education 1963)

proved pivotal in the development of the higher education sector (Burnes, Wend and Todnem, 2014; Silver, 2009; Kettley, 2007; Bathmaker, 2003; Trow, 1964).

The Dearing Report (1997), commissioned by the Conservative government on a bipartite agreement, followed. This advised the long-term development of higher education to ensure economic success within a competitive global market. The report advocated an increase in student numbers and widening participation for underrepresented groups. Widening participation refers to a series of strategies adopted by successive governments in an attempt to broaden participation rates in higher education from less advantaged groups and underrepresented groups. These include “people from minority ethnic groups, people with special needs, and people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds” (HEFCE, 2005.p. 8). An acknowledgement that institutional capital and higher education qualifications mediate economic and social disadvantage (Blanden and MacMillan 2014; Solon, 2004). The report backed increased funding provision for widening participation institutions by retaining the maintenance grant (Barr and Crawford, 2005; Barr and Crawford, 1998; Dearing 1997).

Under Labour, the widening participation agenda moved from a peripheral concern to a centralised position within government higher education policy (Jones and Thomas, 2005). This focused on economic matters as opposed to social justice and meritocracy, as well as “the challenges of the new economy” (DfES, 2001). New Labour introduced several strategies, including Excellence in Cities 1999, Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge in September 2001, rebranded as Aimhigher in 2004, and they committed to increasing HE participation in England to 50% for 18 to 30-year-olds by 2010 (HEFCE, 2006). A particular focus was those from underrepresented groups, low-income families and low-participation areas, as identified in the 2003 White Paper *The future of higher education* (DfES, 2003a). HEFCE (2006, p.5) offers a much broader description of inequalities in higher education, which includes “...gender, ethnicity, first language, parental (and sibling) social class, parental education, type of school attended, housing tenure, health/disability”. This recognised that

disadvantages in early education affect participation in all other forms of learning. However, Jones and Thomas, (2005) argue that the White Paper failed to fully engage with widening participation. The blame for low attainment appeared couched in ideas of low aspirations and the ambitions of individuals and families, whilst ignoring structural inequalities, class and ethnicity. Jones and Thomas, (2005, p.617) comments that:

“...this policy does not seek to improve the educational achievements of the target group but is merely trying to encourage more appropriately qualified pupils from lower socio-economic groups to enter higher education”.

Jones and Thomas, (2005) call for a transformative approach in institutional and curriculum reform, asserting that reform needs to engage with the structural barriers of inequality, recognising the impact of low socio-economic status, poor schooling and social and cultural issues. The numbers engaging in higher education have risen (Figure 1 below); however, disparities continue to present across the higher education sector.

Student numbers have almost doubled since 1992

Young people aged 18 to 24 in full-time education, seasonally adjusted, UK, March to May 1992 to May to July 2016

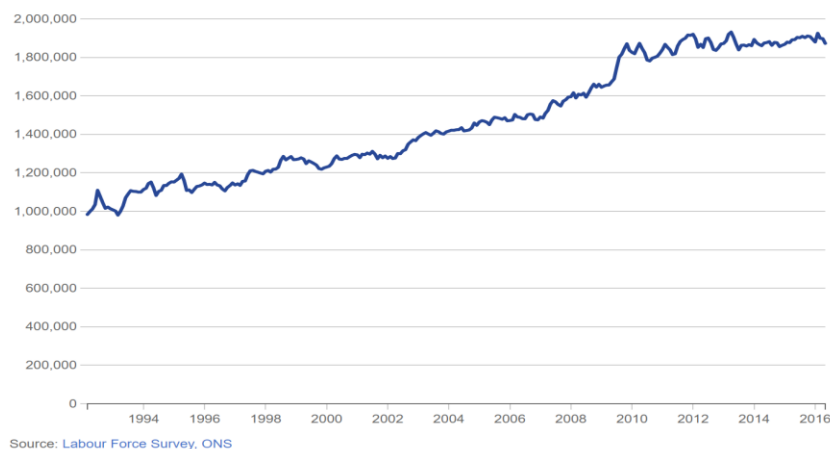


Figure 1. Labour Force Survey. Source: Office for National Statistics (2017)

Structural change appears challenging to the university sector, and participation rates of underrepresented groups within elite, high-ranking universities present a depressing picture; participation rates from disadvantaged groups remain low. Institutional diversity has increased the numbers engaging in higher education overall. Still, it has failed to increase diversity within elite universities, which have higher status and labour market returns (Croxford and Raffe, 2015; Modood, 2012; Modood, 2004). The Browne Review (2010) highlighted this lack of success in selective universities, identifying parental background as a critical factor in attendance (see also Chowdry et al., 2013; Blanden and Gregg, 2004). Therefore, mass education remains differentiated across the higher education sector (Modood, 2012; Reay, Ball and David, 2005).

2.2.1 Participation and Disparity

Crawford (2012) and the National Institute for Fiscal Studies (2010) highlight that participation rates from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds remain low despite widening participation strategies. This indicates that, despite progress within the university sector and the establishment of race equality policies, universities continue to fail to meet BAME groups' needs (Pilkington, 2013). The National Strategy for Access and Student Success (HEFCE and Office for Fair Access (OFFA), (2014) identified that all universities need to diversify their student body.

University participation rates of females and minority ethnic groups have increased, although these are underrepresented in Russell Group universities (Harrison and Waller 2018; Boliver, 2016; DBIS, 2016; Runnymede Trust, 2015; Parel and Ball, 2014; Noden et al., 2014; Boliver, 2004; Boliver, 2013; Modood, 2012; Shiner and Modood, 2002). Rainford (2016) asserts that this is a consequence of autonomous university admission systems. Pakistani, Bangladeshi, mixed white and black Caribbean groups experience the lowest participation rates (LSE, 2014), as a result of "racial prejudice and stereotyping", according to Boliver (2016, p.249). The LSE's

(2014) study, *Black and Minority Ethnic Access to Higher Education* suggests that access to high-status institutions depends on attainment, schooling and social class, as opposed to ethnic status. Moreover, students with parents “in managerial or professional positions were far more likely to apply to high-status institutions” (HESA, 2017). Rainford (2016) argues that strategies used to widen participation in Russell Group universities frequently focus on particular groups of students, such as the gifted and talented, representing further elitism.

Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi applicants continue to experience lower offer rates by elite universities than their white counterparts, even when presenting with identical A level grades (Arday and Mirza 2018). In 2017 Oxford University entry for Bangladeshi students sat at a mediocre 6.7% compared to 25.4% for white students, indicating the failure of widening participation strategies in tackling institutional racism in higher education (Arday and Mirza 2018). Modood (2010, p. 160) argues that discrimination, disadvantage and racism impacts on all members of a society, with a lack of recognition of minority groups operating as a form of “oppression.” Boliver et al. (2019, p.6) contend that increasing numbers of widening participation students in elite universities require “bold admission practices, including tariff reduction, improved identification, and institutional support”, points supported by Mountford-Zimdars and Moore (2020, who allege that those with lower entry points from widening participation backgrounds demonstrate strong achievement levels.

Working-class females and those from minority ethnic groups frequently choose post-1992 universities. Bangladeshi females’ participation rates remain lower than their Pakistani and Indian counterparts (BIS, 2015; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2015; Bagguley and Hussain, 2007) but are higher than Bangladeshi men (Niven et al., 2013). Large numbers of women decide to study at mid- or low-ranking institutions such as post-1992 HEIs and further education colleges (Universities UK, 2015; Crozier and Davies, 2007; Reay et al., 2005). Crozier et al. (2008), referencing Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, argue that working-class students demonstrate lower self-confidence and self-belief. Thus, they choose lower status institutions believing that

they may not fit in at elite universities, and attend institutions where they see others like themselves. Post-1992 institutions have also actively engaged in the widening participation strategies, offering support and encouragement for students with more socially diverse backgrounds (Power et al., 2003; Sutton Trust, 2000). However, the attainment gap appears higher in post-1992 institutions. Explanations for this include lower qualifications on entry (Richardson, 2008; Shiner and Modood, 2002); however, these differentials are evident even when students enter with higher qualifications (HESA, 2017).

BAME students are more likely to withdraw from courses and experience lower student satisfaction levels across the higher education sector than the general student population. They are also more likely to be highlighted as a cause of concern by university staff. They are less likely to achieve a good degree (upper second class and above), with a significant proportion of black Pakistani and Bangladeshi graduates achieving a second-class degree (HESA, 2018; Arday and Mirza, 2018; HEFCE, 2017; Richardson, 2010; Richardson, 2015; Pilkington, 2013; Runnymede Trust, 2010; Universities UK, 2015). By 2013, only Bangladeshis were less likely than the UK white population to have degrees or higher degrees (Hills, 2015).

Andrew Pilkington, writing in the Runnymede Trust's 2015 report *Aiming Higher: Race, Inequality and Diversity in the Academy*, argues that the needs of widening participation groups remain marginalised due to the agenda focus on social class. Arday (2018) contends that universities continue to operate a culture of racism, creating a dominant Eurocentric narrative which results in curriculum stagnation and failure in addressing the BAME attainment gap. The National Union of Students (NUS)' 2011 report *Race for Equality* highlighted that 42% of BAME students felt the curriculum failed to represent issues surrounding equality, diversity and discrimination. Richardson (2008) contends that BAME students have a higher likelihood of experiencing marginalisation through individual and institutional behaviour and practices, including teaching and assessment practices. The NUS (2011) notes that students from BAME groups frequently felt left out of discussions and were frustrated

by the lack of BAME teaching staff. It would appear that racism has become the “wallpaper” of people’s lives, ingrained within society to such an extent that it is no longer recognised. Delgado and Stefanic (2001) argue that policies only remedy the extreme forms of injustice, failing to address the daily reality of racism.

Kintrea et al. (2015) argue that young people from minority ethnic groups are frequently conceptualised as having low aspirations. Boliver (2016) argues that racial prejudice and stereotyping begin at the start of education in schools, where teachers have lower expectations of ethnic minority pupils. This is examined later in the work when considering the outcomes of educational achievement. As pupils transition to secondary school, they may already be labelled as having a particular ability level, limiting their engagement in specific topics or qualifications Mazenod et al. (2019, p.4) discuss the “tiering of aspirations”, where schools and teachers control pupils' streaming, thus enabling or denying opportunities to particular individuals or groups of individuals. This creates the concept of capability, which teachers and individuals internalise. The subsequent effect on an individual's confidence levels forms part of a self-fulfilling prophecy, affecting achievement and future opportunities, thus limiting their choice. Subsequently, this results in higher numbers being directed to or engaging in non-academic or vocational qualifications rather than higher education. Given the points raised within this discussion, it is unsurprising that Pilkington (2013) argues that widening participation and education policy has failed to result in meaningful action. Modood (2010), in his discussion of multiculturalism and liberal citizenship, required four key directives. First, he argues it concerns groups, not individuals. Second, it involves recognising difference, race, sex, and identity beyond ascriptive categories of identity. Thirdly, it needs to celebrate race and, finally, move this from a private to a public arena.

2.3 The Introduction of Foundation Degrees

Following the 1997 Dearing report’s recommendation for an intermediate level short-cycle qualification, David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education in the Labour government of the time (DfEE 2000), launched Foundation degrees in September

2001. Foundation degrees were introduced as a way to address regional and national skills shortages and create a link between higher education and employment (HEFCE, 2000; DfES, 2003). It was intended that a range of providers would offer Foundation degrees. They were designed in collaboration with further education, higher education and employers (DfES, 2003 and Ooms et al., 2012) and operated as a self-standing qualification. Foundation degrees offered academic and work-based learning and flexible delivery (Morgan, 2015) and, in addition, gave the opportunity to transition to the final year of an Honour's degree course on successful completion of their programme (QAA, 2014; HEFCE, 2010). They were designed to attract students from a "broader range of backgrounds", enabling a higher education route from non-traditional pathways. (HEFCE, 2008) offering a shorter cycle qualification (DfEE, 2000).

Foundation degrees had an extensive remit, viewed as a means of addressing professional and higher technical skills shortages, widening participation, and promoting regional, sectoral and provider collaboration (DfES, 2003), therefore, augmenting the lifelong learning agenda, offering flexible learning and providing a higher educational pathway for vocational and apprenticeship qualifications (Greenbank, 2010; Wilson et al., 2005).

There was no single structure for the degree. The aim was that Foundation degrees would align academic and vocational learning with institutions through industry-lead design and collaboration, designing each degree to meet industry needs (Wilson et al., 2005). Thus, it would offer a reconfiguration of the higher education sector, with greater alignment between higher education providers and traditional universities (Wilson et al., 2005). The Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark Statement published in 2004 (QAA, 2010) established benchmark qualification descriptors, developing the integration of academic and vocational knowledge and the application of knowledge to practice. The vocational aspect of Foundation degrees addressed employers' worries regarding university graduates' skills and industrial experience (Taylor, Brown and Dickens, 2006). However, as highlighted by Rutt et al. (2013), there

were concerns that students would view the qualification as merely a progression route onto an Honours programme. Craig (2009) argues that the employer engagement element of Foundation degrees increased opportunities for publicness, decreasing the elitism in higher education. However, as previously noted, the issue of elitism has not been sufficiently addressed.

The early development of Foundation degrees led to increased collaboration with further education (Longhurst, 2010). Initial recruitment to Foundation degree courses focused on part-time students; the majority were women over the age of 25 with non-standard entry qualifications. Foundation degrees attracted large numbers of low-participation students (HEFCE, 2007; QAA, 2005). Further changes enabled colleges to apply degree awarding powers, resulting in the development of full-time courses for younger students. Foundation degree provision grew rapidly (Scott, 2009) – within the first year, 2001-02, 4,000 students enrolled on Foundation degrees (HEFCE, 2007) and, by 2008-2009, this had increased to over 87,000 students (Longhurst, 2009).

Students studying on Foundation degrees demonstrated a distinct set of characteristics compared to the general undergraduate population. Five years from Foundation degree introduction, most students were studying part time (HEFCE, 2007) and were mature, with 65% being over 21. Just under half (44%) studied at HEIs, with approximately 50% of students studying education, business, art and design courses (HEFCE, 2008). However, full-time student numbers on Foundation degrees also continued to increase across the sector.

2.3.2 Student Participation

As previously identified, Foundation degree students appear to come from families and communities that have not previously engaged in higher education. These students prefer employer-supported courses with work-based opportunities (Fuller, 2013; Higgins, Artess and Johnstone, 2010). Students choose Foundation degrees based on their future employment prospects (Bainbridge, 2005; O’Keefe and Tait,

2004). Perhaps this is unsurprising given each degree's vocational focus, with economics as the key driver for learning (Gleeson and Keep, 2004). Few full-time students had been directed to the Foundation degree by employers (Higgins, Artess and Johnstone, 2010). However, it would be naïve to presume that all individuals cited identical explanations for entering into higher education or their choice of study.

The majority of students with non-A level qualifications study at post-1992 universities; only 18% of students from maintained schools and 8% of those studying at FE colleges attend a top university (Bursnall et al., 2019). Differences in subject choice based on gender are evident, with female students showing a preference for arts, humanities, languages and education (Bursnall et al., 2019). Students choose institutions where they feel they will "fit in" with similar people (Reay et al., 2005). Thus, students actively engage in decision-making to avoid institutions where they are expected to fit in with existing cultures.

Foundation degrees were introduced as a sub-degree that enabled progression opportunities, enabling the completion of the full Honours degree within the same period as a full degree, despite lower entry tariffs (Greenbank, 2010). The initial picture of Foundation degrees was one of success. Student numbers continued to rise despite the introduction of fees in 2003 (HEFCE, 2010; DIUS, 2009), with enrolment on Foundation degrees rising from 27,825 to 99,740 at its peak in 2009. However, enrolment on Foundation degrees has declined annually, with 36,975 students enrolled on Foundation degrees in 2016/2017, despite the numbers of people studying for first degrees overall remaining relatively stable (HESA, 2018).

Explanations for the decline in numbers are complicated. Part-time participation has reduced, which has had an impact on the numbers studying Foundation degrees. Demographic population decline affected the figures in 2015, with a specific decrease in subjects such as education (HEFCE, 2017). Issues such as the economic downturn, the 2012 funding reforms, employer funding and austerity measures have contributed

to falling numbers (House of Commons, 2019). Full-time provision has continued to develop and grow, with full-time Foundation degrees being offered across various providers, including universities, colleges and private providers (UCAS, 2016).

According to HESA (2017), more women than men now engage in higher education (56%), with 77% of students studying on first degrees. The numbers enrolled from low-participation neighbourhoods have increased since 2012, as has the proportion of BAME UK domiciled students. Asian student numbers studying for a first degree have increased by 2%, compared to a 1% decrease in other undergraduate studies. The numbers of Bangladeshi women engaging in higher education rose by 15% over twenty years (Scandone, 2018; Ghaffar and Stevenson, 2018; ONS, 2014). However, Bangladeshi women's participation remains lower than all other ethnic minority groups (Scandone, 2018; The House of Commons 2019).

Foundation degrees offer an independent qualification accessed via a range of starting points and qualifications (apprenticeships, access programmes, NVQs, professional certificates and diplomas (QAA, 2014). On successful completion of a Foundation degree, students have an opportunity to transition into the final year of an Honour's degree programme, guaranteed by the institution, which may be supported by a bridging programme (Schofield and McKenzie, 2018; QAA, 2014). Progression and the completion of a full degree programme contribute to students' wider participation from disadvantaged backgrounds (Morgan, 2015; HEFCE, 2007), offering an accessible route into higher education (Winter and Dismore, 2010) and access to graduate level employment.

2.3.3 Transformation and Transitional Space

Higher education and university attendance have been presented as a means of addressing national and global concerns. As previously explained within this chapter, successive governments have introduced education policies to facilitate a more significant number of individuals within the UK to attend university. Trowler (2015),

argues that student engagement operates as a confused concept with a lack of clarity concerning what is a non-traditional student. This aligns to Jackson's (2018) assertion that a knowledge-driven economy privileges the dominant societal group. The concept that higher education is transformational denotes a sector that is free from discrimination and built on the principles of social justice and inclusivity. As previously discussed, widening participation increased the number of students entering university from what was described as disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. The widening participation agenda was viewed as a means of addressing inequalities, improving the qualifications of those from these groups, increasing social mobility and social stratification (Archer 2007, DBIS 2013). Within the rhetoric and context of neoliberalism, Archer (2007) highlighted concerns that sector and university diversification would fail to address the fundamental aspects of equality, leading to the stratification of the education sector. This unease was not unfounded. As the number of universities increased, so did the range and diversity of courses offered in these new universities, as part of the discourse of choice (Archer, 2007). Student numbers steadily increased with a significant number of women from minority ethnic groups entering university. This was viewed as a major success (Modood 2014), however, women of minority and Bangladeshi heritage continued to experience discrimination at the point of entry. Archer (2007, p.639) argues that the introduction of new courses and the broadening of higher education led to a system of stratification where individuals were seen to be offered a "diluted" version of higher education. The introduction of the "gold, silver and bronze" classification further exacerbated this situation denoting "geographies of power" (Archer, 2007, p. 640). Access to Russell groups and elite universities remained problematic, with higher numbers of Bangladesh women gaining access to new, non-traditional universities (Takhar 2016b). However, Bangladeshi women are not discouraged by the discrimination encountered in accessing higher education or employment (Zwysen and Longhi, 2017; Niven, Faggian and Ruwanpura, 2013; Modood, 2006), focusing on the perceived opportunity and benefits this provided them as women (Takhar 2016b). As previously discussed in chapter two, higher education is viewed to negotiate disadvantage and discrimination within British society (Takhar 2016b; Dale et al. 2002). Despite higher numbers of students from diverse backgrounds attending university, it remains evident

that opportunities for attendance, the choice of institutions and the course of study remains affected by race, gender and social class.

Following the introduction of Foundation degrees, expectations were high and initially the increased numbers from widening participation backgrounds appeared to validate the programme's success. However, there have been numerous critics of the programme concerning employability (Rutt et al., 2013), academic rigour, workplace mobility and pay (Jackson and Jamieson, 2009). As mentioned above, the Foundation degree provides further opportunities for higher-level study through progression to the final year of the Honours programme, as noted within the Foundation degree benchmark (QAA, 2020). As identified, the graduate premium fails to fully materialise for Foundation degree students. However, this is also evident for Honours students, as discussed in Chapter One, where low pay and status prevail within the early years sector (Bury et al., 2020; Gambaro, 2017). This is a reflection of the vocational sector's struggles to gain professional recognition and the value placed on vocational qualifications within the professional and societal spheres.

Foundation degrees were intended to play an integral role in restructuring higher education and are viewed as a transformative programme. However, transformation and transformative learning are not merely an issue of access. For transformation to occur, the individual needs to transform personally. The Foundation degree presents as a potential site of transformation through the development of knowledge, the recognition of prior experience, and critical thinking skills identified within the subject benchmark characteristics (QAA, 2020; QAA, 2010;). Therefore, a transformative environment empowers individuals, supporting the development of their identity within a new field of experience. However, as evident within the Foundations degree context, graduation represents a transitional state, the transition from the Foundation degree to the Honours programme, and represents a change of identity. Although representing success, students transitioning to the final year of the students may find this a challenging and emotional experience (Morgan, 2015; Pike and Harrison, 2011; Winter and Dismore, 2010).

Field and Morgan-Klein (2009) view higher education as a transitional and liminal space that is separate from society and bounded by time. University may provide a third space, a space to challenge normative versions of self. Others consider higher education as a transformative space, where individuals, knowledge and identity are transformed (Mezirow, 2000). Student identity is portrayed as a temporal state, with rituals such as graduation signifying the end of this identity [add a reference to support this last statement]. The numbers of women from British Bangladeshi heritage entering higher education indicate the rising levels of agency and aspiration experienced by these women and higher education as a means of supporting transformation. Bangladeshi women's reasons for participation are complex, embodying notions of transformation and the opportunity to create more empowered gendered identities (Hussain, Johnson and Alam 2017). Bangladeshi women are empowered through education, enabling greater choice, agency and financial independence than previous generations (Hussain, Johnson and Alam 2017). This ambition is driven by an individuals, and family desire to improve their outcomes, and status within society (Trow 1973 and Marginson 2019).

Hussain, Johnston and Alam (2017) study identified that students chose to attend university for various reasons beyond that of qualifications. These reasons indicate the complexity of their identity framed within the family, local community and society. University is also identified as a site of transition and transformation, providing space beyond the constraints experienced by some young women within the families and communities, enabling new ways of being and developing new feminine identities. However, the intersecting dimensions of social identity and social structure continue to frame students present and future aspiration and their conceptualisation of self (Scandone, 2018). Modalities of race, ethnicity and social class impact the construction and perceptions of an individual's identity, empowering and disempowering an individual. For Hussian, Johnston and Alam (2017), a series of tensions exist. They discuss how the opportunity to attend university as a personal choice may be negated by the family's social class and economic instability. They

further contend that university choice may be positioned not in the desire for educational achievement but as a means of exploring “ potential” beyond that of a “good Muslim women” (Hussian, Johnston and Alam (2017, p. 415).

Scandone (2020) study of university attendance by middle-class Bangladeshi women identifies that university attendance can support the assertion of ethnic identity and the development of biculturality, supported by contact with educated individuals from the same culture, thus enabling a reclaiming of identity. However, Scandone (2020) also identified a complex hierarchy of value employed by some students based on ethnic and social class attributes that othered student and established a form of self-distancing. Furthermore, othering through the use of stereotypes may enable rejection of familiar and the representation of identity as presented by their family and the local community, resulting in a distancing figuratively and physically from other Bangladeshi young women (Scandone 2020).

Universities, therefore, have an essential role in the development of students social capital to ensure student aspiration moves beyond that of the known and familiar self. Modood (2010, p. 168) argues that a monocultural definition of Britishness fails to engage in the ethnicity agenda, marginalising those from ethnic groups. Modood (2010,p.) contends, “An inclusive national identity is respectful of and builds upon the identities that people value and does not trample on them”. Therefore, an inclusive higher education section and a university environment recognise the diversity of its student cohort and the individual representation of identity beyond that of cultural stereotypes. This starts with access and then is delivered through its policies, procedures, staffing and curriculum.

2.4 Part Two: A Matter of Identity

“Who am I then? Tell me that first, and then, if I like being that person, I’ll come up: if not, I’ll stay down here until I’m somebody else.”

Carroll (2012, p.21), *Alice in Wonderland*

Identity as a concept is difficult to define. Everyone identifies as having a unique identity (Ricoeur and Valdes, 1991), a vision of whom they believe themselves to be and whom they may wish to be. Gilroy (1997, p.301) contends that:

“Principally, identity provides a way of understanding the interplay between subjective experience of the world and the cultural and historical settings in which that fragile subjectivity is formed... and viewed.”

A study of identity is problematic since identity is in a constant state of change, situated in specific timescales within a historical and cultural context (Woodward, 2004; Ang, 2001; Brah, 1996). According to Ang (2001, p.240), identity is “strategically fabricated”, representing who and what we are. The question of women’s identity is intersectional. Within a feminist perspective, women’s identity is constructed, represented and lived within societal constructions of gender, race, class and ethnicity and experienced within power relations and inequalities (Walby et al., 2012; Collins, 2009). Intersectionality examines the axes of race, gender, class, culture and religion, engaging with notions of power and social justice. Lawler (2015, p.9) considers that “Identity works as an object (or a set of related objects) in the social world: it works to delineate both persons and types of person and to differentiate between them”.

According to Mead (1934), we link our internal and the external worlds through symbolisation (see also Woodward, 2004). During childhood, relationships established by children are crucial to their sense of belonging, clarifying the source of belonging and assuming it is decisive for constructing adult identity. Identity forms through socialisation as a relational process. Childhood interactions support our notions of belonging and form part of our adult identity (Dan, 2020). As individuals, we learn to present a range of identities, enabling our navigation in the social world.

Anthias (2002) questions the validity of identity, arguing that this concept refers to a process, since identity is emergent, positioned within locations and relations of gender, ethnicity, and class. Anthias (2002) concurs that ethnic categorisation results in collective identity ideas which fail to acknowledge individuals' and groups' diversity. Ang (2011) agrees, arguing that we need to go beyond what Brubaker 2002, p.164 cited in Ang 2011) terms "groupism". Our identity may be a feature of other definitions, based on their concept of gender, race, ethnicity and religion (Woodward, 2004). This affects our ability to gain membership within specific groups, a facet of social structuring and social control that is firmly embedded within education systems (Nixon, 2007; Bourdieu, 1974). This, in turn, develops our notion of self-concept (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) in accordance with our sense of belonging. As a consequence of internal or external conditions, identity can change (Franceschelli and O'Brien 2015). Thus, identity is a self-conceived orientation dependent on a young person's interpretation, a concept which is acknowledged within the context of this thesis.

2.4.1 Gender Development

Eden (2007) maintains that gender roles are socially constructed and, therefore, neither natural nor a case of biology. The social construction of identity and gender starts with the identification of the biological sex of a child. A series of customary practices are then instigated, based primarily on the biological sex of the child. This presentation of biological sex initiates a series of interactions with others, who consciously or unconsciously utilise the signifiers of gender within their interactions. Thus, gender is learned through interactions and behaviours, and individuals are conditioned to operate within their particular gender expectations through rewards and sanctions.

West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that men and women are captives of societal constructions of gender, and that sex categorisation and gender operate as separate entities, creating a gendered society. According to West and Zimmerman (1987, doing gender involves offering our behaviours for appraisal within a field of social relations,

with gender created through an acknowledgement of socially constructed difference that reinforces the nature of gender through everyday activities.

Consequently, gender moves beyond an active assignment to become something that is achieved through the interplay of social and institutional activities, consolidating our notions of gender. A woman's social identity and social behaviour form part of this "essentialness". Deviations from the accepted norms result in questions concerning a woman's femininity, as opposed to a questioning of the accepted norm. Goffman (1977, cited in West and Zimmerman 1987) contends that this becomes the dominant feature of the arrangement between sexes. Therefore, gender results from a standard of social definition and discursive practices set within a social reality framework (Majstorović and Lassen 2011; Alvesson and Billing 2002).

Gender categories construct male and female identity and societal notions of masculinity and femininity. An essentialist categorisation offers membership of a particular in or out-group. Validated through history, these stereotypes place women at a disadvantageous position within society, perpetuating inequality. Despite extensive changes to the legislative framework in terms of equality within the UK, women remain disadvantaged, with men continuing to experience privilege and positions of power. Walby (1989 p.47) argues that, within Western countries, inequalities remain centred within the six domains of "household, employment, state, violence, sexuality and culture", representing a move from the domestic to the public field. Within this framework, the identity of British/Bangladeshi women presents as being repressed, controlled and passive, struggling to operate across dual identities.

2.4.2 Identity and Cultural Hybridity

Globalisation has facilitated migration, supporting the connections between countries and continents. This has increased our awareness of identities that are predominantly based on notions of difference, resulting in what Nicolson and Adams (2008, p.106) term "societal fragmentation". As previously discussed on p.49 and identified by Gilroy

(1997), identity is fragile, relational, moving beyond our notions of self. An individual's identity is not predestined but is constructed through interactions and experiences within a historical and social construct (Bolland, 2020; Nicolson and Adams, 2008). Therefore, an individual's identity is in a constant state of flux; the identification of similarities, similarities and differences, coupled with thoughts and experiences of inclusion/exclusion, ensure the ongoing revaluation of identity. In the words of Bhabha (1994, p.64),

“...the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy – it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image.”

Numerous researchers have highlighted the development of hybrid identities (Pichler, 2007; Eade and Garbin, 2006; Anwar, 1998; Modood et al., 1994; Bhabha, 1994; Bhabha, 1997). The concept of hybridity is embedded within a history of trade, voluntary and forced migration, and inevitability within colonial and postcolonial narratives (Pieterse, 2001; Bhabha, 1994). Migrant identity, according to Bhabha (1994, p.51) and Eade (2013), is complex, representing a history of change and signifying notions of cultural authority. Bhabha (1994, pp.112-113) contends that hybridity “...is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority)”, bringing with it a “reevaluation of the assumption of colonial identity” and thereby constituting “a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority”. Hall and Du Gay (1996), acknowledges the political and cultural construction of race. Hall and Du Gay (1996) contends that identity within a cultural context always engages in the separation of others, thus engaging in a play of power. Eade (2013, p.511) contends that identity negotiation is fundamentally a “political and ideological process”. Kraidy (2005, p.153), writing in the United States, presents this as a global challenge, arguing that it requires political mobilisation and the creation of “media and policies” to mitigate tensions and thereby enable full

democracy. Pieterse (2001, p.220) asserts that the difficulty with hybridity lies not with hybridity per se but with the obsession with the “problematizing” of boundaries and the fascination with nationality and its failure to engage with the diversity of an individual outside of this boundary.

The fluidity of boundaries of identity is evident – within a migrant population, identities simultaneously remain, change and evolve. (Pieterse, 2001; Eade and Garbin, 2006). Eade and Garbin’s (2006) examination of Bangladeshi Muslims in the UK highlights how discussions surrounding religious identity are located within and outside of transnational links. Second- and third-generation Bangladeshi Muslims challenge the constructions of religion that were formed within the rural communities of Bangladesh, choosing a construction that recognises the construction of the Muslim community as a global community. Within this new construction of Islam, young British Bangladeshi Muslims’ distinction between culture and religion also forms part of their construction of Islamic identity.

Bhabha’s (1994) research refers to the space beyond, a space that offers opportunities to question and reject existing structures and hegemonies. Bhabha (2007) argues that hybrid cultures and new identities form within this temporal third space through encounters between the coloniser and colonised. These encounters enable the development of an “in-between”, a new identity that represents the characteristics of both cultures (Bhabha, 1996, p.259). Bhabha (1994) contends that this offers opportunities for forming a new form of multiculturalism, a chance for an identity free from pre-ascribed assumptions and hierarchy (Bhabha, 2013). According to Eade and Garbin (2006), Bangladeshi settlement in the UK has led to a reinterpretation of identities and merging social and cultural practices. Mirza (2006b), within the context of higher education, discusses black women’s positioning within a “hidden” third space, where disadvantaged groups develop counter-narratives to their publicly-ascribed identity. Thus, identity is complex, diverse and created out of more than just an individual’s ethnic heritage (Eade, 2013).

However, such counter-narrative are not power free but dependent on the culture in which this is fulfilled (Bauhn and Tepe, 2016). Intersections of identity reflect the intersection of overlapping oppressions faced by the community. Hall and Du Gay (1996) argues that, within contemporary society, the unification of identity is illusionary, since identity continues to be constructed within oppositional narratives, practices and positions.

Increased levels of contact have highlighted difference at an individual and societal level. The instability of social units, the complexity and diversity of identity, sexism and racism have all reinforced the concept of difference within dominant cultures. Societal calls for equality and a range of political strategies appear to have been ineffective and failed to meet the challenges of a multicultural society.

British/Bangladeshi women face multiple levels of discrimination and a series of contradictory narratives. The Bangladeshi diaspora is primarily framed within a negative conceptual lens, depicted as being unwilling to integrate, unable to speak English, poorly educated and oppressive to women (Jahan, 2019). Within a diaspora, political and global events continue to resonate and impact experiences in the host country (Eade and Garbin, (2006). While hyper-connectivity has supported transnational links, it also led to the conceptualisation of all Muslims within a negative framework as being fundamentalist and a threat to national security (Mansouri and Modood, 2021). As a result of ongoing Islamophobia, the Bangladesh community and individual Bangladeshi women continue to face hostility, resulting in the further separation of Muslim women from the non-Muslim population (McKenna and Francis 2019). The homogenisation of British/Bangladeshi women's individual and collective identities continues to recognise the reality of their visibility, agency and engagement within British society. When engaged in self-identification, the idea of being British and Bangladeshi is evident, transcending national boundaries (Nayak, 2017; Lyons, 2018), creating new ways of belonging (Brah 1996) and cultural hybridity (Ang 2014). Hoque (2017, p.185) argues that second- and third-generation British/Bangladeshis fit into neither culture, calling them the "ping-pong generation". Ang (2014, p.1185) identifies the developement of bicultural identity positioned with historical, social and economic speheres which moves beyond the

concept of “groupism”. However, in recognition of the axes of similarity and difference, Ang (2014) argues that this is not a representation of the development of new forms of culture, of cultural hybridity, but a representation of the complexity of identity positioned beyond that of monocultural groups.

The question of identity and diversity within minority group remains one of complexity. The Muslim community represents a diverse community with diverse identities (Zeitlyn, 2014; Brubaker, 2012). This point will now be examined further, within the context of ethnicity and religion.

2.4.3 Ethnicity and Religion

Ethnicity as a concept is difficult to define; and Khattab and Modood (2015, p.4) offer the following definition:

“...ethnicity is a form of identification with groups defined by descent, where a number of such groups are present. The element of identification, and with it, community norms and structures and intersubjectivity... distinguishes ethnicity from that of race.”

Khattab and Modood (2015) provide five dimensions of ethnic difference: cultural distinctiveness, disproportionality, strategy, creativity, and identity. They argue that an understanding of ethnicity assumes a shared consciousness (intersubjectivity) and associated norms, which affect and are shaped by socio-economic structures but vary per ethnic group. Ballard, 2002, p.28) differentiates between ethnicity and culture, arguing that the establishment of ethnicity remains situated within terms of “political and economic competition”. Within society, the subject of ethnicity is problematic, homogenising the identity and experiences of a group and ascribing privilege according to an individual’s ethnic status. Ballard (2002) (in his discussion of language acquisition) notes that cultural hegemony is habitually articulated as comprising a mark

of inferiority, thereby refuting the skills, competence and navigation of ethnic minority groups. Khattab (2015) contends that discussions of ethnicity should not be limited to concerns of racialisation, discrimination, and the unequal division of power. In exploring the axes between differentials, for example, employment and self-employment, we gain a clearer understanding of the response to, and the "dimensions of ethnic difference" (Khattab and Modood 2015, p.244), thus supporting our understanding of Bangladeshi employment and features such as the associated "ethnic penalty" (Miaari et al., 2019; Li, 2018; Ghaffar, 2018; Takhar, 2016a; Modood, 2004).

Within the UK, religion and being Muslim have resonance for Bangladeshis and British/Bangladeshis. In 2018 the Muslim population attributed 5.1% of the total UK population (ONS, 2018). Brubaker (2012) identifies the complexity of using "Muslim" as a category of analyses, because the use of the term Muslim suggests an individual and collective identity, however, the Muslim community is not homogenous, as concepts of Islam may differ across individuals and groups (Zeitlyn, 2014; Brubaker, 2012; Brubaker, 2002; Kabir, 2010). According to Kabir (2010, p.15), notions of religion and nation are not "mutually exclusive", with 38% of Muslims in Kabir's (2010) research identifying as belonging to both Islam and Britain.

Societies' use of the term Muslim has intensified across multiple arenas – political, administrative, social and the media – featuring an interplay of "self-identification and other identification" (Brubaker, 2012, p.3). The association between Islam, Muslim and the terror attack across Europe has extended the concept of "othering" to "selved", Brubaker (2012, p.3), with non-Muslims placing accountability for this on all Muslims. This stereotyping of the Muslim community through the creation of a negative individual and group identity is creating the superiority of one group over another.

Zeitlyn (2014) argues that the development of Islamic identity in the UK remains positioned as a consequence of this dual rejection, with British/Bangladeshi families

rejecting both Bangladeshi and British cultural values. Nonetheless, their engagement with “Islamic modernity” (Zeitlyn 2014, p.2019) and the Islamic “good child” notion enables the development of Islamic identity and morality. Eade’s (2012) study acknowledged the intimate relationship religion holds within the context of boundary setting. Within the context of young Muslim women, the resultant consequence of hybridity is the formation of a distinct subgroup within a religious context. Within this context, global communications and hyper-connectivity have supported the emergence of a new definition of Islam that offers women greater empowerment. Thus, we see a reinterpretation of traditional values and new modes of identity and behaviour being represented within this reinterpretation of Islam by young Muslim adults.

2.4.4 The “Traditional Family”: Expectations and Culture

Despite the changing lives of Bangladeshi women, young Bangladeshi women continue to experience expectations of gender-appropriate behaviour and the maintenance of religious and cultural standards.

Traditionally Bangladeshi families and those from the Sylhet region of Bangladesh operate within a patriarchal family structure. The male is deemed to be the head of the household, the “breadwinner”, and there is a traditional division of labour, with women held as responsible for household duties and childcare (Dyson et al., 2009). The patriarchal system operates patriarchal rules which dominate and oppress women (Mirza, 2006a; Walby, 1999), elevating men’s position and power within the social setting. A patriarchal system operates within a hierarchy, with men achieving a higher status over women and women being viewed as less privileged. This system also enables senior women within a household to have power over younger females, for example, a mother-in-law over a younger wife.

Family structure remains diverse, ranging from the nuclear to the subnuclear and extended family. Khanum (2001) defines a subnuclear family as a single parent living

with their children. Within this context, parents retain their given level of responsibility, with the father remaining as head of the household. Historically, women's movements were restricted outside of the family, with limitations on their contact with men (Gardner and Mand, 2012; Zeitlyn, 2012). However, women's freedom within their villages in Bangladesh provided a far more extensive network of relations. Women would have contact with extended family members and other women within the village. Migration to the UK reduced women's contact with others outside and within the Bangladeshi community. Dyson et al. (2009) highlight that Bangladeshi women from prosperous backgrounds experience difficulties developing relationships with those from poorer backgrounds.

Early marriage was an expectation for women before the age of 25 and strictly within the Bangladeshi community (Dale and Ahmed, 2011; Dyson et al., 2009; Mirza, 2006a). Parents may arrange their marriage to ensure the status and honour of the family and maintain the family's lifestyle and interests.

Traditionally within Bangladeshi families, collective interests outweigh the individual, with women deterred from developing an individual identity (Gardner and Mand, 2012; Basit, 1997). This is positionally opposite to Western ideology, where the development of personal identity is paramount. The household, which may include the extended family, fulfils two functions – domestic and financial. The domestic sphere remains the women's responsibility, while the household head takes financial responsibility for the family – both in the UK and Bangladesh (Khanum, 2001). A range of factors may contribute to the historically low levels of female Bangladeshi employment, including a proportion of men who may continue to believe in the male's role as the breadwinner and the female as the homemaker, or barriers to employment such as low levels of spoken and written English and employer racism (Dale and Ahmed, 2011).

2.4.5 The Family: Changing Identities

It is essential to acknowledge that adolescence is a period of transition through an identity crisis, where individuals question who they are and their parents' lifestyles. However, not all adolescents will experience a crisis in the same way. A reasonable expectation is that young people will become independent from their parents in developing their identity. For young Bangladeshi women, cultural and religious expectations may make this more difficult. Hutnik and Coran-Street (2010) highlight that young female adolescents, in contrast to their male counterparts, view family relationships as important and consider their parents' opinions vital in their own decision-making. Zeitlyn (2014), citing the work of Gupta (2007) and Blanchett (1996), argues that Bangladeshi societies remain organised around a framework of "social collectivity" (Gupta, 2007, p.177, cited in Zeitlyn, 2014) and "dhorno" (Blanchett 1996, p.225, cited in Zeitlyn, 2014), a life path attributed by gender, rank, family and status.

Although young British/Bangladeshi women's identities are fluid and complex, operating within a UK societal, cultural, and religious context (Lyons, 2018; Garbin, 2009), second- and third-generation British/Bangladeshis' identities also reflect a different culture, tied to their parents' historical and cultural roots and another country, Bangladesh. This, therefore, places them within a distinctly different position, requiring them to navigate between two different cultures with different values and expectations. As second-generation transmigrants, they develop identities which "connect them to two or more societies simultaneously" (Shiller et al., cited in Zeitlyn, 2012, p.956). Zeitlyn (2012) argues that young people of British/Bangladeshi and British/Sylheti heritage are in a unique position. They are developing new British/Bangladeshi identities due to the potential rejection of their parents' home country's traditional habitus.

Although the idea of the traditional Bangladeshi family remains within public consciousness and may remain a reality for some first-generation Bangladeshi migrants, second- and third-generation young women's experiences are changing.

Dwyer (2000) suggests that Bangladeshi females develop new forms of diasporic identities, based on transnationalism concepts which transcend national borders.

Traditional expectations appear to be changing: kinship ties with Bangladesh are relaxing for the second generation (Dale and Ahmed, 2011), and attitudes towards marriage are also shifting (Mohammad, 2015; Qureshi, 2012). Although endogamy and transnational marriage continue, based on traditional concepts of what constitutes a good match, an increasing number of Asian women are marrying partners based within the UK (Mohammad, 2015). Young British Asian women have different marriage expectations, which are outside the patrilineal system (Charlsey, 2019; Mohammad, 2015). Young Asian women continue to marry; however marriage occurs later for those women with higher qualifications (Li, 2018), with parents keen to exercise a degree of choice concerning their marriages (Ahmad, 2012; Dale and Ahmed, 2011). However, Mohammad (2015) identifies that transnational marriage continues and may be favoured by women as a means of dislocating expectations and decreasing their marginalisation when men move to the UK to marry them. Transnational marriage may also support women's autonomy, as it allows women to remain within their community and maintain their identity and position within society.

The system of financial support required for immigration ensures that these women are able to remain within employment and maintain a degree of financial independence. Conflict may ensue as transnational males fail to adjust to differing gender expectations (Charsley and Bolognani, 2019). This reconfiguration of expectations appears evident when considering marriage instability levels and the increased divorce rates for British Pakistanis (Qureshi, 2012; Qureshi; Charsley, and Shaw, 2014). This does not indicate valid marriage or divorce statistics, however, since Muslim marriages may form within religious ceremonies unrecognised by UK law (Akhtar, 2018; Qureshi et al., 2014).

Parents and spouses have become more supportive of women continuing their studies and entering employment, although accessing employment appears to be more difficult when women whose spouse is from Bangladesh have children (Weedon et al., 2013; Dale and Ahmed, 2011; Ijaz and Abbas, 2010; Aston et al., 2007).

Young Bangladeshi females' activities outside of the home continue to be influenced by their immediate and extended family and by social networks within the local Bangladeshi community (Hutnik and Coran-Street, 2010). However, these activities are also affected by parental concerns of safety due to fears about racism and Islamophobia. Restricting young females' activities within the local community is seen as protecting their moral welfare (Zeitlyn, 2014) and their physical safety. Concepts of *izzat* and *sharam*³ continue to resonate within Bangladeshi communities, and young women are expected to maintain their family's honour and status within the community (Kabir, 2010).

Visits "home" to Bangladesh and Sylhet foster familiarity with traditional customs and practices expected as a Bangladeshi. Zeitlyn (2012) differentiates between Bangladeshi and Sylhet, arguing that Sylheti's history, customs and spoken language are distinctly different from the country at large. Young people on visits home are supported and encouraged to develop the expected modes of behaviour and recognise people's positional roles concerning power and power relations, for example, those around adult men and women and boys and girls; thus, forming a familiarity with Sylheti's *habitus* (Zeitlyn, 2012). Zeitlin's (2014) work indicates that visits "home" provide socialisation opportunities and create a sense of cultural dissonance for young people. This may lead to them rejecting the Bangladeshi *habitus*, creating a new British/Bangladeshi *habitus*.

³ See the Nomenclature at the beginning of this thesis for an explanation of these terms.

2.4.6 Social Class and Higher Education

This section will explore the effects of social class on higher education and social mobility. It will briefly explore the role of aspiration in education using Hart's (2016, p.326) definition of aspiration:

“...aspirations are future-oriented, driven by conscious and unconscious motivations and they are indicative of an individual or group's commitments towards a particular trajectory or endpoint.”

Social classifications within the UK assign social class groups according to occupational and employment status. NS-SEC categories distinguish different occupational positions, operating as a conceptual and analytical class of employment relations (ONS, 2010). These are numbered 1-8, from higher managerial positions (1) to never worked (8), with classes 1-3 classified as middle-class and those 4-8 as working-class (ONS, 2010; Bathmaker, 2003). Atkinson et al. (2013, p.1) offer a far broader definition of social class, as a classification, and as consequential outcomes:

“Class is not just about exploitation and economic inequalities... but cultural and symbolic domination... it is not just about life chances... but about self-worth and denigration, it is not only a politics of redistribution but a politics of recognition.”

Atkinson et al. (2013) argue that, although economic inequality is the most significant predictor of poor educational experience and underachievement, it is also a question of social class and capital. Kintrea et al. (2015) argue that poverty indicators fail to explore the dimensional aspect and effects of poverty, including material deprivation, concepts of identity, capital (family and community) and social and economic forces

Despite higher levels of poverty, the UK Bangladeshi community experiences higher university participation levels than other groups in similar economic circumstances – suggesting that social class may be less significant for this group (Modood, 2004). Modood (2012) argues that occupational status as a social class analysis measure fails to reflect the downward occupational status for new South Asian migrants. New migrants remain forced to take lower status jobs that are below their qualification and social class levels. Therefore, South Asian migrants experienced downward social mobility based on occupational status. However, they still retain high levels of social and educational capital, valuing education as a means of achieving social mobility and economic stability. Once again, high levels of qualifications are not consistent across the community, with Bangladeshi migrants from the rural areas less likely to have qualifications than those from urban areas.

Reay (2010) contends that the uneven distribution of all forms of capital – social, economic and cultural – impacts on the likelihood of success. Atkinson et al. (2012) argue that the current diversification of educational provision operates along class lines within a hierarchical structure, favouring the white middle-class. They continue to assert that working-class parents and those living in deprived areas experience lower levels of choice concerning their educational provision and are most affected by underfunding (Atkinson et al., 2012). Reay, Crozier and Clayton, (2009) argues that children develop their sense of habitus through the surrounding environment and their socialisation experiences, becoming responsive and responding to the range of environments they find themselves in. Children who have had high degrees of educational socialisation have a higher degree of academic success. This elicits a positive response within a school environment, with teachers positively responding to children, impacting on their perceptions of capability. Thus, opportunities within the classroom are requisite on children's language, capabilities and behaviours, based on their social class perceptions (Reay, 2004).

Abbas (2007) argues that Bangladeshi and Pakistani children remain marginalised and disadvantaged in the UK due to low social capital and educational socialisation

levels. This leads to a process of differentiation and social elimination, as noted by Bourdieu (1990). School teachers may differentiate between perceived levels of ability, engaging children in lower ability groups (differentiation) and therefore denying them opportunities to progress (elimination). Children may also participate in the process of self-selected elimination, believing that they lack the capacity for success, thus operating as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Parents' and adults' relationships with children are also important in developing aspirations as they can deny or empower future opportunities (Scandone, 2018; Hart, 2016). Within this context, aspiration and an individual's perceived agency diminishes. However, as Harrison and Waller (2018) observe, despite high levels of aspiration, education outcomes for those from lower socio-economic groups, remains low, a possible reflection of their concept of capability.

It would seem counter-intuitive for schools to deny opportunities through streaming when also engaged in addressing the "achievement gap" (Scandone, 2018). The implications for students' further progress to higher education, their institutional choice and employment opportunities are undeniable. Scandone (2018) and Reay (2012, p.1106) identifies that "working-class localities" and state schooling fails to prepare individuals for the dominant cultural capital of the education system. This, in turn, may deny migrant children the opportunity to aspire to and attend university; however, Hart (2016) contends that the development of aspirations operates as a dynamic process, operating within a chronosystem. Additional factors can counter previous negative experiences, so Hart (2016, p.332) reasons that:

“...the cultivation of aspirations is dependent on the freedom individuals feel they have to aspire, who dares to share or voice their aspirations and how those individuals are judged by others.”

Archer (2013) and Mazonod et al. (2019) suggest that pupils have already started to construct their aspirations for the future by secondary school, initially focused on

occupation and university attendance. Bangladeshi parents and the Bangladeshi community appreciating the value of education and (see also Khattab and Modood, 2018; Bathmaker et al., 2016; Shah et al., 2010; Ijaz and Abbas, 2010; Aston et al., 2007; Modood, 2004; Dale et al., 2002; Basit, 1997). Ballard (2002) highlights how migrant parents, in their efforts to negate disadvantage and discrimination, articulate education as a means of intercultural navigation, facilitated by accessing facets of their cultural heritage (moral, spiritual and social). Scandone's (2018) research revealed university attendance as a normal expectation, as opposed to something requiring intense discussion and mediation with parents. Scandone's (2018) research found that parental support for higher education transcended the borders of social class and parents' own education levels. This viewpoint appeared evident across the Bangladeshi community, supported by relational ties. Within Scandone (2018, p.536) study, the views and the choices made by young Bangladeshi women were "ethnicised, racialised, religious, classed and gendered" and formed within their existing networks.

Numerous studies have identified the link between university attendance and income (Mazenod et al., 2019; Chowdry et al., 2013; Anders, 2012; Archer, 2007; Blanden and Machin, 2004). However, the number of young Bangladesh women from low-income backgrounds attending university has continued to increase. Although Scandone's (2018) research highlights that some students may be deterred by the student loan system and the level of debt, they also view university attendance as a means of countering disadvantage, discrimination, and widening their horizon of opportunity.

Anker (2017) contends that an individual's socio-economic status reflects their social processes and attainment and determines their likelihood of attending university. This is because education forms part of social reproduction, contributing to ongoing inequalities, as does family background (Archer, Dewitt and Wong 2014). Crozier and

Davies (2006) observe that role models are evident within the Bangladeshi community through the extended family, a possible explanation for the rise in university attendance. However, Gorard (2010) concludes that socio-economic factors act as a precursor to achievement, and higher stratification levels remain evident at post-Key Stage 4 (KS4) levels. Children from professional family backgrounds are more likely to aspire to professional occupations (Kintrea et al., 2015). Therefore, university attendance is a consequence of this. Levels of attainment at KS4 indicate the likelihood of further engagement in education, which continues throughout an individual's life.

Pichler's (2007) research identifies the relationship between gender, social class and schools' institutional discourse in girls' identity development. Gorard, Hyat and Davies, (2012) contends that schools' and teachers' actions influence the quality of relationships between pupils and teachers. According to Fuller (2013), institutional trust supports the legitimisation of the education system, community and pupil engagement. Gorard (2010, p.14) argues that pupils clustering from similar backgrounds reduces the opportunity and diversity of role models, creating "institutional isolation". Extensive networks are necessary to support success (Scandone, 2018), as ethnic groups continue to experience low social capital levels within families across all social class levels. Kintrea et al.'s (2015) study identified high aspirations among young people of South Asian heritage.

Anders (2012) agrees that the gap in university participation arises due to early decision-making, with the likelihood of university attendance diminishing between the ages of 14-17 for those from lower socio-economic groups. Mazonod et al. (2019) contend that structural issues affect university application levels, with streaming at secondary school operating as an influencing factor in the decision of whether or not to apply for university. Anker (2017) argues that a complicated relationship exists between aspiration and achievement and achievement and aspiration. University aspirations from the lower socio-economic groups appear to diminish from the age of 14, with decisions concerning university application being less likely to change than

others, regardless of achievement. The relationship between confidence levels and aspiration appears to continue when students apply for university. Both Mazonod et al. (2019) and Archer et al. (2013) indicate that, in Year Eight, secondary pupils have high aspirations, however, pupils appear less optimistic of real success. Scandone's (2018) study of young Bangladeshi women attending university suggests that university attendance was considered to be a typical transition for all participants in his sample, irrespective of class or parental education.

Working-class students appear to limit their opportunities regarding their choice of university (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009). Opportunities to attend elite universities remain reduced due to the type and level of entry qualifications required, low levels of cultural capital and individuals' vision of their possible selves and their judgement of personal gain and loss (Reay, 2012; Stevenson and Clegg, 2011).

Working-class students may find navigating the university sector difficult. Negative experiences at school, a limited understanding of the availability of options and a lack of knowledge of the language used may operate as contributory factors. Families also play a significant role in supporting their children to attend university. Parents reinforce positive messages concerning the value of education, strengthening concepts of capability, and engaging in their children's decision-making concerning course and university choice. Working-class children may be further disadvantaged by their parents' lack of knowledge and understanding of higher education, resulting in lower levels of support. Persistence acts as a precursor of success. Stevenson and Clegg (2011) argue that those with complex self-oriented ideas are more likely to be persistent and successful. Increasing numbers of Bangladeshi girls are attending university, with career-orientated goals, bolstered by a social support network (parents, friends, teachers, college tutors) that facilitates their aspirations, applications, and entry (Scandone, 2018). Qualifications remain a key means of accessing suitable quality employment within racialised labour markets, improving outcomes and social mobility (Khattab and Modood, 2018; Bhopal, 2011; Shah et al., 2010). Stevenson and Clegg (2011) argue that those with more complex ideas of self,

for example, those who have career-orientated goals, have a higher level of persistence and are more likely to be successful in applying to university.

Working-class students are more likely to study at post-1992 than Russell Group universities (Crozier et al., 2008). However, their expectations are that they will have to navigate a middle-class world and unfamiliar pedagogy, in which they may feel “like a fish out of water” (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2010, p.117). Reay et al. (2010) argue that a university’s institutional habitus impacts on working-class students’ relationships with the institution (safety, security, attachment), their ability to engage in learning and their perceptions of capability and their student personal identity. Bathmaker et al. (2016) identify that universities’ reputations appear to be classed, with students commenting on the perceived quality of courses and the type of students they attract. Red brick universities were perceived to offer academic courses, as opposed to the less academic and vocationally-orientated post-1992 universities. Students also commented on the type of students these institutions attracted, with working-class students describing middle-class behaviours as being different from their own. Bathmaker et al. (2016, p.52) observe that these comments represent a mode of being and doing, becoming a “naturalised account of reality”.

The benefits of university attendance differ across the sector, with working-class students more vulnerable to adverse outcomes when appropriate support is unavailable. Burke and Crozier (2014) argue that students’ conceptions as self-interested consumers, coupled with universities’ focus on employability, displays a failure to engage with widening participation. Higher education pedagogy and its focus on outcomes and league tables fail to recognise or engage with the complexity of student experience, so failing to understand the importance of race, gender and social class. Working-class students, therefore, are less likely to gain the benefits of university attendance. Thus, according to McClean, Abbas and Ashwin, (2015), universities replicate and contribute to the existing pattern of disadvantage and inequalities for those from the lower socio-economic working-class groups.

Modood (2012) identifies the similarity between social class and ethnicity definitions and classifications, i.e. categorising specific individuals on the basis of their accumulation of resources. This demonstrates the intersectional nature of the issue, which transcends analysis based solely on social class.

2.5 Intercultural Navigation and Higher Education

As previously discussed, the numbers of young Bangladeshi women participating in higher education has increased, despite arguments concerning their marginalisation as working-class Muslim women. Ballard (1994, p. 8) identified that the Asian community reconfigured the Landscape of British “on their own terms” retaining many of the aspects of their own culture. The Bangladeshi migrant community is changing, and it would be inappropriate to presume that first-generation migrants are not part of this change. Ballard (2002) contends that cultural systems are evident across all societies and these are not fixed or static. Cultural variations are apparent within any diverse community due to the range of social encounters within that society due to changing environmental circumstances (Ballard 2002). However, this is not to say that this change is transparent or consistent across the whole community. Young Bangladeshi women are developing new identities and renegotiating boundaries, so they are an influential force of change within the British/Bangladeshi community.

Ballard (2002) contends that culture provides a framework for behaviour through its rules and conventions, transmitted through a specific network of social relationships. British/Bangladeshi young women have cross-cultural experiences that are developed at an early age. When starting school, crossing border experiences support the development of “bicultural identities” (Franceschelli and O’Brien, 2015; Kabir, 2010). British/Bangladeshis and British/Bangladeshi Muslims are familiar with, and have functioned within and across, multiple cultures and within a range of fields, with varying degrees of success. Young Bangladeshi women have, and are, utilising various strategies to develop multiple identities, supporting the reconciliation of the difference between cultures (Franceschelli and O’Brien, 2015; Modood, 2010).

The rapid increase in the number of young Bangladeshi women entering higher education demonstrates their “skills of navigation” (Bagguley and Hussain 2016, p.45), supporting cross-cultural mobility. There have been criticisms of Bourdieu’s notions of social capital and habitus being used to explain the rapid rise of minority groups entering higher education because, although social capital can explain inequalities, it does not fully explain the sudden increase in number of university students from minority ethnic groups (Bagguley and Hussain, 2016; Modood, 2012). Franceschelli and O’Brien (2015) argue that the concept of habitus and the social field refers to a unitary habitus. They claim that this fails to recognise people’s engagement in multiple arenas or the instability of contemporary identity.

The act of negotiation and navigation requires social interaction. Individuals develop agency, where agency is defined as the ability to make suitable choices that initiate required outcomes (Kabir, 2010). Therefore, identities are explored, examined and constructed within discourse (Mohee, 2011). Furthermore, Bagguley and Hussain (2016, p.411) argue that South Asian women engage in reflexivity to “resist, negotiate and compromise across identities”.

It has been highlighted that parental relationships are significant in encouraging girls’ aspirations. Parents who have good relationships with their daughters contribute to their education and future career decision-making (Franceschelli and O’Brien, 2015; Smart and Rahman, 2009; Abbas, 2005). Degree qualifications increase the social status of an individual and their family within the community, and parents may use this to negotiate a higher status marriage for their daughter (Li, 2018; Bhopal, 2011; Shah et al., 2010). Becher’s (2008) work highlights parental expectations beyond education, with parents mentioning their hopes that their children will become more engaged with their religious beliefs (McKenna and Francis, 2019; Haw, 2011; Alexander, 2000; Modood, 1997). This desire may well reflect parents’ feelings of disenfranchisement from mainstream British society, a consequence of discrimination, racism, and the rise of Islamophobia. A re-engagement in religion is viewed as a protective mechanism, a

means of safeguarding their children and their family's safety and future. As Ballard, (2002) identified, marginalisation by the dominant culture based on a premise of superiority and the use of hegemonic power maintains systems of advantage and disadvantage.

Hussain, Johnson and Alam (2017) observe that Muslim females' degree aims operate within a complex system of hopes, fears and aspirations for young women. Higher education may function as a site of resistance, as a tangible space where they can develop a sense of identity outside the normative British and Bangladeshi concepts of success. The motivation of these women is complicated. However, even if the primary motivator may not be degree achievement, they may still wish to be successful. University attendance may facilitate an exploration of faith in a different way, where education is also seen as part of being a "good Muslim". Faith may be articulated as a means of empowerment, an integral aspect of an individual's personal and social identity. Therefore, it is a complementary aspect of identity and education. Hussain, Johnson and Alam (2017) argue that Muslim women engage in identity work by navigating social and structural constraints within a university context. Frances and Archer's (2005) study of working-class Chinese students highlights the complexity of identity negotiation, claiming that the adaptation and adoption of identity involve gains and losses, which might result in a failed identity and therefore appear to be a risky activity for working-class Asian students.

2.6 Graduate Employment

This section of the literature review briefly examines the underlying explanations for the high economic inactivity rates experienced by young Bangladeshi women in general and young Bangladeshi female graduates in particular. A range of factors such as discrimination, cultural expectations and employment opportunities are scrutinised.

As previously discussed in Chapter One, Bangladeshi and Pakistani women continue to experience one of the UK's highest unemployment rates (DBIS 2017; Salway, 2007;

Lindley and Dex, 2006; Dale et al., 2002). Muslim women experience higher rates than Sikhs or Hindus (Johnston et al., 2010), and Bangladeshi women experience higher unemployment levels than Bangladeshi men (Li, 2018; Niven et al., 2013). Only 38% of Bangladeshi women aged 16-64 are currently in work, compared to 73% of white women and 66% of Indian women. (ONS 2017). British/Bangladeshi women have not benefited from the government's focus on education (Niven et al., 2013), however, qualifications continue to be a predictor of economic activity for Bangladeshi women (Salway, 2007). Successive governments have stressed the importance of a knowledge economy and increased levels of participation in higher education as a means of ensuring economic development, economic stability (OECD, 2018; DBIS, 2016; Leitch, 2006), social inclusion (OECD, 2018; DBIS, 2016; Leitch, 2006), cultural diversity and political democracy (Marginson, 2010). The DBIS's (2016) White Paper *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* identified a lack of parity in graduate earnings based on subject, university and background and a lack of graduate employment for many graduates three and half years after graduating.

It has been well documented that ethnic minority groups are more likely than their white counterparts to access higher education and gain university qualifications. However, their participation in the UK workforce and their employability outcomes remain lower (Zwysen and Longhi, 2017; Niven et al., 2013). Bangladeshi graduates are less likely to be employed within six months of qualifying than their white counterparts (Zwysen and Longhi, 2016). They are more likely to be overqualified for the post they hold (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2017; Rafferty, 2012) and experience lower pay rates (HESA, 2006). This is evident in female British/Bangladeshi graduate employment (Niven et al., 2013; The London Development Agency, 2008; Ahmed and Dale, 2008). Young British/Bangladeshi females experience lower employment rates and a higher pay gap than young British/Bangladeshi men (Niven et al., 2013).

Mirza (2013 p.1) reasons that transnational women are positioned within the intersections of race class and gender, however, these operate in different ways according to each woman's post colonial history, ethnicity, culture and nation state. According to Bagguley and Hussain (2016, p.57), South Asian women's ambiguous positioning and marginalisation act as an enabler of social navigation and, through a system of reflexivity, ethnic identifications are "enacted, resisted and transformed".

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter commenced by briefly identifying the importance of conducting secondary research, which locates valid and reliable literature to develop a literature review that meets the aim, objectives, and study parameters.

A consideration of the literature followed, which was divided into two main parts. Part One considered education and widening participation, examining the introduction of Foundation degrees and their effects on student participation. It explored the arguments surrounding higher education as a transitional and transformative space.

Part Two considered the development of identity ,with reference to gender, ethnicity, religion and social class. It examined the changing expectations of the Bangladeshi family and women's participation in higher education. Finally, it briefly explored the issue of graduate employment for Bangladeshi females.

The following chapter considers the theoretical framework used within this research, examining relational sociology and ego network analysis.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

Understanding Relations: Relational Sociology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces two concepts – relational sociology and ego network analysis. Relational sociology enables an examination of how social relations mediate social structures and how the division of resources contributes to the maintenance and the development of society. The chapter considers Archer's notions of relation, reflexivity and culture within a negotiated framework, considering their contribution to the development of agency and identity construction for young female Bangladeshi students studying on Foundation and Bachelor degree courses.

This is followed by an examination of Crossley's social network analysis or ego network analysis, focusing on reciprocity and nodes of interaction, which provides an analytical tool to understand the type, strength and significance of relational and network ties. However, according to Carolan (2014), ego network analysis has limitations, as it can only illustrate the ego's social environment relative to that of their alters.

3.2 Understanding Relational Sociology

Relational sociology embodies several scholars' work across the United States and Europe, offering a range of paradigmatic approaches to the topic. (Papilloud, 2017; Donati, 2011; Donati, 2015; Archer, 2000; Archer, 2012; Crossley, 2011; Emirbayer, 1997). Within relational perspectives, an understanding of society develops by considering the importance of social relations in developing socio-cultural processes. According to Prandini (2015), the collective and individualistic debate, coupled with the merging together of two research fields – cultural sociology and network analysis – resulted in a relational turn and the development of relational sociology.

Relational sociology emphasises the importance of rationalism, where things exist and function as relational entities, with actors engaged in social practices within transactional and reciprocal relations. Donati (2015, p.87) considers that "...society is not a space containing relations, society is relation and does not have relations". Archer (2010b p.201) continues stating that "very existence of the social order is itself relational."

According to Donati (2015), the creation of a society unfolds as a consequence of relations arising from the development of social structures and cultures. The structural dynamic of relationships enables the maintenance of pre-existing social formations whilst continually influencing changes in conjunction with human action. Communication and communicative events form the basis of all relational events, however, these are not value-free. Communication is influenced, affecting actors within social processes and structures, representing complex social realities (Prandini, 2015). According to Archer (2010b, p.202) central feature of relational sociology is the concept of reciprocity, where social relations mediate "structural and social conditioning" and have "emergent powers of causa! consequences ." The bonds of the relationship are formed due to reciprocity, which builds trust, confidence, respect and care and leads to the ongoing development of the relationship. Archer (2010b) argues this is positioned outside of norms, roles of power interests. It is focused on relationship maintenance and has the ability to deliver relational goods. According to Archer (2010b) relational sociology has the capacity to examine social integration, and exclusion, the emergence of relational goods, morphostasis and morphogenesis. As identified by Archer(2010b p.206) relational sociology is concerned with "stability, change and the reshaping of social forms and formations".

Donati (2015) concurs that social relations operate within the context of two actors, the ego and the alter. They establish a set of shared expectations, with interactional exchanges being regulated through shared norms and values. Relational sociology helps to explain the terms of a relationship within a relationship while acknowledging the order of reality and recognising that each interaction operates within and acts upon

reality, within what Archer (1998) terms a morphogenetic process. Therefore, within a network of social interactions, social structures are changed and work within a new relational structure. Dynamic structures and relational interactions constitute the relational order of reality. At a micro-level, these act upon societal and cultural social norms by understanding the social fact, where a social phenomenon is viewed as a product of relational contact and produces a relational outcome.

Archer's (1998) concept of morphogenesis acknowledges that society is neither predetermined nor present and that human beings are "simultaneously free and constrained" (Archer, 1995, p.2). The underpinning notion of Archer's morphogenesis is the distinctive nature of structure and agency and the relationship between the two. According to Archer (2010a, p 275), structure and agency are "different kinds of emergent entities", which is evident in their properties and powers. Archer (1996, p.76) contends that "structure necessarily pre - dates the action(s) which transform it; and that structural elaboration necessarily post - dates those actions". At particular junctures, existing structures restrict or enable individuals, leading to intended or unintended consequences and the reproduction, elaboration, or development of existing structures, which are a product of previous agents (Brock, Carrigan and Scambler 2017). The critical realist concept of emergence concedes that "social structures, although the product of human individuals have causal powers of their own, which cannot be reduced to the powers of those individuals" (Elder-Vass, 2007, p.27). Emergent properties are relational since they cannot exist outside of the relationship, while social context emerges from an individual's thoughts and actions.

Individuals are not merely products of society; they are active agents within it, enabling the mediation of structures, thus influencing their environment (Vogler, 2016; Dyke, Johnston and Fuller, 2012; Archer, 2003). Continuity, therefore, is illusionary, as society changes over time, although social relations endure. Agents and agency remain positioned within a multiplicity of social relations, despite societal structures and the distribution of material cultural resources influencing people's day-to-day

experiences (Archer 1998). A person's circumstances and subsequent engagement remain within a network of relations and relationships, where "...structure and agency shape and reshape one another over time" (Archer 1998, p.123). According to Adkins (2003), reflexivity and the liberation of agency from structure opens up opportunities to move beyond established conceptions and behaviours of status, class, and gender (see also Archer, 2010a).

This morphogenesis/morphostasis appears as a consequence of agency. The differing relationships between social system constituents exercise causal powers through social agents (Archer, 2012). Archer's (1990 and 2010a) morphogenesis/morphostasis tiered model identifies the interplay between structure and agents as a process of: Structural Conditioning (T₁) → (2) Social Interaction (T₂) → (3) Structural Elaboration (T₃), resulting in either morphogenesis T₄ (Transformation) or morphostasis. T₄ (Reproduction). Within morphogenesis, structure and agency are transformed as a feature of the process, a "double morphogenesis" (Archer, 1995, p.247). Archer (2010a, p.276) comments: "As it reshapes structural relations at any given T₄, agency is ineluctably reshaping itself in relational terms: of domination and subordination, of integration, organization, combination, and articulation". Morphostasis occurs as an outcome of habitual behaviour and low reflexivity levels, operating within structural and cultural domains (Archer, 2010a).

Reflexivity, according to Archer (2007, p.4), refers to the "the regular exercise of the mental ability" and our ability through internal conversations to mediate the external environment (Vogler, 2016; Archer, 2007). By examining our values, goals, priorities and our social context world, we become active agents (Brock et al., 2017; Vogler, 2016; Dyke, Johnston and Fuller, 2012; Archer, 2003). This influences the development of subjectivity, our experiences of the world, and our concept of a meaningful life (Dyke, Johnston and Fuller, 2012). According to Archer (2003), the diversity of reflexive deliberation is explained through four modes of reflexivity conversation, which correspond with particular modes of living – communicative, autonomous, meta and fractured.

Communicative reflexives require the attention and endorsement of others, resulting in relationship maintenance and the duplication of existing modes of being and living. Autonomous reflexives support individuality; thoughts are independent of others and thus positioned towards socio capitalism principles. Meta reflexives remain positioned within ethical frameworks – individuals' focus is on moral as opposed to individualistic concerns and objectives, supporting engagement in ethical and political fields. Fractured reflexives occur as individuals are unable to engage in reflexive deliberation due to disruptive life events. However, as Dyke, Johnston and Fuller, (2012) highlight, individuals are not locked into specific reflexive modes, although they may demonstrate a dominant mode with several secondary modes (Vogler, 2016; Archer, 2007). These may change according to the context of an individual's life course (Dyke, Johnston and Fuller, 2012).

Agency, as outlined within Archer's three-stage model (1995, 2007 and 2010a), considers that:

- Structural and cultural properties objectively shape the situations that agents confront involuntarily, possessing generative powers of both constraint and enablement.
- These relate to the subject's own collection of concerns, subjectively defined within three orders of natural reality: nature, practice, and the social sphere.
- Through reflexive deliberation, individuals produce a course of action, which determines their practical projects according to their objective circumstances.

As previously mentioned, an individual's reflexivity operates within an intrapersonal context. Their inner dialogue reflects upon potential outcomes, enabling the deliberation of constraining and enabling factors. Decision making is neither random nor arbitrary but reflexive, affecting how people view, navigate and exist within the world (Archer, 2007). Thus, human interaction has the potential to reproduce existing structures – "morphostasis" – or instigate structural change with the emergence of new structural properties – "morphogenesis" (Archer, 2007, p.25). Archer (2007, p.39)

asserts that: “each and every one of us has to develop a (working) relationship) with every order of natural reality: nature, practice and the social”.

Higher education appears as an arena for change, a site of morphogenesis, since students leave university with a different level of knowledge, skills and agency than when they entered and, therefore, different levels of capability and agency. University life engages students in new ways of thinking through contact with a wider social network.

Donati (2015, p.353) argues that to be human is to be “relational in nature”, situated within a “socio-cultural context”, developed within “time and space”, where identities develop as a result of a reflexive awareness of self. Therefore, relations present as a macro phenomenon engaging within micro, meso and macro spheres of operation and interactions within the world. Consciousness and relationality are mutually constitutive in the development of self. Personal subjectivity develops from a consciousness of mind and perceptions of our conceptual self, positioned within the social world. The concept of individuals as “relational subjects” (Donati, 2015, p.356) acknowledges that individuals’ internal and external relations gain power and legitimacy. Personal and institutional benefits develop due to reciprocity and alignment, legitimising positions and facilitating influence (Papilloud, 2017). Directed and undirected relationships may be present within networks. Directed relationships represent a relationship between dyads although directed; this may not be reciprocal; for example, Alter One may perceive friendship, whereas Alter Two does not (Crossley et al. 2015). The tie’s value is significant, revealing the level of communication and the value placed on this interaction by the alter, an indication of sentiment relations (Tsang et al., 2017).

3.3 Ego Network Analysis

All human beings operate within the social world; an essential feature of being human is our ability to connect with others through social interaction, resulting in the formation of social networks.

Ego networks enable a focused approach to analysing this, recognising that people form part of a larger social structure, while examining individuals' personal networks. These interactions are meaningful and powerful, forming part of our daily lives, affecting our engagement with others, developing our identity and our concept of future selves (Perry, Pescosolido, and Borgatti, 2018). However, not all interactions have the same level of influence. This may depend on a person's notions of self, motivations, the importance they ascribe to the communication, their perceived levels of agency and the time in which the interaction takes place. Ego network analysis provides an opportunity to examine the importance, constraints and effects of social connections within a relational context. As previously discussed, age, sex, ethnicity and socio-economic status operate as determinants of an individual's educational opportunities, but social relations also structure these opportunities and outcomes (Carolan, 2014).

Rather than focusing on an individual's attributes, a network analysis perspective considers the characteristics of pairs of individuals (dyads) engaged in social relations and re-occurring interactions (Brass et al., 2014; Dominguez and Hollstein, 2014). Social actors may be individuals (human actors), families, organisations (corporate actors), or political actors, with actors engaging with others (alters) within a network (Crossley, 2015; Dominguez and Hollstein, 2014). Ties connect actors to others (alters). Connections operate at a range of levels, including behavioural interactions, physical links, affiliations, evaluations (friend or enemy), formal relations (who has authority over the other) and mobility (place and status).

A social network consists of sets of actors. Each actor has a set of attributes, and a set of ties identifies at least one relationship among its actors (Carolan, 2014). Ties may be direct (ego to alter) or indirect (between alters); ties may be strong or weak. Strong ties offer a closeness of a relationship, an emotional connection and commitment, an investment in time and reciprocity. In contrast, weak ties offer a more superficial relationship, with limited contact within a one-dimensional relationship (Perry, Pescosolido, and Borgatti 2018; Granovetter, 1973). This is not to say that a

tie's strength equates to its inherent value, i.e. a strong tie has a more substantial intrinsic value than a weak tie. In fact, strong ties may result in homogenous networks consisting of family and close friends, which may adversely impact the development of the ego's views and opinions and access to a more extensive social network. Weak ties and a diverse network may expand the availability of resources and information (bridging capital). This can foster access to a broader social network, thus extending an individual's social capital (Peters; Finney and Kapadia, 2019; Knight et al., 2017; Perry; Pescosolido, and Borgatti 2018; Anthias, 2007; Granovetter, 1973). However, O'Connor and Gladstone (2015) argue that network opportunities only become available once individuals become conscious of the opportunity, the individuals within the network and the associated ties. Individuals may develop inaccurate perceptions of the value of the network based on their previous experiences of inclusion and exclusion., According to O'Connor and Gladstone (2015), those experiencing exclusion are far more likely to experience distortion in their perceptions of the network's density and the levels of social interaction. Socially excluded individuals appear to perceive networks as having a higher density and higher levels of social interaction. This subsequently affects their engagement in the network and exacerbates their feelings of exclusion, denying them potential network opportunities and access to collective capital (Anthias, 2007). According to Anthias (2007, p. 4), resource mobilisation is critical in acquiring social capital through access and use of the social network (access, hierarchical positioning and advantage) and the use of mobilisation strategies instigated through disadvantage and exclusion.

Social capital as a concept has a long history, however, in contemporary terms it represents the work of three seminal theorists: Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1990) and Putnam (1993). Multiple commentators from a range of disciplines have continued with this work, resulting in various definitions and a variety of differing perspectives (Engbers et al., 2019; Fine, 2001). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p.51) define social capital as "...the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition". Bourdieu views social capital as an individual's property, providing access to power, which is then used to gain access to actual or

virtual resources. In contrast, Coleman (1990 and 1988) views social capital from a functional perspective, as a matter of public good, in which benefits are gained by those invested in it and by all those within the social structure. According to Coleman (1990 and 1988), social capital may be created or destroyed due to directed action or as a side effect of that action. Putnam's (1993) concept of social capital is centred on civic and social engagement, seeing social capital as embedded in an individual's ability to engage with particular groups within society. Thus, Putnam equates a decline in civic engagement and social capital to four specific features: trust (people and institutions), standards of reciprocity, networks, and voluntary membership of organisations.

The lack of a clear definition, changing perspectives, and the obsession with social capital leads Fine (2001, p.ix) to contend that social capital can simply "be any aspect of the social that cannot be deemed to be economic, but which can be deemed to be an asset". Social networks, ties of mutuality and trust, and other social connections constitute a specific form of resource. Therefore, offering an opportunity for the acquisition of social capital, with strong ties based on the closeness and emotional intensity enables a greater access to resources (Peters; Finney and Kapadia, 2019; Perry; Pescosolido, and Borgatti 2018; Knight et al., 2017; Anthias, 2007; Granvotter, 1973). However, as Fine (2010) comments, the question remains as to whether the formation of the network enables access to resources and social capital, or if social capital allows access to the network, or both.

Networks are formed as a result an arena of independencies, with dyadic ties connecting through nodes of commonality (Crossley, 2015; Brass, 2014). Categorical node attributes enable the establishment of network positions, the distribution of network ties and an identification of the strength of these ties. Each of these recognise each of the others as an influential factor. Network density, the level of connectedness and the level of social support between alters, is influential, according to Perry et al. (2018). High density (network closure) equates to higher levels of influence by alters and higher conformity levels (bonding capital), as opposed to weak ties, which

demonstrate higher levels of adaptation and resilience (Perry; Pescosolido, and Borgatti 2018). Dense networks enable higher levels of information dispersal, the faster establishment of social norms, social control and social support (Dominguez and Hollstein, 2014; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). Bonding capital forms when individuals develop strong relationships within their social network. However, structural holes may present individuals with the opportunity to gain access to privileges such as information, power, and influence through a system of brokerage (Burt, 1992). Bridging capital develops as individuals engage in information and resource transfer, thereby gaining access to other networked groups. Individuals who can gain access to diverse networks are more likely to ameliorate the adverse effects of disadvantage and crisis (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). However, an actor may or may not exploit or manage the benefits and constraints developed within the network. They may also be unaware of particular elements within the network which influence the ties and make up that specific network (Brass, 2014).

Crossley (2015) maintains that identifying all those involved in the network is essential, despite presenting a methodological challenge. This is because, although network boundaries may not be transparent, identifying relevant nodes and ties is necessary to establish research boundaries (Crossley, 2015). A failure to identify all those within networks may result in random and systematic errors within reporting and analysis in the case of participant identification, as discussed within the methodology section below. Furthermore, inaccuracies of memory may result in individuals failing to identify the full range of people within a network. A quantitative study is likely to impact on the analysis of relations, interactions and network structures. Networks are dynamic temporal entities, as their structures and processes evolve and change (Perry et al., 2018). Within the context of education, specific networks such as friendships may be maintained within one educational setting but disappear in another, for example, in the transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education.

Although a potential challenge, a qualitative approach that captures the perceptions, actions and interpretations of a research participant may provide more flexibility.

Within qualitative network analyses, each participant makes decisions concerning the disclosure and relevance of information, enabling an examination of their network practices, perceptions and interpretations (Dominguez and Hollstein, 2014). Network analyses allow the identification of those who appear present and influential; however, qualitative approaches cannot offer a precise measurement of social relations. A qualitative approach with interest in the “lived experience” acknowledges dimensional change within relationships, context and level of influence, a means of discovering “what is going on” within a network (Crossley, 2009, p.21).

Ego net analyses support a consideration of the levels of influence during education transitions, enabling an examination of the concepts of constraint and support within nodes and networks. As Behtoui (2015, p.949) notes, “social capital can play a vital role in determining an individual’s social position and... is synonymous with power”.

It is acknowledged that, within a retrospective study, although individuals may identify those they feel were influential, this is positioned outside of real-time. This may increase their objectivity, however, the reconstruction of the past may also distort the reality of the situation.

3.4 Transnational Identity

According to Crossley (2015), culture is relational and entrenched in human interaction. Cultural development requires the ongoing interaction and coordination of individuals, who engage in the process of reciprocity and configuration (Papilloud, 2017; Crossley, 2015). Social interactions shape individuals as social actors (Prandini, 2015), with high levels of interaction and communication resulting in cultural reproduction and the development of cultural norms. Unsurprisingly, frequent relocation results in limited investment in local communities and a higher level of interaction with family at home, thus changing the configuration of personal networks for migrants (Djudeva and Ellwardt, 2020). Knight et al. (2017) contend that strong family ties and transnational social capital develops weak ties in a host country, which

change with the development of friendship networks within the host country. However, the local is influential, since migratory levels and integration levels act as contributory factors in network ties and network development (Knight et al., 2017).

Crossley (2015, p.74) argues that “coherent disinformation” may occur where existing rules and resources fail to meet the situation’s requirements, leading to social and cultural transformation. Through a system of homogenisation and holism, society fails to recognise cultural diversity, viewing culture as a substantive object while omitting to acknowledge the links between culture and society. Crossley (2015) maintains that this results in stagnant uniformity and a failure to either recognise or accept diversity and cultural innovation. The maintenance of transnational identities and support through transnational ties remains a source of support for ethnic groups which continue to feel marginalised by the dominant culture. Cross-border links, facilitated through technological innovation and globalised communication networks, facilitate support across geographical borders (Bilecen, 2016). However, as Crossley (2015) suggests, extending the opportunity does not necessarily result in changes in behaviour or outcomes. The relationship between cultures, institutions and host countries remains one of complexity.

The hierarchical positioning of each transnational group affects their social positioning, with disadvantaged ethnic groups experiencing a further reduction in their access to resources (Lin, 2004) and in their opportunity to make cross-border links (Behtoui, 2015). Within a history of disadvantage and lower hierarchical positioning and status, particular groups such as Bangladeshis appear to be more severely disadvantaged than others (Khattab and Hussein, 2018; Scandone, 2018; Fisher and Nandi, 2015; Cheung, 2014; Platt, 2011). Disadvantaged groups seem to lack the personal connections within transnational and wider social networks, thus impacting on their access to cultural and economic support (Lin, 2004; Bourdieu, 2001). However, the nature of access and support also differs across class, gender, ethnic grouping and first- and second-generation migrants (Khattab and Hussein, 2018; Behtoui, 2015; Cheung, 2014). It is intersectional and relational.

Fine (2001, p.24) notes the complexity of the issue, arguing that the whole area of social capital is messy, particularly in its relationship to outcomes. The lack of a consistent definition, its application to a variety of fields and its failure to engage in discourse which considers social capital as a cause and an outcome of social capital (resources embedded in social networks) depends on the history of the minority group in question, and its position within the hierarchical social space (Behtoui, 2006; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Transnational social networks may provide protective mechanisms. Conversely, they may also deliver undesirable outcomes (Fine, 2001; Woolcock, 2000), including patriarchy.

3.5 Cultural and Relational Networks

Although their relational nature is evident, the complexity of relationships and individuals' operation within society is also apparent. Bourdieu's (1990) concept of cultural capital observes that culture appears as symbolic, entrenched in meaning that influences our representation in the world (see also Crossley, 2015). Within a multicultural society, the dominant culture and cultural norms establish dominance through civic and social institutions (government, education), establishing cultural dominance and societal norms as an act of symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1997). Concepts of cultural capital have been used to explain the outcomes for minority groups in a range of contexts, including employment and education. However, Modood (2004), citing Bourdieu, argues that research fails to engage with the complexity of ethnicity and culture, instead depicting cultural homogeneity.

The expectations of a dominant society amplify the pressure to conform. Individuals may engage in cultural brokerage, assimilating societal norms and maintaining cultural identities, or alternatively rejecting the dominant society's norms, intensifying isolation and marginalisation. While recognising that the type of social network is influential, the "tie" of a relationship (friendships, animosities, economic exchange) also influences an individual's behaviour within the network. Social actors ("nodes") engage in a web

of social relationships with a range of others (alters), making single and multiple connections with those within each network. Social actors engage in a multiplexity of relations within numerous systems, with relational ties being developed or limited depending on access to these systems. Boundary setting and the denial of access reduce the opportunities for extending the network and developing extended ties. Restrictions imposed on the network's size and diversity consequently affect the type and strength of network ties.

Cultural influence may remain limited by the connections made within the network, the types of contact, the value placed within the particular cultural element, and social actors' capabilities in supporting the transmission, with weaker ties being less influential than stronger ties (Crossley, 2015). When communities maintain a strong cultural identity, adolescent ties are sustained within their primary networks, supporting the culture's ongoing maintenance. Friendships predominantly develop within the network, providing emotional and social support within the network (Herz, 2015; Belotti, 2008). Irrespective of their functions (instrumental, emotional or social), supportive relations appear homophilic according to age and gender (Perry; Pescosolido, and Borgatti 2018; Herz, 2015).

According to Belotti (2008), friendship groups present within a four-level framework: the small clique, the company, the core, and the contextualised network. Within network analyses, a clique is identified as a minimum of three nodes directly connected to each other, who have no other connections within the network (Tsang et al., 2017). The clique is generally small, consisting of those with an extended personal history; they meet regularly, providing emotional and social support. The company provides companionship, meeting daily and having a similar educational background. The core consists of an older tied, cohesive subgroup providing multiplex support, with less dense ties appearing at the periphery. Finally, the coherent subset consists of small independent cohesive subgroups providing specialist support. Belotti (2008) enables the mapping of friendship groups within a defined framework and recognises geographical local as a predetermined friendship opportunity. However, Belotti (2008)

fails to acknowledge ethnicity or culture as a dynamic within the network. Ethnicity and culture may affect friendship opportunities, the development of the core, the ties' strength, and may influence support levels.

Despite dense and closed communities displaying a higher propensity for retaining and replicating traditional ideas, cultural separation can lead to cultural innovation – as seen within languages' development. However, cultural hubs which have contacts and ties with more dominant cultural hubs may increase in speed of diversification due to personal interactions and inter-hub communication (Crossley, 2015). Innovation gains permanence once its meaning is attained, a consensual agreement is reached, and it becomes accepted. Crossley (2015) argues that the construction and reconstruction of social identities, gender, ethnicity and class which is based around social positioning, plays out in social and cultural spaces through social interaction. A reconceptualisation of social positioning and taste is, therefore, possible within these spaces through the process of social interaction.

3.6 Trust Relationships

However, trust is an essential factor within relational networks. It develops as a result of the opportunity to develop relational ties and interpersonal communication. According to Putnam (1993, p.31), trust supports the “efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions”, as confidence grows in other people’s communication due to an actor’s perceptions of their reliability, honesty, and actions. When this is reciprocal, confidence in others’ communication results in mutual trust (Bilecen and Cardonia, 2018). Edwards (2004, p.6) argues that the building of social capital within families creates a “dense social structure of cohesive norms, extensive trust and obligations”.

Conversely, a lack of trust results in the actor and alter failing to confide in each other, impacting on the strength of the relationship and their capacity to be influential within an interpersonal context. Trust is timebound; it necessitates spatial and emotional

closeness and a shared understanding between those in proximity to each other. Individuals with shared values are most likely to trust each other. Ballard (2002, p.12) highlights that an individual's culture provides a "set of ideas, values and understandings which people deploy within a specific network of social relationships to use as a means of ordering their inter-personal interactions"; thus, ties of reciprocity are generated within an arena of familiarity. This familiarity provides the foundations of a trustful relationship, a common bond of understanding, and possible experiences. Specific patterns of ties enable the development of trust and collaboration facilitating individual and collective action (Coleman 1990). However, opportunity for conflict increases as the social network increases as the network becomes larger; however, according to Herz (2015), social strife is more likely with partners and parents, occurs more frequently between genders, and diminishes with age.

Bilecen and Cardonia (2018) studied Turkish migrants in Germany and noted the correlation between closeness and support. Higher perceptions of closeness resulted in higher levels of support, although this was predominately informational as opposed to financial. However, their work also identified the provision of higher levels of support from higher transnationals; thus, the density of ties, coupled with the positioning of the ego between nodes, operates as a contributory factor. They found that women provided higher levels of support to both men and women, with a higher level of information flowing between older alters and younger alters, and that higher levels of financial support were evident from younger to older alters, a probable reflection of the migrant labour market (Bilecen and Cardonia, 2018). However, in as much as transnational links and network ties enable support, they may also generate social conflict (Perry et al., 2018; Herz, 2015). The larger the numbers within an ego network, the greater the opportunity for social conflict. According to Herz (2015), social conflict is more likely with partners and parents, occurs more frequently between genders, and diminishes with age (Herz, 2015).

Having a transnational identity may increase the opportunity to develop a trust relationship, where ties are utilised within an arena of "mutuality and trust" (Anthias,

2007, p.788). However, trust operates within a complex relational system in which kinship, experience, concepts of power, hierarchy, status and identity – our own and others’ – influence our notions of trust. Membership of a particular transnational or ethnic group guarantees neither common values or interests, a bonding tie (common values or interests), or the development of a trust relationship (Anthias, 2007). Anthias (2007) argues that social variation, the identification of fixed boundaries and the value placed upon network bonds can have an adverse effect and, therefore, fail to increase social capital.

Selfhout et al.’s (2010) study of late adolescents identified that friendship dyads are frequently developed within a wider socially-interconnected dyadic. As previously noted, this may limit opportunities for socialisation and the formation of bonds outside of the transnational group. Selfhout et al. (2010) identified four key features in cohesive friendship networks: the opportunity to develop, the selective nomination of friends (out-degree), shared directed ties (reciprocity), the formation of triadic relationships (transitivity), and the distance between pairs of alters (geodesic distance 2). When applied to the context of ethnicity and adolescence, the *opportunity* may be available within school.

However, not all schools are multicultural, and opportunity does not necessarily mean that inter-ethnic friendships develop (Boda, Néray and Snijders, 2020). The selective “nomination” of friends appears to be a defining factor. Boda, Néray and Snijders’ findings (2020) correlate with Tajfel’s (1974), observing that negative intergroup relations are initiated through group favouritism, social competition, group perceptions and self-esteem. Thus, nominations across ethnic groups are diminished or sustained with those who are acknowledged and identified as being within an individual’s ethnic group. Friendships appear to develop within an intersectional dynamic, with gender, ethnicity and social class influencing nominations within an out-degree and degree context (Livingston and Sefton-Green, 2016). Thus, within contemporary society, the network becomes the “dominant cultural logic” (Livingston and Sefton-Green, 2016, p.2).

3.7 Chapter Summary

The chapter considered the theoretical framework of relational sociology and Archer's notions of relation, reflexivity, and culture to develop agency and identity. It explored the concepts of morphostasis and morphogenesis.

An examination of Crossley's social network or ego net analysis, focusing on reciprocity and nodes of interaction, provides an analytical tool that can be used to understand the type, strength and significance of relational and network ties.

The following chapter outlines the methodology and methods used in this PhD research. It provides a discussion of ethics, sample selection, research strategy and the method design for data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four: Methodology and Methods: An Overview

4.1 Introduction

This section provides a brief overview of the methodology and the methods used within this PhD study. All research was conducted over eighteen months, from February 2014 to April 2015, with three groups of students who were all in their second semester of study. The decision to focus on the second semester acknowledged that students might find transition stressful due to: their new surroundings, commencing a higher level of study and the increased level and expectation of work. Each participant was either studying on the Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies or had progressed from the Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies to the final year of the BA (Honours) Early Childhood Studies degree.

Participants included those in the first year of a Foundation degree (FdA) in Early Childhood Studies, the second year of an FdA in Early Childhood Studies, the final year of a BA in Early Childhood Studies, and students completing their BA degree in Early Childhood Studies. The research was conducted within a single institution, a new, small, widening participation university offering vocational degrees.

4.1.1 The Research Approach

This PhD study utilised interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), an interpretivist approach that seeks to understand a defined sample – in this case, young British/Bangladeshi women studying at a widening participation university. Interpretative phenomenological analysis is a qualitative approach that enables an examination of individuals' lived experience within the "real world" (Larkin, Shaw and Flowers, 2018, p.183). Smith (2011, p.9) explains that, "IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of personal lived experience, the meaning of experience to participants and how participants make sense of that experience. It recognises "intentionality", and individuals' connectiveness with the world" (see also Vagle, 2018). This research seeks to understand people's experiences and their conception of

identity. My recognition of human experiences' complexity and positioning within a historical, chronological, situational, emotional and relational context initiated an interpretative approach. This phenomenological approach recognises that each individual's social world shapes their experience and that understanding of the experience impacts on how they perceive who they are. A phenomenological approach offers the opportunity to achieve "rich" descriptions and meaning-making (Vagle, 2018; Geertz, 1973). This exposes individuals' expression of the multiple axes of discrimination they may be experiencing as young Bangladeshi women. IPA enables an engagement with the "double hermeneutic" and acknowledges that the researcher and participants are intrinsically linked within the process of sense-making. The use of a double hermeneutic therefore maximises the opportunity to make sense of the participant's sense-making (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Phenomenology is an ideographic approach focusing on the particular, acknowledging the unique experience of individuals and their sense-making of a specific phenomenon.

A challenge within research is the question of the data collection method. The expression of personal experiences may be challenging, and direct questioning may fail to expose the nuances of those experiences. The use of visual research through photo-elicitation supports the generation of communication and the expression of the emotions felt during this event. The use of prompts guides the research direction, ensuring that the interview continues to meet the research aim. However, the method promotes flexibility and enables the participant to reveal experiences that resonate with them. This enables an exposure of detailed personal accounts and thus helps maintain the research's integrity. Each participant engaged in "conversation with a purpose" with minimal intervention by myself as the researcher. The conversation direction was directed by the photographs and the participant, and guided by the interviewer. The telling of stories and the production of rich interpretative data contributed to the corpus of research within the field. The exposure of personal narratives is significant within the context of the research, this exposes the lived experiences of young bangladeshi women, from their perspective , as opposed to the dominant discourse of discrimination and the lack of opportunity agency Therefore,

photo-elicitation obtains a great depth and quality of description, based on the experience of each participant. Each of these points is discussed later in this chapter.

Using narrative enquiry, the research acknowledged the validity of individual experiences and the construction of their reality. According to Fivush et al. (2011), autobiographical memory offers an expansion of simple recall (who, what, where and when). Through our own engagement in the thoughts, emotions and evaluation of an event, we decide what it means and why it is important. We recollect past events and autobiographical memory in our daily lives, developing these into a meaningful narrative (Vanaken et al., 2020). It is recognised that the development of identity is fluid, ongoing and positioned within a field of representation (Brah, 1996; Hall, 1989) and within a social construction.

Within a cultural context, identity is recognised as a state of “becoming” as well as of “being” (Hall 1989, p.225). This PhD research acknowledges the “bi identity” of British Asians (Pichler 2007, p.207), transitioning across national boundaries, and the duality of cultures (Franceschelli and O’Brien, 2015; Modood, 2004; Brah, 1996; Hall and Du Gay, 1996). Franceschelli and O’Brien (2015, p.702) argue that negotiating identity involves a “polarisation between the non-Muslim British society and the domestic field of the family”, with the development of multiple dispositions. Young people come into close contact with a range of influences that play out in multiple arenas. Identity is neither fixed nor transient; but engages with the constant revaluation of self (Ybema et al. 2009).

An individual’s identity is subject to internal and external influences evident within an arena of agency and power. Higher education attainment is consistently associated with ethnicity (Kesler and Schwartzman, 2015), with low attainment ascribed and presumed for certain ethnic groups. This influences our concepts of ability and identity, which cannot be homogenised within broad definitions and cultural stereotypes. Student identity changes within the feature of their interpretation, and they take aspects of this identity with them to university. Students within the institution often

enter with low academic self-confidence levels, believing that they have limited ability. Developing their confidence within the university and moving away from cultural stereotypes enables shifts in identity for Asian women (Bhopal, 2011a, 2009) and supports their active participation in constructing identity (Housee, 2004).

Tyrer and Ahmad's (2006) study reconfirms the repositioning of self, with Muslim women providing a picture of their lives at the university as a multifaceted interplay of positions and responsibilities. Within the context of Early Childhood Studies, family and cultural expectations sit in tangent with students' studies and experiences of equality, power, agency and voice. However, individuals mediate and facilitate shifts in identity within a social-historical cultural and political structure. This may lock some individuals into particular forms of subjectivity (Alveson and Skoldberg. 2000). Students mediate their beliefs and identity within an ecological system of home, community, education and the broader social environment. Thus, this research seeks to investigate how young Asian Bangladeshi females construct their own identities.

4.2 A Case Study Approach

This section explores the use of a case study approach within the context of this research. The complexities of human experiences and human behaviours, situated within the context of the social world, present the researcher with the question of which methodological and ontological position to take. This research acknowledged the construction of multiple realities and, as discussed above, utilised a qualitative approach. I selected a case study approach as this provides:

“...an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.”

Yin (1994, p.23).

Taking a case study approach provides opportunities for a detailed examination, a study of complexity within an educational field (Stake, 1998), thus acknowledging Flyvberg's (2006, p.223) comment that: "Predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs."

Case study research requires the establishment of boundaries, a framework in which the research is positioned. This research considers a programme of study within a new university situated within a large city, conurbation. Each element represents a context in which the student experience is located: an arena of interplay requiring interpretation and a consideration of the relationship between the institution, individual and external factors. The research is ideographic, requiring a purposive sampling approach in the identification of the homogenous sample (Creswell, 2013). However, it recognises that the participants of this study do not represent all young Bangladeshi women studying on a Foundation degree, as a case study offers a "poor arena for generalisation" (Stake 1998, p.7). The research considers individual experiences of a specific group studying a course at a particular time, establishing the case study's boundaries (Stake, 1998). The case study examines how each participant shapes their representation and construction of identity and behaviour within the context of their interactions and relationships with individuals and communities with whom they are in contact. It explores the interplay between ethnicity, class and gender, and considers if these experiences change at set transition points during or after the course.

Generalisations may need to be made," or "grande petit" endorsing the details of the individual case (Stake, 1998) through the recognition of multiple realities (Thomas, 2011). Through the interpretation of a case study, a researcher explores and represents reality as experienced by the individual. However, generalisations may homogenise human experience, failing to represent either the diversity of experience or the potential spectrum of experience. Thomas (2011, p.12) advocates for using Gadamer's notion (1975, p.269) of a "horizon of meaning", making an interpretation within the context of "one's own experience", that is, interpretation within phronesis. My interest lies in exposing individual voices which are positioned with an individual's

reality, by developing a framework that enables an understanding of the complexities of the young women's lives.

4.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

As mentioned above, this PhD research utilises interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), an ideographic approach that enables the exploration of a phenomenon. Three methodological approaches influence interpretative phenomenological analyses: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. First, the philosophy of phenomenology examines the lived experiences of the individual from their point of view. Descriptive phenomenology examines the experiences as opposed to interpretive phenomenology, which seeks to reveal the embedded meaning in the lived experience it is presented. Secondly, hermeneutics explores the methodological approaches to interpretation, within the context of IPA, analyses follow interpretation. Finally, idiography focus on the particular and how an individual experiences phenomena (Smith et al. 2009).

Smith (et al. 2009, p. 34) contends that IPA offers a “ participant orientated approach” that examines and analyses the lived experiences of individuals. IPA enables the examination of the experiences of numerous participants experiencing similar phenomena and the exposure of a “common meaning” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 76). Students' perceptions and experiences offer opportunities for “a rich, transparent contextualised analyses of the accounts of the participants” (Smith et al., 2009, p.55) with thick descriptions (Vagle, 2018; Geertz, 1973). This facilitates entry into the student's “lifeworld”, recognising being in and part of their world, where the self is inseparable from the world, as Dasein, as being in the world (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 370). Lifeworld entry relies on considering the active consciousness of individual experience and paying attention to those experiences within the background of life, within the world itself, thus offering a holistic approach within the context of research. Vagle (2018, p.21) comments, “When humans experience the world... they find themselves in the experience”. According to Habermas (1997), the constituents of the lifeworld (culture, society and personality) are entrenched within the communicative act, where communication enables orientation within the world. The world is reproduced through

the functions of communicative actions; however, functional disturbances can interrupt this reproduction. The resulting crisis evokes questions concerning the legitimacy of commonly-held beliefs, practices and collective identities.

IPA offers an opportunity to expose and analyse matters arising within the context of a student's narrative and support the student's recognition as an experiential expert (Smith et al., 2009). According to Smith et al. (2009), the IPA researcher has a dual-position. Firstly, as a human being, not unlike the participant, they endeavour to make sense of experiences using their available resources. Secondly, they attempt to access the experience through the presented narrative of the experience while also viewing this through their experiential lens. I recognise that, as human beings, we know the world but also know about the world. Our operation within it is already immersed in the familiar that may be hidden or invisible to us (Dreyfus, 1991). Roth and McRobbie (1999, p.238) make the point that:

“Disclosing life worlds necessitates the identification of an individual's ontology, that is, an identification of objects, events, forces, etc. which make the person's world, and therefore in which she acts and reacts.”

Krey (2002) extends the work of Habermas, arguing that reality operates within three spheres: culture, society and personality, each of which conveys a level of influence upon the individual. Krey asserts that **culture** enables shared knowledge and interpretation, **society** ascribes set rules and standards, and **personality** enables speech, leading to action through a series of “competencies”. Layder (2006, p.227 and p.228) contends that Habermas failed to fully explore subjectivity by concentrating on “bureaucratic logic”, arguing that, in fact, the social world and objective world are “interfused”, appearing as individual features of the whole, offering an analytical feature and operating as a reality. This requires a consideration of an individual's lifeworld, examining self-identity, the impact of social norms and a review of existing knowledge. Thus, the study of intentionality enables a view of the connectedness of

individuals with subjects and objects (Vagle, 2018). This provides opportunities to explore and challenge commonly-held assumptions and the intersectionality of social action and social structure.

Layder's (1993 and 1998) third way, the adaptive approach, recognises a stratified framework of macro and micro phenomena, structures and institutional phenomena which are coupled with behaviour and interaction, thus, offering the potential to identify causal mechanisms within a causality framework. The use of orienting concepts requires keeping an "openness" to the emergence of ideas within the research process and a recognition of social life's objective and subjective nature (Layder, 1998).

Smith and Osborn (2007, p.53) maintain that a two-stage analysis is required, a "double hermeneutic", since this enables a researcher to explore data from an "insider perspective", with participants attempting to make sense of their world and the researcher trying to make sense of the students making sense of their world. The hermeneutic circle's underpinning principles consider the importance of understanding, exploring the relationship between the part and the whole, considering that understanding is contextual (Smith et al., 2009). This PhD research intended to take a double hermeneutic stance, noting Nørreklit and Nørreklit (2006) point that the use of IPA as a research method does not necessarily enable a researcher to develop a greater understanding of the person being studied, nor is this its intent. Nonetheless, IPA as a research method does provide opportunities to build a greater understanding of what the person might be saying.

4.4 Feminist Perspectives and Intersectional Analysis

The research is explanatorily positioned within the real world, facilitating the telling and interpretation of stories while recognising the construction of reality within a cultural-historical framework. This offers an exploration of narrative connections and explanations of self within a social-cultural dynamic. I would argue that the current rhetoric of gender equality has done little to rectify the issues of disadvantage, and

that the legislative assurance of diversity has not provided full equity for women. Within a diversity context, this has added resonance, since this lack of recognition situates women's equality within a male-constructed, dominated and legitimised framework. This is further exacerbated by attempts to homogenise the experiences of women and men within a legislative framework. Within this system, male and female needs are considered concurrently, thus failing to recognise gender discrimination, existing structural disadvantages, or demonstrating an acknowledgement or understanding of what women consider important. The development of a "universal" womanhood places women of "colour" at an increased disadvantage, where womanhood and femininity are legitimised within a white European model.

Women's lives cannot be explained through an individual examination of either gender or race and class alone; however, intersectional analysis offers an opportunity to consider these complexities. Collins (1990) contends that a consideration of interlocking models of oppression provides an opportunity to develop new ways of thinking and to reject the additive approach, thus offering a non-hierarchical matrix of domination. Intersectional analysis arose as a reaction to the homogenisation of women's experiences and the predomination of a single unit of analysis. The dimensional nature of women's subordination and the interrelationship of gender, race, ethnicity and class remains evident (Denis, 2008). The term intersectionality was used initially by Crenshaw in 1989 and Hill Collins in 1991 to describe the overlapping categories of discrimination. This has been increasingly deployed as a method within feminist studies to explore the impact of "simultaneously interlocking oppressions" (Brah and Phoenix, 2004, p.77) in examining and analysing the complexity of women's lives. Brah and Phoenix (2004, p.75) explain:

"We regard the concept of intersectionality as signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts. The concept

emphasizes that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands.”

Within the context of this study, intersectional analysis enables an examination of race, gender, class and ethnicity, and the impact these have on everyday practices and experiences. Brah and Phoenix (2004) identify the intersections of race, class and gender as offering a complex picture of women’s lives, proposing that power and privilege influence the experiences of individuals. Within education, numerous studies have highlighted the relationship between social class and educational outcomes (Lauder, Brown and Halsey, 2009; Reay, 2005; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000), followed by race and gender (Brah and Phoenix, 2004).

The issue of cultural capital remains at the forefront of discussions of academic success. Reay (1998) considers that notions of educational achievement are consistent across social classes. , middle-class parents offer a “compensatory” education through support and confidence in challenging current systems.

However, intersectionality presents us with a series of challenges, with Winker and Degele (2011) and Denis (2008) commenting that little has been written concerning intersectional methodologies. Agustin (2013) notes that intersectionality can be both inclusionary and exclusionary. Inclusionary intersectionality frames difference positively, as opposed to exclusionary, which recognises one type of inequality at the expense of another. This creation of victims further strengthens inequalities. These points directed the nature of the method of data collection used within this PhD research.

4.5 Life Story Narrative

“Narrative researchers **collect** stories from individuals... about individuals’ lived and told experiences.”

Creswell (2013, p.71).

Narratives enable us to make sense of our own life and identity. Narrative researchers engage in exploring stories, obtaining data with thick descriptions. Creswell (2013) comments that narrative research is best suited to capturing detailed stories from a small number of individuals, which has resonance within the context of this study. Anthias (2002) contends that narratives offer a locational dimension to storytelling, a fragmented snapshot of how the narrator places themselves in terms of the social categories of gender, ethnic and class at a particular time and space. Thus, they represent the history and positioning of the individual within society. They draw on collective stories and signify our ordering of experiences within societal norms and conventions.

I acknowledge Czarniawska’s (2004) view that the telling of stories becomes an act of performance. This facilitates an understanding of an individual’s construction of identity, enabling an understanding of their perceptions of self and self-efficacy. The construction of identity is enacted within everyday practices and our interactions with others (Bathmaker and Hartnett, 2010). The story represents who the participant was at the point of transition when data was collected during this research.

The use of IPA supports the development of questioning utilising a “sideways” approach. I also recognise that the research method exposes the temporal nature of reality and identity (Bold, 2011). It is this reality that enables the possible questioning of dominant narratives that is at the heart of the research. Stories may lead us to unexpected places where the personal becomes part of the political and social world (Bathmaker and Hartnett, 2010). A narrative approach requires an in-depth

understanding of the individual and the context of their life story, providing opportunities to convey experiences and identify meanings within a person's life.

Therefore, this type of research facilitates chronological mapping in conjunction with story creation and the exposure of significant events, people and relationships within the individual's lifeworld. Consequently, the concept of "re-story" becomes an integral facet within the interview. My research examined several individuals' everyday experiences, following the phenomenological tradition; although several points followed a chronological journey, others did not (see Appendix 4, interview transcriptions).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and Sikes, cited in Bathmaker and Hartnett (2010), raise the issue of the ethical researcher. Sikes, cited in Bathmaker and Hartnett (2010), considers that writing about people's lives becomes an act of autobiography where our experiences, lives and positionality become linked. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p.78) offer the notion of the "art of ethical description", which outlines a four-pronged approach of context, narrative, focus and consultation. The issue of ethics is considered later in this thesis. However, I utilise a "revisiting" system to assist the accurate portrayal and exposure of voice.

4.6 Interview Methods

This section discusses the range of primary research methods available within an interpretative phenomenological study.

Close consideration was given to the type of research methods available within a phenomenological framework, which necessitates the collection of rich data and personal narratives that expose the individual's experience. Therefore, the method chosen for this phase of the research was interviewing. This enabled one-to-one

interaction, which supports the opportunities for participants to explain their own experiences, behaviours and motivations. Traditional forms of interviews were rejected due to the following concerns. Interviewing requires a skilled and experienced individual to ensure that the information produced meets the research aim and is free from bias. The interviewer can consciously or unconsciously “direct” the interviews and content, leading to limited and biased data based on the available material. Interviewees respond to the questions they think they are being asked, leading to confusion and inaccuracies in data (Tuckman and Harper, 2012).

Therefore photo elicitation was chosen as a research method instead, in recognition that research is a social activity. Photographs engage individuals in social relations, enabling the exposure of internal and external narratives and rich data (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011; Banks, 2001).

4.7 Photo-Elicitation Interviews

A photo-elicitation interview utilises the medium of photographs to facilitate data generation, where photographs offer the stimuli for discussion. A reflexive photographic approach, “auto driving”, enables participants to choose their photographs, enabling a participatory approach (Milligan, 2016) and an opportunity to view their lives from a distance (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011, p.7). Photographic elicitation moves from a formal interview to a conversation with a purpose, eliciting spontaneity. It becomes relational and privileges the interviewer’s access to the personal world, thus engaging both parties in sense-making. The interviewee describes and provides the associated story, with the interviewer questioning whenever clarification is required (Harper, 2012; Margolis and Pauwels, 2011). The development of trust within the context of the research is an important factor when exploring sensitive issues. Therefore, the use of photographs can support this through rapport building. Given my concerns about insider/outsider research, I chose photo-elicitation interviews as they support the reversal of power where the interviewee

becomes the expert, enabling the space interpretation (Harper, 2012; Margolis and Pauwels, 2011).

Photographs stimulate memory, revealing conscious and unconscious thoughts, enabling individuals to discuss their thoughts of the past and issues not necessarily portrayed within the photograph (Warren, 2018). According to Banks (2001), photographs operate within three different social contexts: first, the context of the original production – the where, when and who. Secondly, the context of the history of the photograph – where it is kept, and by whom. Finally, the context in which the photographs are employed.

Photo elicitation provides an opportunity to negate bias (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011). Participants guide the conversation through their choice of photographic material, their decisions on the order of discussion and the stories they choose to tell about their choice of photograph (Harper, 2012; Banks, 2001). The interviewer continues prompting them to expose attitudes, beliefs and emotions, but forfeits direction, instead using facilitation. Questioning may be necessary to ensure that ideas are clearly understood and not open to misinterpretation and inaccuracies. The direction of the discussion may also need facilitation to ensure that the aim of the research is met. According to Glaw et al. (2017) and Harper (2002), the use of photographs encourages individual expression and can elicit hidden memories which are relevant to the research. Subjectivity is present through the interviewer's interaction with the participant, the use of verbal and non-verbal responses, and facilitation with the use of prompts.

The use of photographs highlights some ethical issues. The use of family photographs raises questions concerning the sharing of information and ownership. Therefore, photographs are not shared outside the interview or published as part of the research (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011). While the use of photographs can generate rich data, this also can lead to inconsistencies across interviews (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011).

Therefore, it was necessary to ensure a consistent approach to facilitation and the use of prompts, as the range of photographs provided by participants differed.

4.8 Ethics and Ethical Issues

Given the nature of the research and my interest in students' individual experiences, ethical standards were considered at each stage of the research process to ensure that participants' interests were safeguarded. Therefore, the research complies with the principles identified by the third edition of the British Educational Research Association: Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011), the University of the West of England's ethical guidelines and the Data Protection Act (1998). This considers the importance of transparency, ensuring individuals' awareness of the study's content, consent, voice and representation, risk, harm, the right to anonymity, data storage and confidentiality, disclosure, and the right to withdraw. Research should be reliable and of the "highest standard" (BERA, 2011, p.29), thus safeguarding the researcher's integrity, the research community, and the institution. In the event of the participants requiring further information or raising concerns, names of the appropriate point of contact were provided, my own and my research supervisors. Ethics ultimately relate to the researcher's integrity, avoiding the temptation to suspend what Kushner (2000, p.151) defines as "normal ethical assumptions". Ethics are situated within the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, within interview dialogue and interview conduct. The emergent nature of ethics remained at the forefront of my mind during each interview. Shaw's (2003, p.10) comment resonated with me: "reliance on codes alone risks compartmentalising ethical aspects of research. "Therefore, the process of ethics continues within the context of analysis; the revisiting of data supports this, although over-familiarity may also lead to inaccurate representation. The revisiting of ethics and ethical values throughout the research process was paramount, particularly since the disclosure of personal stories had the potential to raise several intimate details. This needed to be dealt with sensitively and professionally.

Kvale's (1996) concept of virtue ethics concedes the relational nature of research, focusing on ethical behaviours, on the researcher's reflexivity and moral principles. Feminist literature offers an alternative model of ethics of care, considering that ethics are situated based on "reciprocity, diversity and responsibility, and an awareness of power" based on a framework of care. Mauthner (2002, p.23) argue for an ethical framework which considers:

- Who are the people involved in the ethical dilemma raised by the research?
- What is the context of the dilemma, and what does it raise personally and socially for those involved?
- What are the personal and social locations of the people involved?
- What are the needs of those involved, and are they interrelated?
- Who am I identifying with, and who am I posing as other?
- What is the balance of personal and social power?
- How can we best communicate the ethical dilemmas to those involved?
- How will our actions affect the relationships of those involved?

Given the nature of this research, the participants' methodology, the framework of analysis and my concerns of being an "intercultural interloper," this framework identifies the need for reflexivity throughout the research process. Mauthner (2002) proved particularly useful within the context of the study.

Initially, I obtained individual voluntary verbal consent; this was followed by an email to each participant with a resulting confirmation of participation. Before the interview, the participants were given participant information and written consent forms (see Appendices) Participants were free to withdraw from the research at any point. Consent was ongoing throughout data collection and analysis, up to submitting the first draft of the final completed work (BERA, 2011) (see Appendix 6).

Institutional and participant coding systems-maintained confidentiality and anonymity enabled the identification of each participant for the research purpose whilst still maintained anonymity of the participants. Smith et al. (2009, p.53) argue that confidentiality is impossible since research findings are viewed by others; therefore, “representation” is a more satisfactory term, which acknowledges the representation of voice within the research process.

Safeguarding the individuals’ interests was inherent within the research process. The exploration of student experiences involves dialogic engagement through interviews. As a researcher, I have a duty of care to ensure individuals’ safety and well-being, so participants were informed prior to the interview that disclosure of information that placed any individual “at-risk” required disclosure to an appropriate person. It is recognised that within interviews, communication becomes an active process through which information is exchanged, and new epistemic standards are negotiated and exchanged, as Origgi (2008, p.1) contends:

“...by constructing together new reasons and justifications that are heavily influenced by the moral, social or political context”.

Epistemic responsibility involves adjusting the interpretation of conversations to meet our epistemic needs. Researchers do not look for “true” information, but relevant information that is worthy of their attention. The development of a trustful culture includes expecting a truthful dialogue, with accurate interpretation being inherent within the process.

Entering the student’s world is not power-free; researchers set the interview parameters and the conversation (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2005), and hierarchical tensions may exist between student and tutor (Greenbank, 2007). Silverman (2013) argues that a range of power differentials require close consideration. Issues such as

trust and the exacerbation of social differences (race, gender, class) are difficult to predict. Brinkmann and Kvale (2005, p.11) comment that:

“Qualitative researchers may nevertheless fail to be objective—ethically and scientifically—if they fail to situate their means of knowledge production in power relations and the wider cultural situation.”

I am aware of the topic area’s sensitivity, my position as a white researcher, and an “intercultural interloper” (Napier and Leeson, 2016, p.63), therefore consideration was required to address “othering” and the endorsement of existing social stratification (Delgado, 2011). However, as Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) highlight, the identification of other is complex – as a woman, my position may present as neither insider nor outsider but as one of between. I acknowledge that, given the research’s nature, the effects might be felt after research completion (Silverman, 2013), therefore participants were given opportunities to debrief following the interview process, with additional support available via institutional support services and academic tutors.

4.9 Research Participants and Sampling

The selection of research participants focused on specific criteria, which included disciplinary characteristics, (Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies), ethnicity (Bangladeshi females) and age (18-25).

4.9.1 Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment to the research acknowledged a qualitative approach utilising a purposive sampling strategy (Blaikie and Priest, 2000). Data was collected at a specific point, with a specified group of individuals, exploring participants’ academic journeys to a moment in time (Denscombe, 2017). This research does not strive to offer generalisations that can be applied to the whole population. It

considers the experiences, feelings, and emotions of a group of individuals within a phenomenological study. The recruitment of research participants can be problematic, the targeted groups where a defined population, by ethnicity, within the sample (Miller and Salkind 2002). Two challenges were evident, firstly the sample size and secondly in recruiting the participants. A sampling frame was established as the thesis focused on a particular phenomenon (Cresswell and Plano Clark 2011).

Participants were approached from the 2013/2014 cohort of students and included individuals who were enrolled in the first and second year of the Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies programme, and individuals transitioning from the Foundation degree to the final year of the Early Childhood Studies degree. A series of briefing sessions informed students about the nature of the research, and invited students to participate in the study, enabling students to make an informed decision concerning participation (Thomas 2014) . I also contacted post-qualification students via the Alumni Society, providing information on the nature of the study, along with opportunities for discussion.

Although it is presumed that a sample size should be as close as possible to the whole of population of the researched group (Flick 2014), within the context of the research this was unnecessary. Given the nature of the methodology, interpretative phenomenological analysis, the use of photo elicitation and the collection of rich data, a small sample size of nine students was determined (Silverman, 2013). A pilot study was established to identify any areas of sensitivity or improvement (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2009). This encompassed new entrants, students transitioning to the final year of the degree and post-qualification students. Participants in the pilot were recruited from the third-year because I felt that conducting a pilot study with new students to the institution would be inappropriate. I developed an interview schedule, focusing on the Honours programme's final year, before progressing to second-year transition students and ending with the new first-year group. All the response to briefing was enthusiastic. The cohort for the interviews was established quickly via

self-selection on a first-come-first-served basis. The numbers of candidates remained small but met the requirement for the sample.

However, despite several new entrant students agreeing to participate in the research, I was unable to engage three participants from this group, with students failing to attend interviews. Denscombe (2017, p.109) argues that qualitative research requires “flexibility and adaptability”. Therefore, given the quality and the richness of the data collected from interviewed participants, I decided that the study would continue without first-year students. However, an opportunity then arose to include a first-year student who met the criteria and had volunteered. Therefore, the schedule was again amended to reflect this.

4.9.2 The Disappearance of Bangladeshi First Years

An explanation for the failure is necessary. This section explains the failure to recruit the full cohort of students from the first year of the Foundation degree. To support this discussion, I will offer a reflective review of my experience with this programme.

When I first took up employment at the university, I immediately became Programme Manager for the Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies, which was in its early infancy, having run for one year. All aspects of the course required further development; this included systems and processes concerning student support and programme materials. During this tenure, I developed positive relationships with staff and students. Recruitment, retention and achievement improved across the programme, resulting in a 99% progression onto the degree programme’s final year. A promotion resulted in a role change, where I no longer managed the programme. I continued to teach the final year of Honours degree and, therefore, had contact with progressing Foundation degree students.

The programme was taken over by a new staff member within higher education with extensive experience in further education. The staff member had a comprehensive understanding of the type of students the programme attracted and was viewed by staff and students as approachable.

As a programme manager, I developed a personal standpoint on managing the programme and the students. This was based on developing a good relationship with students, in conjunction with providing clear guidelines concerning attendance, timekeeping and professionalism. I believed that this relationship enabled a sense of belonging and fostered the idea of responsibility and professionalism. Attendance was monitored; this enabled early support if problems occurred. This is important because initial poor attendance can perpetuate a cycle of non-attendance, resulting in low achievement levels and withdrawal from the course. First-year students were encouraged to self-monitor, thus enabling independence and self-management in the programme's second year.

My understanding is that widening participation students find attending university a stressful experience, feeling like "strangers in a foreign land" (Jehengir, 2009, p.2), traversing multiple worlds. Support at home may be limited when families have little university experience and where students feel pressured to succeed. My close contact with students provided opportunities for conversations concerning any concerns or difficulties they were experiencing.

However, the new staff member had a different approach to the students, believing that they would engage in positive self-management behaviours since they were adults, in addition to considering that high levels of accessibility and an open-door policy would ensure that contact would be made if problems developed.

First-year retention plummeted, with the university experiencing the lowest retention level since the introduction of the Foundation degree. Retention remained poor across all ethnic groups. However, at the end of the year, despite Bangladeshi students constituting 8% of the first-year cohort, only one Bangladeshi student remained on course. I described this phenomenon as “ghosting”, as students seemed to disappear from the course across the semester. When contacted, students provided various explanations, including a lack of enjoyment, choosing the wrong course and family issues. Fortunately, the remaining student offered to participate in the research, resulting from discussions with friends from the course’s final year.

It is difficult to surmise why retention within this group of students was so poor. However, student engagement and retention are dependent on the university’s approach, activities and student engagement. A student sense of belonging is critical for university and student success (Moore et al., 2013). It is also evident that individuals from ethnic minority groups have higher vulnerability levels in the non-completion of studies.

Day students have limited opportunities to engage in the entire university experience, which affects their opportunity to develop wider social networks across the school and university. This can affect the development of peer relationships, friendships and their levels of institutional habitus.

The allocation of a male tutor to a first-year group may also have had resonance, since Bangladeshi students may have been reluctant to approach a male member of staff to discuss personal issues.

All participant’ within the proposed and actual sample were initially enrolled on the FdA Early Childhood degree. They had the opportunity to transition to the degree programme’s final year, had successfully transitioned to the Honours year, or had

already completed the final year of the BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies degree programme.

Table 1: Proposed Research Schedule

Capture Point	Subjects (Students aged 18-25)	Classification	Sample size	Capture Date
Pilot	All groups Final year BA	Pilot	1	February 2014
1.	BA Completion	Alumni	3	March/April 2015
2.	FdA Second Year	Transition	3	April 2014
3.	Final Year BA	Final year BA	3	April 2014
4.	FdA Year One	New entrants	3	April 2015

Table 2: Actual Research Schedule

Capture Point	Subjects (Students aged 18-25)	Classification	Sample size	Capture Date
Pilot	FdA Transition/ Final Year BA	Pilot	1	February 2014
1.	One year post-BA completion	Alumni	2	April 2015
2.	FdA Second Year	Transition	1	April 2014 – Sept 2015
3.	FdA Transition/ Final Year BA	Final year BA	2	April 2014 – Sept 2015
4.	FdA Year One	New entrant	1	April 2014

4.10 Research Methods

Given the nature of the methodology, interpretative phenomenological analysis, consideration was given to various research tools. These included questionnaires,

focus groups, diaries and email discussion. However, given the nature of the interview participants, and the need to collect detailed and rich accounts, I determined that photo elicitation provided the most appropriate research method.

4.10.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The use of IPA requires that the researcher engages with the phenomena under consideration through detailed, in-depth interviews (Smith et al., 2009). This use of narratives exposed within an interview context enables entry into the lifeworld of an individual. Thus, developing an understanding of the individual's unique perspective becomes the focus, as opposed to focusing on the importance of the question itself (Miller, 2000). As previously discussed in Chapter Three, photographic elicitation offered the opportunity to enter into the world of the participants while enabling a sustained engagement in the phenomena (Vagle, 2018).

4.10.2 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to ensure the chosen method's feasibility and the capture of appropriate data to answer the research questions. Piloting took place in February 2014 to ensure methodological rigour and the necessary data capture (Doody and Doody, 2015; Yin, 2014; Silverman, 2013). A research briefing was conducted with those that matched the criteria for the research. Research participants self-identified, and a random selection process – which excluded the first-year student – was used to identify the pilot participant.

The pilot interviewee was informed of the study's focus, the research method, and the confidentiality of the research material. The interview was voice recorded, having dismissed video recording as it was considered too intrusive, given the photographs' personal nature. Field notes were not taken, as it was felt that this would distract from the care and attention given to the interview participant. Clarification was provided on the interview process, time, and the photographs' role within the context of the

interview and written consent obtained. I requested that the interviewee provided two photographs of themselves, one as a child and a more recent photograph. These could include any single or group pictures of their choice. The time and location were discussed, with the participant choosing the university as the location. I arranged for an appropriate private space at the designated appointment time. Email and telephone contact details were provided to ensure that the interview participant could contact me directly. This was to ensure that any questions and concerns could be dealt with promptly, for example, if they needed to change the day, date, or time of the interview, or wished to withdraw from the research.

The pilot study sought to enable a participant-focused narrative and the collection of rich data. A set of semi-structured questions were developed, as were a set of prompts. However, as an IPA approach focuses on the participant's experiences, it is anticipated that the responses may not follow predicted pathways of discussion. It is crucial to develop a rapport with the interviewee (Smith et al., 2009), as this facilitates the development of a conversation with purpose and supports participants when they are uncertain.

I considered that the use of photographs from different stages of an individual's life would enable the telling of a personal story in a chronological order. However, I acknowledged that an individual might reflect on an earlier issue. The pilot study raised several interesting points – the interviewee was unsure about which photographs to choose, so brought a range of photographs of themselves and their parents both prior to migration and marriage in Bangladesh.

These photographs provided a historical and cultural context, pre-and post-migration, and a richness of data within a historical and cultural context. The photographs were discussed in chronological order, firstly examining their parents' photographs, followed by their earliest photograph, through to their most recent photograph. The early photographs enabled the interviewee to discuss other people, which appeared far less

intrusive than discussing themselves. This helped to create a relaxing atmosphere in the early stages of the interview and supported the subsequent discussion (Smith et al., 2009). The interview lasted 21 minutes and reached a natural conclusion. The participant indicated that they had enjoyed the process. The time had passed very quickly and, although it was discussed, the participant made no further suggestions concerning the development of the process.

The pilot study was encouraging; the method elicited rich data and helped inform the main study procedures. Following the pilot study, it was decided that participants could choose the number of photographs they brought to the interview. This would enable them to make their own decisions on the photographs' significance, thus placing the decision making within their control. However, it was decided that this should include photographs in which they featured, to ensure the interview's focus continued to meet the research aim. Questions appeared relatively superfluous within the pilot study since the photographs elicited large amounts of information, requiring active listening and information assimilation (Yin, 2013). Prompts ensured that the conversation was encouraged and directed.

Due to the pilot's success, the richness of the data and the lack of changes to the interview process, the pilot study has been integrated into the main study's findings.

4.10.3 Interview Experiences

Prior to each interview, consent was once more obtained and the right to withdraw discussed. Each interview presented as a conversation with purpose. Each participant chose the order of the photographs they wished to discuss and the direction of the conversation. Questions were kept to a minimum but were used to ensure consistency across the interviews and ensure that they met the research aim. The discussions appeared frank, punctuated by laughter by the participants and myself, and continued to elicit large amounts of rich data.

4.10.4 Transcription

IPA requires a verbatim transcription, where transcription becomes part of the interpretative process, providing an opportunity to identify aspects of social interactions that may be selected for transcription. (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Smith et al., 2009). The pilot interview was, therefore, transcribed verbatim, enabling an immersion in the data, listening, recording, and internalising of the participant's words (Bragg, 2011).

Audio recording facilitated a revisiting of the interview process. This enabled a familiarity with the presented narrative, an important factor given the richness of the data and each transcription's extensive nature. Given my lack of experience with transcription, I was surprised by the length of time it took to transcribe and the volume of data produced. The transcription took approximately nine hours, and the transcribed work filled twenty-two pages. Consequently, two pages of transcription are included within the appendices of this work (see Appendices). Transcription enabled a constant revisiting of the audio data to ensure accuracy and fidelity in presenting the data. It was decided to continue with full transcription for all interviews. This enabled immersion in the data. I developed a data analysis system within the IPA philosophy but utilised a structured systems approach.

4.10.5 Data Analysis

Immersion in and revisiting of the data are recommended, with analysis being as part of an inductive cycle (Smith, 2007). IPA analysis support sthe use of a range of strategies, enabling a flexible approach to data analysis (Smith et al. 2013; Biggerstaff and Johnson, 2008). This immersion starts directly at transcription, with transcription forming part of the iterative process. Smith et al. (2013) consider that this is challenging for the new researcher. Therefore, a series of guidelines are offered to support this process. Seale (2012), Smith et al. (2009) and Biggerstaff and Johnson (2008) outline

a four-stage approach as a means of analysing the available data. However, Smith et al. (2013) offer two further stages in support of this process.

Stage One involves an in-depth reading of the text, enabling an “intimacy”, an immersion with the narrative (Phoenix 2008, p. 102). Subsequent re-reading enables notetaking and the identification of possible areas of interest. Smith et al. (2009, p.82) recommend a “slowing down”, enabling a reflection and a “bracketing off” of personal feelings during the interview (see Appendix 2: Reflective Diary). However, Vagle (2018, p.18) argues that Dahlberg’s “bridling” offers an opportunity for a reflexive stance, in which preconceptions are restrained and attended to throughout the research process, in order to avoid making early assumptions.

In Stage One, the transcription was re-read, and line numbers applied to the transcript. The decision was made to order the data in chronological order, based on the sequence of life events revealed within the interview. At this stage, I accepted that this necessitated review at a later stage of the process, as comments referenced to an earlier stage of life may resonate later. However, as I started to make my initial comments, I recognised that this placed the remarks out of context, failing to indicate the interviewee’s feelings during the interview stage. Thus, this approach was abandoned, and comments were entered based on the description of the experience in “real-time” as they arose within the interview, a system recommended by Smith et al. (2013) (see Appendices).

In Stage Two, initial key themes were identified and clustered; for example, descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments. This enabled possible patterns and correlations to be identified. Smith et al. (2009, p.79) highlight the importance of developing a “dialogue” between researcher, data and knowledge, leading to an “interpretative account” (see Appendices). Smith et al. (2013) also suggest that repetitions, pauses and laughter, and the functional aspects of language also need to be acknowledged and noted within the text. Repeating comments and hesitations in

the speech were coded; for example, the interviewee used the term “you know”; therefore, it was coded to aid transparency and further attention.

In Stage Three, the body of work grew substantially (Smith et al., 2013), as the original data remained central to the work but now contained additional comments and annotations. During this stage, the researcher needs to reduce the information while maintaining the complexity, mapping relationships, making connections and patterns between their notes. Work is no longer situated with the original text but focuses on the notes. The researcher now needs to identify thematic clusters to turn notes into themes, identifying significant comments within each section of the transcript. This is discussed within the emergent theme section of the work. Smith et al. (2013) suggest using chronological listing as a means of identifying themes. This involves moving themes to form clusters, where themes are cut out and moved round in a large enough space, enabling themes to emerge. At this stage, I decided to explore the chronological listing method (see Appendix 5).

Stage Four identifies the interrelationships between themes, their relationship to the master list of emergent themes, complete with an index of relevant extracts from each of the discussants which are used to guide the results.

Smith et al. (2009) suggest two further stages – repetition and emergent themes – but these did not form part of the pilot study due to the absence of comparative data. Stage Five involves the repetition of all the previous stages with the following cases, and Stage Six considers the analysis of emergent themes across cases. This thematic content analysis enables cross-data examination, which draws attention to “what a phenomenon event or social interaction looks like” Rivas (2012, p.367), requiring “theoretical sensitivity” to expose meanings and relationships (Rivas, 2012, p 368).

4.10.6 Emergent Themes

The identification of emergent themes (see Appendices) stage identified potential themes and cross-correlations between these themes. For example, Theme Two (Being alone) correlates with Theme Four (Friends). At this stage, the value of re-reading became apparent. Important themes may have been ignored, and exploratory comments may lack sufficient depth to enable themes to be drawn together.

Abstraction enables the identification of patterns across themes to develop a superordinate theme (Smith et al., 2013). The matching of patterns enables the development of a new cluster with a new name; from the example, the relationship between friends and support becomes informal networks. A sub assumption follows a similar process, where an emergent theme acquires a super-ordinate status, bringing together a series of clearly related themes.

Smith et al. (2013) argue that it is worth examining data for any oppositional relationships between data. For example, the data about educational failure and educational success highlight issues surrounding support.

Contextualisation enables an examination of the connections between emergent themes within the narrative context, allowing a framing to be applied to life events. Within the pilot participant, Amber's narrative, several events had resonance, such as entering the UK, getting married, moving cities. Numeration may help; the frequency of a theme may signify its level of importance. Numeration may also be helpful within the research concerning the number of hesitations within the data; conversely, it may support identifying the level of importance that is attached to a statement through the omission of data where undue precedence may be assigned initially. Within this study, hesitation is identified, as is repetition of phrases such as "you know". Further analysis need to consider their meaning, the contextual relevance, and the number of occurrences (Smith et al., 2013).

Themes can be examined for their function within the transcript; for example, themes may enable an analysis of self-presentation. Amber's story of self is evident in her discussion of educational transitions. Her narrative initially considers, "I don't remember much, I was young". Her later conversation with her parents' ("**how do you know, if you do not try, you don't know**") represents a story of resilience, growing confidence, and agency.

Smith et al. (2013) argue that organising themes in a variety of ways enables the development of the level of analysis, but comments that the researcher should document the methods used in developing their analysis. Smith also suggests that this should be provided as a table to enable understanding of the data.

4.10.7 Pilot Study and Framework for Analysis

The initial analysis of the pilot study's data highlighted the need to develop a consistent approach to the data and its analysis. Therefore, using an IPA and a textual analysis approach resulted in developing a staged approach to data management and analysis. This was developed further between the pilot and the first interview (see Appendices).

4.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter considered the use of an interpretative phenomenological framework within the context of this research. It examined photo elicitation, the chosen interview method, the recruitment of research participants, the sample size and the ethical issues associated with this research. The creation and implementation of a staged system of analysis was also discussed.

The following chapter explores each biography from the subsequent interviews.

Chapter Five: Student Biographies

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the methodological approaches and research techniques used in this study. This chapter presents an analysis of the case study interviews within a Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies at a small widening participation university. The chapter starts with an overview of the course of study and the research participants. This is followed by a detailed description of the seven photo-elicitation interviews conducted with young Bangladeshi women during set transition points during their studies.

Visual images, through the use of photographs, supported the progression and development of each narrative. An examination of the lifeworld offers an opportunity to enter the day-to-day-experiences of individuals as they experience it. Lifeworld entry enables the consideration of numerous sets of information that make up the totality of their experience, from their perspective – a reflection of chronosystems within a life story narrative.

This narrative analysis recognises the relational nature of language, forming part of an intertextual framework (Allen, 2000). Crossley's (2015) network analysis provides an opportunity to examine the importance, constraints and effects of social connections within a relational context. Within an IPA framework, a sideways approach and the absence of direct questioning enabled participant identification of those within their support network. Relational connections are presented through naturally occurring pieces of evidence and as a consequence of the resonance placed upon each contact by these young women. Archer's (2010 and 1998) concept of morphogenesis acknowledges the changing continuity of people's experiences within a social relations framework. A morphogenic approach, according to Archer (2010, p.274), provides "an explanatory framework" for the interplay of structure and agency, in conjunction with enabling the analysis of "social formations, institutional structures, and organizational forms".

These young women's experiences operate within a structure of social and cultural relations, shaping their immediate and future experiences. These outcomes may be transformative or reproductive (morphogenesis/morphostasis) (Archer, 2010). However, they are not passive victims within a process; they use various strategies to navigate, mediate and influence others in their quest for agency. Individuals may change in the process of actively pursuing their goals and in response to changes to the accepted social order, a process of double morphogenesis (Archer, 2010). They offer an insight into the wider concept of transitions within a morphogenetic/morphostasis framework. These narratives referenced their past, present and future concepts of self within an individual, familial and societal context.

Through an interpretive phenomenological approach, the six-stage analysis process identified key themes that were then explored in greater depth. Interviews captured students' subjectivities, securing a particular opinion in a specific moment in time, offering a representational chronosystem. These views are not presented as being representative of all young Bangladeshi women's experiences but offer an insight into the lived experience of these particular women. This analysis considers critical moments during their education, changing concepts of self and the network of support available at each crucial point, intercultural mediation, and navigation through a process of self-awareness, agency and support.

5.2 Study Context and Institutional Data

The Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies continues to attract students within the research institution despite changes to the funding system and entry requirements. Foundation degree enrolment has reduced since its peak in 2009 in line with the reduction in Foundation degree entrants across the whole university sector. This reflects a decrease in part-time and full-time student numbers (Universities UK, 2015). The Foundation degree has an excellent rate of retention (74.6%) and progression, with 78% of students progressing onto the final year of a BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Studies. This exceeds the national average of 59% (Institutional Data, 2014; Universities UK, 2015). The student cohort is 94.7% female, and Asian females represent 64.7% of the cohort in a local area where 26.6% of the population is of Asian

descent. The majority of students live within the local area (Institutional Data, 2014) and are first-generational entrants into higher education.

Table 3: Research Participants

Participants	Participants' Birthplace	Mothers' Birthplace	Fathers' Birthplace	First entry HE Participant	Prior Education
Bel	UK	Bangladesh Sylhet	Bangladesh Sylhet	Older brother	FE Female only
Asha	UK	Bangladesh Sylhet	Bangladesh Sylhet	Yes	FE Mixed
Aliya	UK	Bangladesh Sylhet	UK	Older sister	FE Mixed
Amber	UK	Bangladesh Sylhet	Bangladesh Sylhet	Yes	FE Mixed
Chanda	Bangladesh	Bangladesh Sylhet	Bangladesh Sylhet	Younger sister	FE Mixed
Charvi	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Yes	FE Mixed
Kyra	UK	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Yes	FE Mixed

(*All names changed within the research)

All participants data self-reported as being Bangladeshi in origin, and all but one of their parents originated from the Sylhet region of Bangladesh. This presented as an interesting dynamic, as participants were keen to contextualise their parents' origins within their country of birth and the district. Therefore, the lived experience has resonance for the interview participants' understanding of their parents and their own identity formation, offering an insight into the relationship between these factors. The composition and development of identity are present throughout the interview data and were examined within a framework of personal, educational and intercultural identity, resulting in the development of multiple identities within their lived experience. All participants are Muslim and, with the exception of Chanda, wear the hijab.

The current chapter is constructed in the spirit of the interviews, offering a narrative approach when considering the participants' experiences. The following analysis is a depiction of their stories. Each story begins with a biography of the young woman, followed by a consideration of these unique narratives, which expose stories of family relationships, expectations, support, experiences of education, personal difficulties, participation and delayed participation in post-compulsory education and university.

5.3 Bel's Story

At the point of the interview, Bel was in the final year of the Foundation degree.

5.3.1 Family Background

Bel was born in the United Kingdom and had a close relationship with her four brothers. Her parents originated from Sylhet in Bangladesh; her father entered the UK at the age of ten. Her mother arrived at age eighteen to marry, unable to speak English, and with no family in the UK. Her husband taught her the necessary basic English skills. Despite Bel's mother continuing to experience difficulties, Bel comments, **"She is so confident now"**.

Bel's parents were business owners, both engaged in the day-to-day running of the business, which was open six days per week. Bel recalled that, as a child she was quiet, and her childhood was happy: **"we had rolls of loose material and shelves ...the shop was not a totally different area; it was part of the household"**.

5.3.2 Experiences of Education

"I was really scared because I didn't know which girls in my class that were going to be there for me."

Bel had enjoyed nursery. She recalled drawing and colouring and described an occasion when she pretended to be the teacher. She recalled leaving year seven being **“so emotional”**, taking photographs of her classmates and teachers. However, she was **“scared”** of the transition to secondary school, although reassured that a small number of girls from her primary school were transitioning with her. She was uncertain about her future after school but thought she might consider teaching.

However, in year eight, her father had informed her that she would not be attending college. She stated, **“I wasn’t bothered”**, as there was no college attendance history within the extended family. However, in year ten, her father asked if she would like to apply. She commented: **“I think it’s because as society goes by, people’s minds change,”** followed by: **“It’s funny, none of my cousins go”**. Bel attended a girls’ college; this choice was affected by the opinions of their relatives, which influenced her father. He said that it was a matter of **“respect and reputation”**, with her father protecting her as the only girl. Her mother was influential in encouraging her daughter’s progression and discussing Bel’s further education with her husband. Bel studied childcare and completed a CACHE Level Three award over three years. On completion of the course, Bel’s father stated that Bel could not attend university.

5.3.3 Getting to University

“he knows me as a person; my mum and him have always said to me, just know where you stand and don’t let people walk all over you.”

Bel worked for a day nursery group for the next three and a half years, realising that the day nursery structure was different. The senior staff and directors were men, but her father appeared unconcerned about this. Initially, she was **“reserved”** there,

however, this improved as she recognised that interactions with men was a **“professional relationship”**. She became experienced and confident at speaking to fathers when they arrived with their children at the nursery. She was promoted to deputy manager and, by twenty-two, found herself promoted again, to manager. She rationalised that she could **“go further”** and found the work **“boring”**. As her parents provided for her, she reasoned that stable employment was not essential. So, without asking her father’s permission, she decided to apply to university. She comments, **“he goes, what are you doing? I said to him I’m filling in an application form for uni. And he looked at me, and he was silent, and he just went ok”**.

Her mother was happy, **“supporting me all the way”**, and informing Bel of the importance of achieving as much as possible before marriage and children. Bel choose the university due to its locality; she was unable to drive, and friends had attended there. She commented, **“it’s funny, once I started college, umm, my relatives then allowed their daughters to go”**, and attend **“mixed colleges”**.

5.3.4 University and Support

Bel chose her course based on her **“passion”**, her previous qualification and her prior experience of working with children, articulating that **“it made sense”**. She appeared open to diversifying her studies in the future. However, she commented, **“at least I will complete one thing”**. Upon completing the Foundation degree, she intended to transition to the final year of the Honours degree and then complete a PGCE. She laughed, stating, **“then hopefully marriage, cos I’m getting older, yeah and then work”**. Bel observed that she had changed since she was sixteen, asserting she had become more confident. She considered that her parents **“praised her a lot”**. She recognised that she and her brother were role models within the family, with her telling the younger children, **“that’s what Bel does”**. She noted the importance of maintaining their pride and expectations.

Bel felt that her older brother provided **“by far the greatest support network I have”**. She identified friends, work colleagues and tutors as part of her wider network of support. Her cousins did not feature as a direct line of support. Bel commented: **“they are busy, they are wife, they are daughter-in-law, they are mother... I’m still able to be childish sometimes”**. Bel indicated that this might change in the future when she has a child. She discussed the changing relationship with her father, saying that he now appears less worried about her safety and more concerned with her opinion and happiness. This may appear as a reflection of her father’s trust, recognising her age, maturity and adulthood.

5.4 Asha’s Story

At the point of the interview, Asha had progressed from the Foundation degree and was in the final semester of the Honours programme.

5.4.1 Family Background

Asha was born in the UK, one of four children. Her father was born in Bangladesh, entering the UK aged 16 with his older brother, following his parents’ death. Asha’s father had not received an education in Bangladesh, although his elder brother had. Asha stated that, **“even though his siblings were educated, my Dad was illiterate, but it don’t mean that he was any less educated”**. Asha appeared proud of her father, stating that he worked hard, engaged in low-paid, unskilled manual labour, living in poor quality housing while supporting his family in the UK and Bangladesh. Asha affirmed: **“He worked really, really hard, he managed to get two freehold houses, and he did so well”**. Asha’s father had married her mother in Bangladesh and then brought her to the UK. Her mother was educated and could read English and Bengali. She described her mother as quiet, suffering from depression and anxiety: **“she thinks someone’s going to hurt us”**, commenting, **“I don’t know if you have come across Bengali people; they are all like that”**. Asha acknowledged that her family had limited opportunities; they were poor and all the children had had a sheltered upbringing. She said that her father was strict and protective of her mother,

as he was **“culturally minded”**. Her father died following Asha’s graduation for her Foundation degree. At the point of the interview, it had been five months since her father’s unexpected death from cancer.

5.4.2 Being Ambitious

“just being around people that are like very ambitious, and it’s helped me so much.”

Asha reflected on the concept of ambition throughout her story. She recalled being eager to read at eight: **“when I was at that age, I was very ambitious... I want to this; I want to do that”**. She wanted to be a teacher and attend university, recalling her observations of students attending university next door to her primary school. Her confidence wavered in secondary school though as she found reading difficult and achieved poor results in her SATs and GCSEs. Asha had support from her sister. She gained confidence in reading, became more involved in her faith, and became surrounded by what she described as ambitious people of faith. She commented: **“it’s so empowering, that like, you should go out and seek knowledge”**, and **“I grew more into my religion, and I was around these cool people”**. Asha’s father featured in her later discussion of success and achievement, wanting to achieve to make him proud of her as he supported her ambitions. She supports her brothers, encouraging them to be ambitious and support the family, as they **“just think about themselves”** and were **“mollycoddled”** by their father. She is also ambitious for her nephews, wanting them to receive a good education and supporting them with their homework.

5.4.3 Experiences of Education

“I think I’ve changed in terms of education and stuff; I think I’ve changed a lot.”

Asha's experience of primary school appeared happy and she was engaged in learning, however, in secondary school, she had started to experience difficulties. She identified herself as a **"dumb child"**, resulting from her problems with reading. She noted that her parents were unable to offer sufficient emotional support, which may have provided the support required to help her develop. However, by year eleven, her reading had improved. She left school with three GCSEs, and she commented that she thought she was going to be **"hopeless"** and **"not benefit anyone"**. She enrolled at college to study an AS Level in Arts as **"I didn't think I was good enough for anything else"**. She left the course after one year, saying that she felt **"lost"** on leaving college, resulting in a two-year gap in her education. It was not clear what she did at this time, although she helped her father with his business. She re-engaged with education following the support of a male and female cousin, both of whom had studied and worked in professional occupations (a dentist and a teacher). They had urged Asha to consider university. With her older married sister's encouragement, she enrolled on a Level Two Childcare course at the local FE college. She liked children and cited teaching as a possibility. She studied at a different college for her Level Three and applied for university. Her university choice was based on: **"I didn't get accepted in any other uni"**. However, she observed that she was happy with her cousins' assurance of the university's affiliation with the local red brick university.

5.4.4. Success and Graduation

"Then as soon as I graduated, in your face, like do you get it."

Asha described working hard on her Foundation degree and **"reading, reading, reading"**. She felt that she had developed personally and academically during her time at university. This had changed **"how she sees things"**, as indicated by her reference to emotional support and attachment. Her family were proud of her graduation from the Foundation degree. Her father **"was so happy... he thought like that people think my family are not educated, think less of my family"**. She reminded me that I had met her father at the graduation ceremony and highlighted his

wish that she should complete the degree. This drove her determination to complete her degree. However, her father's hard work also drives her motivation, and she concluded that her father was her best friend and an empowering force in her life.

5.5 Aliya's Story

At the interview point, Aliya had progressed from the Foundation degree and was in the final semester of the Honours programme.

5.5.1 Family Background

Aliya's father was born in the UK, her mother was born in Bangladesh. Her mother came to the UK with Aliya's grandmother, when she was 18, to marry. During the interview, Aliya described how her mother became lost in the airport on arrival in the UK, resulting in Aliya's grandmother seizing the wrong woman. Her mother understands but speaks limited English, and Bengali is the primary language within the home, although her father uses English occasionally. Aliya is one of eleven children, the fourth oldest. They had lived in several areas within the city, but had moved due to overcrowding and her mother's fears concerning crime. Several of her mother's family had migrated to the UK, settling in London. Her mother's father and mother also remained in the UK, living with the family, although her elderly grandfather had recently returned to Bangladesh. Aliya's mother had attended college, however, her father had not. Her father is employed in retail and her mother is a housewife. They reside in two properties across the city due to the family's size.

5.5.2 Experiences of Education

“cos I was a bit young, and I wasn't sure what to do.”

Aliya discussed how she attended nursery, which she did not enjoy: **“I used to cry”**[She had a much happier experience of primary school, where she enjoyed playing with her friends. She had no thoughts about her future until she began secondary school when, as a result of her younger brother's ill health and hospital visits, she decided to become a nurse. She left school at sixteen to attend college, studying

computing and caring, envisaging a nursing career. However, she changed her mind once **“I realised how hard it is, cos the nurse qualification is really hard”**. She passed but admitted, **“I didn’t get a good grade”**, and left college, registering with an agency, working in day nurseries, and having a **“two-year gap”**. Aliya commented that she enjoyed the practical aspect of the day nursery. However, she quickly became bored and wanted **“something more”**. So she joined a training agency, choosing to study health and social care at Level Three, as a childcare course she was interested in was unavailable. She enjoyed the course, making several **“nice”** friends, achieving a distinction by the end of the course.

5.5.3 Accessing University

“they don’t do interviews.”

Aliya revealed that her sister, who attended the university on the same course, had encouraged her to apply. She was encouraged to apply as the university was small, and her sister told her that the process of gaining a place was easy and quick. Her parents were supportive Aliya commented: **“My mum was really happy, she wants us to do better”**. Aliya considered her sister to be **“stronger than me”**. Her sister had progressed from college to university, influenced by her friends, who had university offers. Her sister provided a support mechanism, giving her confidence to do something she thought would be **“scary”**. Aliya mentioned her happiness at finding university easier than expected. Her family and those within her immediate social network had made her believe that university might be difficult. This appeared to focus on behavioural issues rather than the standard of academic work: **“they kick you out of the lecture for having your phone out”**, indicating her fears of getting into trouble. Those within her immediate (brother) and extended family (cousin) appear to have left their courses before completion. She requested clarification concerning the Foundation degree and progression during the interview, indicating her uncertainty about the programme and its progression benefits.

5.5.4 Doubt, Uncertainty and Progression

“I am happy I go into the degree.”

Aliya admitted that she was uncertain about wanting to progress to the BA (Honours) programme: **“sometimes I did, sometimes I didn’t because some of my friends... would get, not bad grades, but like I would get more”**, however she remained fearful of the final dissertation. Qualifying was important to her. Her friends on the course appear necessary for support: **“all the time we help each other”**. She commented that her family provided no support, “ I do it myself”, as her mother had limited knowledge and her father had little patience.

5.5.5 Decisions and Beyond

“my mum has more control over us, so it’s whatever my mum says”

Post-qualification Aliya wished to take some time out from study as **“the PGCE is hard to apply”** and would be **“too much work”**. She hoped to acquire a teaching assistant position within a primary school, as she had enjoyed this role on a placement. However, she said that, when she had **“grown up”**, she would consider applying for a PGCE and becoming a teacher. Two friends, one a housewife and one completing a Master’s degree, continued to support her aspirations, calling her **“brave”**.

Aliya, who is twenty-four, views marriage and having a family as part of her future. She considers this as a means of achieving **“independence”**. However, her mother is not in favour of marriage for her children. Aliya commented that she is **“attached”** and

wants the children to remain at home with her. However, her father would be happy if they married. Her mothers and sisters will attend her graduation, although she commented that, **“Dad works... I don’t think he will be coming”**. Aliya stated that her mother had high expectations and would compare her degree grade with all those graduating. Aliya considered that their parents were proud of her and her sister, informing others of their achievements, asserting: **“Asian people... they just like to tell people”**.

5.6 Amber’s Story

At the point of the interview, Amber was in the final year of her degree. She had got married in the first year of the course, and gave her age as twenty.

5.6.1 Family Background

Amber was born in Sylhet, Bangladesh and she lived with her parents, two sisters and extended family. Amber’s mother was the first to migrate to the UK, enabling her husband to follow later. Amber and her sisters remained in Bangladesh, being cared for by cousins, and followed three years later. Amber was uncertain of her parents’ level of education. She believed that her mother had little or no formal training, but her father may have attended college. Neither parent was fluent in English; Bengali was spoken within the home. Amber acknowledged that her parents continued to require language support from the family. Three further children were born in the UK - her brother, who was in the first year of a university course, one sister studying for A Levels, and the youngest daughter, who was in the process of completing her GCSEs. The older girls had not received an education in Bangladesh, but Amber explained, **“but if you’re coming from a poor family, then you can’t go to school at all”**. Amber started primary school in year three, aged seven; her sisters started in the first year of secondary school, placing their ages at between ten and twelve. Although all girls appeared to be disadvantaged due to their previous lack of education, the late start was more likely to have significantly impacted on the older girls’ education and future opportunities. Amber’s older sisters had married young: **“as they come from**

an Asian culture, they had to get married early". Amber stated that this was on completion of secondary school at sixteen. Amber continued: **"but with me, I got married late because I think by that time, you know my parents, their mind had changed"**.

5.6.2 Being Different

"I didn't like school at all. I didn't like my teacher, I didn't understand what they were talking about... I didn't know how to eat dinner..."

Amber said that she originated from a **"poor"** Bangladeshi background with limited education in Bangladesh. On arrival in the UK, the family spoke little English, and her parents continued to speak limited English. When she had started school aged seven she was unable to speak English. Amber recognised that her previous experiences and practices were distinctly different from other people in British schools: **"I didn't know how to eat dinner because we used to use knives and forks"**. She appeared to continue to identify with her home country, with this statement followed by, **"but in my country, we don't"**. Amber acknowledged teachers' support in introducing her to those **"like me"**, although she felt they were not like her. She eventually settled into school in year five after making friends who were **"the same as me"**. Amber attended the same secondary school as her sisters, a decision made by her parents. Although **"shy"**, she settled in once she acquired friends. Throughout her story, Amber reflected upon her early life in Bangladesh: **"I didn't know that I would have a chance to come to the UK and get all these things"**. In conversations with her parents concerning college and subject choice, she referred to her struggles, citing her difficulties at acquiring English as a factor in her lack of success.

5.6.3 Decision Making and Education

“I said, well, I’m just going to do this, so I did it...”

Amber left school at sixteen, uncertain what she wanted to do, having failed a maths exam which she understood meant that accountancy was no longer a viable option. She decided to study an NVQ II in childcare at a local FE college. Her parents were happy with her continuing studies, although they were not happy with her choice of course. However, Amber continued with her preferred choice of study after having explained the impact her lack of English had on her studies. She then gained an apprentice position within a day nursery, working there for two years and completing a Level Three qualification. With her confidence boosted and the support of some of her teachers, Amber considered university. However, she started to have doubts – several college lecturers had told her that university was challenging, and she was due to get married. Amber’s husband agreed to her continuing her studies, however, her parents appeared less supportive, suggesting that she should join her husband in London and relinquish her studies. At this point, Amber had defended her decision, telling them: **“I won’t be able to do anything”**, and **“I want to go further”**. Her parents had acquiesced, agreeing that she could remain at home while attending a local university.

5.6.4 Perceptions, Identity and Agency

“it used to be like I’m doing the right thing, but I didn’t use to get there.”

Amber’s presentation of self as a daughter and a Bangladeshi woman changed within the narrative. In the early stages of her story she indicated a lack of agency, citing cultural norms and her parents decision making. She commented on her sisters’ early marriages – **“we come from the Asian culture; they had to get married early”** –

and her lack of choice in secondary school – **“I had to go there, I had no other choice”**. However, Amber stated that her parents perceptions had changed over time. She had married a person of her own choice, at a slightly later age than her sisters, and they finally supported her attendance at university. Amber acknowledged that her parents continued to require her help due to their lack of English, for which they were **“grateful”**. She also described her own developing agency, saying that she supported her younger brother and sisters in their pursuit of higher education and commenting, about her application to college, **“I just did it”**.

Amber revealed a growing confidence level, although this remained fragile and subject to the negative perceptions of others. Despite being offered a place on a full degree programme, she chose a Foundation degree at a smaller institution following a negative encounter with a male staff member. However, within the confines of the FdA, Amber gained an increasing level of confidence, making new friends, having their support, and studying within what she described as a diverse community. Her confidence was reflected in her decision making, getting married at the end of the first term at university despite her parents’ advice that she should not. In her consideration of herself, she commented: **“I have a degree I see myself like, you know”**. Amber explained her hopes for the future, which were moving to London and teaching. However, she acknowledged that this might not be possible without a PGCE. Despite this, she said that she would like to work in a school within nursery or reception.

5.7 Kyra’s Story

At the point of the interview, Kyra had progressed from the Foundation degree; she was in the final semester of the BA Honours programme.

5.7.1 Family Background

Kyra's parents were born in Bangladesh. Her mother had migrated to the UK when she was ten, returning to Bangladesh aged nineteen to attend a family wedding. Kyra had brought many photographs. Several showed her parents, family and friends gathered in a small house in Sylhet, Bangladesh, for a wedding. She explained that her parents had been attending her father's older brother's wedding, had liked each other and decided to get married. Kyra's parents had stayed in Bangladesh until Kyra's mother returned to the UK to receive medical treatment during pregnancy, changing their plan to remain in Bangladesh. Following her mother's return to the UK, Kyra explained, "**We moved around a lot**", living with the grandmother until her father joined the family when Kyra was eight months old. Her father's return initiated a series of moves, initially to the north of England, followed by London and the West Midlands, where the family had settled permanently.

Her mother's parents lived in the West Midlands. Some family members remained "**back home**" in Bangladesh and her brothers live in Manchester. Her mother had received a high school education, then left school at sixteen to work in factories as a "**tailor**" with her sister. This supported the family, as Kyra's grandfather was unemployed due to factory closures. Kyra's mother stayed at home with the children when they were young but had since returned to work in factories. Her father had received a college education, served in the army in Bangladesh and now owned a restaurant. When they were married, Kyra's father had allowed her mother to keep her earnings, stating that she had worked for the money. Kyra recognised that this was the "**first time she had a right**".

Kyra had one older brother, two younger brothers and a sister. The oldest brother was studying for a business degree at university and the younger siblings were still at school. Amber described her younger self as "**snobby**", explaining this by sharing that she cried if she did not get what she wanted.

5.7.2 Experiences of Education

“I felt so alone.”

Kyra had not enjoyed nursery school: **“I used to feel scared”**. She said that her level of spoken English was a **“barrier”**, as she spoke a mixture of Sylheti, Bengali and English at home. Her father often stayed at nursery with her as she would cry if he left. Kyra recalled on one occasion being excited and trying to tell her teacher that it was snowing, but she was unable to find a word in Bengali or English to describe this. However, the teacher failed to understand and a boy she **“grew up with”** translated for her. This supported her in the classroom, and this friendship continued to the present day. She referred to her younger cousins who speak **“only”** English, commenting that it is **“easier for them”**. However, she appeared concerned about their inability to speak Bengali, which made communication with her father difficult. She observed that he speaks **“Paki-Bengali”**, adding, **“they understand it slightly, but they’re not confident in speaking it”**.

Kyra wanted to remain at school for her A Levels and described being **“forced”** to attend the same college as her mother’s sisters outside her local area. Kyra studied health and social care but did not enjoy college. She recalled how her teachers would tell her to become more enthusiastic, and gave her the nickname **“enthusiasm”**, which everyone started calling her. Kyra recalled how one teacher had insisted she read to the class to develop her confidence. This had a detrimental effect on her confidence, resulting in her stuttering, with the teacher **“staring at me”**. Consequently, she only attended classes for one subject, history, which she enjoyed.

Reflecting upon her friendship group, she stated: **“I wouldn’t say they were bad people, but they weren’t like me”**, choosing to smoke and **“hang out”** in the park. She failed to confide in her family, feeling that **“I started the course, I might as well finish it”**. She stated, **“everyone was like that... I wasn’t normal... I didn’t fit in”**,

followed by the comment: “**obviously I don’t need to fit in**”. This resulted in low grades, with the exception of history.

However, later she was reassured by the comments of friends who had stayed at school, who stated that her decision to attend college was the right one.

5.7.3 Attending University

“I always thought I would attend university.”

Kyra’s parents wanted her to attend university, but she was unable to access her university of choice within her local area due to her low college grades (See Appendix 8 Network Analyses). However, she had gained a place at the current institution on a Foundation degree. However, attending a widening participation institution made her feel “**dumb**”. Kyra compared herself to her friends who had completed their A Levels and attended what she considered a more prestigious institution. However, once settled in on the course, she said that she was “**comfortable**” and no longer concerned about what others thought. Following her progression onto the final year of the BA (Honours) programme, she believed she had developed individually and academically, making this a “**good**” option. She acknowledged that she had a good circle of friends on the course and had developed a close friendship with one particular girl, stating: “**I was so happy I found these people**”. She commented, “**I don’t really want to leave, to be honest**”.

5.7.4 Thoughts of the Future

“It’s always been something I wanted to do.”

Kyra shared that she had considered teaching but had changed her mind. She was considering working for a year and exploring starting a Master's degree, however, funding was an issue. Her parents continued to be supportive, saying: **“if you save up as much as you can, we will pay the rest”**. Kyra considered that she had an **“easy life”**, a point her father had raised, and recognised that **“it gets harder”**. This was despite sharing household responsibilities with her father as a result of her mother returning to work. University attendance had influenced her younger siblings; she believed that they would all attend university as **“they have seen us”**. Laughing, she disclosed that she had possibly chosen the wrong degree, stating that **“We are all quite business-minded”**, which was a reflection of her experience of supporting her father to manage his restaurants.

5.8 Chanda's Story

At the point of the interview, Chanda had completed the course and begun employment.

5.8.1 Family Background

Chanda and her older brother were born in Bangladesh, in a village outside Sylhet. She had a half-sister on her mother's side who was born in Bangladesh but was now deceased, and two half-sisters on her father's side, both born in Bangladesh. Chanda also had younger brothers who were born in the UK. Both of Chanda's parents had been married previously. Chanda stated that, due to **“exceptional circumstance”** her mother's parents had encouraged her to divorce her first husband. However, as part of the divorce, custody of her daughter went to her first husband. According to Chanda, this had left her mother **“traumatised”**. Chanda's father was significantly older than her mother and had been previously married in Bangladesh.

The family came to the UK when Chanda was about three, however, Chanda was uncertain of her own age or that of her family members, as births were unregistered in Bangladesh. Neither her mother nor father had received a formal education In

Bangladesh. Her father was engaged in ferry work in Bangladesh and factory work in the UK. Chanda recalled her childhood, remembering her father as **“retired”** and a **“pensioner”**, she was aged eleven when he died. Chanda apologised and described her mother as struggling to read, write and speak English. She described her family as poor, stating that debts had increased following her father’s death. Her older brother had become head of the household at sixteen, which Chanda considered **“young”** for the level of responsibility, surmising that: **“I think he tried, but I don’t feel he succeeded”**.

5.8.2 Experiences of Home

“I don’t think anyone replaced my dad; we kind of got on with it.”

Chanda’s father’s death had left the family in an uncertain financial position. Chanda’s mother did not work, and the family appeared reliant on state benefit. Chanda described living in housing association accommodation, noting that her mother often appeared in debt, **“after Dad passed away, she always struggled to make much money”**. Chanda recalled how her mother had told her to start work or continue education aged sixteen, as she would become liable for Chanda’s rent. Chanda commented:

“she would probably want me to stay in education just so she never had all them debts.”

As highlighted previously, Chanda was uncertain of her actual date of birth. This appeared to bother her: **“your parents don’t feel the need to remember your date of birth”**. Chanda seemed frustrated that her mother was unable to provide this information when questioned. Her father, however, had written her birthday on a calendar in Bengali. She commented: **“if he hadn’t done this, I would have to make**

something up... sometimes it really bothers me". She also appeared concerned by her lack of baby photographs, having only one. She seemed surprised when I disclosed that I was in a similar position, as all my photographs remained in South Africa, commenting, **"no way"**.

At the point of interview, Chanda no longer lived at home, living independently in an apartment. She provided no information about when or why this had happened, although said that contact with her family had broken down. She commented, **"I feel things are coming together, so now I'm back in contact"**.

She described how, when she was younger (she did not state at what age), people (she did not say who they were) had tried to arrange for her to marry a cousin in Bangladesh. Although she was open to visiting Bangladesh, her mother had refused, telling her, **"it would be better if you don't go"**. Chanda appeared concerned about her younger siblings' parenting, asserting that, **"my mother couldn't manage them"**. She had offered to help as she had studied childcare. She recognised that her mother had a different parenting style and would **"constantly adapt"** the advice she provided. Both of her younger brothers had left school aged fourteen, having failed to attend or obtain any GCSEs. One was still out of education, something she considered likely to continue, however, the other was now studying economics at a prestigious university. At the time, her mother's lack of knowledge had made Chanda **"angry"**, however, since **"learning more about me, about my life"**, this now made her **"sad"**. She commented that, if children were part of her future, she would raise them **"differently"**.

Chanda appeared confused by her relationship with her mother. Her mother seemed proud of her achievements **"she says she proud of me"**, while also criticising her: **"you came to England in a ripped dress, and now you think you are too nice"**.

5.8.3 Experiences of Education

“it just seemed the only option because I wasn’t good at anything else.”

Chanda’s early education experience appeared happy, and she stated that she had hoped to follow her brother to university. However, by the latter stage of secondary school, she confirmed that she **“hated”** schoolwork and had decided not to attend college. Following a discussion with the school’s careers advisor, she chose to study childcare as she thought this would be **“easy”**. She left school at sixteen with no formal qualifications.

She attended a further education college at her current institution; however, after failing to meet the deadlines, she was asked to leave the course. She explained that she **“dropped out of college four times”**, eventually enrolling on an apprenticeship programme. Once again, she failed to complete and was unable to continue the course. However, her placement offered her employment as an unqualified staff member, and she worked for six months. She subsequently returned to college to complete a Level Two course in Childcare, once again experiencing difficulties. On this occasion, as her assessments were incomplete as a result of her assessor taking maternity leave, she was required to return to college for an additional term. She eventually achieved her Level Two qualification in Childcare aged nineteen and described her progress as **“slow”**. Chanda then worked as a nursery assistant and commented: **“I mean yeah, a nursery assistant, I hated the word assistant”**. This motivated her to continue her studies, attaining a Level Three qualification in Nursery Nursing.

5.8.4 University and Support

“So, at this point, I was very ambitious. I knew I just wanted to keep going.”

Chanda discussed applying to university with her mother, who had tried to discourage her. She described her mother saying, **“it’s not for you, it’s not something you take an interest in”**, urging her to seek employment instead. Chanda explained this had been confusing, **“because my friend next door went to uni... my mum would make comments like oh she’s in uni”**. Chanda stated that she **“knew”** what she wanted to do, partly influenced by friends with degrees. She completed a GCSE in English and applied to the university to complete a Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies. She remarked that her college choice was the first independent decision she had ever made. Therefore, she had decided to remain at the institution, as **“it’s what I know”**.

She remarked, **“I loved lectures”**, and said that she enjoyed the course but continued to find the work challenging, considering withdrawing once when she received her first set of results. She noted, **“I was disappointed in myself”**, however, she persevered, as **“I don’t want to go back and tell everyone I’ve given up”**. Her next set of work was successful, however, she observed that she had never worked so hard. She passed all the assignments throughout the course, realising that **“I can do it”**. She liked the university’s routine, knowing each year’s schedule, commenting that, **“it always tells you where to go”**.

When asked if she had changed during her time at university, she responded, **“eight hundred per cent changed me, even the way I speak”**, and **“I feel better in myself, I feel proud”**. She stated that she would feel **“embarrassed”** about the direction her life would take without a degree, and remarked that education was important. She

validated the opportunity her father had given her by migrating to the UK: **“within England, education is free; you would be a fool to come here and not take advantage of that”**.

Chanda discussed her mother’s feelings about her successfully completing her degree, **“I think she’s proud of me”**. However, Chanda remained unsure, **“she’s not that fussed over me, but when it’s my brother, it’s a bigger deal”**. It appeared that she had questioned her attitude, with her mother responding: **“I can’t keep praising you to your face”**.

5.8.5 After University

“I’m kinda the same; I’m not always sure, but with education... I have direction. I know where I’m going.”

Since completing university, Chanda had taken sessional employment as an interpreter. Although this work was infrequent, she appeared proud of it, showing me her photograph on her pass card. When asked if she would have applied for the position without a degree, she acknowledged that the degree had developed her confidence, as **“maybe my language wouldn’t have been so good”**.

She thought that before gaining her degree she had avoided talking to people and chose employment based on the premise of **“I know where I am with it”**. This had changed: **“I actually enjoy talking to people”**. She saw continuing her education as part of her future, since, if **“my education was complete, and I have nothing to do... I would really be lost”**. She intended to complete her Maths GCSE retake and work for a year before applying for a PGCE, explaining that she hoped to become a primary school teacher.

Chanda stated that her family were happy with this decision. This was a common role for Asian girls and was viewed as a **“respectable”** profession. She commented, **“I want to be that teacher for someone... I want to be a Miss”**. She intended to return to the institution to complete her PGCE as she felt that staff, expectations, the standard of work and staff were **“familiar”**.

5.9 Charvi’s Story

At the point of the interview, Charvi had completed the course and was employed in sessional work as an interpreter.

5.9.1 Family Background

Charvi described her childhood as **“really happy”**. Both her parents were born in Bangladesh. Charvi’s father came to the UK with his uncle, returning to Bangladesh to marry Charvi’s mother, who migrated to the UK following the marriage. Charvi was one of five. Her parents had initially lived in London, where her older siblings were born, and moved to the West Midlands following their first house purchase. On several occasions, they had moved within the area, eventually settling in a house near Charvi’s mother’s older sister.

Charvi stated that she and her younger sister had never visited Bangladesh, although her older siblings had. She noted that: **“we don’t really know much about it”**, and **“even with me speaking Bengali, I’m not the best”**. She spoke Bengali at home with her father, although her siblings did not. Charvi’s paternal grandmother still lived in Bangladesh, although her grandfather had died. Charvi’s father had received little formal education and worked in restaurants. Charvi’s mother was a housewife, who had died while Charvi was at secondary school. At the point of the interview, she had also recently lost her younger brother. Her older brother had started work immediately after school, her older sister attended college and then began employment, and her

younger brother had attended college before his death. Her younger sister attended the same university on the same course as Charvi.

5.9.2 Experiences of Education

“I was more like, not the teacher’s pet.”

Charvi described herself as a **“good girl”** at school, unlike her young sister, who she described as a **“rebel”**. She enjoyed her schooling, stating that she **“enjoyed high school a lot”**. However, she said that, in retrospect, she would **“do things differently”**. She noted that she had felt **“shy”** and **“not clever”**, and consequently never imagined herself progressing beyond further education. However, a teacher had encouraged her, highlighting that her grades were good enough to eventually progress to university. Charvi commented on the death of her mother and her younger brother, noting that: **“it made me the person I am today”**.

Following support from her school’s careers advisor, Charvi had decided to attend college. She wanted a **“career”**, unlike a number of her friends. Her older siblings had attended college. She attended college within the current institution, studying for a Level Two and Three CACHE award. Charvi was the only member of her friendship group to attend this institution, as her friends wanted to study different topics. Several were unsuccessful at college, as **“things didn’t work out for them”**, with them **“now doing what I did”**.

She enjoyed college and **“liked”** the level of support, commenting that **“you don’t feel like you have to grow up”**. She stated that, **“it was good I went away on my own”**, as this had developed her confidence: **“It made me study a subject I wanted instead of a subject I copied”**. Following a discussion with a college member of staff who disclosed her length of service at college, Charvi concluded that **“it doesn’t**

matter if you stay at the same place". She went on to apply for university at the same institution. When asked if she had discussed this with her father, she replied: **"my dad still thinks we're at college... he still thinks we're small"**.

Later in the interview, Charvi disclosed that her father worked in a restaurant in a coastal area approximately 230 miles from their home. He contacted the family once a month. Charvi stated that, following her mother's death, he had wanted to remain at home, but this had not happened. She stated that, **"we were always independent as children... they could leave and go out, and they would come back, and we would still be alright"**. She acknowledged that this had given her a higher level of independence which would not have been possible had he remained at home, and said that she felt mature for her age.

5.9.3 University and Beyond

"I put a lot of pressure on myself."

Charvi found the level of work on the Foundation degree hard but explained that, in the final year of the Honours programme: **"I put my head down and I thought I want at least a 2:1"**. She felt that she would be unable to access the career she had dreamed of, teaching, without this. She acknowledged **"pushing herself"**, hoping this would **"pay off"**, and said that she was **"shocked"** to achieve this and recalled feeling **"happy"**. She stated that she was happy at the graduation ceremony, despite being sad due to her mother's absence. She explained that her father was unable to attend as she **"only got two tickets"**, followed by, **"my dad wouldn't understand it anyway"**. However, her older brother did attend.

Charvi now worked as a classroom assistant in a SEND school. She had not considered this initially: **"like I had a perception of special school"**. She disclosed that the family had recently moved, following her brother's death from motor neurone

disease. She appeared surprised that she had been successful: **“this was my first interview, and I get my first job ever”**. She had discussed her desire to become a primary school teacher with the head teacher and been told that, after working for three years at the school, she would have the opportunity to train as a teacher through the Schools Direct programme. This would provide sufficient time for her to complete her maths GCSE. She stated, **“I feel I want to learn more while I’m here”**.

When asked if she had any further ambitions, she stated that she would like to get married, **“I want to be a young mum, that’s when I’m about twenty-five”**. She commented, **“just losing my mum; I think I want that family back”**.

5.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter considered seven young Bangladeshi women’s personal narratives at set transition points during their academic journeys. The chapter started with a consideration of institutional data relevant to the Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies for the period 2014-2015, reflecting the period in which the interviews were conducted.

Each story enabled lifeworld entry, the exposure of each participant’s day-to-day experiences as they navigated their journey through education. It explored their journey to university and beyond the course. Each narrative revealed the relational nature of experience, identifying each participant’s relationships with their family, friends, teachers, education and institutions. A consideration of social networks uncovered the constraints and effects of social connections on their experience.

The Foundation degree provides a site of success and aspiration, demonstrating increasing confidence, agency and changing identities as participants progress onto the final year of the Honours programme and beyond.

Chapter Six: The Question of Identity

6.1 Introduction

This chapter draws on the narratives provided in Chapter Five. Seven young Bangladeshi women discussed their journey through education to university and beyond. As outlined in Chapter One (1.4.3), students self-defined as British/Bangladeshi, were aged between 18-25 and were studying at a single institution on a Foundation degree course in Early Childhood Studies. The previous chapter provided a range of comments made by these women as part of a more in-depth narrative interview. This chapter examines the comments raised within the interviews in greater depth to establish how previous experiences of education were instrumental in the development of the women's student identities.

As evident in the transcriptions, a recall of facts on occasion was difficult, because memory is a representation of an event, whose construction is based on what matters to us within a particular moment. As previously discussed within the methodology, autobiographical memory moves beyond recall, providing access to an individual's lifeworld. Each story provides an opportunity for a unique insight into each participant's world, their emotions, the significance they place on the event, their social interactions and their mediation of self and their identity within a socio-cultural context (Fivush et al., 2020). The more significant and meaningful the event is, the more likely it is to be integrated into our memory and our identity. When recalling a memory, we reconfigure and interpret this according to notions of who we were, who we are and who we will be.

6.2 Transnationalism

As discussed in Chapter Five, all of the participants' narratives included diverse stories of migration. These stories highlighted the experiences of parents, grandparents, extended family members and themselves. This section will briefly discuss the experiences of the families and the participants in the context of transnationalism.

Families present as diasporic communities which are engaged in chain and kin migration while maintaining aspects of their social and cultural identity (Ben-Rafael, 2013; Peach, 2006). Large numbers of individuals migrated from the Sylhet region of Bangladesh during the 1970s. This was prompted by factors that included political and civil unrest in Bangladesh and continued changes to UK immigration law, further restricting migration (Alexander et al., 2016; Peach, 2006; Ballard, 1990). Although traditional migration patterns present a dominant pattern of young males, the numbers of women and families also increased. This diversity was reflected in the stories as presented by these participants within the research.

The term diaspora refers to a transnational community that maintain their group identity and their orientation to their native country following dispersal or emigration (Grossman, 2019). Diasporic populations reflect the changing social, economic and political milieux affecting whole societies and individuals' lives. It is acknowledged that, when considering migration, the experiences of individuals and the associated traditions, values and expectations of any identified group remain diverse. The vision of migration is often one of transformation – the transformation of individual lives and those of their immediate and extended family (Alexander, 2013). Attaining financial surety remains paramount and is viewed as a way to establish security for the family within both the host and home country. Thus, migratory activity engages with material and ideological thinking (Rao, 2014). However, as discussed previously in this thesis, this often remains a hope as opposed to a reality. The experiences of new migrants reflect on the whole a reality of unskilled labour, low pay and poor quality housing, where the financial positioning of migrants remains one of instability (Ballard, 1998).

The Bangladeshi population continues to experience higher poverty levels than others across generations (Hoque, 2017; Dyson et al., 2009). For some, migration is viewed as a transitory period as the hope of returning home remains (Zeitlyn, 2014), however, participants' narratives revealed that migration leads to settlement for the vast majority. Only one participant, Aliya, mentioned that a family member had returned to Bangladesh. She commented that, due to her grandfather's age and health, he had returned to the UK, separating her mother's parents across continents. All of the participants, including those born in Bangladesh, self-identified as British/Bangladeshi.

Participants revealed stories of migration based on structural inequalities, poverty and a lack of opportunity to engage in education. Traditional values appeared to continue and develop in the host country's context within a network of social interactions and relations (Prandini, 2015), thus representing morphogenesis (Archer, 1998). The narratives exploring participants' and families' lives detailed the static representations of individuals and cultural groups which fail to acknowledge the diversity of experience, the development of individuals and cultural groups within UK society. As asserted by Vogler (2016), Dyke, Johnston and Fuller, (2012) and Archer (2003), societal and individual stasis is illusionary, since individuals and societies change. This will be discussed later in this thesis, in the context of participants' educational journeys.

The migratory patterns of several participants' families mirrored the traditional pattern of Sylheti migration – several fathers had entered the UK at a young age, worked in mostly unskilled jobs, while maintaining links with their home country and sending money home (Dass, 2013). This practice, according to Scandone (2018), reduces as settlement becomes permanent. The majority of the participants' mothers had come to the UK to get married or proceeding marriage. However, each narrative demonstrates the diversity of migratory behaviours, which is not entirely evident within available research and data. Charvi and Asha's fathers depict what may be considered a traditional pattern of migration (Dass, 2013) – migrating in early adulthood, with their

future wives following them at a later date for marriage. Bel's father had migrated to the UK aged ten, most likely with his family, although this was not clear within the narrative. Kyra's mother had migrated to Bangladesh with her husband, however, illness during pregnancy forced her to return to the UK, followed by her husband. Bel's mother entered the UK, aged eighteen, for marriage. Chanda came to the UK aged three with her parents and siblings, while Amber's mother had migrated to the UK as a single woman, having secured employment.

Amber stated that she saw her mother as a role model: **“she got my father into this country”**. The introduction of the 1981 Nationality Act, the abolishment of automatic entry for citizens from British colonies and the creation of set categories, including employment, had contributed to the change in migratory patterns (Tyler, 2010; Hansen, 2000). Following her father's migration, Amber and her sisters remained with the extended family in Bangladesh. They joined their parents approximately two years later, when Amber was seven. Amber's mother's role in enabling the family migration to the UK appeared significant within a migratory context and concerning Amber's mother's positioning within the family and family decision-making. Amber's mother seemed able to navigate her husband's patriarchal views relating to women and the choices available to her daughters, as Amber commented:

“my dad always says the women shouldn't be doing this”

Amber's mother encouraged her children to make their own choices and follow their ambitions. As Amber stated clearly, her mother **“has more control”**, indicating the position and level of influence her mother – a matriarchal positioning as opposed to the commonly-held idea of Bangladeshi patriarchy. It reveals the changing experiences of migrant women and men and provides an example of how different socio-cultural experiences within host countries can provide opportunities for different ways of being. The perceptions of the oppression of all Bangladeshi women within the UK fails to acknowledge the diversity of family experience, offering a static view of culture that is

entrenched in patriarchy (Mirza, 2013, Lister, 2003). This simultaneously fails to represent women's agency or acknowledge how women's and men's behaviours can develop and operate beyond traditional religious and cultural boundaries.

The maintenance of transnational links with Bangladesh (Grossman, 2019) was identified within Aliya and Asha's narratives. Aliya described her father sending money home, and Asha disclosed that her elderly grandfather had returned to Bangladesh. The predisposing explanation for migration continued to be one of material advancement and escaping poverty and improving individual and family opportunities through hopes of higher paid employment. Amber referenced this when discussing the opportunities to attend school in Bangladesh:

“only if you were like rich or something you could go to the school.”

Several participants (Charvi, Aliya, Amber, Bel) described the hardship their parents had experienced on migrating to the UK, a common feature of migration and a factor within Bangladeshi and Sylheti migration. Aliya described the family moving from a small house in a high crime area to a larger house in what was perceived to be a safer area. Kyra described moving between cities, living with her grandmother and family friends until the family received council accommodation in Birmingham.

As mentioned, participants' parents continued to maintain financial responsibility for the remaining family in Bangladesh. This point primarily focused on remuneration during the early years of settlement; participants failed to state if this had continued. It is evident that material and ideological thinking (Rao, 2014), represented as a migratory dream, resonated with the participants' parents. Decisions concerning migration were made as a consequence of their parents' experiences of poverty in Sylhet/Bangladesh. However, migration had not necessarily improved their financial

position, as hardship and poverty continued in the early years following migration – a point acknowledged by Asha, referring to her father’s struggles with housing, employment, and poverty:

“when he was young, he never had anyone. He had to support everyone.”

Students’ narratives detailed that the majority of their fathers were engaged in low-skilled, low-paid employment, except for Bel’s father, who owned his own business. Migration, a lack of education, difficulties with English and discrimination continue to influence the levels of deprivation experienced by the Sylheti/Bangladeshi community within the UK. Intergenerational poverty persists.

British/Bangladeshis continue to experience higher deprivation levels than other groups within the UK (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2020; Fisher and Nandi, 2015; Platt, 2011; Dyson et al., 2009; Kenway and Palmer, 2007). Chanda’s narrative explained that her family continued to experience further poverty within the UK as her father, a lascar in Sylhet, had found employment in low-paid factory work. Her mother remained at home, caring for the children, and they lived in rented accommodation. Her father’s subsequent retirement and death had resulted in the family requiring state support, which further exacerbated their weak financial position. Amber described how her parents **“didn’t have it easy”**. De Noronha (2019) asserts that disproportionate numbers of the Bangladeshi population experience higher housing deprivation levels than others, due to their lower incomes.

The finances of several participants’ families did appear to have improved over time though, as indicated by examples of property ownership. Aliya’s family owned two houses, and Asha’s father had purchased two additional properties through **“hard**

work”, of which she appeared proud. Although this did indicate success, it should be noted that all the properties appeared to be located within city wards with high levels of deprivation and lower-priced properties. Kyra’s father now owned a restaurant and five properties.

Families continued to maintain links with Bangladesh, however, both Chanda and Aliya had never visited Bangladesh. Knight, Thompson and Lever (2017) argue that transnational ties weaken as families settle and develop friendships within the host country. However, the interviews revealed, links outside the Sylheti/Bangladeshi community appeared limited, a consequence of parents’ difficulties with English and men’s restrictions on women working and socialising outside the home. First-generation migrant Bangladeshi women appeared isolated post-migration. All the participants mentioned their mother’s difficulties with the English language; this limited their opportunities to engage with diverse networks and the wider population. This contrasted with their lives in Bangladesh, where they may have had extended networks of contacts through extended familial networks and friendships with other women within their villages. As opposed to living in isolation in Bangladesh, first-generation Bangladeshi women appear to experience greater isolation levels within the UK (Dyson et al., 2009; Ahmed et al. 2001). This negatively impacts upon their lives and, as indicated within the research, their levels of mental health. Asha remarked that her father attempted to protect her mother due to her beauty and cultural beliefs:

“you need to stay at home, and that’s how like, my mum became very tch, quiet, she wasn’t as like as talkative like with other people.”

She described the effect this had on her mother:

“she’s always been ill, she’s, just, she’s, not physically but I just think emotionally she’s, just, I don’t know, she’s not all well, like, she’s not weird or anything, but she’s just umm. She’s very superstitious, like; she thinks someone is going to hurt us.”

She appeared embarrassed by this and commented:

“I don”t know if you've come across Bengali people.”

Bangladeshi communities continue to stigmatise mental health issues, viewing mental health problems within concepts of izzat and sharam (Dyson et al., 2009).

There may be multiple explanations for Chanda’s mother’s weakening of ties. These may be a choice or may operate as a dimension of living in poverty. Cultural expectations and the stigma of poverty may influence contact maintenance when experiencing difficulties in sending remittances home (Dyson et al., 2009). The high costs of travel may also restrict opportunities to visit home. However, Chanda’s mother’s decision appeared to centre on her concerns about the possibility of an arranged marriage for Chanda. Her own experiences of her first marriage, the loss of her daughter and her arranged second marriage all offer-a possible explanation for her behaviour.

Neither Aliya nor her sister had visited Bangladesh; the explanation for this may mirror that of Chanda’s mother. However, Aliya’s narrative did not explain this. This may merely indicate the weakening of transnational ties as individuals build strong networks within the host country (Knight, Thompson, and Lever, 2017). The separation of the family across two houses in two different city wards, although presented as a consequence of the family size, may indicate the marriage’s possible breakdown. Although divorce rates have increased within the Bangladeshi community (Qureshi et

al., 2012), separation may appear to be a more acceptable option within the cultural context. It is also recognised that marriage may represent a religious as opposed to a civil arrangement. As religious contracts remain unrecognised in UK law they, therefore, require no legal dissolution (Akhtar, 2018; Qureshi; Charsley, and Shaw, 2014). As previously discussed, this was not explored as part of this research and, therefore, remains a speculative point of interest. Aliya's mother discouraged marriage for Aliya and her siblings, although Aliya's father had no such concerns. Aliya talked about **“losing her sister”** and her sister **“running away”** to get married. Aliya treated this in a non-consequential manner and remarked that family members no longer maintained contact with her sister. When asked if any of her siblings were married, Aliya laughed.

Although transnational links appeared to endure across generations, it was evident that these have not persisted through the system of marriage arrangement as experienced by first-generation migrants. First-generation migrants experienced a marriage arrangement system at an early age and had all married within the Sylheti/Bangladeshi community, a traditional marriage arrangement pattern (Dyson et al., 2009). Within the context of the participant sample, only one of the young women (Amber) was married, and no arrangements had been made for the others to get married. However, it was stated by all participants that marriage and having a family was an important factor in their future.

6.3 The Construction of Self: Education

As discussed in Chapter Two, human identity is complex, developmental and multi-faceted. Identity develops within a field of relations which are multiple, enacted and dependent on active interpretation (Ricoeur and Valdes, 1991). Autobiographical identity establishes the connections between past, present and future in developing identity and understanding oneself (Booker, 2019; Fivush et al., 2011). Narrative identity transcends stasis, offering a revaluation of self within an ever changing social and political arena. It offers and presents a re-evaluation of self across cultural and subcultural contexts, an evaluation of self and other (Hoque, 2017). This chapter

explores the construction of self within education as depicted by each student’s narrative, their descriptions of education and their construction of self-identity. This section of the thesis examines the influencing factors and their changing constructions of self as they progressed through compulsory education. The table below provides the students’ associated words, which encapsulate self-identity within primary, secondary and post-sixteen education phases. These words were chosen following careful consideration of the narrative through a process of reading, re-reading and engagement with the richness of the data, to ensure that these are representational. This facilitated the identification of meaning units (Graneheim and Lundman, **2004**) – **words or a series of words that encapsulate the essence of that lived experience**. This was not an easy task; this necessitated careful consideration and reflection to ensure the words were symbolic and not based on any form of bias or preconceived ideas.

Table 4: Phases of Education: Associated Words

Name	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Amber	Different	Unsure	Boosted
Aliya	Happy	Nurse	Unsure
Asha	Ambitious	Dumb	Confused
Bel	Emotional	Ambitious	Own mind
Charvi	Good girl	Not clever	Shocking
Chanda	Aged child	Hated	Drop out
Kyra	Alone	Teacher	Enthusiasm

School forms a critical role in the development of identity, acting as a site of secondary socialisation, with daily interactions with objects, processes and symbols (Bronfenbrenner 1996 and 2001). The school environment, through proximal processes, presents as a site of development and acculturation. Within schools, children develop an understanding of self, their place in the world and a sense of belonging. All the participants attended multicultural inner schools in some of the most deprived wards within the city. A number of the participants attended nursery,

however, two participants had started school at a later stage as the result of migration to the UK. As previously discussed in Chapter Five, the stories of education include students' recollections of their compulsory education, their identity and their thoughts concerning the future.

These stories demonstrate notions of competency and ability. These are developed within the confines, structures and experiences and our interactions within compulsory education. Although schools may reflect the local population's diversity and ethnicity, it is evident from the shared stories that compulsory education represents the UK's dominant culture and language. Schools engage in the diversity agenda and provide support for those from ethnic minority groups, however, these stories demonstrate that educational institutions need to continue engaging with the complex nature of supporting children from diverse backgrounds to promote individual and cultural value. A value-based curriculum is more than just the subjects taught; a value-based curriculum promotes value in the minutia of daily activity.

6.3.2 Being Different

As highlighted in Table: 4, Amber's identified word within primary school was "**different**". Amber's construction centred on her identification as being different and her concept of capability, which drew on her notions of opportunity pre-and post-migration. As previously highlighted in Chapter Five, Amber commenced school aged seven, having joined her parents in the UK from Bangladesh. She was unaware of the social practices of the UK and was unable to speak English.

Amber's story of not using cutlery, given in Chapter Five, was used as a symbolic representation of difference. Amber demonstrated her awareness that she was different from the other children, including children of Bangladeshi and British/Bangladeshi descent, as a Bangladesh immigrant. She recognised that her behaviours symbolised social and cultural difference, thus, recognising the elevation of practices of dominant cultures which subordinate the practices of the non-dominant group and therefore, ascribe value to behaviours and practices, and Amber appeared aware of

this. Her embarrassment was evident; she quantified her behaviour by explaining the practice of eating with her hands in Bangladesh.

In Amber's account, the school appeared unaware of the effect this had on her, offering an insight into the presumptive nature of institutions and society as a whole. The value of diverse practices appears to have been ignored and it was assumed that new migrants would be aware of and adopt the host country's day-to-day practices. I would argue that this demonstrates a failure to recognise the importance of value-based practice within an everyday context. With large numbers of children from diverse backgrounds, arrangements should be made that recognise the diversity of food practices. The recognition of diversity and the development of cultural value lies not only within the classroom practices but also within the wider daily social activities. Adopting, accepting and valuing various practices and conventions from diverse cultures forms part of an inclusive environment, an inclusive curriculum and an inclusive society.

Amber's difference was reinforced by the classroom teacher's actions to support her development of language and friendships. She was introduced to "**someone like me**", a child of Bangladeshi descent. This raises several points. Firstly, this homogenises individuals based on race, ethnicity and culture, and simultaneously "others" individuals based on race, ethnicity and culture (Ijaz, and Abbas 2010). It identifies Amber as being the same as all other Bangladeshi children while identifying difference, i.e. not the same as non-Bangladeshi. This applies to Amber's case and all children of Bangladeshi heritage within the classroom and the school, as demonstrated through the assumption of automatic friendship. This action denied Amber opportunities to develop friendships outside of these categories and reduced network opportunities within diverse networks. By default, this also denied all other children the opportunity to integrate and establish diverse networks. Secondly, it devolved translation responsibilities to a child without recognising the diversity of languages spoken within Bangladesh (Zeitlyn, 2012), thus failing to acknowledge its implications on both children. The friendship immediately faced difficulties due to language difficulties. As Amber explained:

“even though I spoke the language Bengali, I was still learning; I was still a child.”

Kyra’s experiences at nursery school reiterated several points that were raised within Amber’s narrative. She described feeling **“scared”** and **“alone”**, so concluded that communication was a **“barrier”**. Bengali was spoken at home, resulting in her limited use and understanding of English. Another pupil, a Bangladeshi boy, translated (see the example about snow in Chapter Five).

Although there may be benefits for children to engage in translation, it is crucial to acknowledge its disadvantages. Supporting others may develop children’s communication and self-confidence; conversely, it may increase stress levels and distract them from learning. This lack of recognition may be a facet of an “unconscious tiering”. The academic achievement of Bangladeshi children is expected to be lower (Mazenod et al., 2019; Boliver, 2016; Kintrea et al., 2015), therefore, the distraction of translation appears unimportant and unrecognised. I use the term unconscious, as Amber acknowledged that her teachers did **“kinda try to support me”**. Hoque’s (2017) research reiterated this lack of value placed on home languages for South Asian-heritage children within schools. Early education’s failure to fully engage in children’s needs from migrant and multicultural backgrounds appears detrimental. It therefore, appears as an act of symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1997). However, Amber acknowledged that her linguistic development, facilitated through EAL funding, school support and friendships, resulted in her finally settling into primary school. Early disadvantage and her feelings of adequacy, value and competence framed her early school experiences, a factor in educational success (HEFCE, 2006).

Chanda was also born in Bangladesh, entering the UK aged three with her family. She recognised the concepts of difference, although she did not refer to this in the context of education. Her being different centred on doubts concerning her date of birth, as previously discussed in Chapter Five. Chanda’s identification word, **“aged”**, associated herself with a difference. She related this to a school photograph taken in her final year of primary school, where she was wearing what she viewed as **“old-fashioned clothing”**. Her parents’ choice of clothing sat in opposition to her expecting

and wanting to wear jeans and a T-shirt. Apart from this one comment, she made no further reference to primary school. These narratives highlight that late entry into education and their original country of origin, Bangladesh, appeared to separate their identity from children of British/Bangladeshi descent. Those early experiences had resonance for both Amber and Chanda in their ideas of self.

Kyra's focus on developing language within the home environment provided an insight into the importance of dual language and its significance concerning identity. Her inability to speak English created a barrier to learning, engagement and friendships. Her cousin's inability to communicate in Bengali operated as a barrier to developing a relationship with Kyra's father. Kyra created an identity (Zeitlyn, 2012) which was both British and Bangladeshi. However, her comments appear contradictory: **“if we had learnt English when we were quite young, then it wouldn't have been such a problem”**. Initially, this appeared to reject the value of language within her construction of self; however, she continued, **“Yeah, if I had children, I would teach them Bengali fully at a young age because when they go to school, they will learn English”**.

In contrast to Hoque (2017), she encapsulated both ideals, representing her dual identity and presenting a narrative and identity in motion. She continued to develop identity and a sense of self within a cross-cultural context. As discussed in Chapter Five, language represented an important factor in these young women's experiences.

Asha described herself as **“ambitious”** in primary school, eager to learn and to read. She alluded to her later difficulties with reading: **“I had no one too like, I haven't, I don't know”**. She did not refer to receiving additional support. She described the family's **“lack of opportunities”**, referring to her father's long working hours. They appeared isolated, since friends could not visit due to her mother's poor mental health (Dyson et al., 2009; Ahmed et al., 2001).

Aliya described being scared at nursery school and her grandmother remaining with her. She **“loved”** primary school, was **happy** and developed good friendships. Bel enjoyed her time in primary school; she was a creative child and considered becoming

a teacher in the future. She described how **emotional** she became on leaving primary school before she transitioned to secondary school. Charvi described herself as quiet and a “**good girl**”, in contrast to her younger sister, whom she described as a “**rebel**”. The descriptions of a good girl connect to the concept of the good Islamic child of identity and morality (Zeitlyn, 2014) while referencing the family and community expectations.

6.4 Transition: Secondary School and Beyond

The transition from primary school to secondary school operates as a normative transition within the context of education: adolescent development, a period of physical, emotional and social change that occurs during this period. Secondary school operates as a site of development and redefinition (see Table: 4). Schools are positioned within a performativity culture and a capability context. Each redefinition word within the narratives appears in brackets following their name’s first use within this section.

Participants’ confidence levels appeared to decrease across this phase of education, as indicated in a number of the redefinition words. Kyra (“**Teacher**”), Aliya (“**Nurse**”), and Bel (“**Ambitious**”) made limited reference to secondary school. However, this was depicted as the site of career decision making. Aliya was influenced by visiting her brother in hospital during a period of illness, Kyra wanted to teach, supported by her parents, and Bel also identified teaching as a possible career. Charvi (“**Not clever**”) enjoyed secondary school but never felt “**clever**”, an assessment based on her exam results. She attended college to study for a Level Three qualification in Childcare. Asha (“**Dumb**”) reaffirmed her concerns about reading, describing herself as “**dumb**”. By year eleven, her reading had progressed and she obtained three GCSEs, describing this as “**bad**” – although, considering her late start at reading, this could be seen as a positive achievement. This left her confused and lacking direction; however, she enrolled at a local FE college to study Art.

Amber (“**Unsure**”) gained confidence in secondary school, progressing well and making friends. However, she discussed the misalignment between the standard of her work in class and exam results, when discussing attainment. Although doing well

in maths, she would “**withdraw**” during exams, resulting in low grades. Her comment, “**I don’t know why**”, coupled with her remark concerning her teacher: “**she kept on pushing me**”, indicated Amber’s lack of confidence and the adverse effects that exams can have on performance. Despite reassurance from her teacher and additional support, this “**didn’t work out**”. The development of self-confidence is not a universal concept; a person may be confident in one arena but lack confidence in others. Amber’s self-confidence and self-efficacy remained low, despite positive reinforcement by teachers. Her use of the word “**push**” indicated a misalignment between their concepts of capability, and she chose to withdraw. Amber is not alone in the use of withdrawal as a strategy.

Aliya and Chanda (“**Hated**”) both used this strategy during college. Aliya, disappointed by her grade at Level Two, left college to work in a day nursery, thus becoming “**unsure**” of her future. Chanda (“**Dropout**”) failed to complete the required work, describing how she hated academic work, did not complete a course on at least three occasions and asked to withdraw at least once. This concept of withdrawal is complex. It presents as a self-fulfilling prophecy, where concerns about competency and the stigma of failure reduce a person’s desire to engage. Even when support is provided, concepts of ability override their confidence in being successful. Amber received support, however, her lack of success appeared to compound her issue, leaving her confused about her future.

Amber also attended college, in common with Bel and Chanda, obtaining lower grades than predicted and being uncertain of her future career. She enrolled on an NVQ course in Childcare. The three stories characterise the pathway taken by many young Bangladeshi women, where Bangladeshi achievement at GCSE levels sits below that of their white counterparts (Khattab and Modood, 2018). Amber’s parents were disappointed, expressing their expectations and the value placed on their daughter’s education (Khattab and Modood, 2018; Bathmaker, 2016; Shah et al., 2010; Ijaz and Abbas, 2010; Aston et al., 2007; Dale et al., 2002). Her parents attempted to dissuade Amber from her choice of course. This may reflect the status they ascribed to the course, viewing childcare as an extension of the mothering role, resulting in lower pay

and status than other professions (Bury et al., 2020; Gambaro 2017). Chanda's mother encouraged her to seek employment as her lack of attendance at college impacted on the family's receipt of benefits, with her mother unable to provide financial support.

Further education appeared to be a site of further transformation. However, the participants continued to experience concerns about their competency levels. However, their success in the coursework and the course's vocational aspects bolstered their motivation and continued success. All the participants engaged in further education as opposed to continuing at school, thus replicating the pattern of education for young people from minority ethnic groups (Gorard, 2010).

Asha ("**Confused**") left her course after one year, and feeling "**lost**", she turned to her friends and family. Her sister, studying early childcare at university, encouraged her to attend college to study childcare. Bolstered by "**cool people**" and her religion, she enrolled at a different college to study childcare. Although Gorard (2010, p.1) asserts that the clustering of ethnic groups reduces the opportunity for role models, there is little recognition of the diversity of role models present within communities. Asha's "**cool friends**" were role models; they "**practice**" their religion and encouraged her to develop her spiritual and intellectual knowledge, a key feature of Islamic faith within a "new Islam" (Bolognani and Mellor, 2012). With their encouragement, she became more confident and applied to college for the second time. Thus, religion enabled the widening of networks which supported the development of opportunities beyond traditional patriarchal and cultural boundaries.

6.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the patterns, terms and experiences of migration by the students and their families. It examined the concept of the migratory dream, the patterns of migration and the changes experienced by students and their families, pre- and post-migration. It exposed a diversity of experience – for some, the continuation of poverty, for others, greater financial stability and property ownership.

This chapter also examined the micro realities of students' experience as they journeyed through compulsory to further and higher education. These experiences demonstrate that diversity is positioned within a dominant socio-cultural context. Diversity is promoted, but assimilation continues to be expected. Language plays a key role in the experiences of children from diverse backgrounds. However, the stories provide evidence of support, although this appeared limited, with an over-reliance on children engaging in translation within nursery and primary schools.

As each student progressed through education, their ideas of capability reduced, and their definition of identity changed, predominantly within a negative framework. However, the students appeared resilient, despite confusion, and individuals inside their community and further and higher education supported their further progression.

Chapter Seven:

“I just did it”: The Art of Navigation

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the relationship portrayed within each narrative between agency, reflexivity, and mediation. Students develop an increasing sense of agency during their development into adulthood and their transition journey through education. Barriers are experienced; the participants navigated these utilising a range of strategies. Although often lacking confidence, these individuals appeared to be resilient and aspirational, all at some point aspiring to attend university. Early ambitions may have been subdued; however, these became enabled once adverse circumstances were overcome.

The students offered stories of compliance, resistance, failure, success, support, and their skilful mediation in achieving their ambitions. The mediatory methods were diverse, complex, positioned within and outside of the family, engaging in family discourse. The discourse and the relationships within these families engaged with complex ideas of gender femininity and agency within a changing Bangladeshi and British/Bangladeshi cultural context.

As previously noted in Chapter Six, barriers were experienced by each student, including low expectations in a school, difficulties with the English language and lower than expected levels of achievement. The negotiation of these barriers was not always straightforward. Their ideas and ambitions changed. Their journeys into further and higher education became protracted, and confidence levels wavered. However, they continue to progress towards their goal of higher education.

7.2 Accessing Higher Education: The Approach to Mediation

The students utilised a range of mediation approaches in their ambitions to attend university; for some, this included crossing cultural expectations where boundaries are ascribed by gender, so the navigation of expectations led to new ways of being for these young women. Their construction of femininity changed, as did their construction within the family and the wider community. This has resonance for other women, enabling a greater level of agency for young Bangladeshi women. This is explored within the context of three mediatory approaches: mediatory support, mediatory tools and mediatory strategies.

Table 5: Mediatory Approach

Name	Mediatory Support	Mediatory Tools	Mediatory Strategies
Aliya	Mother Sister – Pioneer “and I thought it was going to be really scary.”	Ambitious mother Work – Day nursery Training agency – Qualification	Foundation degree opposed to BA (Hons) “I don’t know, in case if I fail it.”
Amber	Teachers at college Husband	Work – Day nursery Qualifications	Discourse – Triadic reference to migration “This is my choice.”
Asha	Immediate family – Father (now deceased) and Sister Extended family Cool Friends Religion	College – the right course Fathers wish	Religion “you should go out and seek knowledge.”
Bel	Mother Father “people’s minds change.” Brother – role model	Work – Day nursery (male management) Family’s financial support	Quietness “he just looked at me, and he was silent, and he just went ok.”

	Friends – role model		
Chanda	Older friends - Role models	Work – Day Nursery “I hated the word assistant.”	Apprenticeship – waged
Charvi	Mother – now deceased Father’s understanding Careers Service	Mother’s wishes Attending FE at the same institution Independence	Quietness “if he was nearer, then I wouldn’t have this kind of independence.”
Kyra	Mother Father	Mother’s ambitions Changing college/changing course	Course completion “I wouldn’t say bad people, but they weren’t like me.”

7.3 Mediatory Support and Mediatory Tools

This section discusses mediatory support and mediatory tools. For all of the participants except Kyra, university aspirations disappeared during secondary school, re-emerging in post-16 education. Secondary school was described as a site of waning aspiration and achievement, where working-class localities and dominant cultural capitals affected the outcomes for these students (Scandone, 2018; Reay, 2012). However, as Hart (2016, p.332) indicates, an individual’s aspirations are dependent on their “freedom to aspire”, who they share this information with and their reaction to this information.

Bel was initially unconcerned when informed by her father that she would not be attending college, as no other family members had attended. However, a year later, she wished to attend. Although post-16 education and training were not compulsory, school and careers activities supported individuals’ transition to further training and college. Bel’s mother appeared influential, supporting her resistance (Bagguley and Hussain, 2016). Her negotiations resulted in her father compromising, with Bel subsequently attending a female-only college. Thus, Bel’s opportunities were both

extended and constrained; she would have the chance to develop her engagement network, however, it remained constrained within a cultural and gender dynamic.

As this example demonstrates, the network available to each participant, their immediate and extended family members, friends, teachers and career advisors all offered support, enabling progression (Franceschelli and O'Brien, 2015; Smart and Rahman, 2009; Abbas, 2005). The ego network, the level of support and the level of influence each individual had were all significant factors within the mediatory process.

All participants, with the exception of Chanda, identified family members as significant in providing mediatory support. Kyra's parents expected all their children, irrespective of gender, to attend university. Chanda's mother's position appeared ambiguous, not supporting Chanda's desire to continue in education, but proud when she obtained her degree. Financial restrictions, Chanda's withdrawal from further education, and the family's financial position form part of this explanation. However, the remainder of "**wearing a torn dress**" reflected Chanda's mother's belief that Chanda was becoming overconfident. This was perhaps positioned in Chanda's mother's experience of opportunities, agency, and the loss of her daughter, a young woman.

For the remaining six students, mothers featured in the narratives in terms of providing support. As will become evident in the following discussion, parental support featured an important aspect of university attendance; however, the mother's role and influence operated as a key feature of mediation. The mothers of Bel, Aliya, Amber, Asha and Kyra all expressed their wish that their daughters should take up opportunities that had been unavailable to them and continue their education, which is an indication of the generational shift in the construction of gender and femininity for British/Bangladeshi women (Shah et al., 2010; Aston et al., 2007). Bel's mother was supportive and her ambitions for her daughter appeared focused on her future career and employment prospects (Mazenod et al., 2019; Archer, 2013), identifying the compatibility of teaching when she gets married. Despite Bel's father's initial

reluctance to send her to college, he now advocated law as a possible profession. As previously discussed in the literature review, this is a normative profession for Asian families (Scandone, 2018; Archer and Francis, 2007) and reflects parents' perceptions of the importance of qualifications and professional status within racialised employment markets (Khattab and Modood, 2018; Bhopal, 2011; Shah et al., 2010; Ahmed and Dale, 2008).

His discounting of childcare may indicate his understanding of the level of value and status ascribed to the childcare and early years sector (Bury et al., 2020; Gambaro, 2017). As a female-dominated industry and, in light of his insistence on her attending a women's college, it might be expected that he would encourage this. Bel's opportunities extend as her physical safety, and her honour is maintained. But Bel's level of agency increased, and her sense of identity change. This affected her father's role as protector and her positioning within her immediate and extended family.

Chanda's mother had died. She acknowledged her mother's pride in her achievements and this continued to motivate her. She also appeared to have a close network of siblings who seemed to support each other's ambitions, a possible consequence of their mother's death and father's absence.

Mothers facilitate the changing construction of femininity for young women. This is not a rejection of previously-held values and beliefs but an extension of opportunities beyond the home and family. Charvi's story did not reflect this, however, her family's straitened circumstances, as discussed previously, continued to motivate her. Although her mother did not directly facilitate her, neither did she obstruct her. She appeared to have a certain level of indifference for all her children – a possible consequence of the difficult financial circumstances the family live in.

The mothers' experiences, their limited access to education, their experience of restriction and isolation (Dale, 2002; Ahmed et al., 2001), and the additional

opportunities available within the host country present as probable factors for their roles as mediators. Education provides access to greater levels of freedom, extending opportunities and empowering women towards a greater level of equality which also features in the development of Islamic religion and faith. Asha made this distinction, comparing her religious identity with cultural beliefs and highlighting the difference between her beliefs and those of her father. Mothers facilitated and engaged in mediation, advocating on their daughters' behalf. Some were insistent; others appeared to be more subtle, with early conversations enabling further discussion. Within families, the lines between patriarchy and matriarchy appeared blurred. Women demonstrating a degree of agency within the home, decision making and decisions concerning children's futures was evident as a facet of this. Within families, femininity for young Bangladeshi women appears within the context of the educated daughter. This was presented as symbolic capital, as it was a matter of honour that improved the status of the individual and the family (Bhopal, 2011; Shah et al., 2010).

Fathers were not absent from these networks, but it was evident that fathers experienced morphogenesis (Archer, 1998). Their ideas changed as their residency in the UK prolonged and, in their minds, residency became more permanent (Knight et al., 2017). However, explanations for this are complex, and residency alone does not provide a full explanation. What is evident is that changing subjectivities are embedded and enabled through a network of relations and discourse. For Aliya, these extended beyond the immediate family, affecting the extended family's subjectivities and the Bangladeshi community as a whole.

As a first-generation participant in higher education, a person appears to be a pioneer within the immediate and extended family. However, as a pioneer, success is measured by achievement, qualifications and behaviours. Behaviours need to reflect the expected modes for women's respectability, which uphold community expectations, family status and honour (Dwyer, 2000). Each woman's behaviour remained scrutinised by the family community (Crozier and Davies, 2006) Conversely, a pioneer female who fails to engage in what is deemed appropriate behaviours risks

a negative assessment by her family and the community, resulting in a loss of personal and family honour.

These risks were evident to the individual and their family prior to applying to university. They may reflect a family's reluctance to allow a daughter to participate (see the narratives in Chapter Five). This risk is universal, affecting the individual, the father as the head of the household, the family and the community. This perhaps explains the fathers' initial reluctance to allow their daughters to engage in higher education; however, higher status is accrued once a child is successful. However, the growing numbers of Bangladeshi females engaging in higher education perhaps reflects the increasing levels of mutuality and trust (Anthias, 2007), an essential feature of effective networks. This extends beyond the immediate and extended family, involving institutions, the state and society, where diversity and construction of gender are acknowledged and valued within society. Parents need to believe that their daughters are safe, appreciated, valued and supported within the wider society.

Several participants highlighted other people as being influential in their decision making. There appeared to be sufficient role models within the Bangladeshi community (Crozier and Davies, 2006), a concern of Gorard, Huat and Davies, (2012) evident within student networks. This reflects the high levels of aspiration (Kintrea et al., 2015) and the community's expectations of growing numbers attending university. Aliya, Asha and Bel mentioned their immediate family as role models, a point raised by Crozier and Davies (2006). Aliya's sister was portrayed as a pioneer, the first to go to university, studying the same course at the same institution. Thus Aliya's progression was supported, in addition to providing a safety net for Aliya on the course. Bel's brother attended university; he encouraged her, and she wished to follow him. Amber's husband attended university and supported her. Members of Asha's extended family had attended university, as have friends; friends also featured Chanda's discussion of significant others.

In the context of mediatory tools, the opportunity to gain qualifications within vocational settings offers university progression (Vincent and Braun, 2011; Greenbank, 2010; Greenbank, 2007; Wilson et al., 2005; O’Keefe and Tait 2004). The workplace featured in Aliya, Amber and Bel’s narratives, representing non-traditional routes into higher education, which is a particular feature of the changing face of higher education and the creation of Foundation degrees (Herrera et al., 2015; Morgan, 2015; HEFCE 2010).

An additional feature within the context of mediatory tools is that of parental wishes. These were highlighted in the narratives of Aliya, Charvi and Asha, although featured for different reasons. Aliya’s mother’s aspirations drove her own ambition to attend university. Parental ambitions also guided Charvi and Aliya, but for a more poignant reason, with both having experienced parental bereavement. Aliya was aware of the disadvantages experienced by her father pre-and post-migration and of his dreams of success for his children. He was proud of Aliya’s success, and this drove Aliya’s ambition. Charvi’s mother died before she attended college, but she appeared proud of her success. This drove her ambition. She further noted that her opportunities were enabled by her father’s prolonged absence and his lack of understanding (“**he still thinks we are at college**”).

Mediatory support and mediatory tools align with the use of mediatory strategies. These are discussed in the following section.

7.4 Mediation, Reflexivity, and Agency

Each narrative demonstrates the complexity of navigation and mediation within a family context; participants are skilful navigators. They demonstrated their understanding of the realm of expectation, which focused not only on their expectations but also on those of the family as a whole, and engaged with notions of race, gender, class and culture, situated in two contrasting cultures. Participants discussed hardship, poverty, opportunities and expectations. The boundaries the

participants crossed are multiple; however, structural inequalities established the individuals' positions, influencing their experiences, expectations and opportunities. Charvi, when discussing her experiences in Bangladesh, articulated this as a lack of privilege, while Asha, referring to her life in the UK, commented:

“So yeah, I wouldn’t say my journey was like easy. I know other people have it a lot harder than me. I am very lucky to have a roof over my head, and my dad always provided food, probably not the best of food, but he did always make sure there was shopping done every week.”

The issue of poverty, as previously discussed, featured in the participants' narratives, however, concepts of social class were also raised. Charvi's mother's discussion of a **“torn dress”** alluded to Charvi's position, offering a reprimand when she felt Charvi was acting in a manner above her position. This was also evidenced in Asha's reference to a house move to a **“nicer area”**. Chanda referred to her parents' expectations, **“they say other people can do better, but not us”**, a point on which she disagrees. Transitioning expectations and borders was intersectional. Each of these intersections required consideration when navigating commonly-held ideas concerning potential opportunities.

Amber used mediation to support the next stage in her educational journey and progression onto further education. This use of mediatory tools created the space for her to develop further agency. Amber was reflexive; she considered the potential barriers and the potential arguments given by her parents. Amber's transitions involved race, gender, ethnicity and culture; however, for her, gender and culture connected and presented as dominant features in mediation. She highlighted two key points in her mediation with her parents – her late entry into education and her English language difficulties – citing both points as an explanation for her previous low attainment and to justify her choice of college course.

This communicative approach, Amber's reflection and resistance demonstrated a questioning of the validity of beliefs and actions, indicating a functional disruption of communicative action (Habermas, 1997). Amber used a negotiation (Bagguley and Hussain, 2016), evoking concepts of the past, present and future. These represented her idea of a meaningful life (Dyke, Johnston and Fuller, 2012). Amber was actively pursuing her goals; her activities were relational; they involved reflexive deliberation and double morphogenesis (Archer, 2010).

Amber utilised a range of strategies in her mediation. Firstly, she deflected the responsibility of outcome from herself to a particular set of circumstances. This shifting of responsibility acted as a reminder to her parents. She evoked the past, reminding her parents of their reasons for migration, thus referencing the "migratory dream", a better life, and the transformation of family and self (Alexander, 2013). This discourse established a triadic connection between the family's identity as Bangladeshi, the act of migration and her particular circumstance (Mohee, 2011). It referred to the present, "**this is my choice**". Her words reflected her changing identity as a British/Bangladeshi woman, her assertion of agency, and the family's changing relationships. A cultural shift, morphogenesis (Archer, 1998), was apparent.

Amber's account demonstrated how discourse and mediation supported the restructuring of relations within the family (Archer, 2010.) Her contention of "**my choice**" referred to her immediate and future agency beyond her parents' expectations. Amber's marriage supported this agency as the perceived shift of responsibility from her father to her husband supported Amber's pursuit of education. Amber's parents were portrayed as traditionalists, and her early marriage to a Bangladeshi community member appeared to reflect this ideal (Dale, 2011; Dyson et al., 2009). However, Amber married later than her sisters to a man of her own choice – a non-traditional construct, and evidence of her parents' changing attitudes and expectations (Dale, 2002). Amber conformed to the expectations of her parents, where males remain as decision-makers within patriarchal systems, but she discussed the idea of marriage with her future husband. This discussion garnered support and she

then presented it to her parents. Although not entirely happy with her decision, they consented. Amber highlighted how: **“they didn't say anything”** and **“they said fine”**.

As previously noted, Kyra's parents valued education and all their children – regardless of gender - were expected to attend university (Scandone, 2018). Kyra attended the same college as her mother's sisters. She felt **“different”** from college friends who engaged in behaviours that she found difficult, such as smoking. She rarely attended but was determined to complete the course, although obtained lower grades than anticipated. Although not having revealed this to her parents during the course, she discussed this on course completion when she received her results. They asserted that, had they known, she could have changed institutions. Kyra used her moral and the expected cultural value base as a means of mediation, explaining to her parents that she wished to align her behaviours with their religious and cultural expectations. Conflicted, she removed herself from the situation, thus removing the potential negative influence of inappropriate behaviours. Her strategy of non-attendance enabled the maintenance of her beliefs and values without compromising her friendships with others, thus representing resistance (Bagguley and Hussain, 2016). Her parents continue in their support of her.

Bel and Charvi appeared to mobilise their identity as Muslim/Bangladeshi women to support their academic journey. Both said that they are quiet, and it is this quietness that appeared to support their transition. They seemed to conform to young women's expected behaviours, which appeared to support their future decision-making. As previously noted, Bel's father eventually allowed her to attend a women's college; however, on completion, he would not allow further progression to university. She remained quiet, accepting his decision and gaining employment in a day nursery with male directors. There she developed confidence and promotion, rising to a managerial role, thus demonstrating her professionalism to her father. She then applied to the university, without seeking his permission.

“he goes, what are you doing? I said to him; I’m filling in a form and application for uni. And he just looked at me, and he was silent, and he just went ok, so he didn’t say anything cos I was kinda older he respected my decisions.”

As previously highlighted, trust development appears a fundamental factor in this construction; it appears as a reoccurring theme. Working with men appears to an important aspect of this. During her time at the nursery, she had her father’s support, encouraging her **“not to be walked over”**. Through discourse, her father engaged in her daily life. The disclosure of information, her behaviour within the expected standards, and her respect towards her family appeared to support her next step. Her father appeared less fearful about it by then, being confident in her ability to transcend any difficulties she may encounter and to behave appropriately within wider society.

Charvi is also quiet; she described herself as a **“good girl”**, however, she lacks confidence in her ability. This inhibited her thoughts of university attendance; nonetheless, she attended college and, on the advice of lecturers and career support, decided to apply for university. Charvi’s father was not permanently resident in the family home, working at the opposite end of the country and visiting the family every three to four months. This continued following the death of Charvi’s mother. The siblings lived together, and Charvi said that they had a large amount of freedom. Charvi’s quietness enabled her to transition to university because her father continued to believe she was at college, possibly supported by the university operating on the same campus. However, it appeared that neither herself nor her siblings tried to dissuade him of this; she maintained that, **“ he doesn’t understand”**. Thus Charvi, through her quietness and independence, maintained her control over decision making and hid her progress from her father (Crozier and Davies, 2006). Charvi’s father’s lack of knowledge of education, difficulties with English (Hoque, 2017), and his separation through geographic locality all indicate a lack of early involvement that was maintained throughout Charvi’s education.

Chanda's employment provided financial support for the family and increased her independence and agency. Through her employment in the childcare sector, she developed her ambition and a desire to **“keep going”**.

7.5 Identity, Status and the Foundation Degree

Each narrative explored students' perceptions within a widening participation university, with students positioned at different points within their academic journeys. These included first-year (Foundation degree), second-year (Foundation degree) and final year (BA Honours) in Early Childhood Studies. Interviews were conducted within the second semester of study, a key semester in preparation for transition. The transition points included year one to year two (Foundation degree), year two (Foundation degree) to the final year of the BA Honours programme, and final year students exiting the course, either for further study or employment.

Students from minority ethnic backgrounds may experience limitations placed on their course and place of study. Students from Bangladeshi groups, particularly female students, study at universities closer to home within a commutable distance, attending as day students. However, as discussed in Chapter Four, these students are also more likely to study at “new” post-1992 universities and remain under-represented in Russell Group universities (Boliver, 2016; Boliver, 2013; Boliver, 2004; DBIS, 2016; LSE, 2016; Runnymede Trust, 2015; Noden et al., 2014; Modood, 2012; Shiner and Modood, 2002).

As discussed in Chapter Five, the majority of participants chose their course as a consequence of previous experiences. These included previous study within child-related disciplines, work experience within childcare and early years, and employment in the childcare and early years sector. The Foundation degree enables students with lower tariff points to access university, attracting students from non-traditional backgrounds (Morgan, 2015; Herrera et al., 2015; HEFCE, 2010) while providing an opportunity for progression to the final year of a degree programme (Greenbank,

2010). The following table provides an overview of the students' decisions concerning their choice of course and institution, as described in each narrative.

Table 6: Course Choice

	Course choice	Institution
Bel	<i>"first of all with my passion, and secondly it's because I had already done a CACHE diploma in it and I had experience with working with children and families as well."</i>	<i>"previous friends that came to this uni." "I wasn't driving at the time."</i>
Aliya	<i>"my sister came here... same course."</i>	<i>"It was small... they don't do interviews... it's easier "[both laugh]</i>
Amber	<i>"I want to come into this path."</i>	<i>"A was just too far I went to D, I got in to do the BA, but when I went there, I didn't find the people there friendly."</i>
Asha	<i>Sister, "why don't you do childcare, or you can go into teaching."</i>	<i>"because I think I didn't get accepted into any other uni" [both laugh] Referring to her cousin – "she told me it was umm certified by (names a red brick group university."</i>
Chanda	<i>"in terms of education, I've always done things one way and gone ahead with it."</i>	<i>"all my qualifications are from **** [name of this university]"</i>
Charvi	<i>"I did the CACHE Level Three, across the road in ***, I just liked the college."</i>	<i>I was talking to the careers advisor at school, and he said there's **** [names the university] and I wanted to go to university." "it almost feels like an entire school and something I'm comfortable in."</i>

Kyra	<i>“I wanted to go into teaching.”</i>	<i>“I was going to do the BA Early Childhood Studies, or another course in**** [name of a local university], and then obviously my grades in college weren’t as good”,</i>
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Secondary school and GCSE qualifications operated as a significant determinate of course choice, determining the direction of higher education study and future career aspirations. Numerous factors may have limited their opportunities, however, qualifications were given as a dominant factor in the choices they made. Each participant chose to remain within vocational education, studying for a vocational degree at a vocational widening participation university.

As evidenced above, the women indicated a mixed response to the question concerning their course choice and institution. However, employment, work experience and previous qualifications within the early years care sector influenced these decisions. Although a reflexive approach was evident within their stories, a small number appeared to have chosen their course of study based on other people’s thoughts. The advice of siblings (sisters) appeared influential for both Aliya and Asha, with Aliya’s sister currently studying the same course at the same institution.

A reflexive approach concerning their choice of course was demonstrated by Bel, Amber, Chanda and Charvi, although the reasoning provided for their decisions diverged. Bel’s response to the question, of course, quickly described her reasons (**“my passion... I had already done a CACHE diploma... and I had experience with working with children and families”**). Her quickness and depth of answer indicated her reflexivity levels; she had thought about this; she appeared certain of her choice and was able to convey this quickly. As previously discussed, Amber and Kyra were certain – Amber stressed, **“this is what I want”** – and Kyra appeared focused on a future career in teaching. The Foundation degree offers progression to the final year of an Honours degree programme, subsequently enabling access to a range of

teaching qualifications. Chanda's response ("**in terms of education, I've always done things one way and gone ahead with it**") reflected her determination to develop her career and qualifications, despite her previous difficulties and her perceived lack of familial support.

The choice of institution was interesting, since approximately seven other institutions offer the Foundation degree within the immediate locale. The university operates in a niche market, offering vocational courses while offering further education on its college campus, which is located within walking distance of the university campus buildings. However, the campus is separated, and further education students only have limited access to the higher education campus. Chanda and Charvi studied at the college campus. Chanda stated that remaining within a familiar setting was important to her.

In contrast to her previous experience of post-compulsory education, she had been successful within the institution. Charvi cited careers advice as being influential and commented that she felt "**comfortable**" continuing on at the institution. Bel and Amber described the location as influential, since the city location has good public transport links, which make the institution easily accessible. Amber mentioned her father's concerns with distance ("**it will be too much for you**") at an alternative provider.

Qualifications at Level Three limit university choice, as access remains dependent on the UCAS tariff points accredited to each course and university. Therefore, Asha's university choice remained limited and she received her only offer from this university. Her laughter reflected her embarrassment of disclosing this to a staff member. Kyra also explained that her qualifications directed her course of study and institution, since the university operates a flexible approach to enrolment. Its tariff point system is lower and more flexible than those of local competitors, reflecting the university's widening participation status and providing an example of business modelling. Although all potential students can meet and contact staff to discuss future enrolment, interviews are not conducted. This point was given as a factor for Aliya and a possible reflection

of her confidence level at the point of application. Asha referred to the institution's affiliation to the local red brick university. Although this institution awards the Foundation degree, the BA (Honours) degree is awarded by the red brick university – something the local community appear to be aware of. This seemed important to Asha, a reflection of the importance of institutional status.

Amber had the choice of completing her BA (Honours) Early Childhood Studies at four different institutions in the local area. She appeared to have visited all four institutions: her second choice was discounted due to the travelling distance, this particular institution was her third choice, and she made no further mention of her fourth choice. The visit to her preferred university, her first choice, appeared to provide the impetus for all further decisions. Having secured her place there, she was asked to complete DBS paperwork before starting the course. The visit was unsuccessful ("**I went there. I didn't find the people there friendly**"); within her narrative, she described a male member of the administrative staff looking "**down**" on her. Amber presents as a Muslim woman, represented by wearing the hijab, which Hoque (2017, p.189) asserts is a "highly politicised issue". She subsequently withdrew from that university course and looked for another institution but, importantly, decided not to enrol on a full degree programme, questioning her capability. She explained that this was because "**I felt scared**". This appeared to be an act of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991) which resulted in her subsequent enrolment on the Foundation degree at this location instead. Amber justified her decision as: "**I was going to leave in year two because cos I thought I could do the BA in London**". This reflected the Foundation degree's versatility, as it operates as an interim qualification enabling further progression over a longer period (Schofield and McKenzie, 2018; QAA, 2014).

Amber's narrative emphasised an important point that was also raised in the stories of Bel, Chanda and Charvi – the concept of belonging. Amber's perception of being judged: "**he looked at me like I wasn't able to do the course**" and "**feeling small**" reflected her sense of habitus on her levels of confidence and self-esteem (Crozier and Davies, 2007). These dispositions had been internalised as a consequence of

primary and secondary socialisation (Bourdieu, 1986). Amber's previous experiences had affected her sense of identity, acceptance, capability and belonging, with her security and identity being threatened (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2010), so she withdraws from what she perceived as a threatening situation. She chose this institution instead once she had visited, stressing her desire to **"fit in"**: **"I felt comfortable, I thought it near home, and it's a welcome environment I can see diverse people here as well I don't have to feel alone or scared"**, thus starting the relationship and attachment with the institution in the development of institutional habitus (Reay et al., 2010). This highlights the complexity of and intersectional nature of university choice, and how concepts of race, gender, class and ethnicity affect institutional choice. This may empower the individuals but may also limit their opportunities and choice. Although Amber's story provided a direct example of this, Bel, Chanda and Charvi's narratives also highlighted the importance of habitus, of their sense of belonging. Therefore, it is evident that gender and ethnicity are key factors in the development of self and belonging.

Amber's narrative of the negative comments made by a male administrator reflect the conceptual positioning of power within a gender and ethnicity dynamic. She commented that: **"the way he was talking to me and seeing me, it felt like do you know this is not the right place"**. This reflects the importance of ethnicity and race within a university context. Other people's conscious and unconscious behaviours reflect the dominant institutional dynamics of race, gender, and social class within higher education. Therefore within this discourse, for Amber, identities were recognised (Brubacker, 2012), categorised (Mohee, 2011) and othered (Brubacker, 2012), resulting in Amber's identity disruption and instability. Amber, Bel and Chanda all demonstrated reflexivity. Their choice of a diverse institution ensured the maintenance of their identity as Bangladeshi women (Bagguley and Hussain, 2016); thus, demonstrating their reflexive awareness of potentially disruptive forces and their use of meta reflexivity (Archer, 2003).

7.6. On Course and Changing Identities

This section examines the young women’s changing concepts of self within the context of higher education. It explores their responses to their course of study in conjunction with their perception or experience of progression to the BA (Honours) programme. The issue of achievement and progression was discussed repeatedly in the narratives of each of these young women, so it is evident that this continued to frame and reframe their concepts of self as they began and progressed at the university. The following table offers a vignette of their conceptual selves, which will be discussed further.

Table 7: The Conceptual Self

The Conceptual Self	
Bel	“a lot more confident, I would say”
Aliya	“I don’t want to be where they are.”
Amber	“so I feel proud of myself.”
Asha	“I think I’m emotionally strong.”
Chanda	“it made me realise how much different; If I ever had children, I would raise them different from the way I was brought up.”
Charvi	“If you don’t put the hard work in, you don’t get anything out of it; you won’t smile again.”
Kyra	“As I was going on the course, I felt first like I was quite dumb” [both laugh]

As demonstrated in the table above, the discussion of higher education and the Foundation degree elicited a range of responses. University provides additional space for self-development, and this was positioned outside of their customary fields of operation. As Bel’s remarks reveal, these young women initially appeared nervous: **“you do feel kind of scared”**. Friendships, work level, and fear of failure were all cited as concerns for these women. As a widening participation institution, the university actively engages with local communities and attracts large numbers of

students from under-represented groups in the local area with lower-than-standard entry qualifications. Students appear conscious of this, having taken their places at the university within this rationale. Although all the participants were happy to have obtained a place, their concept of the university seemed to be classed (Bathmaker et al., 2016), as they appeared aware of the status of the university compared with the local red brick institution.

This, combined with their course level (Foundation degree as opposed to the Honours programme), contributed to their definition of self (Crozier et al., 2008). Chanda articulated this when referring to her brother, who was studying at the local red brick university: **“he says it’s the best university... and everyone will probably forget my degree”**. Chanda’s story demonstrates her perceptions of the relationship between institutional status, gender, family perceptions and power. As Chanda had previously disclosed, she had a problematic relationship with her mother (**“it’s an Asian thing, she’s not fussed over me, but when it’s my brother, it’s a bigger thing”**). Within the context of Chanda’s story, attending an elite university provided her with the potential for greater visibility and ranking within the family. As Lewis (2006) contends, gender and the manifestation of femininity represent gendered assumptions that are expressed in our daily lives, thus representing power and inequalities within patriarchal systems (see also Tefera et al., 2018). Chanda’s recognition of status was viewed as a possible means of navigating her mother’s more traditional opinions concerning gender and a means of gaining an equal position to that of her brother.

Kyra was also aware of the university’s status, referring to her friends’ enrolment at an alternative university with the comment, **“my other friends went to university *** [names a red brick university], and I got into here, so obviously the status”**. The level of course also appears influential in the construction of an educational self. Kyra expressed this as: **“I have to do a Foundation degree, not a BA.... I was quite dumb”**.

Despite her progression, Aliya remained concerned about this: **“Foundation degree It’s the same, isn’t it?”** Although determined and ambitious, these students continued to demonstrate low self-confidence levels on entry to the university (Crozier et al., 2008). The concept of their possible self at this point remained low, although high aspirations remained, but so did reduced expectations concerning the outcomes (Harrison and Waller, 2018). This was further reinforced by their starting to study what they perceived as a lower-level qualification.

Within a discursive context, widening participation and engagement in university is articulated as empowering individuals. This aims to narrow the education and skills gap of disadvantaged groups (HEFCE, 2005; DfE, 2003), increase diversity within universities and support greater social mobility (Thomas, 2005). However, universities’ status, the courses offered, and entry qualifications and entry strategies, such as interviews, continue to perpetuate a binary system and elitism (Rainford, 2016). Red brick and Russell Group universities continue to enrol low numbers of students from widening participation and ethnic minority groups (Arday and Mirza, 2018). It would be naïve to believe that the students were unaware of this and that this did not affect their identity and sense of self. As previously mentioned, their identity development and construction occurred within education, subsequently, each student constructed a vision of their educational self.

As revealed within the narratives, students were aware of their university and course status. Although the opportunity to attend university may empower individuals, the clustering of students from widening participation backgrounds within widening participation institutions, often on vocational courses, also exacerbates the negative construction of self within an educational context. This highlights two key points within the research context. Firstly, it reinforces widening participation students’ senses of position within higher education, as it classes the course and their sense of self. Secondly, it highlights the continuing failure of elite universities to address the issue of widening participation. The penalisation of widening participation and ethnic minority students (Croxford and Rafe, 2015; Modood, 2012; Modood, 2004) persists, through

widening participation strategies (Rainford, 2016), admissions systems and procedures. Elite universities appear to avoid developing an institutional habitus that welcomes and accommodates these students (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2010). Thus, disadvantage is embedded and perpetuated through the system of higher education, reducing opportunities to diverse members of society.

7.7 Changing Identities: “Learning More About Me”

Each narrative provided an independent view of the course and the transitions made, therefore, generalisation is impossible. However, the university provided each woman with a space in which they developed a greater understanding of self, their experiences and their possible futures. Their aspirations remained high. Despite their initial evaluation of achieving a lower outcome, their successes built upon their self-confidence levels. For several women, study on the Foundation degree appeared less risky than attempting a full Honours programme.

The course’s length, their perceptions of the level of work and the opportunity to leave with a qualification appeared to legitimise their choice. Aliya explained, “**I applied to the FdA because in case, I don’t know...I didn’t get to pass the work**”. Amber made a strategic choice – the Foundation degree accommodated her plan to join her husband and complete her final year in London. When reflecting on the Foundation degree, all women appeared happy with their choice. Kyra’s comments reflected this: “**I think it’s a good option for people to go onto**”. They all agreed that they were happy with the course and with the progression opportunities it provided.

The openness of the interviews enabled each individual to share their experience in an open, non-judgmental environment. The confidence in questioning and offering suggestions indicated that the Foundation degree and BA programme presented as a site of empowerment, agency and transformative learning. Charvi suggested a range of improvements that could be implemented to support the degree’s practical element,

an essential feature of vocational degrees (QAA, 2004). Charvi's knowledge, levels of reflection and communication had all developed as a consequence of the course, and these questions and suggestions evidenced her increasing self-confidence and self-awareness (Calleja, 2014; Mezirow, 1996). Aliya sought clarification of the rationale for introducing the Foundation degree, which I was happy to share. Reassurance appeared to be a coping strategy, which countered any ongoing concerns about her course of choice. Aliya used the word "**scared**" within her narrative, revealing that her father had limited patience and "**shouts**". Issues surrounding self-esteem and self-doubt that were evidenced within each of the narratives indicated that reassurance from others – peers, lecturers, and family members – formed part of a coping mechanism. This defensive strategy enabled and supported their academic journey towards developing self-identity.

As previously highlighted in Chapter Seven, institutional habitus and a sense of belonging are important aspects of university life and friendships. Each of the young women developed individual and group friendships during their period of study. As young Muslim women, their friendships appeared to be with other young Muslim women, with the exception of Chanda, who seemed to have a more diverse circle of friends. Other friendships included female members from their immediate and extended family. These friendships were sustained within and outside of the university and supported through social events within their community.

In some cases, this led to the widening of their network within the community. When friendships extended outside of their year group, they continued with females on the same course within the same school. This is not to say that all Muslim girls were friends; friendships were made with the people that students perceived were like-minded and supported their sense of belonging. These friendships provided social and emotional support based on a shared understanding (Herz, 2015; Belotti, 2008). A range of explanations may explain these friendships. Friendship groups may reflect the women's position as day students. Day students may have limited opportunities to engage with others outside of the timetabled hours. Several of the women mentioned

their responsibility to support their mothers with household duties. Aliya's grandmother had taken over her duties, to support Aliya's studies. Kyra and her father carried out family chores to support her mother, who worked. Concerns regarding racism and Islamophobia made students wary of developing their network of friends outside of their group, in conjunction with surveillance concerns (Crozier and Davies, 2006).

University structures may also exacerbate the issue, inhibiting the development of a wider social network. Student demand for condensed timetables has reduced their time within the university, which has limited opportunities for social interaction. Recreational space in public areas raises concerns about privacy and surveillance, an issue for Asian women (Crozier and Davies, 2006). Network development and friendships through student guild activities remain restricted, primarily being embedded within sporting events and drinking culture. Thus, there is a failure to recognise that the intersectional experience of young Bangladeshi women offers a restricted diversity experience and remains embedded within a widely male, middle-class culture.

As highlighted in Chapter Five, friendships formed part of a network of support for the students on the course. These friendships were sustained, continuing onto the Honours programme. Kyra remarked, **“it's good to have your friends and your family supporting you in this; otherwise, it can be really scary stuff when you're on a course; you're almost protected for three years, aren't you?”** Sustaining these friendships was possible as few students left the university following their successful completion of the Foundation degree. All the students in the research group, irrespective of their year of study, achieved sufficient credits for progression.

What was evident was the changing support available within the family as each student progressed and succeeded in their studies. Their identity changed within the context of the university but also within the context of the family. As discussed in Chapter Three, a process of morphogenesis represented changing levels of agency

that was facilitated through reflexivity and discourse and supported within their ego network (Archer, 2010; Archer, 1990; Archer, 1998).

As these young women observed, their confidence levels improved once they started to achieve (Table 7. p.178). Kyra's initial analysis of being "**dumb**" changed, and she considered that "**my confidence level has gone up, not all the way up but it has gone up**". Chanda initially struggled and considered dropping out. On passing her first set of assignments, she was "**shocked**", remarking that, "**I feel better in myself; I feel proud**". Aliya's confidence grew when she compared her grades to her friends' ("**I did better**"), although she was still worried about failing. Aliya characterised her friends as other, offering a redefinition of self, saying they were like her but different: "**I don't want to be like them**".

These young women's redefinition of self represents a transformative process. They all experienced a change in perspective and their sense of who they are and who they want to be. Within this context, the university presents as a transformative learning site, providing opportunities for change in a supportive environment. In common with students, lecturing staff at the university present as non-traditional. Staff in the school have begun teaching following careers in the early years, childcare and the nursing sector. Several staff, myself included, studied at the university on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The concept of "catching up" applies equally to staff and students, and staff are happy to share this with their students, thereby supporting the development of a learning community. The university and the course provides an environment where they can "test out" these new identities, thus engaging in experiential learning. Once confident, these new identities are transferred from the university environment to new spheres of operation (friends, family, the workplace).

The women acknowledged that university and the course had changed their sense of identity – as **Kyra remarked, "I've progressed so much. Not just educationally but as a person as well"**. The university and the Foundation degree create a space in which students reflect upon their experiences. The Foundation degree structure, combined with the course content, enables greater insight into the theory, reality and

diversity of the developing child. This, coupled with the practical experience in early years settings (a requirement of the course's vocational aspect), extends each student's formal networks within diverse settings. Thus, these women have opportunities to observe and work within a diverse network that crosses social class and ethnicity boundaries.

The integration of new experiences offers dissonance opportunities due to "disorientation", where previously-held beliefs are questioned (Mezirow, 1996). University presents as a site of discourse where Aliya and Chanda questioned their childhood – Chanda commenting: "**I would always imagine myself as a child or how I was raised**", and Aliya referencing her mother: "**she didn't give us much time**". They engage in discursive action (Mezirow, 1991a Habermas, 1984). Thus, university study and vocational practice empowers young women within personal and professional domains. Blame was not apportioned to their parents – as Aliya commented, "**it's just that the upbringing, their upbringing wasn't very good**". As outlined in Chapter Five, these women demonstrated their understanding of agency; they were aware of their ability to engage in independent decision making. This is not to say that this occurs in isolation, separate from familial and cultural expectations, as decision making may continue to require navigation within the context of cultural norms at a family and societal level.

7.8 Transition: The Honours Programme and Beyond

As previously discussed, progression to the final year of the Honours programme is available to all students with the appropriate grade profile. Foundation degree achievement and graduation operate as a rite of passage, providing a clear signal to others concerning capability. The majority of participants, their parents and siblings attend; however, fathers are not always present, with work commitments offered as an explanation. Asha's comments signified the importance of the event to herself and her family, since her father believed that the family had a lower status within the community due to their education level. Asha commented: "**as soon as I graduated,**

in your face". All participants, with the exception of Aliya, who did not attend her graduation ceremony, described their families' pride in their success – a fact they share with family, friends and others in the community, as Amber described in her narrative with her mother's comment, "**Ooh my daughter, yeah she went to University**".

Participants continued to frame transition to the Honours programme as being a possible, as opposed to a probable outcome, despite their success on the Foundation degree. Numerous concerns were highlighted, depending on their stage of study, including credits for progression, the level of study, assessment, and final degree classifications. The young women identified the increase in work level as they progressed through each stage, mentioning "**working hard**". Charvi spoke about her desire for a 2:1, which increased the pressure she felt.

The young women who remained on the course identified the availability of a range of possible careers. This demonstrated a growing level of self-confidence and represented the Foundation and Honour's programme's value in transforming their thoughts of the future. They now visualised their futures within the context of a career and marriage, transcending the traditional concept of a housewife (see table below).

Table 8: Future Career Options

Name	Study Point	GCSE	Career First	Careers Second
Bel	FdA First Year	Yes	Teaching Primary/Secondary	
Aliya	FdA Second Year	Yes	Teaching Assistant	
Asha	BA Honours Final Year	Needs Maths	Teaching Part-time	
Amber	BA Honours Final Year	Needs Maths	Teaching Assistant School	Teaching
Kyra	BA Honours Final Year	Unknown	Museum Guide	Tour Day Nursery Ownership Masters

Chanda	Alumni: BA Post-Completion	Results Pending: Maths	Sessional interpreter	Teaching Primary
Charvi	Alumni: BA Post-Completion	Result Pending:	Teaching Assistant Special School	Teaching SEN

- Pending- at the point of interview Chanda and Charvi were awaiting Maths GCSE results .

Chanda and Charvi described teaching as their preferred profession. Chanda emphasised that: **“everyone wants to be a teacher, especially like Asian girls they always go into like childcare and teaching and people just, it’s become common”**. Since leaving university, both students have obtained further GCSEs to enable their further progression in their first year. While she was awaiting her maths result, Chanda found employment as a sessional interpreter, something she enjoyed and seemed proud of, showing me her photograph on her ID pass. Charvi was employed in a SEND school as a teaching assistant. She was awaiting her GCSE results and hoped to progress onto teaching at her school through the Learn Direct Programme. Although the need for additional GCSE qualifications could have been seen as a barrier to progression, both young women overcame this barrier, demonstrating their growing confidence as young women and the transformational nature of the course and the university. Neither identified concerns with either passing these exams or not being able to access a teaching qualification.

Chanda discussed her father’s role: **“even though he has not been part of all my life, he’s put me into a land of opportunities, and I would be a fool not to like take advantage of it”**. This reference to migration was evident throughout each narrative; these young women were aware that their opportunities had increased due to their parents’ migration. These stories raised the ideas of family separation, sacrifice and a search for a better life, which they have the advantage of. This motivated them to succeed but also inspired their concept of a different life, which was not a rejection of their culture or identity, but an acknowledgement of a different way of being. As articulated by Asha, their ideal appeared to be coached in terms of success. Asha referred to her father, saying, **“he really wanted me to be something”**. Success

initially appeared couched within the context of education and their future career. However, it also represented their sense of identity as a successful British/Bangladeshi woman. It relates to the concept of a meaningful life.

With the exception of Asha and Chanda, marriage and children were portrayed as part of the participants' futures. This was viewed as desirable as opposed to obligatory, as Kyra stressed: **“father ideas have changed, my dad goes no, I wouldn't want them to get married. I would probably give them two or three years to get to know each other and then get married”**. Bel affirmed the changing views and behaviours of fathers towards their daughters, **“he's more concerned with our happiness... if I ask him anything, he doesn't give a long answer, he just stays quiet and says ok”**. Aliya viewed marriage as a means of creating **“space”** away from her mother and family and saw marriage as a way of achieving this. However, this was dependent on whether her mother would allow it. These young women explained that they were expected to marry within the Bangladeshi community. Kyra described her grandmother as progressive, allowing her to marry outside of the Bangladeshi community **“as long as they were Muslim”**.

At the point of the interviews, only Chanda was living independently from her family. Her relationship with her mother had broken down, but she had just re-instated contact.

7.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the detailed findings of the interviews with seven women of Bangladeshi heritage. The interviews' analysis highlighted the mediatory approaches used to access higher education within a widening participation university on a Foundation degree in Early Childhood Studies. It detailed the range of mediatory approaches used by each young woman within the context of mediatory support, mediatory tools, and mediatory strategies. It highlighted the interplay of gender, ethnicity and class and described students as skilful and knowledgeable navigators. Facilitation and support of family members appeared evident within the stories.

This was followed by an examination of the construction of identity within the context of a Foundation degree in a widening participation institution. Institutional and course status was emphasised as being significant, with evidence of its importance within the construction of the self. The changing identities of these young women were evident as they progressed through higher education, as the nature of the course content and their increased levels of knowledge and reflexivity caused a questioning of previously-held beliefs, indicating transformation. This transformation and changing identities were not exclusive; families' and fathers' role also appeared to change. This suggests that university attendance and the maintenance of cultural expectations supports the reframing of identity which extends beyond the family to the Bangladeshi community.

The following is the final chapter of this thesis. This focuses on the research questions and the implications of this study.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Implications

8.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes this thesis, which has examined the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender and class, as they shape the representation and construction of identities and behaviours for young British/Bangladeshi women studying on a full-time Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Studies within a widening participation university. The research has identified that young Bangladeshi women's identities are fluid, multiple, contextual, and positioned within a field of expectation. Student identities are formed within early education; however, new identities emerge as they begin the Foundation degree and transition onto Bachelor-level study. Mediation strategies play an important role in the navigation of space and agency. Each young woman presents as a skilful navigator. These young women's supportive networks appear to play a critical role in the recognition of new identities.

The chapter commences with a consideration of the research questions as identified in Chapter One, followed by the further implications for research. This is followed by a discussion of its contribution to the existing body of research and the limitations of the study.

8.2 Research Questions

8.2.1 How do young Bangladeshi women construct their identity within the framework of early education?

Each of the young women interviewed had experienced periods of identity fracture and instability during their journey through compulsory education. This occurred primarily at their first point of contact with education, which was generally nursery school; however, two participants had started school later due to migration. The

second period of instability for all candidates occurred within a secondary school. Each period of instability presented with differing explanations.

These young women's initial construction of self, developed through primary socialisation within the home and family, was scrutinised when they began their education. As Bangladeshi children, their difficulties and their parents' difficulties with the English language formed part of this scrutiny. In contrast to perceptions of Bangladeshi parents as disinterested in education (Crozier, 2009), it was evident that a number of the women cited fathers and grandparents being supportive as they began education.

The narratives indicate that English language acquisition appeared essential; however, early education language support appeared inadequate, with interpretation responsibilities being placed on young Bangladeshi children. Their experiences were assumed to be homogenised, and there was a lack of recognition of the diversity of their experiences. This is evident when considering the variety of languages spoken by the Bangladeshi community (Zeitlyn, 2012). Behaviours and practices within early education failed to recognise or value diversity. Their methods of support, although well-intentioned, appeared to "other" Bangladeshi children. The concept of difference was presented as a collective identity (Anthias, 2002) within a negative framework. Rapid acculturation seemed to be expected, resulting in the fracturing of their confidence in their Bangladeshi identity, "a coherent disinformation" (Crossley, 2015, p.74) and an identity change (Franceschelli and O'Brien, 2015). Familiarity, acculturation and language acquisition initiated the development of bi-identities to support border crossing. Once a sense of belonging (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) was established, a period of stability ensued.

Secondary education launched the second period of identity instability, primarily due to the performative nature of secondary education and teachers' expectations (Scandone, 2018; Hart, 2016). This period resulted in the majority of individuals constructing their capability within a negative framework, and their confidence and aspirations diminished, marking a period of uncertainty. However, despite their difficulties, they appeared resilient with the support of others; their journey continues.

8.2.2 How do young Bangladeshi women's perceptions of identity change across phases of educational transition?

It is evident from the research that each young woman's perception of identity changed across education phases. Initially, this was portrayed as a fracturing of their Bangladeshi identity within the context of early education. Stability appeared restored once a bi-identity started to be established. These women articulated their identity as both British and Bangladeshi. Their identity as Bangladeshi women seemed stable despite pursuing goals that may disrupt the traditional modes of behaviour for Bangladeshi women. These women may act as pioneers, influencing others and the Bangladeshi community (Archer, 2010), while upholding the community's values.

Their perceptions of capability adjusted across each subsequent period of education. Secondary school marked a period of decreasing confidence in their own capability, exacerbated by a performative culture and low expectations within schools for young Bangladeshi women. Post-compulsory education and work experiences in the vocational sector changed their perceptions of self and their confidence improved once they became successful. They became aspirational, and their concept of capability improved. These experiences and the development of knowledge, skills and resilience represent a primary site of transformation.

8.2.3 What are the interplay and tensions of race and femininity experienced by young female Bangladeshi students?

Gender was depicted as a societal and cultural construction, representing a bi-national identity that was constructed within two cultures' expectations where gender discrimination dominates and directs women's lives. To portray British culture as meritocratic and non-discriminatory would perpetuate an equality myth that denies the complexity of life for British/Bangladeshi women. The intersectional nature of these women's lives and the interplay of ethnicity, class and gender compound this complexity.

The Bangladeshi community experiences higher levels of poverty, unemployment and living deprivation than their white counterparts. This fundamentally places young Bangladeshi women in disadvantaged positions. Working-class, low-income localities determine the opportunities available to these young women. The school they attend, their education level, and teachers' expectations all form essential features of this construction. Qualifications, and social class levels determine future opportunities and university attendance (Mazenod et al., 2019; Chowdry et al., 2013; Anders, 2011; Archer, 2007; Blanden and Machin, 2004), as does parental occupation (Kintrea et al., 2015). Each young woman achieved lower grades than expected. This determined their vision of self (Reay, 2012; Stevenson and Clegg, 2011) and the next step towards their future (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009). Opportunities to attend elite universities remained limited as a consequence of the type and level of qualification achieved. Within Stevenson and Clegg's (2011) vision of future selves, the women planned their futures based on what they believed to be available.

The interplay of ethnicity and gender was also apparent in the construction of self. Education was viewed as a means of empowering these young women by the majority

of parents. Cultural constraints, although evident for two of the participants, appeared negotiable and open to change. Parents advocated normative professions such as law and teaching to improve their outcomes and secure future stability. Early years and childcare appeared to be a non-favourable profession despite the dominance of women working within the sector, providing an indication of parents' perceptions of professions and professional status. This factor appears important within the Bangladeshi community, where professional status imbues personal and family status and honour. This resonated with the young women, who acknowledged that this status could elevate their position and their families' position within the community, providing greater freedom and choice. This was evident within marriage arrangements (Bhopal, 2012; Shah et al., 2010), where qualifications and a professional identity enabled choice.

The young women differentiated between culture and religion; depicting culture as restrictive. In contrast, religion and the teachings of Islam were viewed as empowering. These women wished to avoid and change certain aspects of their culture which restricted their daily lives and denied them opportunities. This is not to say that they wished to ignore their cultural context, although they did desire further mobility. These young women and their families recognised the changing cultural context and their roles in this change process. Family negotiation, their mediatory skills and their conformance to the expected standards of behaviour appeared to be factors in the development of new identities. This conformance developed trust, and their skilful mediation and navigation enabled an increased level of agency. Once this was established, these new identities were tested and integrated across a range of settings. Once founded, practised and authenticated, the new identity then became a recognised mode of identity.

Their history and culture were important to these young women, forming an essential part of their identity, and they self-identified as Bangladeshi and British. Cross-cultural experiences were mainly limited to education and employment, and social activities stayed within the Bangladeshi community. Support networks, therefore, were developed within the Bangladeshi community, and these influenced and maintained cultural values. Ego networks provided opportunities for the sharing of information and the further development of their mediatory approach. The development of mediatory support, tools and strategies aided their future navigation. Their desire for greater levels of freedom was positioned within a religious and cultural context (Basit, 2010). Although they desired greater agency, they also wished to maintain their identity as Bangladeshi women and uphold the tenets of their religious identity. However, while culture was not rejected, certain aspects of culture which deny them opportunity, based on gender construction, were questioned and navigated.

8.2.4 As young Bangladeshi women navigate space within higher education, are new gendered identities developed?

As discussed, the young women within this study presented as skilful mediators in their navigation to higher education. As they began university, they did not appear to be passive victims (Archer, 2010). They were knowledgeable individuals (Smith et al., 2009) with agency. The university and their study on a Foundation degree offered a secondary transformative space. The university represented a dichotomous positioning, since the features which made it accessible also defined it in terms of status.

As a widening participation institution, it attracts non-traditional university students with vocational qualifications. As aspects of institutional choice reference institutional habitus, the women felt they would fit in there. They were aware of the university's status and the context of the Foundation degree as a sub-degree. This once again defined their perceived capability, self-definition, and definition by others, and decreased their self-confidence as learners. The institution and teaching staff had

preconceived ideas of capability situated within the widening participation agenda. Therefore the relationship started within a negative framework.

Their academic success restored a sense of stability, but the students remained insecure concerning their levels of capability. Instability reemerged at the end of the Foundation degree, when students questioned their ability to progress to the Honours programme. Insecurity arose from their previous education experiences and their construction of their academic capability prior to university. At this stage of the course, anxiety levels appeared high and remained so throughout the degree programme's final year.

Despite students' concerns, progression to the degree programme's final year appeared to be expected by staff and students, and it was rare for a student to leave the course following the completion of the Foundation degree. As revealed within the research, progression featured as a personal, professional and family concern. Personally, several young women stated the minimum classification they wished to achieve, a facet of their ideas of capability. Professionally, degree classification has implications for their possible futures. These young women may require higher classification levels than others to access the workplace as a result of ethnic penalties. Higher classification levels are also necessary for postgraduate study, with minimum entry levels set for accessing teacher training.

For the young Bangladeshi women, the association between success, status, opportunity and agency appeared integral to their desire to progress. They were aware of their identity as Bangladeshi women and the framing of new identities through obtaining a university degree. Their awareness extended outside of the personal construction of self to accommodate their symbolic identification as Bangladeshi women within their community and wider society.

Within a family context, graduation was presented as a rite of passage that marked their success. However, several young women highlighted how their level of classification was compared to others by their mothers. Family attendance at the graduation and the absence of several fathers possibly inferred issues surrounding daughters' status within the family, indicating inequalities through gender construction. However, there is insufficient evidence to support this, and further research is, therefore, necessary.

As these young women finished the course, a new identity emerged – that of the educated professional Bangladeshi woman. This new identity represented their future self. They saw a variety of opportunities available to them, and these ideas were supported by their families. The aspirations of these young women remained high, as did their resilience. Despite barriers to progression, a consequence of their GCSE results, they persevered in gaining additional qualifications to ensure progression. The Foundation degree was portrayed as a transitory qualification, with all the students focused on advancing to the Honours programme (Fenge, 2011).

The role of women has changed, however, for most women, marriage continues to form part of their future and identity construction. These women believed they could “have it all”, indicating an increasing level of agency being attained through successful mediation and navigation. Their families provided support and encouraged them to continue in education and develop their roles within the family and wider society.

8.3 Contribution to Knowledge

This section identifies the contributions to existing knowledge and the methodological, theoretical, and educational contributions to research made by this study.

8.3.1 Methodological Contribution

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by exposing the reality of a group of young Bangladeshi women's experiences as they transitioned through

education and university. An interpretative phenomenological approach enabled access to their “lifeworlds”. This acknowledged the individual as the expert while exposing the complexities of their experiences as situated within a social and societal context.

The subsequent approach to the interviews, and the use of photo elicitation redressed the balance of power, addressing my concerns as an insider/outsider. The development of a six-stage analysis strategy enabled gaining in-depth familiarity with each narrative, providing a consistent approach to identifying themes across the data. Within this approach, each stage enabled familiarity with the research, providing opportunities to further interrogate the content, meaning and subjectivity within the process. The further inclusion of a personal narrative and a reflective journal evidenced my subjectivity, supporting reflexivity. Each of these points supports the ongoing development of systematic approaches to research, addressing the issues of privilege and power, the insider/outsider debate within narrative and ethnicity research.

8.3.2 Theoretical Contribution

The research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by examining the diverse and multiple identities developed by Bangladeshi women within social and educational spaces as they transition through education. The work exposes the changing identities of young Bangladeshi women and the intersections of race, class and gender as they transition through education into higher institutions and work. It demonstrates how university can provide a transitional third space in which young women can develop a range of identities outside or inside expected cultural norms. Religious and cultural beliefs can inform the development of self, enabling a reimagining of what it means to be a young Muslim women. It demonstrates how their revaluation of self is situated

within the competency framework. It exposes the individual and common junctures where their competency is developed, framed and reframed. The research reveals the effect this has on their identities as Bangladeshi women.

It exposes the individual construction of mediatory approaches to navigation from compulsory to higher education, exploring the development and use of multiple identities within their journey. However, it also identifies the value placed on education within the Bangladeshi community and refutes the belief that Bangladeshi parents dissuade their daughters from attending university. The thesis demonstrates the value of applying Archer's conceptual framework of morphogenesis to understand the relational nature of the individual experience of student and parent. Additionally, an understanding of morphogenesis develops our knowledge of the collective experiences of the Bangladeshi community within the UK post-migration. The ego network analysis enabled the identification of supportive and influential networks within each participant's narrative and their contribution within the mediatory support context. This is an essential factor in developing our understanding of the importance of community and social networks to navigate and develop social mobility within the Bangladeshi community. However, it also raised questions concerning the value placed on these networks and the lack of value placed upon them concerning social capital development. Social capital is developed within these networks, and role models do exist. However, the lack of recognition raises further questions concerning hegemonic power.

As featured within the study, empowerment and disempowerment presented as a particular feature of education; student reflexivity and social networks supported their navigation of discriminatory practice. As evidenced in the narratives, well-intentioned support exposed inherent discrimination. This was evident within the context of support in schools, colleges and universities, and at a more fundamental level within policy developments intended to address inequality and discrimination. As seen within the development of vocational qualifications and vocational degrees, this layering reduces opportunities and choice, thus limiting opportunities for progression and disempowering the students. This thesis develops our understanding of how education

replicates societal power, status and privilege based on race, gender, ethnicity, culture. and empowerment. The Foundation degree appears as a transitional stage the earlier concerns that this being primarily viewed as a progression route has come to fruition. This has implications for the future of Foundation degrees, as the numbers of part-time students reduced, and the number of young full-time students has increased.

However, university status remains an issue for the higher education sector, with issues surrounding access to elite universities remaining problematic. This study has exposed a further issue concerning the identification and framing of non-Russell Froup institutions and the courses they offer by students and their families. This instigated comparison with elite universities and non-vocational courses, which continued through to graduation, resulted in student concepts of capability waning and them placing negative judgments on their degree's value and status. Graduation also highlights questions concerning the construction of gender within a cultural context. What is evident within the research is the reconstruction of young educated professional Bangladeshi women's identities as facilitated by a university education.

8.3.3 Educational Contribution

The final point for discussion concerns inclusion, widening participation and pedagogy. This research has exposed the successes and failures in the provision of education for Bangladeshi women. The barriers to education appear multiple; in essence, the current education system represents a pedagogical approach to inclusion that fails to fully recognise or value diversity. The dominant approach continues to represent a white middle-class narrative. This systematically stereotypes and fails to meet the needs of this particular group of children. Three key points of transition appeared significant in the women's narratives – starting school, the whole of secondary school and starting university. Teachers, students, support workers and lecturers conceptualised ethnicity and capability at each of these points. Within a capability and competency context, teachers, support workers, and lecturers' actions appeared critical on the participants' self-confidence levels, identity stability and actions. Starting school initially raised the issue of difference and resonated throughout their journeys

through education. Secondary school appeared to conceptualise ethnicity within the context of capability, directing specific student groups in a particular direction. This seems evident when considering the high number of students from Bangladeshi groups studying vocational qualifications, and is evidenced further when considering topic choices and gender. What is presented as an enabling factor, the opportunity to study for qualifications, appears derisory. While offering empowerment through opportunity it also disempowers the individual from creating future opportunities. A culturally-responsive pedagogical approach requires an understanding of the diversity of identity, acknowledging the value of cultural identities and recognising the stereotypes that limit opportunities for Bangladeshi females. A culturally responsive pedagogy requires acknowledgement of the value of difference, this recognises the value of culture, language, ethnicity, gender and religious identities enabling integration within the curriculum and within policy and practice. The current separation between policy and practice is evident. This raises questions concerning curriculum design, the training of professionals in school and the meaning of equality and diversity, within a culturally-responsive context.

The development of bi-identities may have supported the participants' navigation of adverse circumstances, where facets of each of their identities were used to support this navigation. However, the navigation of bi-identities meant that journeys into higher education became *messy* and protracted. Once again, the domination of a single identity within a host country perpetuated a culture of discrimination, placing those of Bangladeshi descent within disadvantaged positions. The lack of recognition of the diversity of identity may place the individual at a disadvantage. Individuals may follow others due to a lack of awareness of their own opportunities, or they may follow the guidance of others if that pathway appears more accessible. However, it is noted that, although family and community support is not a prerequisite for accessing higher education, this does increase the likelihood that students will attend and remain on the course.

Consequently, within this study, further education, vocational qualifications and apprenticeships represented a primary site of transformative learning, thus enabling access to higher education and university, so support the transformation of identity. Higher education was depicted as a secondary site of transformation, and the opportunity to study for the Foundation degree and then transition to the Honours programme provided further transformative opportunities.

8.4 Research Implications

The clear understanding of Bangladeshi women's experiences and their construction of identity gained through this study has implications for theory and practice.

8.4.1 The Construction of Identity within Compulsory Education Settings

These women's experiences have resonance for developing inclusion and widening participation policies and practices in schools. The experiences described within the research highlighted that the construction of identity within compulsory education reverberated throughout their subsequent journey to higher education. However, what was apparent is that resilience was developed, despite fluctuating aspirations. This resilience sustained their journey to higher education despite these students encountering further barriers to participation. Given the focus on the importance of the early years sector, further research concerning identity construction within this setting is needed, to identify appropriate ways to change the current systems of approach, support, and practice. As discussed in the thesis, supportive behaviours continue to stereotype children's ethnicity. The failure to recognise and acknowledge the complexity, richness and diversity of Bangladeshi identity continues to perpetuate cultural stereotypes and racism in the day-to-day practices within schools. This obviously has further implications for policy concerning the sector's funding and training of early years practitioners, and has implications for secondary schools.

Within secondary schools, the over-representation of Bangladeshi children within non-academic and vocational qualifications indicates the tiering of aspirations (Mazenod et al., 2019). This, coupled with the “othering” of young Bangladeshi Muslim girls and the perpetuation of cultural stereotypes as passive victims (Ijaz and Abbas (2010), reduces their opportunities to engage in higher education. This denies opportunities and conceptualises capability within a negative framework, preventing a linear progression to higher education. Further research is needed to understand the views of children and teachers. Teachers, politicians, and policy makers need to understand the diversity of experience and the Bangladeshi community’s changing culture. The conflation of negative perspectives centred on the idea of a passive victim engaged in a forced marriage fails to recognise the reconstruction of identity and gender within an ethnic framework, therefore perpetuating stereotypes and increasing marginalisation.

8.4.2 Post-Compulsory Education: The Vocational Sector

The further education sector, its variety of qualifications and the opportunities it allows for work experience, provided a site of empowerment for many students interviewed, provided them with second-chance opportunities. Although this was a success, it was also dominated by the widening participation of students in terms of social class and ethnicity. This indicates a tiered level of education. White middle-class students have greater opportunities within an educational context and, therefore, greater access to higher education, employment, and professions (Mellor, 2011). As is evident, each stage of education has a relationship with the next. The opportunities provided by vocational qualifications, their transferability to other vocational and non-vocational qualifications appear important when considering tiering in the sense of future occupations, for example, with regard to the professions of law and medicine and tiering concerning access to elite universities.

8.4.3 Higher Education: The Vocational Sector

Gaining entry to higher education remains challenging, with issues around institutional choice, habitus and university status being described as an issue for the participants.

As discussed above, students chose universities where they felt they would fit in, an issue of ethnicity and capability. Within a cultural context, distance, safety and institutional trust are significant factors for parents. This means parents having trust in the university concerning safety and trust in the individual to maintain the expected modes of behaviour. Trust develops within the community as a result of pioneers like the women interviewed. These women attended, successfully completed, and maintained their parents' and community's expectations while studying at university. Therefore, they were preparing the way for further women to attend university. This extended to the extended family and the community as a whole.

The status issue continues to reverberate, leading to comparisons by the individual and their family concerning the status and the quality and value of the university and course. This remains an issue for the sector and requires far greater transparency in widening participation policy and strategies to widen these opportunities. Staff within widening participation universities view entry as a success, but appear unaware of the issue of status and its effects on confidence, capability and identity. Therefore, a more focused study of this issue is recommended, to support and enhance current university transition activities.

8.5 Internal Transition

The ease of internal transition from Foundation degree to the Honours programme supports identity stability across programmes. As discussed in Chapter One, modules and module content remain identical across the programme. Despite this, students remain anxious about the likelihood of progression, partly based on progression credits. Foundation degree students require a higher credit value to progress onto the final year (220 credits and a 50% grade average or 240 credits) than their degree counterparts. This relates to the nature of the Foundation degree being a stand-alone qualification requiring a lower-end credit value. This does, however, increase the levels of pressure and stress experienced by the students.

Despite this, Foundation degree students within the institution appear to make more significant progress than the full Honours students, indicating higher levels of motivation, commitment to study and levels of capability. Although the qualification widens participation (HEFCE, 2008), it also appears to penalise the Foundation degree students as, to secure progression and course completion, they must prove capability and are penalised with financial consequences requiring them to study and pay for additional modules should they fail.

8.6 Implications for Research

8.6.1 Limitations of the Study

This study's limitations are the sample size and selection, my positionality as the researcher, the research method, and the nature of the research institution.

8.6.2 Sample Size and Selection

The sample size and the use of a phenomenological approach in the study elicited rich data which identified the multiple realities of the experiences of the young women in the sample. Each experience was portrayed as being unique, situated within each individual's life experiences and lifeworlds, with different causes and different consequences (Huisman et al., 2019). Although this small sample enabled me to identify common themes, it cannot be deemed to represent the wider population's experiences. Therefore, generalisation from this data is not possible (Denscombe, 2014).

It is also acknowledged that the sample participants, as described in Chapter Four (Methodology), did not fully represent the cohort of students during this particular period. The reduced number of first year students is of particular significance. Therefore, the data only represent the thoughts and comments of the individuals within the study.

8.6.3 Researcher Positionality

My dichotomous positioning as both an insider and an outsider highlights concerns surrounding power and objectivity. It is important to recognise that the representation of any disadvantaged group is a matter of social justice (Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford, 1997).

As an insider, a member of staff within the research institution, my position of power and authority has the potential to create bias. Although insider knowledge enabled a greater awareness of the mechanisms and tensions experienced by participants within education and the institution, it might also affect objectivity (Savvides et al., 2014).

This also resonates with my position as an outsider, a middle-class white woman. It was important to recognise that my social class positioning and the white positioning of power within British society both appeared to give me a position of power. The use of photo-elicitation acknowledged this and provided a culturally-responsive methodology. Participant dialogue became the priority and the sharing of experiences a possibility. However, it is important to recognise that the balance of power may have consciously or unconsciously remained, influencing the eventual outcome and the interpretation of the findings. It is also important to acknowledge that my early experiences may also have influenced my data interpretation, affecting the research's objectivity, since – as previously discussed in the thesis – complete objectivity is impossible. A range of methods was used to address the issue of subjectivity. Therefore reflexivity, self-bracketing and a declaration of my narrative were used to address these limitations.

8.6.4 Research Methods

As outlined in Chapter Four, photo elicitation produced large amounts of rich data (Vagle, 2018; Geertz, 1973) and engagement with each participant's perspective.

Photo elicitation enabled access to their world as they experienced it (Meo, 2010). As the pilot interview highlighted, participants were keen to choose their own photographs, equalising the balance of power. Therefore participants selected the number and type of photographs we discussed, resulting in a diverse number and range of photographs, reflecting the IPA approach of participant orientation (Smith et al., 2009). Prior to the interviews, it was instructed that they should feature in the photographs, including photographs of themselves as a child and an adult. However, several women produced photographs of their family where they were not present. Although this provided relevant historical data, it created some inconsistencies in data exposure. More explicit instruction about the inclusion of family photographs would have increased the consistency of the approach used, however, it might have influenced the participants.

Further questioning was required to ensure that similar points were covered, affecting the balance of power within the interview. This also impacted on the interview's length and the time frame agreed between the participant and the researcher. This perhaps led to a rushing of information from both parties, therefore, the interview periods needed to be longer.

Although each individual's network enabled the identification of those within each network and their changing support during transition phases, this presented as *light touch* and was not explored in any degree of depth. A more focused study of each woman's ego network is necessary to extend the study. The identification of each participant within the network, their levels of influence and their role at each point of transition would facilitate further opportunities for analysis within the context of mediatory support.

8.6.5 The Research Institution

The research institution operates within a niche position, being a widening participation institution that provides further and higher education across various professional sectors within an urban setting. The institution, therefore, cannot be seen as

representing all other similar institutions or universities within the sector, although the themes identified may have resonance for other institutions.

8.7 Final Comments

As I started this research, as explained in Chapter One, I was motivated by working with women from diverse backgrounds. I was particularly interested in women of Bangladeshi heritage who demonstrated resilience despite ongoing discrimination and challenging journeys through education. My experience of managing and developing the Foundation degree fuelled my enthusiasm for the course and the students enrolled on the programme. As a sub-degree, it offered a transitory step in each young woman's journey onto the Honours programme. This appeared to empower the students, providing greater levels of agency and furthering their employment opportunities. My experience within the community and the classroom increased my interest in young Bangladeshi women.

What became evident within the study was the difficulties these students encounter before entering higher education. This is challenging for universities. However, universities, and particularly widening participation institutions, offer a range of additional services to address these issues. University staff are aware of the low levels of academic self-confidence experienced by widening participation students and provide additional academic support via academic support services. However, some students remain reluctant to use these services and prefer to receive additional support via their lecturers. As identified within the research, engagement is relational; a trust relationship is essential within students' support from diverse backgrounds. The separation of services from day-to-day teaching activities appears to have resonance for the students. This would indicate that within the context of widening participation, a reevaluation of the structure, roles and processes of support services within universities is necessary.

Further research is needed to understand the reality of the lack of student engagement within support services. This has implications for the structure of these services, pastoral care and the role of teaching staff within institutions. Current trends for the high-level contact hours for teaching staff within teaching universities impact on the additional level of support staff can provide while maintaining the demand for delivering quality teaching.

The Black Lives Matter campaign has further highlighted the need for universities to acknowledge that student identity, concepts of value and capability impact on these women's day-to-day lives. These affect their opportunities within transformative spaces. The recognition of racism, racial discrimination, and the opportunity to explore these issue appears a fundamental issue in course design and development. Although highlighting issues surrounding discrimination, the BAME agenda homogenises the experiences of a diverse range of individuals. In addition, we need to move away from the essentialisation of identity, to recognise the diversity and changing nature of ethnic identity within contemporary society. The intersectional nature of identity and experience across race and gender requires a far greater level of consideration. The portrayal of the UK as a multicultural society implies recognition; the recognition of diversity in its true sense, therefore, appears to be an integral part of this process and for full citizenship and democracy.

Within universities, momentum has increased to decolonise the curriculum, however, decolonisation requires an extension of all activities outside of the classroom environment as well as inside it. The decolonisation of universities and the university sector is a more appropriate agenda. All aspects of university life require a commitment to ensure that ethnic minority groups and the reality of wider social context issues are acknowledged and proactively addressed. The university sector needs to represent a more diverse range of students and courses, with equal status being ascribed to universities across the sector. This has implications for all universities but, in particular, red brick "elite" universities. As previously discussed, access to those institutions for ethnic minority groups needs to be addressed, as does the question of vocational courses. Within the university sector, vocational courses

primarily remain the domain of post-1992 universities. Institutions offering these qualifications, as well as widening participation institutions, are perceived as having lower status and value within and outside the sector. The failure of elite universities to fully engage with this issue perpetuates this notion.

Universities play an essential role in preparing students for graduate employment within a competitive and challenging market. The recognition of the disparities in employment pay and future opportunities requires attention at university level. Widening participation universities are ideally placed to lead the way in this, since employer engagement appears to be mandatory in the development of vocational degrees, and placement experiences are an essential element of many of the courses.

As well as acknowledging the disparities in employment and opportunities for those from ethnic minority groups, and recognising the intersectional nature of discrimination, universities need to offer culturally-aware careers support. This requires understanding both the employment market and the multiple axes of discrimination experienced by female Bangladeshi students. Discrimination is evident; courses continue to appear gender streamed, as do occupations. Bangladeshi women continue to experience the effects of the ethnic penalty in employment. The Early Years sector continues to have less status and value than male-dominated areas of study. Societal change and the sector's re-professionalisation must begin within educational institutions; higher education must commit to this agenda. As previously discuss, the development of vocational courses, with their commitment to employer engagement, provides a starting point for this. However, this commitment needs to be extended throughout the universities' development plans, to ensure that students are not left in a disadvantaged position during their course and post-course.

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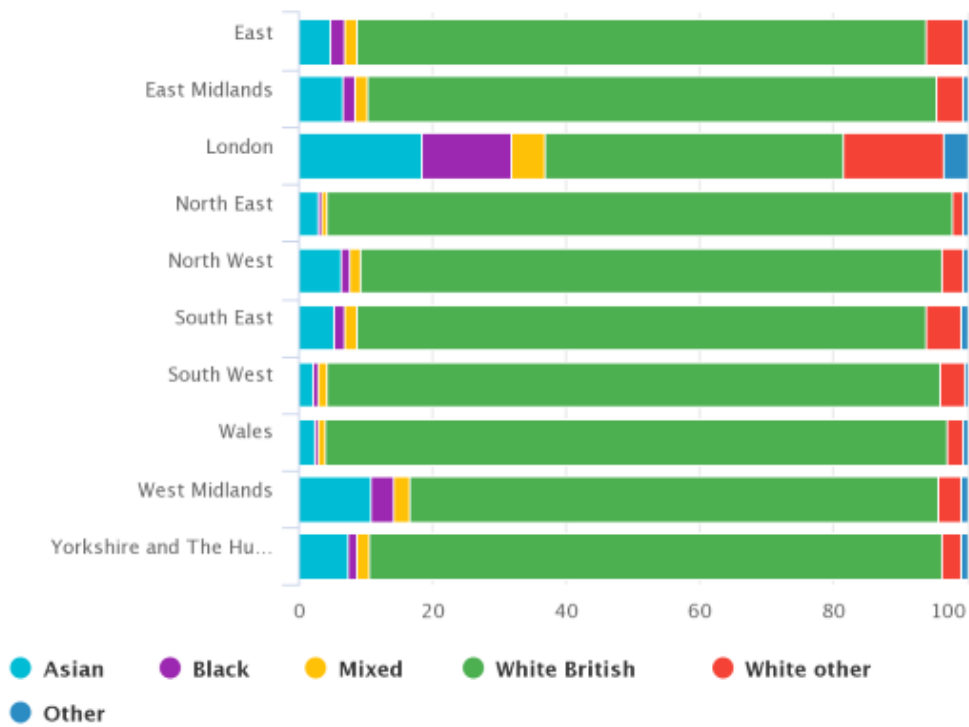
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Appendix 1

Ethnicity of the UK Population 2011

Title: Areas of England and Wales by ethnicity. Location: England and Wales. Time period: 2011. Source: Office for National Statistics| Ethnicity Facts and Figures GOV.UK



Appendix 2

Reflective Diary

Sunday 13th April 2014

I start this diary with a certain degree of trepidation; a number of tasks remain outstanding, and I have a tight schedule of work in my head, however, I have not committed this to paper, so perhaps this would be a sensible starting point?

A reminder of where am I? The pilot study is complete. I have conducted two transition interviews, unfortunately, the third participant was unable to complete the interview prior to the Easter holidays and therefore remains outstanding.

This and the fact I have first-year and alumni interviews to arrange raises my levels of anxiety. My intention was to arrange this prior to the Easter holidays, however, I failed to do this due to work and marking pressures.

Note to self: take a lunch break, this way, small jobs can be completed.

However, having transcribed conducted interviews, a lengthy task, I have placed these in an initial format for the start of the analysis. My intention is to start the initial analyses today, although, at this point, I am uncertain where to start!

If in doubt, organise,

Plan for today:

- Organise a contact schedule for interviews
- Back to the literature (Smith and Flowers)

- Listen to transcript one (Asha)
- Start to make preliminary comments for transcript one.

End of the day: Completed work

- Initial schedule of work is completed
- First step analysis completed, however, this is simplistic at this stage, read, reflect and revisit
- Initial comments have been made
- Revisit transcription one tomorrow

Immediate thoughts

The word ambitious appears significant, it is used in relation to the idea of the future and in relation to education – revisit this

Education is articulated in two domains – formal education and in relation to father and life skills

The loss of her father is obviously central to her discussion

Appendix 3

The Pilot Study: Reflection and Subjectivity

“I don't believe there's an atom of meaning in it.”

- Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and
Through the Looking-Glass

Epoché Statement

The development of an epoché statement offers the researcher the opportunity to identify their preconceptions and potential bias, which may obscure the phenomena studied (Smith et al., 2009). Landridge (2007) argues that doubt lies at the heart of this concept; this provides a potential starting point for developing a personal epoché.

Experience

I believe we develop our notions of truth and reality through personal experience, however, these experiences are not value-free but created within a system of values, beliefs, and our perception of our place in the world. These experiences support knowledge creation but may also develop upon and reinforce existing beliefs; experience, therefore, is subjective. Memory is also imprecise, transient in nature, and an interpretative process, filtering, storing, attributing and discarding information within the event and reinterpreting it over time.

Given all these factors, the individual may ignore the significance of an experience or attribute undue credence to an experience.

- Prior experience of student behaviour is bracketed.

Gender

My gender as a woman impacts on my perceptions of women within UK society, which remains unequal despite equality declarations. Equality legislation has supported the development of women's rights. Still, it has placed men and women in a position where the "same" is viewed as equal. Homogenising men and women's experiences has led to a repositioning of men within female-dominated arenas and has given men further rights within these domains, whilst failing to address the inequalities of female experience. For example, maternity rights have been extended to men to enable greater participation by the father in the lives of their children; however, many women still face difficult choices in relation to motherhood and work and continue to "juggle" home and family, continuing to take responsibility for the domestic sphere and the primary parenting role. I believe we require a reconceptualisation of what is meant by womanhood, where difference, not sameness, is valued and where female roles are recognised as valuable. This does not advocate that men should be removed from these domains. Still, female inequality needs to be addressed as a priority.

- Concepts of gender inequality are bracketed.
- Concepts of gender roles are bracketed.
- Concepts of power realities are bracketed.

Personal Experience

I acknowledge that my own childhood experience has driven my interest in the subject area. Issues of equality and inequality drive my interest in the topic and are also a significant feature of my teaching practice. I believe education provides individuals with opportunities as a result of experience and achievement, and therefore view education as "power". I also acknowledge that factors such as race, gender, ethnicity and social class all impact on individuals' senses of opportunity, power and agency. I also acknowledge that poverty plays a role within individuals' lives, leading to unequal positions within society, but I feel that poverty alone fails to provide a satisfactory explanation for inequality.

- Personal views on the purpose of education are bracketed.

Attending to my Feelings

Each of these points requires a reflexive approach throughout the research process. Visiting the bracketed points at critical points will support this process's development.

Personal Reflection

Within this section, I offer a discussion of the piloting process, considering it from briefing through to a post-interview reflection.

Pre-Interview

The initial briefing was conducted with 50 final year students in semester two of the final year of the BA (Honours) Early Childhood Studies degree. Students within this group progressed to the final year either through the full-time BA or through the FdA in Early Childhood Studies. The briefing followed a two-hour lecture which had explored the educational underachievement of boys. Following an explanation of my research project, I suggested that potential participants could contact me via email for further information and to register their initial interest. Four students made email contact. Additional information concerning the nature of the research was provided via email. Each of these registered an interest in participating.

Further arrangements were made regarding the time, location, date and arrangements for an interview. One student was selected for the pilot study on a first contact basis.

Although not everyone was eager to participate, I was surprised by how eager the four were to participate in the research. My initial thoughts were that there might be a number of potential barriers to recruitment, for example, a lack of interest in the

research, timing (due to workload), a general lack of confidence by the student, worries about a one-to-one interview, and my personal concerns of being an “intercultural interloper”, given my position as a white women interviewing Asian females.

However, each prospective participant appeared enthusiastic concerning the research and, although there were some initial difficulties arranging interview times due to issues around timetabling and placement commitments, the first student seemed eager to go ahead with the interview. Alternative venues were considered, however, it was felt it would be more convenient to conduct interviews within the institution. Suitable rooms were therefore located to ensure privacy and comfort.

Within the pre-pilot interview, I discussed with Participant One (Amber) the nature of the research, consent, withdrawal from the research, data storage and access to the findings. Amber appeared happy to participate, stating, “I can’t wait to see the write-up”. Again, this surprised me, making me reconsider my preconceptions concerning students’ levels of self-confidence. I often perceive – and I am not alone in this view within the staff team – that the majority of students within the school appear to lack self-confidence, based on our conceptions of the experiences of first-generation entrants into higher education, entry data, students entering, in some cases, with lower entry criteria compared to other institutions and students’ high levels of anxiety in relation to the assessment.

Although not providing a clear counter-argument, the students’ willingness to participate brings this belief into question. Students appear to have higher levels of self-confidence than previously anticipated. I also wonder if the timing of the briefing following a lecture based around concepts of equality impact of this choice, did this raise their awareness of inequality and therefore influence their decision, offering an opportunity for the voice for young Bangladeshi women to be heard?

Post-Interview

I felt the first interview went well. Before the interview, Amber had been asked to provide a photograph of herself as a child and a recent photograph. I had anticipated this would support the interview process through the generation of a narrative. Surprisingly Amber brought a range of photographs – one of herself as a child, one of her graduation (wearing her hijab cap and gown) featuring her husband, parents and brother, three of her wedding – one of the days before the wedding in traditional dress, one of the wedding days in traditional wedding attire and one of her registry office wedding in a white wedding gown.

Before the interview, Amber apologised for this, explaining that she only had one photograph of herself as a child; I reassured her that this was fine. This comment was repeated post-interview; again, I reassured her, explaining that I too only had one photograph of myself as a child, as all the others had remained in South Africa where I lived as a child. Disclosing part of my own story appeared important as the lack of photographs appeared to bother her. However, she seemed surprised to find that I was in a similar position.

During the interview, Amber appeared relaxed and keen to tell her story. On several occasions she laughed when describing her parents, her relationship with the family presented as important to her, and she appears to have a good relationship with her parents. The interview seemed to follow a “natural” progression of discussion and ended at a natural juncture. I thanked Amber for her participation, reiterated her access to the data and asked her to contact me if she had any further questions.

The use of photographs to generate a narrative appeared successful, with a high participant involvement level and minimal questioning. This enabled a far more exploratory approach with the interview naturally developing and minimal prompting

required to keep the interview within the study's framework. However, data analysis will enable an evaluation of the data collection method.

Questions

The use of the additional photographs supplied by Amber supported the development of the discussion. This provides me with a dilemma – does limiting the number of photographs impact on the discussion's quality? Is it necessary to extend the number of photographs or to see if other participants supply additional photographs? Is the inclusion of additional participant photographs significant within the context of the research?

Why did Amber feel it necessary to supply additional photographs – is this an indication of a lack of confidence or nervousness concerning the interview? Do they indicate significant events and people in her life? Did she wish to share these, or is there importance attached to her concerns regarding a lack of photographs as a child?

Each of these points require further consideration within post-data analysis.

Appendix 4: Pilot Interview

4.1: First Transcription (Verbatim)

Research Interview- Me, Myself, I.

Date of interview: 13th March 2014

Interviewee: Amber

Audio length 21 minutes and 8 seconds

START OF TRANSCRIPT

Photograph One: individual photograph of a smiling girl of approximately four years of age

Facilitator	Ok, so let's start with this photograph; tell me about this photo, then
Interviewee	Urr this was taken in Bangladesh, where I was born, I can't remember who took the photo cos I was young then, but umm I remember when I was there, umm I used to play you know with my family and friends, but my parents umm left us with our cousin they had to come to the UK first
Facilitator	Yes
	so I was there with my younger umm older sisters I just remember like they used to look after me and I used to be with them, I didn't go to school umm when I was there because I was young umm so I used like most of the time stay at home or play or I used to be by myself really because my elder siblings they used to go to school or do things, I used

	to be by myself really you or you know with my cousins, I used to be by myself really but yea that's what I remember about that one I don't really remember that much <i>[both laugh]</i>
Interviewee	What was, what's the next one
Photograph Two: Group Photograph	
Interviewee	next one is that one
Facilitator	ok, tell me about this one then
Interviewee	these, I have four sisters ok, this is my elder one, umm I came into the UK in 1998 with urr two of my sisters, these two
Facilitator	and how old were you then
Interviewee	I was 7 when I came to the UK
Facilitator	Yea
Interviewee	Umm?
Facilitator	And had you been to school at all by then?
Interviewee	Yea I think I started school in year three at that time because I didn't, I couldn't go back to the reception or nursery because of my age
Facilitator	Yes
Interviewee	I think I was in year three, yea...
Facilitator	...and had you gone to school in Bangladesh?
Interviewee	no, I didn't go to school at all there because at that time I don't think there was school, well, there was but only if

	you were like rich or something you could go to the school
Facilitator	Yes
Interviewee	but if you're coming from a poor family, then you can't go to school at all, so when I came here, I did start school...
Facilitator	Yes

End of inclusion (2 of 22)

	I didn't know what to say to them.	83-85	<p>young adults; this may dominate given the importance placed on this now.</p> <p>Lack of confidence/lack of skills? (language, social)</p>
3. Educational transitions	<p>I didn't go to school umm when I was there because I was young umm, so I used like most of the time stay at home or play</p> <p>I think I started school in year three at that nursery because of my age,</p> <p>I couldn't go back to the reception or nursery</p> <p>I think I was in year three yea</p> <p>No, I didn't go to school at all because there that time I don't think there was school, well, there was but only if you were like rich or</p>	<p>11-13</p> <p>29-31</p> <p>33</p> <p>35-37</p>	<p>I didn't go to school (Bangladesh)</p> <p>Started school with children approximately the same age – year seven. This would mean under the current system, she would have missed two years of education.</p> <p>Seems aware of this fact- therefore aware of the gap in education – uncertainty, confidence? Recognition of difference? Didn't, couldn't</p> <p>Given transition, home, language, school reuniting with parents and the age of Amber, it would appear reasonable this point might be unclear.</p> <p>Limited availability of schooling in the local area?</p> <p>An acknowledgement of her families' position, i.e. poor Awareness of social positioning</p>

	something you could go to the school		
4 Friends	<p>umm I used to play you know, with my family and friends but my parents umm left us with our cousin they had to come to the UK first</p> <p>I used to be by myself, really.</p> <p>I had no friends when I started school, I had no friends, you know</p> <p>You can be friends with them, but even though they weren't the same</p>	<p>4-7</p> <p>14-15</p> <p>79</p> <p>83</p>	<p>Umm -hesitation</p> <p>Why? Separation/loss "left with cousin."</p> <p>Being by herself appears significant memory</p> <p>Friends appear important-support?</p> <p>Awareness of not being the same – not doing things "right" and her ways are wrong. Fitting in?</p>

Appendix 6: First Interview

Educational Doctorate

Interview 1

Research Interview – Me, Myself, I.

First Transcription – Verbatim

Date of interview: 13th March 2014

Interviewee: Asha

Audio length: 23:20

START OF TRANSCRIPT

- 1 F- Ok, which photograph shall we start with then?
- 2 I- umm, we can start with this one
- 3 F- Tell me about that photograph, then?
- 4 I- I actually remember, it sounds quite crazy, but I remember that scene my brother was taking the
5 picture and umm, and all I just remember is my dad just went missing. And I think he was trying to
6 play hide and seek with me, but that's what I remember of that picture, but I thought brilliant, cos I
7 was that young, and I really do remember that day. Uum, my brother took the picture and my dad,
8 he just I don't know he just hid, and then I found him again umm, and that's all I remember
- 9 F- How old were you there?
- 10 I- I don't know, probably two three, I don't know...
- 11 F- So you were very, very little
- 12 I- Yea
- 13 F- Yea
- 14 I- And that's where I used to live, umm, I live in *** still, but it's just at the bottom of ***, so I moved
15 from there, and I live somewhere else

16 F- And had your parents always lived there?

17 I- Yea, they still have that property

18 F- Yea

19 I - Yea, so

20 F- And what your dad born in the country?

21 I- No, he was born in Bangladesh, and he came. I love it when my dad tells me about his history; it's
22 amazing. When he came he worked in factories, and at that time it was shillings, and he's like it was
23 this much and umm yeah it was quite, it's like and, he was like telling me like the, you know the ***
24 market, there used to be animals and stuff and they used to play games, and they used to work in
25 very cold conditions and umm and he would talk about the swimming baths like everyone would go
26 there for baths and stuff and urr yeah

27 F- So did your dad come over to this country on his own or?

28 I- Ur, his brother brought him over, how was very young, he was about... sixteen, his older brother
29 had an education whereas he didn't, he had to work hard my dad, he had to get the money coming
30 for his brother and uum his family back home so, but he told me that the Queen brought him over
31 like the Queen did some kind of scheme, that brought people from Bangladesh

32 F- Yea

33 I- Yea, so I don't know

34 F- So that possibly would have been would have been maybe in the 1960s, 1970s?

35 I- Yea, it was around that time

36 F- If it was the old money, then it would have been around the 1960s

37 I- So umm, I lost my dad, about five months ago

38 F- So it's very fresh in your mind

39 I - Yes, it's fresh; I continued uni cause he really wanted me to graduate. I worked so hard to get
40 here; I didn't wanna like because I missed two years of education. I just didn't want to like defer or
41 miss another year, so umm, I just kept strong, and that's what's

42 F - So what happened with missing the two years? What happened there?

43 I- Umm (sighs) I was so confused, in college, I went to *** college, and I was doing like arts and stuff,
44 and I was good at it, but ... I just didn't feel like it was going to get me anywhere in life. And Urr, my
45 family, like saying, you know, you're good, but is it going to get you a job, you know this and that,
46 stating the facts, but I wasn't as ambitious then. I thought yea, I'm going to be this and that, but
47 when I got to college, I wasn't as ambitious as I was in, when I was in year 11.

Appendix 7

Exploratory Comments and Emergent Themes

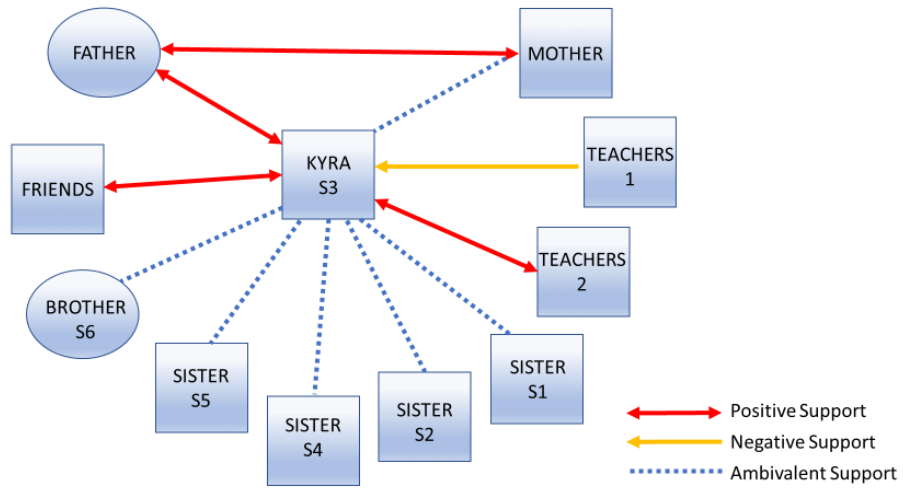
Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Line	Exploratory comments
	F- Ok which, photograph shall we start with then?	1.	
	I- umm, we can start with this one	2.	
	F- Tell me about that photograph, then?	3.	
The importance of early memory	I- I actually remember, it	4.	<p><i>I remember – this memory appears important, significant in her relationship with her father? (r)</i></p> <p><i>She thought brilliant, is this her feeling about the photograph and the events of the photograph now (e)</i></p> <p><i>Young – is this concept of age significant (pr)</i></p> <p><i>“I found him again” (c) changes</i></p>
Being young	sounds quite crazy,	5.	
Her relationship with her father	but I remember that scene, my brother was taking	6.	
	the	7.	
Lost and found	picture and umm ...	8.	
	and all I just remember is my dad just went missing, and I think he was trying to play hide and seek with me, but that’s what I remember of that picture, but so, I thought brilliant, cos I		

	<p>was that young, and I <u>really do</u> remember that day.</p> <p>Uum, my brother took the picture and my dad, he just, umm, I don't know he just hid, and then I found him again, umm, and that's all I remember</p>		
	F- How old were you there?	9.	
	I- I don't know, probably two, three, I don't know...	10	(v)
	F- So you were very, very little	11	
Relationship with her father	I- <u>Yea</u>	12	A warm response
	F- Yea	13	
House /home?	<p>I- And that's where I used to live, umm, I live in **** still, but it's just at the bottom of ****, so I moved</p> <p>from there and I live somewhere else</p>	<p>14</p> <p>15</p>	<p>(p)</p> <p><i>The tone of voice changes; it becomes much more matter of fact</i></p>

Appendix Eight

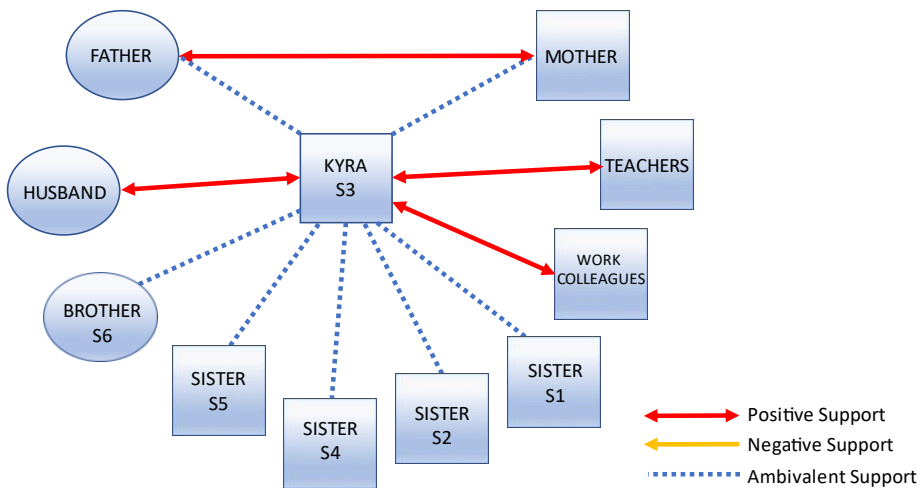
Kyra Ego Network Analyses 8.1

TRANSITION : SCHOOL / COLLEGE



Appendix 8.2

COLLEGE / UNIVERSITY



Appendix 8.3

COURSE / COMPLETION

