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Family, Citizenship and Islam

The Changing Experiences of Migrant Women Ageing in London

NILUFAR AHMED

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Family, Citizenship and Islam

The Changing Experiences of Migrant Women Ageing in London

NILUFAR AHMED
Swansea University, UK

LONDON AND NEW YORK

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For my parents

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Series Editor's Preface

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Since the early 1980s there has been a burgeoning of research and writing on the migrant experience, the protagonists being males who left home as economic migrants, asylum seekers or refugees. More recently the spotlight has widened to incorporate female mobility: women who are economic migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, or those illegally trafficked as sex or domestic workers. In contrast, little or no interest has been shown in the experiences of the earlier waves of female migration, that which comes under the heading of 'family reunification': predominantly women who left home in order to join their husbands – some of whom they had not seen for a number of years – or those who travelled as brides, married to men their barely knew. In this pioneering and scholarly work, Nilufar Ahmed redresses the lacuna in female migration studies by exploring the lifecourse and experiences of women who came from Bangladesh and settled in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets in the 1970s and 1980s; women who came simply as wives and mothers. However, this is not just a temporally defined examination of female arrival and settlement in a specific place. It is a longitudinal study. Ahmed carried out the research, in the same location with the same subjects, in two separate periods, firstly in 2001 and again in 2011.

This book is then much more than just a one off evaluation of the way in which migrant women adapt to spatial and cultural change. It is far richer than this, as the longitudinal element enabled the author to assess the ways in which subjective values such as ageing, family, communal status and identity, combined with the objectivity of external political and social events, impacted upon first generation female migrants as the process of settlement evolved. The research was further enriched by the fact that, in the context of her research fieldwork, Ahmed was both an insider and outsider. As a Bangladeshi who spoke the dialect of her interviewees – Sylheti – she was able to integrate with her research universe, whilst at the same time, as an outsider, never having lived in Tower Hamlets, she was able to stand back and take an objective analytical view of the intersection of locality and person.

Upon reading the chapters in this book we begin to appreciate the enormity of the pressures on the Bangladeshi women who arrived in Tower Hamlets during the last quarter of the twentieth century. Ahmed's methodology develops from an intersectional approach which enabled her, at both stages of the research project, to arrive at a holistic impression of her subjects' lifecourses, without overlooking the specifics such as their experiences of, and reactions to, racism, linguistic disability, marriage, parenthood, religion, caring and widowhood, as well as, as time went by, the acceptance of a British identity and an appreciation

of place. The latter two conditions were facilitated, rather than impeded, by the sense of belonging that Tower Hamlets had imbued upon its Bangladeshi population. Indeed, what the book highlights as a by-product of the core theme is the significance of an accommodating and empathetic local government body which understands and provides for its ethnic population; something that can be seen to have developed in Tower Hamlets in the years covered by the two research initiatives.

The title of this book suggests that it is very specific in relation to ethnic minority and place, and thus may not have application to other migrant females from other backgrounds in other locations. However, this would be a mistaken assumption. Whilst the detailed accounts of the lives of the Bengali women interviewed by Ahmed are both moving and enlightening, the methodology used and the issues highlighted provide a readily transferable template with which to explore other females who migrate for reason of family reunification. It is the combination of the revealed lifecourse experiences and the possibility of what other research this book might stimulate, that makes this book an exciting and deserving addition to the library of migration and diaspora studies.

Anne J. Kershen
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Introduction

This book is a longitudinal and intersectional exploration of the lived experiences of first-generation women who migrated from Bangladesh to Tower Hamlets in the first wave of large scale female migration during the 1970s and 1980s. This group of women have been largely invisible in both the literature and the communities they entered by virtue of their housebound status. The growth in academic interest in the feminisation of migration (Castles and Miller 2003) has had an altogether different focus, concentrating more on the experiences of female labour migrants (Piper 2008, Rahman 2011) and ignoring or marginalising the experiences of family reunification migrants (Kofman 2004). After being broadly absent from the literature and invisible in wider society for decades, older migrant women have found themselves the cause of scrutiny following the identification of some second-generation Asian migrants as engaging in the northern riots in 2001; responsible for London bombings in 2005; and more recently in 2015 travelling to Syria to join the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS). All these events have raised questions about the lack of integration of Muslim communities. The focus on older women arises from prevalent notions of women as the bearers of culture and tradition (Dwyer 2000) and thus crucial in fashioning the identities and community relations of the next generation (Silvey 2006). Through their investment in the home and family, older women are implicated in the actions of the second generation.

This book emerges from a recognition of the limited literature on first-generation Bangladeshi[1] women who arrived as family reunification migrants and uses intersectionality, or the ways in which gender, ethnicity, place and ageing condition the lives of women, as the framework for understanding their changing selves. This introduction summarises relevant debates on migration, gender and ageing which form the context of the findings discussed in this book before discussing the history of Bangladeshi migration and settlement in the UK. It concludes by outlining the structure of the book.

1 Throughout this book I use Bangladeshi, Bengali and Sylheti interchangeably as my respondents do. Bengali can refer to people from the Indian state of Bengal. But all Bangladeshis identify themselves with Bengali. Strictly defined: Bengali refers to the language, Bangladeshi to the country and Sylheti to the region and the dialect. My respondents, like most Sylhetis, do not make this distinction in their everyday usage of the terms.

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Migration, Gender and Ageing

The literature on migration has until recently paid scant attention to the way in which women's journeys and experiences differ from males, with many writers lamenting the paucity of research until this century on the experiences of female migrants (e.g. Mahler and Pessar 2006, Lentin 2006). In the last decade there has been a vast increase in studies exploring the gendered nature of the migration process and settlement (e.g. Curran et al. 2006, Elmhirst 2011, Ge, Resurreccion and Elmhirst 2011, Zaiceva 2010, Erel 2009, Williams 2009), which show that women's experiences of migration are qualitatively different from men. The processes that underlie the motivations for men to migrate, and the range of expectations, experiences and opportunities upon arrival, rarely apply to women in the same way (Kanaiaupuni 2000). Studies that include gender in the analysis have been insightful in highlighting differences. For example, by interviewing women it has been shown that processes celebrated as indicators of migrant upward mobility (such as the entrepreneurship of migrants) can underneath the patina of success hide exploitation and patriarchal power systems (Donato et al. 2006).

Whilst the exploration of female migration has proliferated in recent years, much of it focuses on the experiences of female economic migrants (e.g. Pyle and Ward 2003, Rahman 2011). Often, these studies focus on women working in unskilled gendered positions such as domestic work and care (Espiritu 2003), and trafficking and the sex trade (Andrijasevic 2003, Kambouri 2008). Findings reveal gendered issues not previously examined, including the changing nature of family structures (Asis, Huang and Yeoh 2004), care of children left behind (Parrenas 2005), and the trafficking and exploitation of females (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003). The awareness and study of such areas is welcome and insightful; but does not relate to the experiences of women who migrate for family reunification. The experiences of family reunification migrants has not been widely studied (Raghuram 2004), despite family reunification continuing to be the most prevalent mode of migration to developed countries for women (IOM 2008). This risks their experiences becoming forgotten or ignored in the literature, or worse still deemed not worthy of investigation. Early family migrants who arrived from the subcontinent were pioneer migrants, leaving behind family and homes, for uncertain futures. Women who followed their husbands had no idea of what lay ahead of them, nor if they would ever return. The motivations of female economic migrants are different in that they migrate primarily for financial gain, and often, where there are children, involves making the difficult decision of leaving their children behind in order to secure a better future for them. Literature on females who migrated in the 1960s and 1970s is largely limited to reporting female migrants as dependents of family or spouses, and viewing migration as a male phenomenon with women playing only an auxiliary role (Dhar 2012, Ghosh 2009).

Migration redefines the position of women within the family (King and Zontini 2000, Suárez-Orozco and Qin 2006). It can expose the complexity of managing gender roles when individuals are faced with alternatives to the roles they

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performed in the homeland, and are sometimes forced to adopt roles they would be discouraged from undertaking, or would personally shun in their country of origin (Buijs 1993). Families can find themselves destabilised by the rapid changes in roles and expectations (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001, Chuang and Tamis-Le Monda 2009, Pantea 2011). Within the family, power dynamics may be reversed with children rapidly acculturating and learning a language faster than adults (Lee et al. 2009), or women challenging traditional gendered roles (Lamb and Bougher 2009).

For some women migration opens up new possibilities and can be empowering in allowing opportunities for wage earning, distance from patriarchal family systems and greater independence (Gardner and Osella 2003). However these benefits can come at a cost of overbearing workloads as women tend to work in poorly paid jobs that are often undocumented whilst having to continue to manage all household duties; once they start working it may be hard to stop due to unceasing demands for remittances (Unnithan-Kumar 2003, Rahman 2011). For other women, migration simply alters their lives to the extent of adding greater uncertainty and isolation, and increasing restrictions on their movements (de Haan 2003). The relative costs and benefits of migration are contextually and culturally bound, there is no particular gender experience that can apply across migrant women; the motivations and realities of migration differ across and within ethnic groups and across gender and generation.

Gender is a subjective process (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999) and the practice or performance of gender (Butler 1990a) changes over the lifecourse as an individual ages, interacts with others, and negotiates their way through the fluid structures of the economic, social and cultural spaces they find themselves in. There has been a substantial body of work exploring the experiences of second-generation migrants. In the UK, studies have examined retention of cultural and religious practice (Knott and Khokher 1993), identity (Eade 1994), education and employment aspirations (Dale et al. 2002, Ahmad, Modood and Lissenburgh 2003) and gendered identities (Barot, Bradley and Fenton 1999). These studies often highlight the differences between generations – but they rarely collect comparative data within the study. Instead interviews with young women about their educational achievements and employment aspirations are contrasted with statistics which show low levels of educational attainment and employment amongst first-generation women. This is problematic in that it casts first-generation women as uneducated and lacking the career aspirations of younger women, without exploring the heterogeneity of experience amongst this group and any aspirations or unfulfilled desire for education and work that they may have. There has also been little or no examination of the barriers and obstacles to education and employment for first-generation migrant women both in this country and their countries of origin. Women may come from places where social norms and access to resources such as schooling are totally different to the UK and restrict their options. The result of this is that first-generation women are presented as choosing to be home-bound and having no inclination to work.

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This approach also removes any sense of agency by implying they accept their roles without constantly negotiating and modifying these in response to changing circumstances and changing perceptions of self.

Gullette (2004) observes, we are 'aged by culture'. Ageing is a socially constructed phenomenon, influenced by social, historical and cultural factors (Wyn and White 1997); and like gender, age is continually performed (Laz 2003). Viewing gender and age as social constructions emphasises the importance of place and location in the formation and subjective experience of them. Age interacts with gender and culture in specific ways. For example, older Bangladeshi men travel between Bangladesh and the UK more frequently than do their spouses. Men may go to manage their land and assets from years of remitting money back to invest in homes and businesses in Bangladesh, or they may travel for health reasons. Women are less likely to travel to Bangladesh on their own, and finances and other considerations such as school term times, do not allow them to travel with all their family. Often Bangladeshi women's childbearing career spans decades, and they still have young school age children at the same time as having adult children, and so continue in the homemaker role for many years. Their husbands may feel able to travel back to Bangladesh knowing that their wife will be safe with the adult children.

Exploring ethnic differences in the experience of ageing poses difficulties for researchers as many standardised measures and surveys are appropriate only to a white population and such studies can yield unreliable information (Grant and Bowling 2011). For minority communities, the persistence of 'the myth of return' (Anwar 1979) has meant that health and social services have been underprepared to meet the specific care needs of migrants as they age and require long term care (Manthorpe et al. 2012). Older people from minority communities are more likely to endure economic hardship, experience poorer health and more limiting illnesses than the general population, yet despite the greater need they are less likely to utilise care services and institutional care provision (Treas and Mazumdar 2002). The abiding belief that Asians 'look after their own' (Ahmad and Walker 1997) has been partly responsible for the misconception that elderly Asians do not suffer the worst outcomes of such inequalities as they are ameliorated by the presence of dense support networks (Schans and Komter 2010). There are differences in cultural expectations of care of the elderly; de Valk and Schans (2008) in a study of immigrants in the Netherlands found the elderly parents had greater expectations that their adult children would provide care than did the native Dutch elderly. However, as much as individuals may feel a sense of familial obligation to care, factors such as employment and mobility may limit the support that can actually be provided and hence the difference between ethnic groups in what is actually provided may not be large as has been assumed (Hogan, Eggebeen and Clogg 1993). Even so, the level of care provided remains higher amongst migrant communities; Schans and Komter (2010) suggest that core values of obligation that children are imbued with remain a powerful motivator for behavioural choices.

The lifecourse perspective examines factors that are influential across an individual's life span (Knodel and Ofstedal 2003); by charting continuity and change over a period of time. The approach posits events in one's life are affected by those that have gone before and will have an effect on what is to come (Robinson and Moen 2000). Lifecourse analysis tends to follow a cohort who enter into a system or gain a particular status at any given time. This book focuses on a cohort of first-generation female migrants from Bangladesh. This is not to imply that a cohort is an entirely homogenous group, rather it is crucial to explore variations within the cohort to get a fuller understanding of differences in responding and adapting to political and social changes as they age (Kertzer 1991).

Underpinning the lifecourse is the importance of age as a structural factor (Kertzer 1991). Every society has its own normalised timetable of appropriate age-related behaviours, and expectations of role transitions such as the suitable age range within which one ought to get married (Hagestad and Neugarten 1985). The United Nations defines older people as anyone over the age of 60 (Huber 2005). But ageing is defined differently across cultures and this has implications over a range of other elements in one's life including health and care provision. Wray (2007) found differences in the way that British Pakistani, African Caribbean and British white women view themselves as they reach midlife. For the British Pakistanis, midlife was self-defined as 30–40 years and 'older' as 45 years and older. Whilst some people hold on to cultural norms of ageing in diaspora, for others migration interrupts the normative timetables of ageing by introducing alternative cultural timelines and a different set criteria to measure ageing by.

Examining different points in the lifecourse allows the exploration of the impact and relationship of events over time. It gives insight into the expectations that people have about their future and the strategies they deploy to meet these and whether or not they are eventually met. This method is particularly interesting to apply to migrant groups as often their expectations about ageing are built upon traditional modes of ageing from their country of origin. However, the process of migration and the rapidly changing social norms they encounter in the host country as well as the social norms that their children are exposed to, may mean that the likelihood of these expectations being met become less of a possibility. For some this can lead to a sense of unsuccessful ageing, whilst others reconfigure their construction of ageing in line with the norms of the country of settlement.

Theoretical postulations on ageing have a noticeably western inflection to them with a focus on commodities, consumption and looks, and less consideration of religion and familial expectations and obligations. Accounts of western ageing view midlife as a time for relinquishing responsibility and pursuing individual interests as financial demands lessen and children leave home (Featherstone and Hepworth 1996); but for migrant women, midlife is often characterised by greater responsibility such as the care needs of a spouse or other family members. Far from being a period of independence they may feel more bound than ever. The stress of this period of their life may be exacerbated by the realisation that the

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roles they expected to move into with older age are not there for them in the way they had imagined. The literature points to a desire to hold back ageing and attempts at denial or delaying of the ageing process (Featherstone and Hepworth 1998); this does not resonate across cultures. Wray (2007) found that migrant minority women do not have the inclination to retain a physical appearance of youth or attempt to avoid ageing to the extent of their white British counterparts, for them ageing identity is taken on in line with having grown children and the health of their spouses. This questions the cross cultural applicability of prevalent notions of the body as a mask for a more youthful inner self (Biggs 1997, Everingham 2003). Wray found Asian Muslim women are less concerned about their physical appearance as they age. This may be linked with the practice of modest dress and *hijab*, a mode of dressing that is always subject to personal interpretation. But largely for the older generation who never sought to enhance their appearance, hijab accentuated the modesty of their attire.

In western cultures ageing is often viewed as a decline (Gullette 1997) exemplified by a range of losses (Silver 2003). The loss of good health (Moen, Dempster-McClain and Williams 1992), loss of mobility (Gignac et al. 2006), loss of looks (Tiggemann and Lynch 2001) and loss of meaningful roles (Mudege and Ezeh 2009); with signs of ageing viewed as markers of failure especially for women (Twigg 2004, Gilleard and Higgs 1998). This conceptualisation of old age does not transfer across cultures. In many other cultures and certainly within the Bangladeshi cultural framework, old age signifies the transition to an alternative mode of power and prestige (Gardner 2009). In old age men retain their position as the head of the household but can step back from providing for the family, handing that mantle over to adult sons; and women are relieved of much of the household duties by grown up daughters and daughters-in-law. The achievement of this elder status confers upon them respect from their children and their community and they are viewed as holders of wisdom and advisors to the next generation (Gardner 2002). For migrants however this does not always play out in the way that it might have done had they remained and raised their family in Bangladesh. Factors such as the logistics of housing affect the feasibility of multigenerational households where parents reside with all their adult sons and their spouses and children, and any unmarried daughters. In addition children who are socialised in the UK may hold different attitudes about living with parents and in-laws post marriage.

As migrants age, their relationships alter, and often the strength and dominance of patriarchal order is reduced with ageing and this can lead to changes in opportunities for women (Silver 2003). Opportunities, such as taking up language classes or tentative attempts at pursuing employment, can only be realised if there are supporting elements in the provisions available in the community and there is support from others within their personal networks. An individual's life is interconnected and influenced by the lives of those around them; they cannot be understood in isolation of the relationships that they are part of. Attempts to understand why first-generation migrant women are virtually invisible in labour market statistics must take account of the demands of their relationships within the household, and with the community.

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The growing recognition of the interaction of multiple factors in creating subjective experiences has been analysed in terms of intersectionality which explores how different elements such as gender, race, class, sexuality etc. intersect and interact with each other. And whilst the fluid relationship between age and gender is increasingly recognised, (Russell 2007, Wilinska 2010), there has been little that also incorporates ageing and place (Hopkins and Pain 2007). This is an important omission. It is known that the ways in which people utilise public areas is highly gendered (Meir and Gekker 2011), and women can be viewed as the 'other' when they transgress certain boundaries which operate to exclude them. For example, certain public areas may be viewed as male spaces where women should not trespass (Silvey 2006). Such rules may apply only to some women depending on their ethnicity and their class. However, age is also a factor and as individuals age their use of space alters (Means and Evans 2011). Structures of age, gender, ethnicity, class and cultural norms work together to circumscribe the permissibility of who belongs where and when, and these structures influence subjective experiences of place (Segura and Zavella 2008). Women's roles in influencing and changing spatial dynamics have been largely neglected in explorations of migrants (Papastergiadis 2000). Factors such as widowhood or poverty may propel women into entering spaces that are male dominated and this may cause internal and social conflict. Place is ever changing and imbued with multiple factors of identification – gender, age, ethnicity, class – and is experienced and used in different ways over time.

It is within this framework that this book is positioned; to explore the experiences of first-generation Bangladeshi female migrants who arrived as family reunifiers in the 1970s and 1980s[2] fully expecting to return soon after. It examines how women adjusted to their lives in the UK after arrival; and continue, decades later, to negotiate norms and structures that are different to their own cultural scripts. This book explores how migrant women are managing unexpectedly ageing in place rather than returning to Bangladesh. The next section introduces the Bangladeshi community in more detail.

A Brief History of Migration from Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with a population of over 150 million (World Bank 2012). The majority of Bangladeshis in the UK come from the north-eastern district of Sylhet (Figure I.1) which has a population of 9.9 million. Sylhetis make up 6.5 per cent of the population of Bangladesh (Ibrahim and Kamal 2012). Despite Sylhetis making up a relatively small proportion of the country, through the process of chain migration Sylhet accounts

2 A few respondents arrived in the early 1990s, delaying their migration for various reasons, including care provision, but the majority of women in this study arrived during the 1970s and 1980s. See Appendix for year of arrival.

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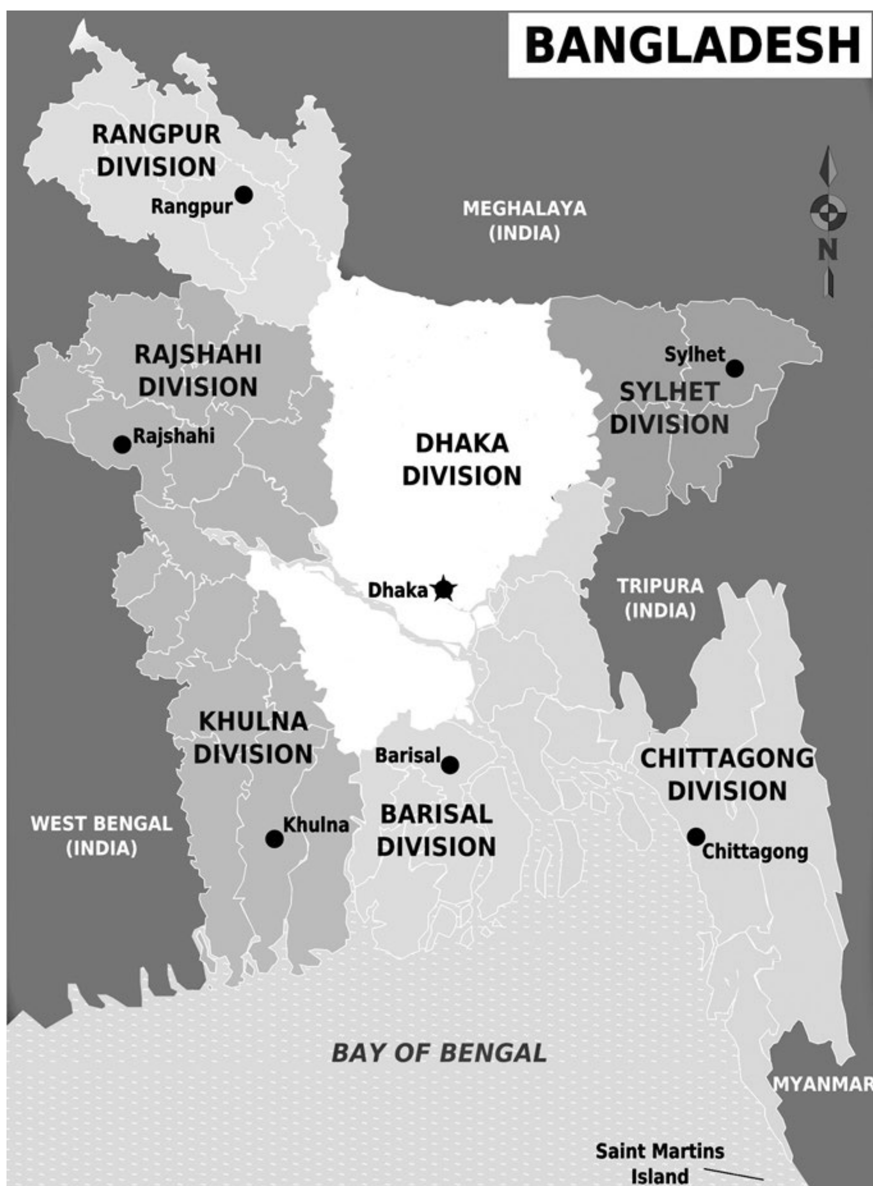

Figure I.1 Map of Bangladesh
Source: © wikimapia.

for the vast majority of outmigration from Bangladesh. It is estimated that over 95 per cent of the Bangladeshis in the UK come from Sylhet (Gardner 1995, Núñez-de la Mora et al. 2007a); subsequently the literature on the history of migration

from Bangladesh focuses almost exclusively on Sylheti migrants. Sylhetis are substantially different from other Bangladeshis, most notably in their use of a distinct dialect; only spoken in Sylhet it bears some, but little, resemblance to Bengali. Sylheti now exists as just a verbal dialect as its ancient written form has become largely extinct (Al-Azami et al. 2010) and only standard Bengali is used in education.

Sylhet refers to Sylhet Division which is comprised of four main districts: Sylhet, Maulvi Bazar, Habiganj and Sunamganj. The residents of Tower Hamlets are predominantly from Sylhet district (Figure I.2) within Sylhet Division. This district is the most densely inhabited part of Sylhet Division with over 3.4 million residents (Ibrahim and Kamal 2012); and is the greatest source of outmigration for Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets (Alexander 2011).

The history of Bangladeshi immigration is difficult to precisely chart as Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) is a young nation, born out of a civil war with West Pakistan in 1971 and previously part of a unified India. Thus migration from Bangladesh pre-dates the formation of Bangladesh itself, with seamen arriving from Sylhet as far back as the nineteenth century (Choudhury 1993), and accounts of Indian lascars in the UK from the eighteenth century (Visram 1986). Some of these men jumped ship and settled in the East End when the ships docked in London (Eade and Garbin 2002). Numbers remained relatively low until the post-Second World War period which saw people from New Commonwealth countries being encouraged to migrate and work in Britain.

Large scale migration from Bangladesh was a staged process with men arriving as labour migrants during the 1950s and 1960s (Chowdhury 2001, Ullah and Eversley 2010) and women following in the 1970s and 1980s (Gardner 2009). Peach (2006a) describes the arrival of Bangladeshi men (in large numbers) to the UK lagging about ten years behind that of Pakistani men and further again behind Indian men. This may be due to the links in the chain of migration taking longer to be established and strengthened for those travelling from Sylhet than from India or Pakistan. Certainly India has a much longer and geographically varied history of out-migration to the UK, including via East Africa. Once migration from Sylhet was established it rapidly escalated. However, upsurge in migration from Bangladesh coincided with changes in immigration laws which affected the pattern of migration from Bangladesh.

The first of much subsequent legislation which sought to limit the number of immigrants entering the country was passed in 1962 with the Commonwealth Immigrants Act and an employment voucher system was introduced to regulate numbers of immigrants. The voucher system required migrants to be recruited in to a job to be able to migrate; many Bangladeshi men who were already in the UK encouraged family members to migrate before the system came in to effect, leading to a rush to migrate to the UK. Whilst the number of vouchers issued decreased year on year, they provided the main route of entry for male migrants from Bangladesh and demarcated the first large wave of migration from Bangladesh to the UK.

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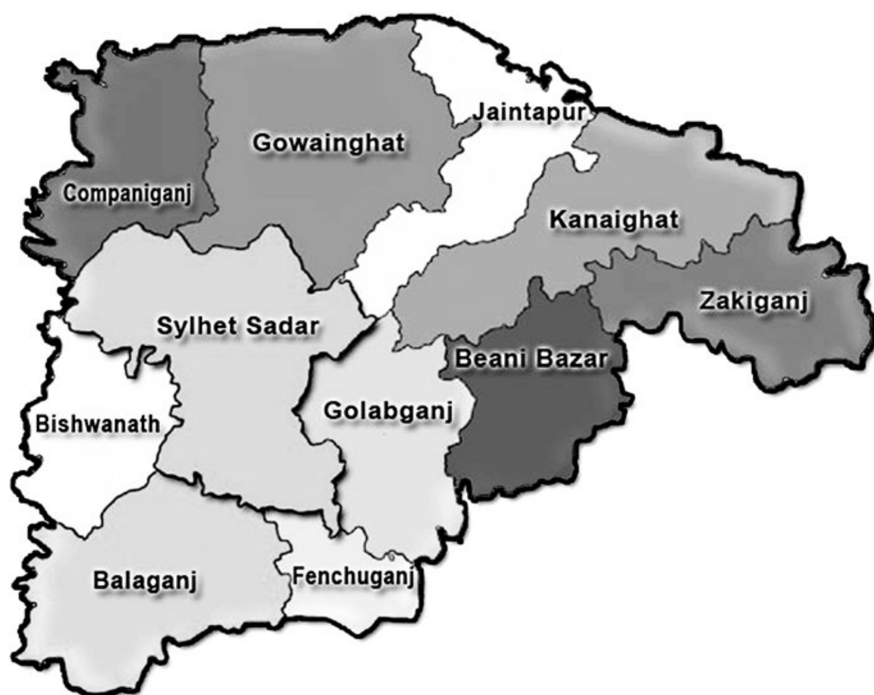

Figure I.2 Map of Sylhet District
Source: © wikimapia.

Early male migrants typified the economic migrant, migrating in search of employment with every intention of returning to the homeland once enough money had been accrued. However, paying off the costs of migrating, and the growing demand of remittances from family in Bangladesh meant the temporary stay began to extend over the years, and many decided to return to Bangladesh to marry (Carey and Shukur 1985). Some men brought their wives to join them almost immediately, whilst others, still convinced that their time in the UK would be for just a little while longer, left their wives behind. The later onset of large scale migration of men from Bangladesh compared to other groups from the Indian subcontinent means that Bangladeshis were the last of the South Asian groups to complete family reunification, encountering increasingly tightening immigration laws (Peach 1996). Conversely measures intended to restrict numbers led to a flux of migration from Bangladesh to the UK, of not just men but also women, to ensure that individuals were able to come to the UK whilst they still could, and families could be united (Gardner and Shukur 1994) before any further restrictions could be enforced limiting choices. Men who might not have been thinking about bringing their wives and families to join them in

the UK rushed to make this happen, lest the opportunity not be available in the future. The impending restrictions in immigration laws led to ingenious ploys to maximise family migration such as bringing extra family members. It was not uncommon practice to bring nephews over as sons to broaden the migrant base for a village. And in accordance ages (which were at best estimates) were altered to accommodate these claims. It is not unheard of for a woman to have added ten or fifteen years on to her age to convincingly bring a teenage nephew over as a son as part of family reunification. Families began to grow in the UK as the sojourners became settlers (Kershen 1997).

Most of the early male migrants found themselves in the garment workshops in London's East End or factory work in other industrial areas in the Midlands and in textile mills in the north of England. As factories began to close in the north of England and Midlands, many families relocated to East London where they hoped they would be able to find work in the still active garment workshops (Gardner 2009). This internal migration of Bangladeshis within the UK to London led to a sizeable community being established in East London by the 1980s. However, any work that was to be found was largely short lived as the garment trade slowly began to peter out in London too, although some Bangladeshis who had been able to accumulate enough money were able to buy into or take over garment workshops and provide ongoing employment for the community (Kershen 2004); but the migrant fuelled garment workshops no longer dominated the workscape of East London as before. For many Bangladeshi males, the closure of factories, workshops and mills led to job losses; many would not go on to any further employment due to barriers of language and health problems (health conditions incurred perhaps in no small part due to years of putting in long hours in old factories).

Factories and workshops were the predominant employment sector for Bangladeshis until South Asian cuisine began to grow in popularity in the UK from the 1970s and the restaurant trade developed. The first Indian restaurants in the UK were established much earlier and have a history entwined with the arrival and settlement of the lascars and the trading of the East India Company; but significant numbers of Indian restaurants in the UK emerged with the arrival of migrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh from the 1960s onwards (Buettner 2008). Along with the greater numbers of migrants arriving from these countries there was a greater exploration of global foods by the British population; and as the factory and textile works which employed so many Bangladeshi men began to close often the restaurant trade was the only opportunity for employment. With little English speaking skills or educational qualifications the more entrepreneurial started their own restaurants and employed other Bangladeshi men. As Bangladesh was such a new country, most restaurants marketed themselves as Indian restaurants. Estimates suggest that to this day, 80–95 per cent of Indian restaurants in the UK are owned and run by Bangladeshis (Ullah and Eversley 2010).

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Bangladeshis in the UK

Mass migration from Bangladesh coincided with an inopportune time in the context of the British economy. At a time of recession and high unemployment during the early 1980s, migration from Bangladesh also reached its height with families coming to join men already in the UK (Ansari 2004). Migration peaked in the 1980s and then began to drop till the 1990s which saw an increase in numbers of migrants granted settlement in the UK, perhaps as a feature of marriage migration of children of the first-generation migrants (Ahmed 2005a).

Table I.1 shows rounded up figures for Bangladeshis from 1951 to 2011 and shows over a 60-year period the number of Bangladeshis in the UK has increased over 200 times. It is important to note that the growth of the Bangladeshi population in the UK is more a feature of large family size and more people being born than from migrants being granted settlement.

Table I.1 Bangladeshis in the UK

Year	Number of Bangladeshis
1951	2,000
1961	6,000
1971	22,000
1981	65,000
1991	163,000
2001	280,000
2011	450,000

Sources: Figures for 1991–2001 from Peach (2006a) and figure for 2011 derived from Census.

The 2011 census data records about 450,000 people of Bangladeshi origin in the UK making up 0.8 per cent of the population, with just over half of Bangladeshis (51 per cent) in the UK living in London. Bangladeshis have a young age profile; data from the 2011 census shows 62 per cent of Bangladeshis are under the age of 30, compared to 35 per cent of the general population, and 69 per cent of Bangladeshi households have dependent children, compared to 29 per cent of the general population households. The census data reveals that 34 per cent of Bangladeshi households live in social housing, compared to 17 per cent of the general population.[3]

Statistics show that Bangladeshis have the lowest levels of economic activity in the UK (Simpson et al. 2009). Much of this deficit comes from the very low labour market presence of Bangladeshi women (Dale et al. 2002, Ahmad et al. 2003). It is difficult to avoid viewing the Bangladeshi community

3 Census data extracted from NOMIS tables via http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011.

in wholly disadvantaged terms. Kenway and Palmer (2007) report 60 per cent of Bangladeshis live in poverty compared to rates of between 10 and 15 per cent for other groups. The vast majority of literature finds the Bangladeshi community in the UK to be generally 'poor, badly housed and poorly educated, suffer a high level of male unemployment and have a very low female participation rate in the labour market' (Peach 2005: 23). Whilst recorded economic activity may be low, data sets on employment are not without problems; they do not address engagement in the informal labour market (see Kabeer 2000) and rarely differentiate between British born and overseas born (Platt 2011). As those born in the UK begin to reach working age, there is evidence of a shift in the community, with some studies reporting that as the community settles, across the second and third generation there are higher levels of academic and employment achievement (e.g. Dench, Gavron and Young 2006, Niven et al. 2013). But the attainments that are becoming more evident in the educational statistics across the UK have yet to be fully reflected in the employment statistics (Healy, Bradley and Forson 2011).

However, the recognition of the mobility of the second generation, without any exploration of the first generation implicitly reinforces assumptions of the older generation as stagnant in their poverty and lack of interest and achievement on employment and educational measures. This is not necessarily the case, and lack of achievement cannot be equated with lack of ambition. The desires and attempts of first-generation women to engage in education and employment are sometimes thwarted by extraneous factors such as access to resources, and cultural barriers such as getting the support of family members. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 4.

Bangladeshis are almost always positioned at the bottom of the class structure (e.g. Modood et al. 1997) without consideration of internal differences and the construction of class within the community. Class is not understood or defined uniformly. The norms of the country of origin and country of destination can differ on the construction of class. Despite a call for a greater recognition of class in studies of gender and migration (Mahler and Pessar 2006) there continues to be what Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2001: 876) call 'an "impasse" in class analysis'. Surridge (2007) argues that there is a divide amongst researchers with some defending the relevance of class as worthy of exploration and those who view it as an outdated marker of difference. This has led to the focus on class in research waning in recent years (McCall 2005, Walby, Armstrong and Strid 2012), with a greater examination of non-class-based forms of social difference and identity (Anthias 2001, Kearney and Bessera 2004). This may be because of a reconfiguring of class norms (Oesch 2006) and a sense of traditional markers of the working class disappearing (Wacquant 2008, Dowling 2009). In place of the traditional working class, Datta et al. (2007) argue that in London the influx of migrants who take on low-paid work now constitute London's new working class.

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For Bangladeshis class is operationalised at different levels – the class structure of the UK, and the class structure that individuals bring with them from Bangladesh based on regional differences. In Bangladesh the class or *zaat* system operates and approximates more to the Hindu caste system (Mumtaz et al. 2012). This system does not map on to a British class system and migrants can simultaneously be positioned in a high and low class position depending upon the terms of reference used. Zaat is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Existing Research on Bangladeshis

Research on (or including) the Bangladeshi community comes from a variety of sources, including large data sets such as the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities (NEMS) (Modood et al. 1997) Census data (Connolly and White 2006), the Millennium Cohort Study (Plewis 2007), the Health Survey of England (Sproston and Mindell 2004) and Understanding Society (Berthoud et al. 2009) from which quantitative data relating to ethnic groups including the Bangladeshi community across the UK is generally retrieved. In addition to the these data sets which draw on large numbers there are smaller studies, often qualitative locality based research which provide depth and nuance to quantitative research.

Until recently most data sets have combined the experiences of Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities, where there has been a lack of ethnic monitoring and as Bangladeshi and Pakistani surnames are similarly of Islamic origin, or due to small sample sizes. But there is a growing recognition that ethnic minority group experiences are diverging and they can no longer be viewed as one group (Berthoud et al. 2009, Khattab 2009). Disaggregating groups reveal important differences. Platt's (2005) study on parental class position and social mobility of children finds significant differences between Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Josselson argues the greater need to separate groups, highlighting that 'when we aggregate people, treating diversity as error variable, in search of what is common to all, we often learn about what is true of no one in particular' (Josselson 1995: 32).

Studies focusing on, or including, the Bangladeshi community have tended to explore specific issues. Research on the second generation has explored identity (Eade 1994), religion (Glynn 2002), education (Ahmad 2001, Khattab 2009), employment (Dale et al. 2002, Salway 2008), drug use (Cottew and Oyefeso 2005), and transnational connections (Zeitlyn 2015). With the older generation, there is a tendency (as there is with much research on older people) to focus on health-related issues (e.g. de Brito-Ashurst et al. 2009). Although some studies do explore across generations, they generally focus on specific issues that are more prevalent in the community such as betel nut consumption (Bedi and Gilthorpe 1995, Núñez-de la Mora, Jesmin and Bentley 2007b), and health issues such as diabetes and heart disease which south Asians including Bangladeshis are at high risk of (Hayes et al. 2002, Netto et al. 2007, Alam, Speed and Beaver 2012).

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Tower Hamlets and the Growth of the Bangladeshi Population

Most locality-based ethnographic research on Bangladeshis has been conducted in London, and specifically Tower Hamlets (Figure I.3) (e.g. Phillipson et al. 2000, Barn 2008, Croucher et al. 2003), which houses the largest concentration of Bangladeshis in the UK (over 81,000). Bangladeshis represent the majority ethnic group in Tower Hamlets and make up almost a third of the borough's population (32 per cent) down slightly from 2001 when 33.4 per cent of the borough was Bangladeshi. Comparatively few studies have been conducted on Bangladeshis outside of London or other areas of high ethnic concentration (Scourfield et al. 2002). Tower Hamlets lies east of the City of London and is ranked as the third most deprived area in England (English Indices of Deprivation 2010).

Figure I.3 Map of Tower Hamlets Borough
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The respondents in my study were interviewed from across the Borough of Tower Hamlets, but predominantly from Whitechapel.

Whilst the majority of research on Bangladeshis has been conducted in Tower Hamlets, the importance and impact of Tower Hamlets as a space on the experiences of the Bangladeshi community therein has rarely been commented upon. Space has been used conceptually by sociologists and geographers in their efforts to grasp the social, political, cultural and economic forces which flow through any particular place. Space refers to wider, structural elements of society which can govern and facilitate or limit individual's choices (e.g. housing policies, disadvantaged areas, low performing schools, lack of jobs etc.). Place is situated and includes the way space is used through the way in which individuals' lives are suffused with the forces that operate within the space. Perkins and Thorns (2012: 1) define place as 'the many settings where people live out their lives as they engage in all of their many activities'. These can include the private space of the home or public areas outside the home (although the boundaries of public and private spaces are becoming increasingly blurred (Smith 1992, Kurtz 2007). As the Bangladeshi community has settled in the UK, the interaction of people and place has influenced and transformed the spaces and places they inhabit (Eade, Fremeaux and Garbin 2002).

Place both transforms and is transformed by the people that live therein. The relationship between individuals and society is a dynamic reflexive one (Appadurai 1995). An affective attachment to place is important for one's sense of wellbeing (Hidalgo and Hernández 2001), but aside from an emotional attachment to place there are issues of formal attachment and citizenship (Valentine, Sporton and Nielsen 2009). All the factors involved in these processes constantly interact to create the lived experience of place. A geographical place is never a neutral space upon which interactions simply occur. Rather, it is a site imbued with the outcomes of pre-existing social processes and norms which interact and influence any activity that takes place in it, creating place and time specific meanings (Lee 1997). Bangladeshis have a long history of migration to East London; the processes and politics of migrating during the colonial period continue to impact the relationship of people and place (Wemyss 2009). Wemyss (2008) argues that the Bangladeshi presence in East London is politically marginalised in favour of discourses which celebrate the mercantile history of Tower Hamlets and the East End, and this can frame their sense of belonging. This view prioritises the male experience and virtually ignores female sites of belonging.

A feature of Tower Hamlets (as with many places that migrants settle) is residential clustering. Such ethnic clustering is often presented as 'self-segregation' (Phillips 2006) and viewed in terms of disadvantage (e.g. Harrison and Phillips 2003) and as a barrier to integration for migrants. This background has formed the basis of the citizenship discourse where 'breaking down segregation' (Community Cohesion Panel 2004: 17) is viewed as important to encourage and strengthen citizenship and identification with a British identity among British Asians (Phillips, Davis and Ratcliffe 2007). However, it is important not

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to conflate ethnic concentration with self-segregation. Spatial segregation of communities cannot be read as indicative of a resistance to integration (Murdie and Ghosh 2010). Discourses of self-segregation are too simplistic and fail to take into consideration the range of factors that interact to keep people in place. The lack of affordable homes relegates migrants to poorer parts of cities (Ratcliffe et al. 2001). A combination of cheap housing, proximity to work and the presence of other migrants attracted early settlers to inner-city areas and gave rise to ethnic clustering. It is also worth noting that early male migrants (including but not limited to Bangladeshis) had restricted choice over where to live. They faced considerable discrimination, with many landlords refusing to rent properties to 'coloureds' (Phillips 1987, Glynn 2010). In the 1970s, racism from the local white communities forced many Bangladeshis who had been housed elsewhere through social housing schemes to return to areas in Tower Hamlets which had more concentrated levels of Bangladeshis, even if it meant living in poorer accommodation (Glynn 2005). Over time it has been found that there are distinct benefits to ethnic clustering that emerge through the interaction of people and place. The availability of cultural and religious resources may prove more important to some than the presence of other resources. Phillips et al. (2007) found that many of their respondents had no desire to move to middle-class suburbs even if they had the means to do so. Thus the interpretation of class can be subjective and individuals may prioritise their position within their cultural group above the way they are positioned in society as low-income migrants living in the inner city. The relationship between class and place becomes blurred with immigrant communities, where many may choose to reject certain place-based markers of class, such as moving out to more affluent areas, in favour of cultural and religious convenience. These findings are important and point to the differences in class position amongst Bangladeshis and challenge the prevalent literature which fixes Bangladeshis as fixed in lower class and disadvantaged positions.

Despite the growing body of literature, there remain substantial gaps in the understanding of this relatively new, yet now rooted community. There continues to be little research on Bangladeshi women; notable exceptions are the work of Katy Gardner examining Bangladeshi households in Bangladesh and Tower Hamlets and Naila Kabeer's (2000) work with female garment workers in London and Dhaka. Representations of Bangladeshi women in the literature as 'hidden' (Miller 1995: 299) and hard to reach (e.g. Twamley et al. 2009) continue, and Alexander, Firoz and Rashid (2010), in their review of the Bangladeshi diaspora in Britain, comment on the undeveloped nature of explorations of the experiences of women and factors such as age profile in research with Bangladeshis. This book addresses these issues by examining the everyday lived experiences of first-generation Bangladeshi women in Tower Hamlets. By doing so, it offers a new and different perspective on Bangladeshis in the UK by moving away from predominantly health-based research on the older generation and exploring more subjective experiences of identity and relationship with and use of space. It offers real life accounts of the lives of Bangladeshi women whose lives have been

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arguably misrepresented in fictionalised accounts. Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) brought attention to Bangladeshi women and received accolades in the press and amongst non-Bangladeshis for apparently shedding light on the hidden lives of hidden women. The book was not well received by the Bangladeshi community who felt it merely perpetuated outdated stereotypes about minority communities and victimised women.

Accounts of early Bangladeshi migrants largely focused on the experiences of men (Adams 1987, Choudhury 1993, 1995) with little known about the experiences of women. Contrary to perceptions of Bangladeshi women as inactive and tied to the home, there is evidence of political engagement by women from the 1970s for better support and resources for women. In 1978 the women's group Nari Samity (translation: 'women's association') was established by female migrant Anwara Haq to support Bangladeshi women and promote their needs; and the Jagonari Women's Centre was established in the 1980s. These groups were the forerunners for the numerous women's groups that operate across the borough of Tower Hamlets today (Asghar 1996). Despite the clear presence and activity of women outside of the home, previous studies of migrants did not seek out their experiences and stories in the way that men's experiences had been documented (Adams 1987). It is almost as though the fact that women arrived as dependants of men meant that the men's stories would suffice. In addition the overall absence of Bangladeshi women from the labour market, their relegation to the private sphere of the home, language differences and lack of understanding of cultural issues combined to create the illusion of them as a 'hard to reach community' (Crozier and Davies 2007).

Background to the Research

This study is a qualitative longitudinal study by default rather than deliberate design. I was a research fellow at Keele University in 2000–2002 working on a project examining the lives of first-generation Bangladeshi women. One hundred women were randomly selected for the main phase of the study (this is detailed in Chapter 2 which discusses the methodology). Findings from this study have been written up elsewhere (Ahmed, Phillipson and Latimer 2001, Phillipson, Ahmed and Latimer 2003). All women interviewed were asked for their consent to be contacted again if I had further questions. At that point there was no intention of a follow up 10 years later. In 2010 I decided to follow up a random selection of 20 respondents for my doctoral thesis to provide a comparative longitudinal analysis of 20 women interviewed in both 2001 and 2011. Consequently, the original interviews in 2001 are supplementary to the experiences of the 20 women interviewed 10 years apart and who are the main focus of this book. The age group of 35–55 (45–65 in 2011) was chosen as it reflects the ages of women who had arrived from Bangladesh during the first wave of migration in the 1970s and early 1980s for family reunification. It is worth noting that ages are not always accurate. Many migrants, both male and female,

are unaware of exact dates given a lack of recording such facts in rural Bangladesh. Often years of birth were recollected in terms of comparison with others, e.g. 'three years after so-and-so', or in relation to events, e.g. 'the year of Independence'. Some, especially women, adjusted their age to comply with immigration laws. Women had to be above the age of 16 to be married according to UK law and so ages would be adjusted on passports to accommodate this. This study uses their 'official' or passport age as that is the age that women are registered with their GP. Many women when asked what their age was during interview would reply, 'Do you want my real age, or my passport age?' This open disclosure was indicative of my insider status as will be discussed in Chapter 2. A few years difference was common across the sample, and the greatest age discrepancy was where a respondent's official age was 15 years older than her actual age.

The Sample

Table I.2 summarises the 20 women whose narratives comprise the core of the findings. Pseudonyms are used in all outputs and analyses. The table shows both averages and the range of data to highlight the differences within the group. Please see the Appendix for a more detailed account of individual respondents.

Table I.2 Details of sample

	Age at interview (2001/2011)	Age at marriage	Year arrived in UK	Age at migration	Number of years living in UK (2001/2011)	Number of children	Household size (2001/2011)
Average	46 / 55	17	1982	26	20 / 30	5.85	6.8 / 5.1
Range	37–55 / 47–65	13–22	1972–1994	16–40	7–29 / 17–39	3–10	2–11 / 2–9

Book Outline

I have here provided an introduction to the themes of gender, ageing, migration and place that form the context of the findings I will present in upcoming chapters as well as background on the Bangladeshi community in the UK and the background to this book. Chapter 1 discusses intersectionality as the conceptual framework underpinning this book. Chapter 2 presents a detailed discussion of the methodology including the process of conducting qualitative longitudinal research and a reflexive account of fieldwork.

Chapter 3 examines the evolving sense of belonging and attachment for Bangladeshi women over time, exploring changes in identity and roles prior and post-migration and over the lifecourse. Starting by looking at their experiences of

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marriage and how they negotiate their identity and agency within their status of married woman, it goes on to explore the early experiences of migration and factors which influence and alter women's sense of belonging over time.

Chapter 4 discusses citizenship in the context of the ongoing debate about English language requirements. It examines the obstacles that operate and the factors that facilitate access to language classes over the lifecourse, and highlights that integration and progress towards cohesive communities is not restricted to speaking English. The chapter also explores the changing sense of Britishness, how it has evolved over time and what Britishness means to migrant women.

Chapter 5 analyses the changing nature of the family examining alterations in traditional roles that have taken place after migration and continue to be negotiated in the context of ageing in Tower Hamlets. It discusses housing structures which do not accommodate large extended families living together, and the impact of children opting to choose their own partners rather than having arranged marriages. Women's changing roles and experiences within the family are discussed along with the changing material circumstances of the family.

Chapter 6 explores issues of care and access to services. With an increasingly ageing population the care needs of the elderly are a recurrent theme in political and public discourse. This chapter highlights important aspects of care that are specific to this group of women and the wider Bangladeshi community and shows how as the community has aged in place services have been developed to meet their cultural and religious needs.

Chapter 7 examines the impact of the evolving sense of religious identity. It explores differences among the respondents in this study, as well as differences between generations in relation to women's experience of Islam. Whilst migrant women have been identified as important in reproducing religious practice in the home, this chapter shows how this religious practice interacts with place and changes over time.

Finally, the Conclusion draws together the findings overall and discusses how taking a longitudinal perspective can deepen our understanding of migrant communities and the pivotal role of first-generation female migrants in the establishment of the Bangladeshi community in the UK.

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Chapter 1
Conceptual Framework

Intersectionality offers a framework within which the multiple themes of migration, place, gender, family, religion and ageing, and how they interact with each other in different ways and at different points of time and place to construct subjective lived experiences, can be examined. In this chapter I present the background of this framework and discuss how an intersectional framework can help understand the processes of identity for individuals within their social or 'translocational' positions (Anthias 2002), before describing the way I apply intersectionality to this book.

Intersectionality

There is a strong body of literature exploring the history and applications of intersectionality (e.g. Davis 2008, Choo and Ferree 2010, Mehrotra 2010, Walby et al. 2012); these detail the multifaceted nature of this dynamic approach in much more depth than there is scope or space for in this chapter. Intersectionality at its core views individuals as simultaneously positioned across multiple categories of identification – gender, race and class (Phoenix and Pattynama 2006). As a concept it is seen to have arisen from feminist studies particularly the work of black female scholars who contest the writings of gender experience of white academics as being representative of all women. Kimberlé Crenshaw is credited with coining the term 'intersectionality' (Crenshaw 1989) in her research on the specific experiences of black women in the labour market. Subsequent research predominantly focused on the same categories and established what Monture (2007: 199) calls the 'race–class–gender trinity'. Dhamoon (2011) suggests this trinity has become stabilised through the choices made by researchers, rather than being the most, or only, critical categories of power and domination. The categories of potential inequality extend far beyond these and include (amongst others) ethnicity, disability, sexuality, age, nationality and religion. It is important that other categories are explored in research, and that it is recognised that the same category of inequality does not affect everyone in the same way (Verloo 2006). More recent studies have included other dimensions within the intersectional framework including sexuality (Strolovitch 2012), religion (Banton 2011), ageing (Pietila and Ojala 2011), mental health (Rosenfield 2012), the labour market (Moore 2009), education (Bhopal and Preston 2011) and health (Bowleg 2012). Yuval-Davis (2011) has skilfully demonstrated how intersectionality can be applied to examine the multifaceted notions of citizenship

through unpacking the ways in which formal citizenship, belonging, religion and ethics of care are interlocked. With the development and wider applications of intersectionality it has been described as a 'handy catchall phrase that aims to make visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it' (Phoenix 2006: 187). The adaptive nature of intersectionality and the fact that categories are not predefined encourages research across disciplines (Davis 2008).

Whilst intersectional research is growing in popularity, it is important to acknowledge that the examination and discussion of the interrelatedness of multiple axes of difference has a much longer history than the proliferation of 'intersectional' studies in recent years. In much the same way as the term 'transnational migration' is understood to describe phenomenon and behaviour that was characteristic of many migrants before the term came into use; or the term 'superdiversity' is being used to herald what is actually part of the fluidity of a long established situation of multicultural living; the interconnection of multiple levels of disadvantage existed, and was recognised as contributing to ongoing inequality prior to the conceptual definition of the term intersectionality. At the heart of intersectional research is the focus on examining difference; this has been explored in other areas using other terms of reference. Writings on ethnicity (Brah 1996), hybridity (Bhabha 1994, Hutnyk 2005), multiculturalism (Phillips, A 2009, Marranci 2004), nationalism (Brubaker 1996, Timmerman 2000) and cosmopolitanism (Beck 2006, Kim 2010) all explore the mutually constitutive relationship between individuals and the social groups they claim membership to and the wider structural institutions that shape them. Thus the issues addressed by intersectionality have a history prior to, and an applicability beyond, feminist and gender studies. There is also variance in the language of intersectional studies, which depends mainly on the preference of the researcher. Terms such as 'interlocking' (Razack 1998), 'multiple jeopardy' (King 1988), 'interlocking oppressions' (Collins 1990) and 'intertwining' (Krekula 2007) have all been used to describe the interaction of multiple social categories in the everyday lived experience of an individual. In this book I predominantly use the term 'interacting'.

Despite the long history of studies examining difference and marginal voices, intersectionality as a conceptual framework is still a relatively new field. The parameters of this are constantly being negotiated with some authors focusing on examining identity at a personal and group level (Buitelaar 2007, Wilkins 2012), with others calling for the need to widen the perspective and more thoroughly explore the social structures which frame experiences for all sections of society and not just the marginalised (Yuval-Davis 2006). However, as Crenshaw (1991) argues, there is no reason why the two cannot be combined to examine the ways in which individual everyday experiences are situated within social structures and institutions.

Intersectionality provides a framework to analyse the complexities of individuals' lives by exploring 'the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and

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cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power' (Davis 2008: 68). The approach views 'categories of difference' as socially constructed (Ludvig 2006) and functioning simultaneously (Mahalingam, Balan and Haritatos 2008). It regards elements of oppression in society such as sexism, racism and religious dominance as unable to operate independently of each other; rather they interweave in their influence to create specific modes of oppression that reflect the interaction of multiple forms of discrimination.

Categories such as woman, black and migrant can be contested and have multiple meanings; nevertheless, they are necessary to present arguments and ideas. As Gunnarsson (2011: 23) states, 'although the category "women" does not reflect the whole reality of concrete and particular women, it nevertheless refers to something real, namely the structural position as woman'. Within this there is the recognition that categories are never isolated wholes, they are socially constructed and co-constructed. The concept of gender and gender relations is always intersected by other socially constructed categories, including (but not limited to) ethnicity, age, class, race and education. All women do not experience discrimination in the same way; intersectionality allows differences in experience to be teased out.

Intersectionality refutes the notion of additive categories, whereby categories are seen as distinct, and the more marginalised positions a person holds, the greater the oppression. An additive approach would consider a woman to be disadvantaged by her gender, a black woman to be further disadvantaged by her race; a disabled black woman to have greater disadvantage again, due to her lack of able-bodiedness. However, lived experience cannot be so simply computed, and multiple categories do not merely add up (Bowleg 2008). Recognising that separate analyses of categories cannot fully represent a person's lived experience, intersectionality focuses on the dynamic and mutually constitutive relationship of categories at individual and institutional levels.

Even though the roots of intersectional research lie in the unpacking of difference, some overarching categories, including gender, ethnicity and religion, can become so entrenched they appear fixed and normative. These normative categories have rules and expectations that those who belong share the same understanding and experience of the category. This of course is not the case; intersectionality can unpack the multiplicity of experience within and across categories. For example, Rahman (2010: 952) talks about 'the "impossibility" of gay Muslims' where the categories of gay and Muslim are often argued to be mutually exclusive, with many Muslims arguing that claiming membership to a Muslim identity eradicates any base for a gay identity and vice versa. Rahman (2008, 2010) uses intersectionality to demonstrate how for gay Muslims, far from being mutually exclusive, the categories are mutually constitutive, with non-additive outcomes for those who identify with more than one social group.

It is worth commenting on Butler's (1990b: 143) criticism of the potentially endless list of categories of difference. She is disparaging about the 'embarrassed "etc." at the end of the list' of categories, arguing that the incomplete list renders

it an impossible task to present a complete picture of an individual's situated experience. Ludvig (2006: 247) argues that this 'etc.' has become the 'Achilles heel' of intersectionality studies. To some extent Butler's point is valid – one can never fully accommodate the range of categories that may be relevant at a given point in an individual's life. However, most scholars identify the categories of difference that they seek to explore at the outset of their research, and recognise others that may emerge from the data. The fact that categories cannot be absolutely defined is arguably a strength of the approach as it seeks to move away from essentialised, reified categories. Categories are always open to interpretation and the range of meanings of any one category will not be applicable to all who claim membership to it.

More problematic than the list of categories is the potential conflation of categories of difference; for example, Pakistani woman becoming interchangeable with Muslim woman. Muslim women are not a homogenous group, yet often are viewed as such. In a report which collected the views of Muslim women across the country, many women lamented the fact that provisions for Muslims, e.g. *halal* food in hospitals, were in fact accommodating Asian cultures rather than a heterogeneous Muslim community with global cultural affiliations (Raz 2006). An intersectional approach highlights the relationship between gender and religion and demonstrates how in everyday life they can be interdependent and interweave with each other in different ways, but are not reducible to each other. This approach allows for new insights and perspectives by exploring the multiple positions individuals hold and makes it amenable to research across disciplines.

Intersectionality views categories as fluid, configured and reconfigured according to personal and social relationships, and relationship with social institutions (Chow 1996). Acknowledging this avoids any hierarchical positioning of categories of difference; it recognises that members within categories (e.g. woman, Muslim, Bangladeshi, British) are diverse; and that to understand an individual or group, one must explore their position within and in relation to other institutions and social locations, or what Anthias (2002) terms 'translocational positionality'. I discuss this further later in this chapter, but Anthias uses the term to capture all of the dynamics of where individuals position themselves, how they are positioned by others and the structural processes which can impede or encourage options available to them.

Crucially, intersectionality demands recognition of the temporal position of the outcome. Brah and Phoenix (2004: 64) state that intersectionality examines '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'. For migrants a new set of social relations and social institutions are introduced into the repertoire when they arrive in their new country, where some may be conflicting with the established sets from the country of origin. Bürkner (2012: 181) makes a compelling argument for using intersectional research to explore the lived experiences of migrants:

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> [I]ntersectionality promises to solve one of the fundamental problems of migration research: how to reconcile structure and agency without promoting cultural essentialism […] it makes a case for nonfinalised empirical and theoretical reconstructions of the social practice of migrants. In doing so, it also queries preconceived notions of community, ethnicity, and everyday culture that are abundant in migration studies.

Intersectionality has been applied in many ways. Yuval-Davis (2006) separates out levels of analysis, teasing out subjective and structural domains. Other scholars define discrete levels of analysis e.g. micro-level of everyday lived experiences, meso-level of structures and organisations, and macro-level of nation (Winker and Degele 2011), with researchers predominantly focusing on one level with reference to others. This book focuses on a micro-level analysis, seeking to present a longitudinal exploration of the everyday lived experiences of first generation Bangladeshi women.

Much of the earlier literature that explored the intersections between race, class and gender looked at the differences between white women and black women, as if these categories were in themselves homogeneous. Ironically, intersectional studies which highlighted the difference between white women and black women, risked establishing an equally homogenous category of 'black woman' which apparently represented all non-white women. This is more a reflection of the research parameters which often did not include women of different ethnicities. Clearly the experiences of all non-white women are not the same (just as the experiences of all white women are not the same). More recently the fragmentation and multiplication of categories of 'black', 'woman' and 'older' means that Bangladeshi women cannot be subsumed under the political label of 'black women' for research or other purposes by virtue of being non-white. A 'black' identity as a means of differentiation from the white majority is inadequate. It is impossible to understand the motivations, attitudes and agency of Bangladeshi women without including the relevance of Islam in their lives. Intersectionality offers a framework to analyse the way power works in the intertwining processes of gender, race, ethnicity, religion and other categories that create and contribute to differences and inequalities, and sees them as relational rather than constructs that operate independently of each other. It helps to move away from the construction of minorities as victims, holding fixed essentialised identities.

The exponential growth of intersectional research has led to a multitude of descriptions of what constitutes intersectional research (Oleksy 2011). Intersectionality has been described variously as a 'framework', 'paradigm', 'theory', 'perspective', and 'lens' (Hulko 2009). It does not have proscribed methodologies or research designs (Nash 2008), and as a concept is fluid and contested (Dhamoon 2011). As Phoenix (2006: 187) notes, 'there seems to be enough in the concept of intersectionality to attract and repel feminist theorists to keep them going for a long time to come'. Hancock (2007) suggests that this is a reflection of the difficulty in being able to harness all the tenets of intersectionality;

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it may also be due to the 'transdisciplinary' (Bilge 2010) nature of the application of intersectionality where researchers within and beyond feminist studies use varied approaches to explore how categories of difference relate to each other.

Dhamoon (2011) argues against a universal agreement on the concept of intersectionality as that would preclude analyses specific to certain contexts that may fall outside the parameters. She suggests 'intersectional-type' (232) to refer to the work that comes under the broad umbrella of intersectional research. This recognises work that applies an intersectional lens to its approach and analysis, but without making any demands of strictly defined criteria to frame research. It can also be applied to research that has not explicitly defined itself as 'intersectional' but looks at multiple factors that interact to create difference.

In attempting to organise intersectional research McCall (2005: 1,779) has suggested three domains of research. She describes an *anti-categorical* approach which deconstructs categories and critiques the relevance and applicability of broad categories like gender. This mode of exploration highlights the arbitrariness of categories that have become normative. This type of research is not relevant to this book as the findings rely on categories (however contested and arbitrary they may be) to frame the outcomes. The *inter-categorical* approach looks at differences *between* fixed categories; for example, studies which examine differences in the engagement with the formal labour market across ethnic groups. By defining categories of exploration at the outset, it invalidates any claim of indefinite categories. This method is often applied to large quantitative data sets and thus not relevant to the discussion in this book. McCall's domain of *intra-categorical* approach which focuses on one group and examines the intersections that arise within single dimensions of multiple categories (2005: 1,781) is most relevant to this book. This approach uses narratives and/or case studies to highlight the nuances of everyday experience, and is popular in ethnographic research (Prins 2006, Winker and Degele 2011). It does not set out to explore the full range of potential categories that interact (Ludvig 2006), but focuses on some of the interactions that emerge as significant from the data, or that are of interest to the researcher (Simien 2007). Narratives provide situated knowledge and experience and can offer a view of how multiple categories operate simultaneously. Narratives can demonstrate how individuals occupy multiple positions, and the meanings that individuals attach to different social identities at any given time.

Individual narratives are important as they expose the salient axes of identity and subjectivity at a given point. The way a person positions themselves within a discourse may be different to how they are positioned by others. A non-working Bangladeshi Muslim woman may see herself as upholding her cultural traditions and living a comfortable life where she does not have to leave the home to go out and work; but this same position may be constructed differently externally where she may be viewed as a woman dominated by patriarchal and cultural regimes which bind her to the home, restrict her movements and exclude her from actively engaging in social life and employment outside the home. Alongside this, there is the added dimension of how individuals are positioned by external processes;

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for example, the access Bangladeshi Muslim women have to culturally sensitive education and appropriate jobs. For this reason, qualitative methods work better with intersectional approaches as they allow a more in depth exploration of the subjective construction and experience of categories (Shields 2008). Importantly, narratives when viewed from an intersectional perspective can expose how categories, including gender, class and ethnicity interact with and transform power relations (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, Yuval-Davis 1997).

Recent intersectional studies have retained an interest in gender and ethnicity yet focused less on class (McCall 2005), to the extent that Walby et al. (2012) state it has become neglected, they suggest this is due to difficulties in defining class as a measure of exclusion. They argue for the continued relevance of class in structuring inequalities and call for it to be 'systematically included in the discussions on the intersection of gender and other inequalities' (Walby et al. 2012: 232), but without over-emphasising its significance. The complications arise in the study of migrants who may adhere to a different class system altogether, one which has application in the country of origin, but no relevance in the UK, or limited relevance within their diasporic community (Mumtaz et al. 2012).

The meanings attributed to positions need to be explored. Some women may actively choose to disengage with the labour market as working outside the home is viewed as an occupation of the lower classes in their country of origin (Brah 1993). Yet others may wish to be actively working but are unable to find employment through a combination of their own skills (or lack of) and the access they have to options to enhance their employability. Some individuals may refuse to become homeowners because interest payments on a mortgage are considered to be against their religion (Ahmed 2011). These are important elements that merit investigation. However, some individuals may be precluded from home buying through a range of policies that position them in a way that makes it difficult for them to buy a house. For example, people who work in irregular, informal or unregulated jobs may have the capacity to buy a home, but may not satisfy the requirements for a mortgage. Intersectionality studies which focus on individual narratives can expose these nuances of experience and the range of social positionings. The next section elaborates on social positioning and identity.

Intersectionality and Identity

Intersectional studies focus on the experiences of difference. Central to debates on difference is the issue of identity. The concept of identity is crucial to this book as it is part of the way in which respondents view themselves and are viewed by others. Intersectionality offers a framework which can tease out the ways in which categories of difference interact. The processes of migration and globalisation have made the world more accessible and connected on the one hand yet concomitantly created a greater sense of uncertainty and isolation on the other, with individuals feeling less anchored in any one place (Bauman 1992). Amongst all this fluidity and flux, there

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remains a seeming continuity of experience demarcated by overarching normative themes of gender, ageing, culture and location. These factors are socially constructed and subject to change, but despite their fluidity and change, the continuity lies in the constancy of these structures framing the lived experience and impacting sense of identity. Anthias (2002, 2007) offers the concept of 'translocational positionality' in reference to such overarching themes to understand identity as emerging from the multiple locations and positions an individual holds. Translocational positions do not merely refer to the geographical locations of country of origin and arrival, but more so to the multitude of social spaces an individual inhabits. These spaces are not dependent on physical movements of people; they emerge within the specific context and socio-historic outcomes of the interactions of categories of gender, ethnicity, religion, etc. (Anthias 2009).

These locations are context dependent and as such identities which arise from this can be (or appear to be) relatively stable for periods of time; but they are not fixed. This approach allows for contradiction and change as meanings and contexts shift and alter. Thus with migration, women may hold on to an identity of 'Bangladeshi woman', but the situated and contextual experience of this can alter the meaning of what constitutes being a Bangladeshi woman for the individual. Anthias (2009) argues viewing identity as something possessed by individuals or groups does not acknowledge the range of structural factors which affect the ways that identity is experienced and performed. Rather, viewing identity as a process (Hall 1996) conceptually allows for the ways in which identities can change over time and in response to external factors.

The notion of translocational positionality goes beyond acknowledging that broad categories of gender, ethnicity, religion, etc. can intersect in different ways. It importantly forces a recognition of the situated processes and politics that lead to social outcomes. This view sees multiple identities of an individual as processes they experience rather than it being a solid characteristic they possess. It also allows a wider perspective on their experiences drawing on spatial and temporal factors that may position individuals in certain ways at a given time and thus creates space for contradictory identifications to be held.

Applying Intersectionality to this Study

Intersectionality allows flexibility in research and analysis. Despite, or maybe precisely because of, intersectionality's growing usage across academic disciplines it has been applied in different ways across studies. There is no definitive, all-fitting model of intersectionality research that can be applied across studies and disciplines, and it is the malleability that arises from a lack of proscribed patterns that makes it so attractive for this study. Intersectionality studies necessitate the researcher to make a choice about the categories most relevant to a particular group, at a particular time in a particular place. Taking an intersectional lifecourse analysis approach allows a far more detailed and nuanced exploration into the significance and relationships

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of people and place over time. It moves away from merely describing situations to providing explanations of why individuals' everyday lives are lived in the way they are. It draws out the obstacles and barriers as well as the facilitators for change and the structures and forces that may keep them tied to certain positions for periods of time. These are the considerations that make intersectionality an attractive framework within which to position this book. The lack of prioritisation of any category (gender, age, ethnicity, religion) makes intersectionality ideal as so many of these concepts (as will be discussed in forthcoming chapters) emerge from the data as being critical to the lives of respondents.

Intersectionality's strength as an analytical paradigm lies in three core tenets that frame this book. Firstly, the recognition that social categories are constructed and therefore the meaning of a category may not apply universally. This allows meanings of categories of identification to be unpacked. Secondly, categories are imbued with differential power dynamics and whilst these categories are fluid they are not reducible to any one single determinant. This recognises that women's experiences cannot be reduced to any one determinant factor such as their gender or migrant status. Thirdly, it acknowledges the agency of women by allowing an insight into the way categories intersect to create situations where women can exercise power and autonomy within positions of structural and cultural disadvantage such as living in a deprived area or struggling with patriarchal dominance. This highlights the complexity and nuanced nature of women's experience and moves away from migration studies which have positioned women as voiceless victims, and demonstrates the multiple ways in which they challenge forms of domination. The longitudinal element of this research adds a further dimension to the exploration of the way categories intersect in different ways at different points in time.

Raghuram (2004) comments on the lack of overlap between the literatures on international migration and gender despite the enormous relevance of one to the other, and argues that the absence of such debates has contributed to the lack of understanding of how families are reconfigured post-migration. Yet Mahler and Pessar (2006) rightly stress that examining the role of gender in migration alone is not enough; the impact of factors such as generation and class must be explored in tandem to be able to gain a fuller understanding of the migration experience. And whilst the interconnectedness of gender and age have been noted (Arber and Ginn 1995; Maynard 1999, Wray 2004) they have notably overlooked the interaction of ethnicity. Those studies which have included ethnicity as a variable have found differences. For example, studies exploring attitudes to menopause found non-white women to be considerably more positive in their attitude to menopause (Sommer et al. 1999, Wray 2007) and point to the need to ensure that ethnicity is included as a variable in studies of ageing. An intersectional approach can also demonstrate the changes in power relations over ageing (Zajicek et al. 2006), and can provide insightful information on the construction of religious meaning and practice. Hessini (1995) discusses the complex ways in which of gender, space and religion interact, and how the hijab can be used for

personal gain. She demonstrates the way in which the hijab makes certain spaces accessible for women that would not be so if they were not covered. Similarly, Heyat (2008) found young Azerbaijani women found the hijab a helpful tool in negotiating permission from spouses or parents for greater freedom outside the space of the home.

Intersectionality opens up the complexity of subject formations by demonstrating the interdependence of multiple processes and categories across different levels, from the individual to societal. At its simplest, and at the core of this book, the application of intersectionality theory highlights the complexity of people's lives, and illustrates the multiple structural forces operating on those subjects in order to challenge essentialised representations of individuals and groups. The findings are grounded in the everyday lived experiences of respondents to examine the interactions of all of these fields: migration, gender, generation, class, ageing, ethnicity and religion, in the spatial location of Tower Hamlets over a period of 10 years. It is not the aim to provide a critique of intersectionality and weigh up the arguments of those who contest the parameters of intersectionality; rather, this book deliberately utilises the very fluidity and diversity of the intersectionality framework that some contest. It applies the fundamental principles which recognise the multiple and fluid positions individuals hold and the interrelationship between factors. Thus the study is defined as an 'intersectional-type' study (Dhamoon 2011: 232). The diversity of categories explored in the upcoming chapters (belonging, citizenship, family, care and religion) reflect the multiplicity of positions women hold and the adaptable 'framework' (Hulko 2009) of an intersectional-type study best fits the exploration of these categories.

A note on terminology: I use categories and factors to refer to the main themes of exploration of this study. Gender, ageing, religion and place are categories of exploration. In recognition of the terminology of intersectional studies I do refer to migration and time as categories, but recognise that they are processes rather than categories. However, they become factors in explanations of the context of an individual's or a group's experience. I prefer the term interaction to intersection (although I use both) to discuss how elements 'interact' with each other dynamically, constantly enabling each other. I prefer interaction as I feel intersection confers a sense of a meeting point of categories, rather than an enmeshing of different factors. I agree with Anthias's concept of 'translocational positionality' in my book, but chose the less unwieldy terminology of 'social position' in reference to the same concept.

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Chapter 2
Methodology

There were two distinct periods of data collection: phase one in 2000/2001 and phase two in 2011. For phase one, 137 women were interviewed through focus groups and individual interviews. Of them, 37 women were recruited to the exploratory focus groups, trial and pilot interviews through community organisations and snowballing. However, for the largest part of the research in 2001, 100 women were randomly selected from doctor's surgeries across Tower Hamlets. It is from this randomly selected sample that the follow up sub-sample of 20 women was randomly drawn from again in 2011. (See Appendix for details of all respondents who feature across this book.)

Corti (2007: 44) argues that methodological details are often presented in a way that is 'frustratingly brief and sanitised'. This chapter responds to this by presenting a detailed account of the methodological approach. This is particularly important given the lack of presence of Bangladeshi older women within research literature and the repeated observations that they are 'hard to reach' (Crozier and Davies 2007, Choudhury et al. 2008). The construction of Bangladeshi women and especially older Bangladeshi women who do not speak English as difficult to engage with, is increasingly used as justification for their absence in data sets. Neufeld et al. (2001) go so far as claiming that the difficulties of recruiting immigrant women to research studies are an accepted truth. This study demonstrates how appropriate methodologies can facilitate recruitment to studies. This chapter offers a detailed account of recruitment in response to Rugkåsa and Canvin's (2011: 133) note that, '[t]he rarity with which qualitative […] researchers publish details about how their samples are recruited is, however, of concern, because transparency throughout the research process is central to assessing the validity of qualitative research'.

I begin by discussing the benefits of rooting oneself in the geographical area of research before detailing the individual phases of research focusing on the development of the questionnaire and recruitment to the study in each phase of the study. After this, the application of a longitudinal study design is detailed as this is a relatively new application in qualitative research. Within this section, the analysis of data is explored within a longitudinal research framework. Finally, I present my own critical exploration of the research process and my reflexive position throughout the research.

Developing a Relationship with Place and Space

Spending time familiarising oneself with the people and processes of the area of research can increase understanding of the community and help facilitate recruitment to the study. The time spent establishing relationships with community centre users in 2000 led to a 100 per cent recruitment rate to focus groups and pilot interviews. In addition, the time afforded to building relations with individuals and organisations in phase one reaped benefit to the study in phase two as connections were relatively easy to re-establish despite a gap of 10 years. Some community centre workers and other professionals who had been involved in the first phase of the research were contacted again in 2011, and despite many having moved on to other jobs, they were happy to meet and offer advice.

The interviews in phase one were conducted through Keele University, but academic bases were agreed at London Guildhall University (now London Metropolitan University) and Queen Mary University of London, both in Tower Hamlets. This allowed immersion into the geographical area of study. In order to understand the community and get a sense of the space, a substantial amount of time was spent getting to know Tower Hamlets through visiting numerous community organisations, especially those that worked specifically with women and families. The community organisations were supportive of the study and one centre provided a regular workspace and allowed me to be involved in helping to run activities with users. The support of such organisations which effectively operate as key gatekeepers who facilitate access to participants is crucial to successful research. Initially the strategy was to shadow the centre staff in their activities, but the shadowing quickly receded with greater involvement in the activities of the centre: taking part in the classes and even accompanying staff and users on trips outside the borough. Memorably, a long journey to the coastal town of Hastings on a very wet day.

Spending much of the early period of the study based at different community centres rather than at a university campus allowed daily access to women representative of those who would be interviewed for the study. It created opportunities to build relationships with women from the community as well as taking part in the activities of the centre. It also served as a valuable learning tool and helped in the development of the questionnaire. The everyday encounters and general conversations with women made clearer the areas that they were happy to discuss (e.g. children, health, housing), as well as the ones they rarely spoke about (e.g. finances, husbands, in-laws, racism). These discussions helped develop the framework and running order of the questionnaire.

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Phase One

Developing the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed in 2000 over a number of stages including focus groups, trial interviews and pilot interviews to ensure that it was worded in a way that was appropriate and sensitive, yet sufficiently able to probe the areas of exploration.

Focus groups were conducted with women through community organisations in 2000 to help form the content of the questionnaire. Having an ongoing presence at the organisations greatly facilitated recruitment to the focus groups; all the women approached to take part, either by myself or staff at the centres, agreed to participate. The association I had built up with the organisations eliminated any sense of distrust there may have been had a random, unknown interviewer sought to solicit their views. Of course, as well as the familiarity that had been established by my continued presence at the centres, my shared ethnicity and fluency in Sylheti was a distinct advantage in encouraging participation. Three focus groups with 4–6 respondents in each were held in three community centres across the borough. In the groups, the women were encouraged to talk about their lives in the UK and their experiences in Bangladesh before migrating. A further focus group was held with younger women based on the issues that arose in discussions with older women to explore their views and ideas and whether any issues raised by the second generation ought to be included in developing the interview schedule.[1]

The analysis of the focus group transcripts brought out themes which were incorporated into an interview schedule. This schedule was trialled on 12 women in 2000. The women were interviewed either in their home or at community organisations. At this stage recruitment was through community centres or through word-of-mouth and snowballing. This ensured the sample comprised community centre users and non-users. It was important that the respondents were not all users of local services to counter any potential bias that might bring to responses. The questionnaire was further refined from these interviews to establish the main questionnaire.

The final questionnaire was piloted in early 2001 on 10 women drawn again from community organisations and word-of-mouth. Months had been spent on ensuring the questionnaire was right in terms of the content and the ordering of topics and questions. Issues such as marriage and finances need to be approached sensitively and it was imperative that respondents did not feel they were being intruded upon. It was particularly important to pilot the questionnaire as the questions were developed in English but would be administered in Sylheti, and

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1 A further three focus groups with young women were held at the end of all data collection in 2001 where the discussions were framed around the outcomes of the 100 interviews with older women.

there can never be an absolute mapping of one language on to another; nuances in meaning always exist. I developed the questions to ensure as much equivalence between the meaning of the questions in English and in Sylheti.

Recruiting Respondents

In 2001, following the trialling and piloting of the interview schedule, the main phase of the research began. For this, 100 women were randomly selected through General Practitioner (GP) lists across the borough to eliminate many of the biases associated with other sampling methods. Seventeen Health Practices were invited to take part in the study of which seven from around the borough agreed to take part. From the lists of Bangladeshi women aged 35–55 provided by the practices, a random selection of names was carried out in order reach the eventual sample of 154 women that were invited to take part, and from which 100 women were interviewed.

The interviews took place between April and October 2001 and were conducted as soon as possible after contact had been made and respondents agreed to take part. This meant that recruitment and interviewing were concomitant to ensure there was a minimal time-lapse between individuals being contacted about the study, agreeing to take part, and being interviewed.

Recruitment to the study in 2001 was a two-stage process. For the first stage, letters were sent out to the women informing them briefly about the study and notifying them that I would be following up the letter with a phone call to provide more details, answer any questions they might have and arrange a time to visit. The letters were in Bengali and English, maximising the chances that even if the targeted individual had literacy problems there would be someone in the house who would be able to read the correspondence and explain it to them. The information in the letter was kept brief in order to minimise the risk of overwhelming or worrying the individual.

The second stage of the recruitment involved phoning all of those who had been written to. Where there was a problem with the phone number, follow-up letters were sent. The follow-up letter included a tear-off slip to return where they could indicate whether they were interested in taking part in the study, give details of a phone number if one existed, or else suggest a day and time when it was convenient for me to go and make contact.

Phase Two

The Questionnaire

In the follow up interviews for phase two in 2011 the original questionnaire was re-administered but included some modifications: a section on ageing was added. Some sections had questions added; for example, a question was inserted about where married children were living. And new questions were added, for

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example, for widows, asking where their spouses had been buried, and for all respondents, exploring their own preferences for country of burial. The decision to broadly use the original questionnaire was based on the fact the questionnaire had been developed so comprehensively initially, and to explore whether the same questions would elicit different responses 10 years on. The fact that none of the respondents I contacted and interviewed remembered taking part in the first phase of the research meant that the re-administering of the questionnaire also allowed me to ensure consistency in the responses across both phases.

Recruiting Respondents

In phase two in 2011, 20 of the original interviewees from the randomly selected sample in 2001 were followed up. A sub-sample of 50 of the original interviewees (five from each band of original interview numbers 1–9, 11–19, 20–29, etc.) was selected to draw the final sample from. As in 2001, interviews were arranged as the respondents agreed to take part and thus the sample was recruited alongside the interviews being conducted. With only the details from the first round of interviews to contact potential respondents 10 years later, there was no way of anticipating how the fieldwork would eventuate. Quite aside from whether they agreed to participate or not, there was no guarantee respondents would still be living in the same homes, or have the same contact number. As it transpired, the original contact details were wrong for a third of the sample selected. From the 50 women sampled 34 per cent (17 women) had wrong contact details reducing the sample to 33 women. From this reduced sample of 33 women 61 per cent (20 women) agreed to be interviewed; 21 per cent (7 women) could not be contacted as no one would answer the phone. There is no way of knowing if those respondents continue to be available on the same contact number from 10 years ago and were simply not home when I called. Just three respondents (9 per cent) refused to take part; one had a husband in hospital and suggested I call back in a month's time, as fieldwork time did not accommodate this she was marked as a refusal. The two others simply did not want to be interviewed. A further three women from the sample could not be interviewed for various reasons: one was not at home on two separate occasions that an interview had been arranged; another had guests arrive the day of the interview, subsequently cancelled another interview arranged, and then went to Bangladesh making it impossible to interview her. And the third potential respondent unfortunately had died in a car accident four years ago.

In this phase, contact with the women was made through phone calls only as all of the women had previously given consent to be contacted again at the time of original interview in 2001. All the respondents spoke Sylheti. Given the experience of previous interviews which highlighted a general lack of literacy in both English and Bengali (as discussed in the Introduction, Bengali differs substantially from the verbal dialect of Sylheti), I decided against translating the information sheet and consent form, partly because Bengali would for the majority

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be fairly redundant and partly to eliminate any potential stress by ensuring respondents were not presented with a seeming mass of information which they could not read. The consent forms and information sheets were in English only and verbally translated for the respondents by myself at the time of interview. I also made sure there was someone they trusted that could read and translate the information contained within the information sheet and their copy of the consent form for them again in the future should they want.

The interviews were conducted between June and August 2011. It was imperative the fieldwork did not extend into August as it was Ramadan during August 2011, a period where it would have been impractical and insensitive to conduct interviews.

The Interviews

For all interviews, across both phases, all of the respondents were interviewed at home. The interviews took around one hour to conduct, although there were some exceptions, with the longest running to almost three hours in 2001 and over two hours in 2011. Interviews took place at the convenience of the respondents. This meant that optimum timing for interviews was late morning – after children had gone to school (this also applied in 2011 when it was more often grandchildren going to school and the house being quiet) – or mid-afternoon after midday prayers and before the children came back from school. All of the interviews were conducted in Sylheti and recorded for transcription – on a bulky cassette recorder in 2001 and a far more discreet digital recorder in 2011.

My methodological approach has been discussed in depth to demonstrate how recruiting Bangladeshi women to research need not be a difficult task if appropriate strategies are adopted. These may require some time and patience, but are undoubtedly worth the effort. I achieved a high recruitment rate of 65 per cent and 61 per cent across respective phases, with outright refusal to participate being less than 10 per cent in each phase of data collection. Other factors including complexity in arranging times and availability of respondents meant the remainder were unable to take part.

My study contradicts Choudhury et al.'s (2008: 64) argument drawn from their work with the Bangladeshi community that, '[e]ngaging participants is difficult and the employment of local well known people is essential'. My methodological approach of basing myself in community centres, engaging with local people and taking time to build rapport means that I did not have difficulty in engaging with, or recruiting participants to my study in either phase of the research. My relative anonymity in the community was far more advantageous in building trust than if I had existing links and was 'well known'.

The innovative longitudinal feature of this research offers a unique insight into the lives of the same women 10 years apart and highlights how much change has occurred in the lives of the respondents in a relatively short time period. The next section discusses the application of a longitudinal study design and data analysis.

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Qualitative Longitudinal Research

Qualitative longitudinal research (QLR) is a relatively new methodological development attracting increasing interest (Corden and Millar 2007). This study makes an important contribution to QLR studies by presenting data from a completed phase of longitudinal exploration. The longitudinal aspect of interviews at two separate points in time allows for reflection and discussion of changes that have occurred over the lifecourse of respondents. This helps overcome a common difficulty of ethnographic research, whereby a snapshot in time becomes a lasting legacy defining that community for further research. If the communities are relatively small and under researched, the scope for new updated findings is particularly low. Much of the research conducted on minority groups results in groups being locked into a position of poverty and disadvantage through the re-iterance of such findings in the absence of new research or available figures. This has the effect of misrepresenting communities and missing changes at an individual and societal level.

This study applies O'Connor and Goodwin's (2010: 285) definition of qualitative longitudinal research, which involves:

> [R]eanalysis of pre-existing data from an earlier study using new research questions. However, in addition, QLR, unlike simple data reuse, involves the generation of new data and the use of the original research questions. The most significant way that QLR differs from both reuse and restudies is that the research is focused on the same respondents as the original study.

I reanalysed the existing data set from phase one in 2000–2001 applying a new conceptual and research focus in line with the aims of this study, and re-used the same questionnaire with the same women, albeit with some additional questions to probe changes since the previous interview.

Thomson, Plumridge and Holland (2003: 186) note that most QLR studies have been focused on youth. They suggest this is because youth is a period of the lifecourse marked by rapid change. This study utilises QLR to explore lifecourse changes for an older cohort whose lives have been no less marked by rapid change – marriage, motherhood and migration are often experienced in a short space of time, followed by adjusting to a completely different social and cultural world, an adjustment process that this book will show continues long after the migration journey ends.

Secondary Analysis

Following O'Connor and Goodwin's (2010) call that QLR should involve reanalysis of the original data set using new questions, all of the original data collected was subject to secondary analysis in 2010 and prior to any further developments on the questionnaire to identify themes for potential further exploration in phase two.

When the fieldwork for the second phase was complete in June 2011, all the interviews from the 20 respondents were analysed using NVivo. The original interviews, despite having been subject to secondary analysis already, were reanalysed again as part of the new longitudinal data set. In this book I focus mainly on narratives of the 20 respondents interviewed across both phases, but also, where relevant and insightful, draw on transcripts from phase one in 2000–2001 to add clarification to points I make.

Heaton (2008) argues that secondary analysis is best conducted by the original researcher because of the interviewer's involvement with the original data. Outcomes of research are necessarily affected by the researcher and their interpretation of the data and this will be different with someone else's analysis. The researcher becomes integral to the data; the outcomes are to a large degree dependent on the relationship between the interviewee and interviewer. The contextual cues and observations made by the original researcher will not be available to subsequent data analysts. The tacit knowledge the researcher gains through the process cannot be drawn upon by other researchers. It is rare for subsequent researchers to have access to this contextual information (van den Berg 2005, Medjedović 2011). In this study, I developed my interview schedule, arranged, conducted, translated and transcribed all of the interviews in the first phase and thus am well connected with the data set. I am familiar not only with the raw data, but also the context of the data, the locations, the non-verbal communication and the off-the-record information shared.

Given the time that had elapsed from conducting the original interviews it is unsurprising that my personal research interests and perspectives have changed. Revisiting the data at a later date for secondary analysis led to the data presenting itself to me in a different way based on my own personal development with certain issues more salient upon returning to it than at the time of original data collection. Recognising this is part of the reflexive relationship that I have with the data. The reflexive position of the researcher is an increasingly important area in qualitative research and is discussed below.

Reflexivity in Research

Reflexivity or researcher introspection has grown in significance as part of the qualitative research process, especially when research is conducted with minority groups. Although not new, the method has gained greater attention and evolved to become a core feature of qualitative research. Young (2000: 642) defines reflexivity as:

> [S]elf-reflection on one's research process and findings, self-awareness of one's social positionality, values, and perspectives, and self-critique of the effects of one's words and actions upon the individuals and groups being studied.

Reflexivity requires the constant interpretation of field experiences and how these interpretations arise; it forces the researcher to recognise their own position in

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relation to what is being studied and how that may impact on the study itself. The self-critical acknowledgement of the researcher's particular position (or positions) creates for a less authoritative script as it recognises the contextual meanings produced as an outcome of the relationship between the researcher and the researched. The open acknowledgement of the research outcomes as co-constructed between researcher and respondent dispels traditional power hierarchies of researchers over the researched. And importantly, by locating the research within a specific contextual framework where another researcher may develop another story altogether, it highlights the fluidity of experience and helps to prevent the reification of cultural experience which many ethnographic research outcomes can lead to.

The section below discusses my reflexive position within this study whilst heeding Finlay's (1998: 455) advice that reflexivity ought to be 'neither an opportunity to wallow in subjectivity nor permission to engage in legitimised emoting'.

In the Field

Interviewing in the field is rarely a straightforward process; as much as one prepares there are often unforeseen issues that arise. One of the greatest advantages in conducting this research was being fluent in Sylheti, the dialect spoken by the respondents. It has been suggested that a key factor limiting the inclusion of minority groups in research has been language and/or cultural barriers (Tsai et al. 2004). The main avenue for overcoming this is the use of interpreters, but this is not without its problems (Wallin and Ahlmstrom 2006). Aside from costs, it is not always possible to match interpreters with respondents in respect to gender and this can influence responses (Miller et al. 2002).

Temple and Young (2004: 168) point out that it is rare to find a researcher 'fluent in the language of the communities she is working with'. They argue that translation is never neutral and there are always positions of power that apply. Being fluent in Sylheti allowed me to recognise nuances in dialect and vocabulary, to pick up which parts of Sylhet people were from. Throughout the process of interviewing and transliteration it was important to be cognisant of educational and class differences between myself as the researcher and the respondents and between the respondents themselves. Where the respondents are more educated and their class position in Bangladesh is slightly higher, their lexicon would reflect this in the interviews in the way they expressed themselves and the vocabulary they used. Thus, in translating, these differences had to be acknowledged and transcripts produced in a way concordant with the meaning and vocabulary used by respondents, rather than simply presenting my interpretation of what had been said.

Henry (2003) raises the important question of how researchers present themselves to participants. This was a critical decision I had to make. As a relatively independent single woman who lived alone away from the parental

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home, it was possible that I might be viewed as too independent and potentially represent what the women feared most for their own daughters. To this end, whilst conducting the fieldwork in 2000–2001 I decided it would be judicious to present an alternative version of my life. Whilst they knew I was single (this led to much advice on my need to settle down and even some offers of helping find a groom for me), when asked, I said I lived with my married sister in Kent. I was truthful about my upbringing in Wales. This deliberate construction of an alternative self resonates with Wolf's (1996: 11) assertion that:

> [O]ur power and control offers us the choice to construct and (re)shape our selves to our subjects, playing on the different positionalities of the researcher and the researched. This is particularly the case when researchers are far enough from home that the researchers do not encounter many of their family members or friends, whereas our respondents are usually surrounded by kin and friends and cannot similarly withdraw, hide and alter aspects of their identity.

Whilst there is some undeniable truth in Wolf's quote in reference to my own experience as a researcher, it cannot be assumed that participants do not also present or perform identities they are happy to share, and hide elements they do not want to expose. In phase two in 2011 I enquired about the son of a respondent's co-wife[2] – the respondent assured me the co-wife had no sons – despite my previous interview listing the son. I was sure I was not confused, having read through the original interview transcript beforehand, but wondered if I had made a mistake at the first interview. I resolved to check the original transcript and fieldnotes again more thoroughly on leaving, and revisit the original interview recording. At the end of the interview the co-wife entered and asked if I being educated could help her: she was concerned about her son who was locked away because of his mental health problems. Had it not been for the intervention of the co-wife I would have questioned my previous data on the family.

In 2011 I was completely honest about my current circumstances and reasons for returning to Wales to care for my father as these did not pose any potential problems with cultural expectations and ideals. My return to my parental home quite likely worked to my benefit in constructing me as a dutiful daughter and someone imbued with a sense of traditional cultural and familial responsibility. My position as a researcher of the same ethnicity and culture as the respondents undoubtedly bore relevance; but clearly there are other dimensions to personality and identity beyond race and ethnicity, and even these are subject to personal interpretation. Cultural similarities alone are not a guarantee of eliciting participation or making

2 Co-wives refer to women who are married to the same man. Polygamous marriages are allowed in Islam. Actual numbers are difficult to ascertain as with polygamous marriages in the Bangladeshi community, the second wife is often married only under Islamic Law. In the context of UK law there is only one official marriage and no record of polygamy.

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respondents feel comfortable with the researcher; other factors such as age, gender and class also have an impact (Narayan 1993).

Age is a factor that could have affected responses. At the youngest end of the age range the respondents were not much more than a decade older than me, whilst at the oldest end they were a generation older. Even the respondents closer to me in age had vast differences in their life experiences – I shared their ethnicity, but I had not migrated to the UK, I was not married, I did not have children, and have been educated and socialised in British culture. For the older women I represented someone of the next generation, and many women would compare my experiences with that of their daughters in terms of my education and employment. Some also remarked upon my independence when talking about getting their daughters married young. Some women who expressed fears of further education having a negative effect on their daughters' cultural attitudes were pleased that it did not appear to have diminished my ethnic identity and engagement with the community. They asked questions as to whether I had lived away from home during my studies and how I had managed to keep away from 'bad influences'. The interview offered them an opportunity to discuss their hopes of educating their children alongside their fears and worries with someone who could inform them from personal experience, often these discussions were not so easy with their children. The age differences also informed the way I conducted the interview. It is common across many cultures to engage in 'name-avoidance' as a mark of respect (Anchimbe 2011). When interviewing, all those who were 15 years or more older than myself I referred to as '*khala*' (maternal aunt), and those under 15 years older I addressed as '*afa*' (sister). It would not have been appropriate to refer to them by their name, as culturally, anyone older is always addressed by a familial term. The respondents in turn when asking questions about my family would use corresponding terms, they would refer to my father as '*bhai*' (brother) or '*mama*' (maternal uncle), and use the terms for brother and sister when asking about my siblings.

The insider/outsider debate refers to researchers who are either from the ethnic group they are studying, or from outside it. It is often presumed that holding insider status will make the research easier, but this is not always the case (Twine 2000). Cultural and social differences exist even when researching within one's ethnic group and one can simultaneously be positioned as insider or outsider depending on the context. In this study, my gender, shared language and cultural heritage positioned me as an insider, yet the fact that I was born and raised in the UK, brought up in Wales and did not live in Tower Hamlets, and also the geographical location of my father's home in Bangladesh to the locations where the majority of respondents had migrated from, positioned me as an outsider. The fact that I wasn't from Tower Hamlets was an advantage as the respondents could be secure in the knowledge that I was not part of the community and therefore there was no risk of me sharing any information they gave me. In addition there were other variables such as age, education and class on which I differed from the respondents.

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Despite the differences, there was much benefit in being able to occupy both insider and outsider positions. My insider status allowed free communication, women were comfortable talking to me, often making comments such as, 'Well, you know what it's like in our community'. Many women complimented me on my fluency, with one respondent even remarking how I spoke Sylheti far more proficiently than any of her children who had been raised in the Bengali environment of Tower Hamlets, and was surprised to learn that I had grown up in an area with hardly any Bangladeshis.

Aside from the feminist literature, there has been relatively limited exploration of methodological concerns pertaining to the multiple identifications and role of the researcher in qualitative studies. How to present oneself to one's own community when researching them is a dilemma many minority researchers have had to confront (Abu-Lughod 1988, Lal 1999). Throughout the process of interviewing I was always aware of the ways in which I was constructing my identity in terms of how I wanted to present myself to my respondents. I was acutely aware of differences between us and the risk of being viewed as too much of an outsider. My age was often discussed as was my single status; I was aware that information I shared may compromise my insider status to the point of being viewed as (possibly more accurately) an outsider-within (Collins 1986) or, even worse, of someone with an invalid ethnic identity (Omi and Winant 1994). The respondents spoke with disdain of young people who behaved in ways incongruent with their culture and tradition. There were perhaps more reasons for the respondents to view me as an outsider than there were for them to identify with me. Yet my careful constructions of identity seemed to gain their trust, and, in a way wholly unanticipated, the process of investigating the identities of my respondents became a process of introspective examination of my own identity.

Researchers have made conscious decisions to adopt certain behaviours or modes of dress during their work. For example, Berik (1996) chose to conform to subordinate female roles when conducting research in rural Turkey in order to maximise the chances of recruiting females for interview. In her writing on holding insider status, de Andrade (2000) argues that the meanings afforded to ethnic identity are produced through social interaction – through not only physical attributes, but behaviours, shared rituals and even clothes, and these symbols are continuously read and interpreted by social actors in the course of their interaction. How I presented myself physically as well as my manner and demeanour would have an impact on the impression that the respondents had of me, and in turn would no doubt affect their openness with me. This is of course a two-way process and I made decisions about the appropriateness of certain questions and how much I could and should probe areas of discussion based on the way respondents presented themselves to me.

I made a conscious decision during the fieldwork in the first phase to wear Asian dress. I chose to do this as I felt it would make the respondents more comfortable with me. I did not want to appear too modern. But whilst I wore Asian clothes I chose not to wear hijab. I knew that covering my hair would make me appear

more respectable, but it was not something I was comfortable in doing as religious symbolism is personal to me and not to be utilised for benefit. Clothing has long been used for political symbolism (Parkins 2002). Islamic dress has become highly politicised since 9/11 with many Muslim women and men choosing to assert their religious identity through their attire. For women they range from the full *jilbab* or *burkha* which is a loose garment worn over clothes and finished with a headscarf or hijab which leaves no strand of hair uncovered; some women also wear a *niqab* which covers the whole face revealing only the eyes. This niqab remains rare amongst older women but is increasingly popular among young women who often complete the look with highly accentuated and elaborate eye makeup.

The wearing of hijab for many young women is part of what Werbner (2007) terms 'strategic veiling'. She argues that by donning full Islamic attire in a way that is markedly different to their parents interpretation, such as the flimsy scarf thrown causally over the head that many women had been used to in Bangladesh allows young Muslims to assert authority over their parents. This strategic veiling is often used to gain permission from parents in allowing young women freedom outside of the home. Those who choose to cover their faces as well are assured of the fact that they cannot be recognised by others. Thus it is not unusual to see groups of young men and women wearing jilbab and/or hijab intermingling across Tower Hamlets in ways that would be forbidden by parents and widely disapproved of by the community. However the hijab allows women the freedom to engage in such relations safe in the knowledge that their identities are relatively concealed. Of course, this is only one strategic use of hijab, it is also empowering and creates spaces of freedom for women to pursue education and employment.

The requirement of hijab as an absolute for Muslim women has long been a matter of contestation in public and private discourses; there is not the scope to cover the debates in this book. What is evident is that hijab is not a static phenomenon. It is constantly being negotiated and interpreted, adapting to specific socio-historical spaces. It is within this multilayered context that I made a deliberate choice not to wear hijab. Choosing to wear Asian clothes for fieldwork did not pose a dilemma as it is not incongruent with my personal life as I do wear Asian clothes albeit limited to Asian gatherings. The literal translation of hijab is 'to protect', and despite the term being synonymous with head covering, its original application goes far beyond dress and refers more widely to modesty to speech, manners and behaviour. I personally subscribe to the measure of hijab as an overall requisite of modesty and reject the way that religion has become misappropriated to the extent that for many (but clearly not all) the covering of hair has become symbolic of an elevated level of piety and the implication that those who cover their hair are more devout (or better) than those who do not. During the fieldwork in both phases, some respondents commented on how I must face assumptions being made about my character because I do not cover my hair, and spoke about their daughters who chose not to wear hijab being faced with the same prejudice from within the community. This is discussed further in Chapter 7.

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Ethnicity, like other social constructs, is malleable, subjective and contextual, and for that reason the elements we choose to present as salient can be altered according to context. When I re-entered the field 10 years later, I chose not to dress in Asian attire. I noticed that as well as increased numbers wearing hijab and niqab, far more young women in Tower Hamlets were wearing western clothes and had their own sense of style which was a form of covered veiling – no flesh was on show, but the clothes were often very fashionable skinny jeans with tight tops, sometimes finished off with an elaborate headscarf and sometimes not. I felt I would not seem out of place or too modern if I were to dress in non-Asian clothes. I was still aware of the way I dressed; as the fieldwork was mainly conducted in the summer, I wore long dresses, or if the weather was inclement I wore jeans with shorter dresses – this look was more like the traditional *salwar kameez* that I had worn during the fieldwork in 2001. Thus I was continually re-assessing and negotiating my insider status in the course of the fieldwork. But of course, if ethnicity is constructed through interaction, my chosen presentation may have been interpreted differently than my intention. So whilst for some my western attire may have appeared modest enough, for others whose daughters practise hijab or do not wear western clothes, it may have seemed too modern and westernised still. Ethnicity is constructed and afforded meaning from influences far beyond one's cultural heritage. It is not something that exists a priori, but is enacted and performed, made up of one's awareness, knowledge and interaction with history, language, community, customs and practices.

De Andrade (2000) discusses how her initial assumption that her insider status would facilitate the research process was in fact too simplistic and in many cases added complications to the process that were specific to her insider status. Like her experience interviewing Cape Verdeans, I also had to go through a process of being quizzed by interviewees on who I knew in the locality, who else I was interviewing, where my family were from in Bangladesh, and where my siblings had married (the locations of the original family seats in Bangladesh rather than the UK). This was all to establish whether we had any commonality. Sometimes they would know of the area where my family or one of my sibling's spouses was from in Bangladesh – someone in their extended family had been married in the vicinity and that would lead to discussions of what people from that area were like. These conversations were usually held prior to the interview commencing and were never recorded. They were part of the process of making the respondent feel comfortable with me and to consolidate the rapport that I had begun to establish in the telephone conversations. These conversations were also important in my respondents' constructions of my ethnic identity and placing me within the wider ethnic community. Not being from Tower Hamlets or having any discernible family link to it, they needed to ground me in their 'imagined' ethnic community. They were keen to know more about my family, when my father had arrived, how many bedrooms our house had. A question I was asked often was, 'How many bedroom house did the council give you?' My response that we had never lived in social housing may have created some distance from the respondents, but was

quickly worked through with discussions of how much more affordable houses in Wales are compared to London.

As an insider I was asked my opinion and advice on family matters, especially pertaining to education of their children, and I was also asked to keep an eye out for potential brides and grooms for the respondents' children. They trusted me to do this as I supposedly knew what both they and their children would look for, and it wasn't a request that they could make of everyone. As a researcher who worked for a university, I was viewed as an outsider, a professional. In many cases I was asked to help with official business – housing, health, welfare or immigration matters. It is not unusual for researchers to be viewed by participants as wielding authority and having some influence (Ballinger and Payne 2000), especially given the formalities of explaining information sheets and gaining signed consent forms. Generally individuals are only asked to sign documents in an official capacity. My position as an 'official' person allowed me to ask questions about private areas of their lives that they would not ordinarily share with anyone beyond their intimate circle. Alongside this, my insider status allowed them to share information in a way that they might not share with an outsider, not just because of language issues, but because of a shared understanding of cultural meanings – issues such as black magic or possession were discussed with me because of shared semantic schemas to encode and understand such references.

My position as insider opened space for respondents to discuss issues they may not have discussed with other researchers who they did not perceive as insiders. One respondent in phase one spoke about how her elderly parents-in-law were cooped up all day and how the family had tired of listening to stories of 'the olden days'. She discussed the problems of her children having to take time off school and college to act as interpreters for her in-laws when they went to doctor and hospital appointments, and her worries about the impact this was having on their education. She recognised that as they grew older and entered employment they would not simply be able to take an afternoon off to take them to appointments. She spoke about how she wished she had some support. I was able to help put her in touch with a day centre that catered for elderly Bangladeshis, they ran a daily luncheon club with a pick up and drop off service and also took people to appointments. I presented an information leaflet from the centre to the respondent. She however did not feel confident in calling the centre and asked if I would do this for her; thus I made the initial contact for her. I called the centre from her home, but passed the phone on to her once I had given the details of the situation. The duality of my status as insider (whom she could share her worries with) and outsider (who could liaise with services for her) was empowering for the respondent as she now had access to support in coping with her in-laws, had relieved her children of extraneous care duties, and had created some time for herself. In phase two, most of the insider queries were focused on whether I could help find appropriate brides and grooms for their children, and outsider queries were mainly to do with benefits, but one respondent wanted help with contacting the appropriate immigration office and discussed the letters she had written. I agreed to retrieve telephone numbers from the internet for her.

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Feminist writers advocate the sharing of personal information as part of the research process (Oakley 1981, Smith 1987). So the question of how much disclosure is appropriate is one that I had to assess. The disclosure element reversed the role of interviewer and participant, where it often felt like I was being interviewed by the participants. And even when the interviews were in full flow, they would sometimes stop to quiz me on my experience and opinions. The question of where they would like to be buried would sometimes lead to the participants asking where my mother was buried and what had prompted that decision. These questions often made me feel quite exposed as beyond sharing that she had passed away, I was not inclined to discuss this issue, yet the women would want to know the cause of death, where she had died, how long she had been unwell and many other very personal facts. My discomfiture made me reflect on the nature of the questions that I was asking respondents to answer and wonder whether they felt the same vulnerabilities as I did. This reflexivity undoubtedly made me much more aware in my interviewing and less likely to probe areas where I sensed that respondents were uncomfortable. This was in contrast to my earlier interviews where I had ploughed through the questionnaire, and where issues were sensitive I would rephrase or revisit, and unless the respondent explicitly stated they did not want to discuss the issue (usually marriage issues), I would probe. In the second phase of interviews, I would desist from questioning further when I felt the respondent was uncomfortable. Yet despite my sensitivity to questions raised in regard to my mother, it allowed a stronger rapport to be built with the respondents – I had lost my mother in my teens, and many of the respondents had left their mothers in Bangladesh at a similarly young age and empathised with not having a mother to rely on for support, and spoke about their pain at this. It also made some of the older respondents more nurturing towards me, with comments like, ‘You can call me mum’.

Conclusion

Whilst there is a drive towards standardised research practices, the key to engaging with any individuals or communities, especially those deemed ‘hard to reach’, is flexibility. A flexible approach need not affect the rigour of methodology. Many of those defined as ‘hard to reach’ are unaccustomed to research and unaware of the processes. Talking at length about themselves can seem simultaneously an indulgence and an intrusion. It may not be possible to immerse oneself in the community for a length of time before commencing research but just taking a little time to build rapport and answer questions can make a huge difference and result in creating trust and ease.

The process of fieldwork goes far beyond collecting data through simply administering a questionnaire or conducting an interview. Decisions are continually being made and remade about how to present oneself, how much to share and how much to hold back. The line between interviewer and interviewee

often becomes blurred. The position of insider may bring potential benefits but does not necessarily mean that it will lead to an accurate or more truthful reading of a situation. An insider's views are as contested and fluid as an outsider's, and the negotiation of what information is shared and exchanged is a two-way process that is constructed contextually between the interviewer and interviewee.

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Chapter 3
Belonging

This chapter examines emotional belonging through the ways in which women negotiate their sense of responsibility and duty, and the different factors that intersect to alter their use of and attachment to place over time. It discusses how structural factors in Bangladesh and the UK interact with differing levels of agency over time by examining the influence of gender, ethnicity, culture and patriarchy. Belonging is bound up with place (Leach 2002, May 2011); without feeling safe in place, it is difficult to forge a sense of belonging. For migrants, especially those who arrive as family reunifiers, it can take a substantial amount of time before they are able to feel secure in their surroundings. The sense of unsettlement which begins with the physical journey of migration does not end with arrival to the UK; it can continue for years as they adjust to new roles, new homes and form new relationships.

The women in this study underwent a series of accelerated life events. Many experienced marriage, migration and childbirth in their teens; and a substantial number were widows and/or grandmothers by their thirties. Hernandez and McGoldrick (2005) argue that migration adds a new and discrete stage to the life cycle for those who migrate and adjusting to a new culture is a long term developmental process. The respondents in this study left their natal families young. Often after marriage there was a prolonged period of separation from their husband; and when they migrated they found themselves in a country that they were unprepared for and that was completely different to the rural alluvial land that they had left behind. For many, housing uncertainties played a large part in the early days of arrival, with many migrants staying with relatives or in shared housing with non-relatives and then in temporary housing whilst waiting to be housed by the council. It took years for a sense of belonging to be established. This chapter begins by examining the role of marriage in shaping the sense of belonging for respondents.

Marriage

Marriage is a key life event for individuals and necessarily impacts identity as an individual enters into a relationship where decisions are made with another person. The marital relationship presupposes a level of emotional belonging to one's partner. In the west, marriage usually signifies the relinquishing of a single, often independent status for the choice of being part of a couple. These general dynamics are not representative of all cultures, where the choice of marriage partner

may be primarily decided by those other than the main individuals involved. The marriage itself may be viewed fundamentally as a union of families rather than individuals (Dale and Ahmed 2011). In Bangladesh marriages follow the patrilocal tradition where women 'leave their natal home on marriage to reside with their husband's family and become part of his patrilineal group' (Kabeer 2011: 501). In this study most of the women were married in their teens and thus dependent on their families before marriage and then shifted their dependency from one family to another family, or more specifically from their father to their husband.

Many respondents married in their young teens, so there was little time for them to experience belonging as a young person to their natal family for any great length of time before marriage which conferred adult status on to them. This is not to say that familial attachment was not present or strong, rather that there was little scope for forging an independent identity before marriage. For Bangladeshis, as with other cultures which encourage early marriage, the status of adulthood is acquired upon marriage and not by reaching a particular age (Unicef 2001). With marriage there is the expectation that a young bride takes on household duties of her new family.

The average age of marriage was 17 both in the sample of 100 women interviewed in 2001 (range 9 to 29) and in the sample of 20 women followed up in 2011 (range 13 to 20). Respondents spoke about how in earlier generations women had married at younger ages still. As Nazmin, who was 13 at the time of her marriage, says:

> That was the way it was. They used to get married even younger. Some people would get married at just seven. I heard about those things when I was young. (Nazmin 2001)

Of the women interviewed in 2001, Ranu was the youngest marrying at nine years old. She recalls not understanding what was happening, she says:

> My marriage was like a play-marriage. He was only 14 years old himself. He was still at school. On the wedding day, they told me that we were going to visit someone's house. When we got to his house, his aunt washed me and dressed me in a sari – I was so small the underskirt for the sari was hanging off me – they tied it halfway up my chest! I was so young – only nine. All my teeth still hadn't fallen out; I got my second set of teeth after my marriage. In the olden days marriages used to happen that way – but in the really olden days. In my generation I was the only one to get married so young. (Ranu 2001)

This quote demonstrates the changing nature of age of marriage in Bangladesh, and although early marriage remains common throughout much of South Asia (Adhikari 2003), including Bangladesh (Schuler et al. 2006, Field and Ambrus 2008), with almost 70 per cent of girls married by the time they are 18 (NIPORT 2005), the evidence shows the age of marriage is increasing from early teens to mid-late teens (Jones 2010).

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According to the customs of the time marriages were arranged by family elders, usually male elders with little input from older female members, and generally none from the women and men for whom the marriage was being arranged (Jones 2010). These traditions are common across rural parts of South Asia (Majupuria and Majupuria 1989, Ghimire et al. 2006); and in much of Bangladesh, especially rural areas, these customs remain the norm (Mahmud and Amin 2006). Shuara describes her experience:

> In our day it was fathers, uncles, and brothers who arranged it all. If you didn't have a father, you would have an uncle, if you didn't have that you would have an older brother, and those who didn't even have that, might have an older brother-in-law. There were always elders to arrange things. (Shuara 2001)

The lack of involvement of females in the process is indicative of the social customs of that time and does not mean that they were against the decisions made for them, as Gulnehar describes:

> I got married just like everyone else did. In our country nobody was asked for their consent when they got married, it wasn't needed because nobody would have objected. (Gulnehar 2001)

Marriage at a young age requires adjustment to the demands of extra responsibilities. Anwara who was just 12 when she married recalls the early years of her marriage:

> I didn't know how to do anything when I was at home; I never cooked in my father's home. Six years after our marriage, his brother got married. I did everything in that time. (Anwara 2001)

For Anwara there were 21 years between marriage and migration to the UK, during which time her husband made four visits to see her. The prolonged periods of separation in their marriage, made the establishment of a solid relationship difficult, especially as she married in the late 1960s in a rural environment with no telephones. Having never attended school she lacked literacy skills and so could not have a private correspondence with her husband; for over 20 years, contact, and in effect their relationship, existed only during his four visits to Bangladesh before she joined him in the UK. Having married at 12 (her date of birth was adjusted for immigration, and age of marriage recorded as 16), she did not properly live with her husband until she was 33. These periods of separation are common amongst this sample, and have been found in other migrant groups (Mand 2005). Such long periods of separation from a spouse, especially with no contact in between visits can impact a sense of belonging within a spousal relationship. It is important to acknowledge the socio-historic nature of these periods of absolute separation with no contact. In modern migrant marriages, contact can be maintained during absences with phone calls at the very least; for the respondents in this study this was not an option.

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As well as adjusting and trying to establish a sense of belonging to a new family, many respondents were adjusting to a newly independent country. Jusna was 15 when she married in 1972, soon after the Bangladesh War of Independence ended in 1971; she describes the turbulent times:

> I got married straight from studies – I was still a student. It was a very restless period for us during the Independence War. We had to live away from our home because we had a lot of trouble from Pakistanis during that time. We lived in a strong Hindu area. We lived away from our home for a while, and then I got married. So even in the short time after I finished my studies I wasn't really at home in a normal way. When I got married I had to learn everything there. At first it was a bit difficult to adjust, but that is just natural. They had a different way of family life to us; it took time adjusting to their family ways, trying to mix with everyone. Eventually I came to see them as my own family, and then I had two children there, so they were my family then. So, afterwards it wasn't difficult, but initially, the first few months were hard. (Jusna 2001)

What emerges from Jusna's narrative is the importance of her children in helping her to feel settled and in creating a sense of belonging. Children dominated the respondent's narratives at all stages of their lives, and their identity and belonging is intricately bound up with their relationship with their children. These relationships are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Arranged marriages appear to presuppose a lack of agency on the part of those directly involved in the marriage union. The practice can be somewhat unusual or difficult to understand within western discourses of romantic love as the basis of marriage (Giddens 1993). However, arranged marriages were and continue to be the cultural norm in Bangladesh (although, as discussed, age of marriage has increased). Anything else would have seemed extraordinary. With early marriage the norm, the social milieu of that time created few opportunities for any other mode of marriage. Women and young girls were confined to the space of the village surrounded by their family only, and education beyond primary school age was rare. Thus there were few occasions for females to interact with any males outside the family either before or after marriage. For those women who married within the wider family, e.g. marrying cousins, there was even less contact with males outside of the family circle.

Women whose marriages were arranged to migrants had their fates sealed for them in terms of migration, as Gulabi says:

> I had to come because my husband was here. I didn't really want to come. My parents got me married and I had to be where my husband was, didn't I? (Gulabi 2001)

But whilst this decision had been made for them by those arranging their marriage, it did not eradicate the scope for agency within that situation. Women often negotiated the terms of their journey post marriage. In the early stages of

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migration from Bangladesh, women were more reluctant to migrate for fear of not knowing what to expect. Nazifa describes the changing attitudes to migration. She had married in 1965 at the age of 15 (recorded as 17 for passport purposes), but delayed her arrival till 1987 when she was 37 (or officially 39). By that time, in the late 1980s, the Bangladeshi community was firmly established, including many members of her own family, and she felt a greater confidence for having her children with her when she made the journey. She describes her feelings:

> I cried so much. My husband wanted to bring me before my children were born. But I didn't come. Women didn't really do that then. Now every Ali's Mum and Tali's mum comes. Now, people even come over on false grounds. Before there was none of that. I thought, 'Oh my God, where is he going to take me? Will I see anyone there? Will I see anyone again before I die?' And there weren't the children at the time. (Nazifa 2001)

She goes on to describe how deferring her migration journey allowed a social network to build up in the UK for her to enter into and this made adjustment easier:

> At first it was strange. But by the time I came most of my family were here. So it was okay. My sisters and brothers were here. Of four sisters, three of us are in this country. And I have my nieces and nephews and cousins, pretty much all of us. Now our village is empty. (Nazifa 2001)

Studies suggest migration is facilitated when perceived costs of migration are reduced and perceived benefits increase (Fuller, Kamnuansilpa and Lightfoot 1990, Agadjanian 2008). For Nazifa the fact that so many of her family migrated, to the point there were fewer people left in her village, made the decision to migrate much more attractive. She felt reassured that she would not be isolated in the UK and would enter into a family network where she could belong.

Within the 22-year period between marriage and migration Nazifa recalls that her husband returned only three or four times, staying less than a year each time. He had left after nine months of marriage and did not return till seven years later, as he prioritised paying his bills. Most of the literature on family reunifiers views women in terms of their dependent status having little or no agency in the decision to migrate (Ghosh 2009). This is not always the case, Nazifa was demonstrating immense agency over her migration – her husband was keen for her to join him in the UK as he had creditors who needed paying back before he could return to Bangladesh, but she refused to do this. It was not unusual for this generation of migrant women to have such protracted lengths of separation from their husbands. For Nazifa sadly there were unforeseen costs of delaying migration as the time she had with her husband was shortened more so when he passed away just three years after her arrival to the UK and thirteen days after the birth of their last child who also passed away soon after. In a marriage that spanned over two decades, Nazifa spent barely a quarter of that time with her husband.

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Mariam had exerted tremendous agency over her decision to migrate. Two months after marriage her husband had gone missing in Bangladesh. She describes the situation:

> After I got married, two months later my husband went missing – this was during the Independence War. He went to India to get money; when he was there he got captured. At that time they were killing so many people weren't they? So many people from our parts got killed by the military. So many people disappeared. I still had the henna stains [from my wedding] on my hands and my husband had disappeared – isn't that a terrible thing? I fasted for six months for his safe return. I was married off at just 14 – that was the way it was done in those days, girls were married at 12, 13, 14. (Mariam 2011)

He was eventually found a year later having been captured as an alleged freedom fighter. However, for Mariam her troubles were not to end there. Within a week of his return he flew back to the UK and she had no contact from him for the following six years. In this time her father (who had been amongst the very early migrants and had returned to Bangladesh) came back to the UK and discovered that his son-in-law was not what he had hoped, and wanted the marriage dissolved. Yet Mariam remained firm, she says:

> I didn't even get a letter! My husband didn't send me a penny. I made my own passport to come to this country. He didn't arrange that for me. My brother's father-in-law worked at the agency and he got me a passport, he sent all the documents you need to send off to Dhaka [capital of Bangladesh]. I did that about a year after he had left. And then about five or six years later I suddenly got a letter from Dhaka to go and get my entry. When that letter came I didn't tell anyone. I didn't tell my father or my brother. I didn't even tell my sister. I had to steal myself away to go and get it. My brother was determined that I wouldn't go to my husband. He thought my husband wasn't worthy of me, that I was smart and my husband was stupid. When I got the entry letter I went to my sister's village for two nights and her brother-in-law took to me Dhaka for the flight. And then my brother wrote to my mother; he said, 'We shared the same womb and yet she left the country without saying goodbye to me'. But I know that he would have stopped me. He would have prevented me from leaving the country. (Mariam 2011)

Mariam's father who had become aware of her husband's gambling and womanising ways was determined that she not join this man and had procured her another potential husband already. But Mariam refused. Her family continued to encourage a separation even after she had had three children. This demonstrates that issues such as divorce were not as rare or discouraged in the past in Bangladesh as is often believed since Muslim women can initiate divorce more readily than is generally perceived (Miller 2009). It can be easy to view

divorce as a choice that is more readily available to more educated or progressive individuals given that they may be less inclined to be affected by stigma (Lyngstad 2004), but research in Bangladesh has previously found that divorce is more common in rural areas than in urban (Ahmed and Chowdhury 1981). Shaikh (1998) found that divorce rates in rural Bangladesh were declining, thus pointing to higher rates of divorce in the past.

Like Mariam, Fultara also refused to leave her marriage at the behest of her family when her husband's true character came to light, she says:

> My father didn't know the truth. My father didn't know that he was living with an English woman here […] We didn't know people in London who could check him out. My sister was here, and she has married into a very good family. And so my father thought that this proposal was much the same. Afterwards we found out the truth, he [husband] has a very bad character. When my father found out, he wanted to take me back from my parent-in-law's village. This was before I came to London, and my father didn't want me come, and my sister also said, 'Don't send her here – she will never be happy'. But I didn't accept it. I said, 'Well, why did you get me married then?' I thought that when I came over he would change. I thought that he would have to change, and that maybe he had lived in London for too long and that was why he had taken on these ways. They couldn't take me away even by trying. They told me to go back so many times. I said, 'You will take me back only to marry me off again, so why should I come back? What would that do for me? Will I be any happier?' So that's why I didn't go back. I always hoped that he would change, but he never did. (Fultara 2001)

The experiences of Mariam and Fultara demonstrate the nuances of agency and control over their decision to remain in the marriage and to migrate. Their marital status afforded them greater bargaining power which they felt they would lose if they were to leave the marriage. Wives of migrants who remain in the country of origin can often experience an increase in their decision making capacity in the household (Gulati 1993, Hadi 2001). As unmarried women their decisions would be made for them by their fathers. As married women this decision making was largely deferred to their husbands; but in the absence of their husbands they decided for themselves. For both women their exertion of agency to remain in the marriage was partly to resist the perceived inevitable loss of power and agency if they were to leave the marriage and revert back to status of unmarried woman. Having found themselves in marriages where they had no contact with their husbands they effectively did not have a sense of belonging as part of a relationship, but having been given away in marriage they no longer belonged in their natal home and to return to that as a divorced woman would redraw their relationships within the household.

Before Mariam had married, her brother's wife had taken on all the household duties when she married into the home. If Mariam were to return home as a divorced woman, this would reconfigure these relations as she would be reliant on her brother's generosity and have to earn her keep. Mariam says:

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> I refused to go back to stay with my brother and his wife – why should I carry my sister-in-law's water? It would be better for me to carry my mother-in-law's water. At least there is the spiritual benefit of carrying my mother-in-law's water.[1] (Mariam 2011)

For many women in poor countries, especially Muslim women, these norms continue to define household relations. Demytrie (2012) reports increasing levels of divorce in rural Tajikstan where migrant worker husbands fail to return home from Russia and divorce their wives instead – sometimes just over the phone. Some women have to return to their parental homes where they and their children are criticised for being a burden.

Both Mariam and Fultara felt they could change the behaviours of their husbands when they joined them. For Mariam this eventually came to be (although not for long as he suddenly passed away leaving her with five children aged five and below). For Fultara, however, at the time of the first interview in 2001 she had been separated from her husband for a year, during which time he had returned to Bangladesh to remarry without divorcing her. In 2011 she revealed that soon after the first interview, whilst he was in Bangladesh, he had unexpectedly passed away. Fultara had struggled to forge a sense of belonging with her husband, even defying her family to do so. Yet ultimately this belonging was not found in her marriage.

Arrival

The women in this study are part of the early cohort of migrants who migrated at the cusp of the technological revolution. They left Bangladesh without knowing what to expect in the UK. Later migrants had more information through the stories and accounts of those who had made the journey. However, a combination of greater numbers of men having initially migrated and the gendered nature of migrant networks meant that potential male migrants at that time, whilst not as well advised as subsequent generations, still had more access to information from seasoned migrants. By contrast, women's social networks were not only gendered but also limited to family members and thus they did not have access to ready communication with other women who may have migrated and were on return visits to learn about what to expect. In this 'age of migration' (Castles and Miller 2003) migrants are informed about the country of arrival long before they depart. This is not to say that they may not hold unrealistic expectations about the country, but they are far more aware than migrants of previous generations. Aside from the stories of return migrants they have access to global media which expose them to different cultures and practices. As King (2002: 95) comments on

1 To 'carry water' is a metaphor for hard work. It comes from living in villages with no running water, where women would have to make (sometimes multiple) trips to the nearest water source and carry water back in clay or metal vessels.

migrants from countries including Bangladesh, they have 'a kind of anticipatory socialisation into Western European culture by their consumption of global media and images of Western lifestyles'. In 2011, Toslima remarks upon this knowledge of non-migrants:

> Today they experience London without ever leaving Bangladesh. They live in Bangladesh and give us advice on what to do in London. I had no idea what it would be like when I left Bangladesh. (Toslima 2011)

Like Toslima all the women in this study arrived from Bangladesh with no prior expectation or knowledge of British society or roles of women. Arriving to the UK, everything was different – the food, weather, houses, roads and the way people dressed. Most of the respondents had migrated from highly rural areas with limited or no electricity, where cars were rare and homes were one storey buildings made from natural materials such as thatch and mud. Women who arrived as part of the first large wave of female migrants from Bangladesh found themselves confronted with a country where they felt lost and isolated. Shuara says:

> The first six or seven months were very difficult. I felt so bad. I didn't want to see anyone. I didn't even want to see other Bengali people. And then slowly, what could I do? I slowly got used to it. When I first came it was terrible. I didn't like the food, I didn't like anything. To look around there were so many people, but if you really looked there was no one. I had no one here. (Shuara 2001)

Shuara arrived relatively late, in 1991, when the community was already sizeable, yet her comment poignantly illustrates how the size of a community is irrelevant if there are no networks for individuals to enter into. The support of networks cannot be regarded as a fixed resource for new migrants to draw on. Networks are fluid and membership fluctuates. As a migrant community becomes established in the country of arrival, members may have little time or inclination to support new arrivals (Pathirage and Collyer 2011).

Most of the literature on the role of social networks in migration has examined their role in facilitating migration and access to employment in the destination country (e.g. Hamer 2008, Deumert, Inder and Maitra 2005). These areas are more typically associated with male or economic migrants than female family reunification migrants. Networks and the use of them is gendered (Curran and Rivero-Fuentes 2003). Having networks to substitute family and kin from the homeland is far more important for female migrants than male (Silver 2011) and is crucial in helping women adapt. They can provide advice and guidance on how to manage daily activities and avoid or ameliorate the effects of 'culture shock', where individuals experience disorientation and stress in a different cultural environment (Furnham and Bochner 1986). These support networks can provide a supportive kin substitute to women at important times such as during pregnancy (Chakrabarti 2010). Motherhood can be a time of overwhelming change in a

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woman's life, and more so for women who become mothers in a country they have recently arrived to (Tsai, Chen and Huang 2011). Coming to terms with motherhood in a new country can be difficult especially if there are different cultural practices and norms and women do not speak the language of the country (Tummala-Narra 2004).

Shanaz describes the advice she received from her networks after arriving to London:

> My husband's friend's wife helped me. I used to wash clothes with soap, and she told me not to, she showed me washing powder. She taught me how to use a cooker and how to clean the house. In this country you prepare fish with a knife, in Bangladesh we had a *dha* [scythe-like blade set in a wooden block that rests on the floor]. She showed me how to do most things. (Shanaz 2001)

The importance of social networks is crucial for many who arrive and have no permanent place to stay. Nazmin shares her early memories of arrival and moving around London:

> As soon as we came we went to a hotel. We were there for nine months. It was in Enfield. Then they moved us to a temporary house in Wood Green where we stayed for two years. I didn't like it. It wasn't very nice. I got used to it very slowly. It is hard moving from one country to another – if you moved to another country and left all your family behind then you would find it hard too, wouldn't you? That was one thing [moving to a new country] and on top of that we didn't even have our own home. We were sharing in a hotel. It was very hard. (Nazmin 2001)

Some respondents like Shamima had initial support from family who had already migrated:

> We were in Kings Cross with my sister for five weeks and then we moved to Wapping to a cousin's house. I was there for four weeks before the co-operative gave us a temporary house for 13 months, and then the council gave us a house in Bow. My husband was a member of the co-operative. It was a very damp house, but we moved so we could be on our own. (Shamima 2001)

It was not uncommon for women and their families to move around for years between family, hostels and temporary housing until they were housed by the council. The council housing rules at the time meant that males were not able to apply for family housing until their wives and children were in the UK (Glynn 2010). This meant that the majority of those who required social housing ended up living in hotels and temporary accommodation for often lengthy periods of time. Many were keen to take the first housing option offered only to regret it later and be on a waiting list to be re-housed for years, thus still holding an impending

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sense of further movement and mobility before settling. But within these temporary destinations there was still room for attachments to be formed, as Rukshana says:

> Everyone was in the same situation weren't they? Everyone was living in a hotel. That was the way it was in those days. I don't know if everyone arrived and went to a hotel, but that's the way it seemed to me. There were a lot of people at the hotel and people were coming and going and we would get to know them. (Rukshana 2011)

For some respondents the lack of security continued even when they were relatively long established in their homes, with being on waiting lists to be re-housed into more appropriate properties.

Many of those who had wanted to migrate found that it did not quite live up to expectations, as these quotes show:

> I was very young when I left Bangladesh and I was really excited about coming here. I really wanted to come to London, and so I was happy about it. But from the day after I arrived I really began to miss my family. I have no one here. I just wanted to go back. It was really cold, and I just wasn't used to weather like that. The cold really bothered me, and I used to get angry at myself for coming to this cold country. (Toslima 2001)

> It wasn't the way I had expected it to be. In Bangladesh, we can't imagine what it will be like. I didn't like it. I had thought it would be wonderful, but it wasn't. As soon as I left the airport I said to my sister and her husband, 'What is this? I heard London was such a wonderful place – what is this?' They said, 'Wait till you get inside London, then you will see what it is really like'. I had heard so much about London, and it was nothing like what I expected. People always talk about how great London is, but when I came, I realised there was nothing great about it. (Fultara 2001)

Many of the women struggled to form a sense of belonging in the UK and coped with the vast changes they were confronted with in the external environment by attempting to hold on to and recreate the familiar within the internal space of the home. The enormous discrepancy between lifestyles in Bangladesh and the UK may have propelled women to try to hold on to their identity in a more conscious way, as the alternative they were presented with in Britain was so radically different to what they knew. Holding on to the familiar ranged from continuing to dress in the same way despite the fact that saris and salwar kameez are far more suited to warmer climates; attempting to recreate their homeland within their homes through decorative artefacts and pictures; cooking the same foods; and maintaining cultural and religious rituals. By defining their private space in this way they were also asserting and validating their own identity, proving that despite the migration journey and the changes they found themselves surrounded by in the public

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sphere, in their private space they remained unchanged. Sarup (1994: 94) suggests that migrants make their homes into 'private museums' dedicated to the homeland to protect against the changes in their new environment. Attempts to 'sustain their home culture away from home' (Werbner 2002: 6) helps to buffer them from the new world they have entered. Tolia-Kelly (2004a, 2004b) in her work with South Asian women in London argues that migrants form 'new textures of home' in London with materials that are imbued 'with memory of "other" spaces of being' (2004a: 676). She argues that pictures and artefacts from the homeland bring part of the home landscape to Britain. Thus migrants bring a piece of their home with them and these landscapes then 'shift notions of Britishness, and British domestic landscapes' (2004a: 678). The restrictions on the amount of things that people can take when they move, imbibe smaller objects with greater significance, and little trinkets that may have been of little value prior to migration are often proudly displayed in the new home because of their symbolic association with the country of origin (Walsh 2006). Aspects which represent belonging in the home country are used to help forge a sense of belonging in the UK. There is a symmetry in the way trinkets from each land are given elevated status in the other. Migrants on return visits take little souvenir knick-knacks back as gifts; and those who leave the homeland, bring mementos with them to their new country. In both countries these artefacts are proudly displayed in showcases behind glass doors, where they can be gazed at but are always out of reach. Symbolic tokens of the future for those who have not migrated, and of the past for those who do not know when they will return.

Retention of the home culture through immersion in a transplanted version of Bangladeshi culture was more possible for female than male migrants. Bangladeshi men left the home and engaged with wider society through employment. Men often worked long hours leaving women alone or with very young children at home. Women were afraid to leave the house alone as they were not familiar with the area. Gulabi, who arrived in 1980 says:

> I didn't like it. I was stuck in the house all the time. The houses were different, the people were different. In this country you are all on your own in your house. It is closed off. When my husband and his brothers went to work I was just on my own. I couldn't get around on my own because I didn't know how to. I didn't have any relatives around. In those days there were less of our people around as well. (Gulabi 2001)

Women's daily lives and roles were focused around the home, venturing out only when required. In doing so, they were recreating a sense of home through re-enacting practices from one place in another, to maintain a coherent sense of identity that traversed multiple places. Being at home most of the time, women simply replicated the roles they had performed in Bangladesh – although these could never be performed in exactly the same way as they had been in Bangladesh because the structure of the family had changed, the houses were different and

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women had to contend with appliances like cookers. But in general terms, women focused their attentions on raising their family. Aklisun's account of her day is typical of many:

> My whole day goes with my family and prayers. I wake up and pray and then go back to bed. Then I get up to get the children ready for school. I give them breakfast and take them to school. That takes up much of the morning, and then I come back and tidy the house and do the cooking. Then I pray in the afternoon. If I have some time I will also read the Quran. Or someone might come over and we will sit and chat and have tea. And then the children come home from school and I feed them. And the evening goes similar to that. (Aklisun 2001)

Thus, after arrival, most of the women did not experience any vast changes in the routine of their lives. Their circumstances and environment had changed, but their daily routines remained largely familiar reworkings of female roles in Bangladesh which helped retain a sense of belonging to cultural norms and practices in a new space.

Use of Space

For years after arrival, most women's daily routines included taking their children to school, with the routes to the school and local shops becoming well-worn paths. These simple steps are important in establishing a sense of belonging to place. For de Certau (1984) the use of space is bound up with a sense of belonging. He argues that belonging emerges through the repeated use of space, predominantly walking, which helps individuals become part of a place and develop belonging as they begin to incorporate knowledge about the place through habituation and repeated use. Women became used to the legitimate use of this space and created a link between the space and performance of taking their children to school to facilitate a sense of belonging through what Bell (1999) terms 'performativity and belonging'. Taking the children to school meant that women were engaging in space outside of the house. Many spoke about how in Bangladesh this task would be taken on by older children or males in the family. Taking children to school is fully within the remit of female gender roles in the UK, but was a new experience for Bangladeshi migrant women. As well as expanding their spaces of belonging, these actions were transforming the parameters of what constituted women's roles.

The cultural and gendered norms of use of space outside the home in Bangladesh are so different that engaging outside of the home in any other way, such as employment, was an option that few considered. This was expounded by the demands of childcare. In Bangladesh women would have the extended family for support; in London they were effectively alone whilst their husbands worked long hours. Coming from rural areas, women were not familiar with females working outside of the home. Bastia, Piper and Prieto-Carron (2011) argue that the gender

norms of country of origin impact how gender is perceived and practised in the country of arrival. Thus, any discussions about perceived integration or visibility of migrant women (for example, debates about their engagement in employment) ought to take account of the modes of behaviour which are normative for women in their country of origin, rather than focus exclusively on the way gender roles and interactions are conducted in the country of arrival. It is important to recognise that some migrant women do not have paid employment as part of their identity repertoire. Their role within the home offers a familiar identity construct and is sufficient for their sense of identity and belonging. As Mariam says:

> I never wanted to work. All I ever wanted was to bring up my children. (Mariam 2001)

Recognition of the gender norms of Bangladesh allows the application of a wider lens to understand women's engagement (or lack thereof) in spaces and activities outside of the home.

For women who would have liked to have learnt English or worked, it was not simply children's needs that curtailed their choices; but also the transplanted cultural norms that had taken root in the community exerting their influence. Saleha found her choices limited by needs of her in-laws:

> I would have gone to school to learn the language. I went once, but then all the time guests would come around. People were always coming to visit my in-laws. So if someone was coming around, I wouldn't be able to go. I joined the classes, and went as often as I could, but it wasn't that often. I wanted to learn to speak English. But I couldn't learn to do it properly. And my parents-in-law, they are from a different time; they think: 'Why should the daughter-in-law go out? What need is there for her to go out? Daughter-in-laws don't go out' (Saleha 2001)

In 2001 Toslima expressed a sense of envy over the opportunities her daughters had and wished she could share them:

> I want to share in the opportunities that they have. I am jealous of them sometimes. But they do push me to do well. I started to go to English classes but I wasn't very good, so I stopped. But they keep pushing me to go. I can't really commit to classes because I have to be there for my mother. But my daughters want me to study and in the future get a job. (Toslima 2001)

She had been discouraged from learning English by her husband, she says:

> He accused me of only going so that I would be able to get a social worker and take him to court. He would moan about how bad Bengali women had become after coming to this country. (Toslima 2001)

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When interviewed in 2001 she had separated from her husband and had taken language classes and was tentatively embarking on a childcare course with the encouragement of her daughters. Her care duties to her mother restricted her ability to engage as fully as she wanted. When interviewed in 2011, her achievements were highly impressive. She has amassed a slew of qualifications and is now a fully qualified nursery nurse travelling across London to various placements that the agencies she is signed up with send her to. She is hoping to come off all benefits and be fully self-sufficient. She has poured an enormous amount of energy into her education, which she is continuing, currently studying towards a GCSE in English. She is now able to be available for work as her mother has moved in with her brother who arrived from Bangladesh in 2005.

Toslima's situation shows how a number of factors intersect to create her lived experience, and importantly highlights that it is not only family demands of childcare that can limit women's access to opportunities outside of the home, but also care demands for elderly parents. Multigenerational households are far more common amongst Bangladeshi communities, and this has implications for the care of older people which is discussed further in Chapter 6.

When her mother moved in with her brother, Toslima began to engage outside of the home more. She has been able to find a grounded sense of belonging through her education and employment. She describes her activity over the last two years since she qualified:

> I go [out of the borough] for work all the time. I go to Surrey, I go all over London – south, west, north. British Rail, underground, overground, bus. If that is where the work is then that is where I have to go. I have been to Chadwell Heath, Wanstead, Redbridge, Epping. I go by train and then bus. I have been to Beckenham – that is far isn't it? It's in Surrey. I have been to Kent, Finchley – that is in London but its north-west, it's so far. I have to travel so far for work. Yesterday I was in West Croydon. I like working. It makes me feel better. (Toslima 2011)

This is in stark contrast to her experience of work when interviewed in 2001 where she described a situation of coercion and force:

> I used to sew at home. It wasn't an official job. He [husband] forced me to do it. I didn't want to but he would get the jobs and bring them home for me to do. (Toslima 2001)

Toslima's new-found confidence with her education and employment means that she is able to move comfortably around and out of the borough and even out of London. Since her divorce she has been able to pursue life-changing positive opportunities. Toslima asserts a strong sense of identification and belonging to the UK, to the point that she has subverted her position and sees herself as a visitor and tourist in Bangladesh on return visits. She says:

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> I feel this country is my country. I have no other country now. I have been here for 34 years. I don't feel any particular longing for Bangladesh. I don't miss it. When we go we rent a house in Sylhet and stay in hotels when we are in Dhaka or Chittagong. We are tourists in Bangladesh. I have become a tourist there now. I am not that bothered about the village or anything in Bangladesh anymore. (Toslima 2011)

Much of her sense of belonging is derived from a sense of independence which has been supported by access to education and employment in the UK. She had never envisaged this when she arrived. When asked if she had ever thought she would live permanently in the UK, she replied:

> Not at all. But I was very young then, I didn't really understand what was happening and I was fully dependent on my husband. I came as his dependant and I was dependent on him […] Now I know for sure that when die I will go in my coffin to Walthamstow [neighbouring borough where her daughter is buried] […] I don't want my body to be sent to Bangladesh. (Toslima 2011)

However, whilst she expresses a strong sense of belonging to the UK, it is not without contradiction. She talks about her desire to build a house in Bangladesh. When this was queried in relation to her sense of belonging in the UK she explained:

> It's not so much to live; it's just to have a place. If I have a house in Bangladesh I will live on my own and I will just come to this country to visit my children. If I am on my own I don't have to worry about anyone else, or worry about cooking and eating. I will go out in the morning, come back in the evening. In Bangladesh I can keep someone to cook for me if I want. I just want to have a bit of comfort in my life, that's all. Have some enjoyment and not worry. My whole life I have struggled. (Toslima 2011)

Toslima arrived as a family reunifier, but now shares a vision with many of the original male economic migrants where she wants the fruits of her labour to ripen in Bangladesh. Her earnings will allow her a much more comfortable lifestyle in Bangladesh than in the UK. It is interesting that she makes the distinction between a place to live, and a place to stay. She inverts the perspective of a temporary migrant by viewing the UK as her permanent place to live and returning to Bangladesh to stay on a temporary basis.

By going out to work and having aspirations of building a home in Bangladesh, Toslima is in many ways performing the male gender role of provider, leading her to claim, 'I am a woman but I am living my life like a man. I am only a woman by name, my life is like a man's'. This statement points to the need to be aware of the gender roles of the country of origin, as these influence the structure of the family in the country of arrival more than the norms of the destination country. The destabilisation and reinterpretation of gender roles by migration has

been found across groups (Boehm 2008); but as a normative category gender is rarely discussed unless the norms are challenged. The experiences of migrant women illustrate the heterogeneity in cultural interpretations and constructions of normative roles. In less developed countries the role of men as provider and women as nurturer are more ingrained and condition the lives of individuals to a greater extent (Therborn 2004).

Shukla (1997) found that for South Asian immigrant women, being able to maintain traditional gender roles within the family is considered to be indicative of retaining ethnic identity. Thus the disruption of gender identity brings ethnic identification into question as well. Gender roles for Bangladeshi and British women do not transfer neatly on to each other since the cultural constructions of each are so different. Toslima's narrative also reflects the complexity of her 'geographies of belonging' (Blunt 2007, Mee and Wright 2009) where attachments are held across multiple sites, both in the physical places inhabited as well across national borders.

Like Toslima, Asma had begun to pursue education when interviewed in 2001, and in 2011 was working as a full-time childminder and continuing with her studies. She too has a strong sense of belonging in the UK:

> This is my country. I believe that everything of mine is here now. Before I would think that if only I had money I would go back to Bangladesh. But now I feel that this is my country, this is my home. The classes that I have done, the learning that I have done, I developed my sense of belonging from there. I began to think that if I keep going to Bangladesh and taking money from here to buy things there, what is the point? How much time do we spend there? We spend all our time in this country, and my family, my children are here, they don't want to go to Bangladesh. This is my place, this is where I belong. (Asma 2011)

Toslima and Asma feel a strong sense of belonging to the UK that is driven by their engagement in education and employment outside of the home. Other respondents express an equally strong sense of belonging, but much more spatially restricted. Gulabi feels a strong attachment to her area but it is limited to the space around her building. It does not extend beyond Stepney into the next ward of Mile End where she goes swimming, a walking route of about 10 minutes:

> I feel that this area is my country now – not any further – if I go to Mile End to go swimming, it is only when I come to the edge of Mile End [and Stepney] that I feel I am home. Back in my area. (Gulabi 2011)

Gulabi's sense of belonging chimes with de Certeau (1984) who argues that belonging is something which emerges over time out of everyday interaction and use of space, a familiarity and habit. Similarly Fenster (2005) argues belonging emerges slowly. It is constructed through a growing sense of comfort, safety and commitment to one's place, and the repetition of performance of belonging

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through everyday practices. Despite living in Tower Hamlets for over 30 years, Gulabi has only recently started to venture out of her locality and is wary of being too far away.

Spatial subjectivities are never fixed, the experiences of women demonstrate the fluid relationship between people and place and how it continuously constructs and reconstructs belonging and identity (Longhurst 2003). For some respondents it is the ability to engage with employment and education opportunities that helps to consolidate a sense of belonging. For others, who are only just beginning to explore further spaces decades after arrival, it is premised on familiarity of space.

Growth of the Community

The Bangladeshi community is now firmly established in Tower Hamlets. The link between place, performance of belonging and identity in Tower Hamlets can be seen in the activities surrounding the Shaheed Minar (Figure 3.1). The original Shaheed Minar is a monument in Bangladesh which commemorates the martyrs of the language movement in 1952, where the people of East Pakistan resisted the move for Urdu, the official language of West Pakistan, to be enforced across all schools and official institutions as the national language in place of Bengali. The language movement is widely seen as the turning point leading to the Bangladesh War of Independence in 1971, which led to the establishment of Bangladesh as an independent nation state.

In Altab Ali Park[2] in the heart of Tower Hamlets, there is a scaled down replica of the Shaheed Minar. This was built in 1999 through funds collected across local community groups. Until this time, the fall of the martyrs was still recognised in Tower Hamlets with a ceremony of remembrance held every year since the mid-1980s with makeshift versions of the structure being erected each year, and the remembrance ceremony held in various community organisations.

The site of Shaheed Minar in Tower Hamlets continues to be a focal point for the Bangladeshi community and their diasporic identity. In recent years, with the growth of Bangla TV and other British-based satellite channels that cater for the Bangladeshi community, the ceremony at 12.01 am on 21 February has been broadcast live to Bangladeshis across the diaspora.

Events like the remembrance ceremony held at Shaheed Minar in Altab Ali Park, and the Baishaki Mela which celebrates the Bangladeshi New Year, reinforce a sense of collective Bangladeshi belonging and identity in the UK. They have emerged not just from the growth in numbers of Bangladeshis in the UK, but specifically because of the concentration of Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets, where the size of the community demands cultural recognition (e.g. the incorporation

2 The park was renamed in 1998 in remembrance of Altab Ali, a young Bangladeshi man who was the victim of a racially motivated murder in 1978.

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Figure 3.1 Shaheed Minar replica in Tower Hamlets

of salwar kameez into school uniform) and creates opportunities for celebrating cultural heritage (e.g. a designated religious holiday for all pupils and staff at schools in the borough for Eid). For Bangladeshis these practices reinforce a sense of dual belonging to both Bangladesh and Tower Hamlets. They are located in the UK but express their Bangladeshi identity through rituals that reflect their cultural identity and mark them as separate from other South Asians, particularly Pakistanis with whom their people had struggled against to form their own nation to belong to.

Place attachment is an important part of identity and is critical to understanding the lived experiences and identities of migrants. Much of the writing on migrants and place tends to emphasise the concentrated nature of minority communities (Peach 2006b), segregation (Phillips 2005) and ethnic enclaves (Van Liempt 2011). There have been arguments that such patterns of parallel living can affect migrants' integration by limiting their opportunities to interact with the host community (Phillips 2006). But as Toslima shows, interaction and integration is not limited to or by locality and community. The way in which the concentrated nature of minority communities is presented rarely considers the benefits of large communities, where women like Gulabi can begin to explore spaces beyond their usual routes feeling confident in the safety of the area.

Some migrants find a strong ethnic community is integral to their sense of belonging. For Asha, belonging lies in the cultural composition of her space. She describes how, for her, Whitechapel has become a transplanted version of her local region of Sylhet:

> How can I leave this place? How can I leave the taste of Whitechapel behind?
>
> **What is the taste of Whitechapel?**
>
> [Laughs] There is a specific flavour to Whitechapel isn't there? It is very specific to Whitechapel. You go out of your house and you see so many things, you can get anything you want. Our people are everywhere, this is the flavour […] Everyone here is from Beanibazar – we have left one Beanibazar and come to another Beanibazar. (Asha 2011)

Asha's quote resonates with a quote from another respondent, Shuara, who when interviewed in 2001 said, 'You might as well call this Sylhet. This is our own Sylhet'. But it is distinctive in the greater regional specificity of Beanibazaar (see Figure I.2). As the community has grown, it appears that there is residential clustering where people from the same area in Sylhet are living in close proximity in Tower Hamlets. Whitechapel has been noted as being predominantly inhabited by Bangladeshis from Beanibazaar (Alexander, Firoz and Rashid 2010). This regional clustering has been found to be a common feature of chain migration across migrant groups, where people from the same area in the country of origin are seen to replicate these patterns of spatial living in the destination country (Verma 2002, Weinreich 2009).

For Asha, having so many people around her from her own district of Beanibazaar in Sylhet enhances her sense of belonging and reinforces a sense of a place-based identity. Phillips, Davis and Ratcliffe (2007) report similar findings in their study in Leeds where an older Bangladeshi man is quoted as saying, 'I will go on living here as this community is like my village in Bangladesh' (2007: 224). Phillips et al. point out that the security and comfort offered by a sense of 'village' is valued more by older and recent migrants rather than the younger second generation who can find it constraining, highlighting generational differences in experiences of place.

In this study, Asha appears to offer a different version of Les Back's notion of 'neighbourhood nationalism', where he argues that who belongs, and group loyalty, is influenced not by ethnicity but 'determined by length of residence and commitment to the area' (Back 1996: 240). Asha, like other respondents, displays what I term 'residential regionalism' where certain wards or streets, or even buildings, are predominantly occupied by residents who hail primarily from the same region in Bangladesh. Whilst this may be viewed as strategic self-segregation, it is not so simplistic; decisions to remain in areas arise from a combination of affordable housing and accessible resources.

The sense of regional loyalty is evident across other respondents. Shalina contrasts neighbours in her building who are from a different area in Bangladesh to those who are from the same area:

> They are different. They aren't like people from Fenchuganj [area Shalina is from]. There's less love in them, they keep themselves to themselves. We all get

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on together, everybody shares. It's like in Bangladesh; we all live together and share everything. We are just different. (Shalina 2000)

And Parveen only socialises with those who are from the same area in Bangladesh as her husband:

Do you have any friends in this community/neighbourhood?

Just some ladies in this building. I go to their house sometimes. I go to their house because my husband is from the same village as them. (Parveen 2000)

Zadeh and Ahmed (2009) argue that social and historic divisions from country of origin transfer and continue to be played out in the social networks of migrants in the country of arrival. Whilst solidarity can be beneficial, Griffiths (2000) suggests that such group loyalties and perceived area differences from the country of origin can affect access to resources in Britain if those divisions are promoted over a sense of groups working together around their shared goals in the UK.

Thus, evidently the way in which place is experienced affects sense of belonging. Papastergiadis (2000) argues that the relationship between people and place is never neutral or static, but ever-evolving with space transforming the people that inhabit it and being transformed by the people and processes that occur within it. As the Bangladeshi community has grown and become established, its influence on the space has become increasingly apparent. There are now a multitude of Bangladeshi grocery shops, mosques, clothing, and music stores. There are bilingual road signs (Figure 3.2) and many streets and housing estates are named after Bangladeshis, for example, Shah Jalal Housing Estate and Fakhruddin Street. These developments have made life easier for migrants by providing culturally and religiously relevant goods and services. All of this has contributed to making the space less threatening and more accessible for women. Fears of not understanding and not being understood have to some degree been allayed by the knowledge that there are more Bangladeshi people in the community and working in local services. This arms women with the confidence to go out without their husbands knowing that they can carry out interactions in their own language. The growth of the community and the dynamic relationship between the migrants and Tower Hamlets supports May's (2011: 364) argument that 'self and society are mutually constitutive'.

As the community has grown and become established in place, women feel safer. Respondents spoke about how racism was no longer a fear:

At first it was very bad, there were just white people in this area, we were the only Bengalis; they used to give us so much trouble. They would really torture us. We wouldn't dare go out. Before there were problems of racism, but now it's just our people here so racism isn't a problem. (Moymum 2011)

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Figure 3.2 Bilingual Brick Lane street sign

> How can there be any risk of any racism problems in this area? There's only Bengalis here – you need other people to have those sorts of problems. (Rupa 2011)

It is not just the size of the community that contributes to a greater sense of safety and belonging, but the achievements of the second generation. Gulabi says:

> Women are more confident now, and they feel safer to go out. Now our people are MPs and councillors. Before people were scared in this country or scared to go out, and there used to be problems between whites and blacks didn't there? There isn't any of that now. (Gulabi 2011)

In 2010, Rushnara Ali, a second generation Bangladeshi female from Tower Hamlets, became the first person of Bangladeshi origin to be elected as a member of parliament for the Labour party, and was re-elected in 2015. In 2010 Lutfur Rahman was the first directly elected mayor of Tower Hamlets,[3] and in 2015 more than half of the councillors (23 out of 44) in Tower Hamlets were from the Bangladeshi community, of which four were females. This demonstrates the organic relationship between people and place; as the community has settled and

3 Lutfur Rahman was re-elected to the position on Mayor in 2014; however, in April 2015 the Electoral Commission declared this decision void and he was forced to stand down amidst controversy.

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grown, members of the community have become involved in positions where they are able to influence local policy. These policies which are sensitive to the Bangladeshi community subtly change the place; from the redevelopment and rebranding of Brick Lane as 'Bangla Town' in 1999, to halal school meals across the borough. These achievements also highlight the importance a longitudinal exploration of the community where there has been so much change in a relatively short period of time.

The increase particularly in the number of Bangladeshi women in the borough allows women to be less noticeable by being part of a crowd. The greater public visibility of women in the community is in part paradoxically a response to a greater sense of invisibility and anonymity they personally feel due to the larger numbers. It can be argued that this erosion of individual identity into a larger group identity is a form of deindividuation (Zimbardo 1969). Deindividuation theory posits that an individual loses their identity in a crowd and becomes less inhibited. This theory has generally been utilised to explain negative and extreme circumstances of rioting, mob behaviour and war crimes (Lea, Spears and de Groot 2001, Russell 2004, Milillo 2006). However, the basic premise of becoming less inhibited due to the presence of large numbers applies well to the way in which Bangladeshi women have begun to become more visible and active in the community as their numbers have grown.

Whilst the growth of the community may have made the public space less threatening by making women feel less conspicuous, it does not mean that the space is equally accessible by males and females. Certain spaces, almost wholly Bangladeshi in their structure and services, such as Brick Lane, and its transformation into 'Bangla Town', the symbolic heart of the Bangladeshi community in the UK, remained male-dominated areas for a long time. Cultural scripts define who has access to which spaces. During the fieldwork in 2000–2001 areas like Brick Lane were fully accessible to non-Bangladeshi women, whilst being inaccessible to Bangladeshi women. This exemplifies how effects of gender cannot be interpreted without reference to ethnicity as they interact in different ways for women according to ethnicity and age as well as other factors. Despite certain spaces being ostensibly 'public' the gendered and cultural policing of them relegates these spaces to the 'private' sphere of contestation and negotiation (Massey 1994). The interviews in 2011 demonstrate a tangible shift from the attitudes held in 2001. For most of the women, Brick Lane is no longer a place that is out of bounds. A combination of length of residence and size of the community has led to increased confidence on the part of women in venturing out and exploring the neighbourhood they live in and that has become their home.

The shift in the way that women inhabit physical space, and the lessening of restrictions about the places they can go happens at different rates for different women. Fultara ventured out to Brick Lane for the first time since her arrival to the UK, over 30 years ago, on the day of her interview in 2011. When prompted as to why she had gone to Brick Lane for her grocery shopping as opposed to her

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regular stores, she replied that she had been tempted by the special offers on rice that had been advertised on Bangla TV. These adverts not only promise many bargains to be had, but also show images of women shopping in the store. This made Fultara feel comfortable enough to go to the grocers with her daughter. In this way the visual media is helping to forge a sense of a shared community and belonging in much the same way as Anderson (1983) suggests print media helped to create imagined communities.

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Return Visits to Bangladesh

Belonging is fluid, and sites of attachment can change over time. For migrants, the image of their homeland they bring with them often remains unchanged. For them, village life remains as they left it despite the passage of time and changes in their life in the UK. Return visits can expose the changes that have occurred in their absence. Those whose families had migrated to the UK found themselves isolated on return journeys. Shanaz says:

> It has changed. It doesn't feel as comfortable as it used to. Now I miss this country [UK]. The people have changed; lots of people have come to this country now. (Shanaz 2001)

This is in contrast to Nazmin who still has a substantial number of family members in Bangladesh:

> I really like it there. In this country I just sit at home indoors all the time. In Bangladesh I see everyone, all my relatives come to see me, I see them, I go out, walk a lot. In my father's village I have sisters and cousins, lots of family. We have a lot of people there, it's a big village. (Nazmin 2011)

Aside from physical changes in terms of greater development, women poignantly note the changes in the community they have left behind. In their imagination their village remains made up of those who had been there at the time of their departure. Return visits expose the fallacy of this vision:

> Everything had changed. It had been 14 years since I left. There were none of the old people there. Lots of people had died; others had married or moved away. People had moved abroad or come back from abroad. It was very different. (Monwara 2001)

> The people have changed – a lot of the people I had left when I came weren't there anymore. Girls had got married, older people had died. There were new people too, to get used to – new brides, children. (Nazia 2001)

Many of those who had returned were often surprised at difficulties they had in adjusting to life in Bangladesh and found basic household tasks difficult. Moymun says:

> I don't feel comfortable in Bangladesh anymore. I have spent the majority of my life in this country so this is where I feel comfortable. When I go to Bangladesh I can't adjust to living there. Whether it's the weather or the food, or anything, I just can't adjust. When I go to Bangladesh I fall ill. It took me a full month to recover when I came back. (Moymun 2011)

Thus establishing a sense of belonging is a complex process which can take years. Sometimes the recognition of belonging was by default through becoming aware that one no longer fitted in back in the home country where they thought they belonged. As Lutfa says, 'once you live here you can't go back'; echoing Hall's prophetic claim that 'migration is a one way trip. There is no "home" to go back to' (Hall 1987: 44).

Conclusion

Women's narratives expose the complexity and fluidity of spaces of belonging. Many women negotiated a fractured sense of belonging within the intimacy of their marriages conducted across national borders. Whilst marriage almost certainly bound them to migrate, some women were able to assert authority and manage the journey on their own terms, sometimes choosing to migrate years, even decades, after marriage. Their stories offer a different perspective of minority women and arranged marriages, highlighting the agency women have within their marriages. Whilst their marriages were arranged for them, this was indicative of the social norms of the time rather than active patriarchal power and control being exercised over passive victims, as is so often the representation in the literature. Their experiences show how divorce was neither uncommon nor taboo amongst this community and some women actively remained in their marriages despite encouragement from fathers and brothers to divorce. The stories challenge notions that Muslim communities are resistant to and stigmatised by divorce by exposing the heterogeneity of experience.

Early experiences after arriving to the UK reveal encounters with an unexpected world full of differences that could never have been imagined or anticipated living in rural Bangladesh. These accounts highlight the need for socio-historic accounts of migration as the experiences of one cohort will not necessarily map on to those of subsequent arrivals. Early female migrants remained housebound after arrival to the UK, their experience of their new urban landscape too different to the villages they had left behind in Bangladesh. Many women lived in hostels and temporary housing for years before being allocated a home. Within these

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unfamiliar transient spaces women largely recreated traditional roles as best they could till they felt more secure in place to explore beyond the home.

An emotional sense of belonging to their new homeland took time, for some it was their engagement with education and employment that emerged as an important factor in expressing a sense of belonging. Others only realised the depth of their sense of belonging and attachment to Tower Hamlets when they returned to visit Bangladesh. The next chapter explores belonging in a formal sense by discussing the issue of citizenship and the sense of Britishness.

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Chapter 4

Language, Citizenship and Britishness[1]

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Since the start of the millennium citizenship has become a key policy arena for successive Governments. Citizenship theories and policies have been criticised for often disregarding the nuances of roles and positions of women in society, and for the lack of empirical support in citizenship debates (Lister 2007). This chapter addresses these claims by examining two areas of the citizenship debate. It predominantly focuses on the requirement that all immigrants have a basic command of English, which is a key element of citizenship strategy, before going on to explore the fluidity of identity by showing how adoption and assertion of a sense of Britishness emerges over time.

The lack of English speaking skills has been identified as a contributory factor to much of the social unrest amongst different communities in the UK. Policy documents have argued that the ability to speak English allows immigrants to integrate more effectively, creates cohesive communities and reduces segregation. However, whilst the ability to speak English may indeed enhance elements of women's lives and allow them to engage more actively in the community, there may be an over-emphasis on its role in reducing segregation. Learning English is not simply a matter of personal choice; there are multiple cultural and gendered barriers to learning which can interact to limit individual's options. The longitudinal approach of this work illustrates how these elements are not fixed – how women engage with and negotiate factors that facilitate or impede access to resources such as language classes changes over time. The interviews 10 years apart capture the importance of time in the development of a British sense of identity, which emerges over the lifecourse and is imbued with multiple meanings across individuals. This chapter begins by presenting some of the background to the rise in salience of the dyad of language and citizenship.

Language and Citizenship Policies

The Home Office paper 'The Path to Citizenship' (2008) outlined the largest overhaul of the citizenship process in decades. The paper emerged as part of an ongoing response to a number of inter-related policy themes, including

1 Part of this chapter was originally published in 2008. See Ahmed, N. (2008) Language, Gender and Citizenship: Obstacles in the Path to Learning English for Bangladeshi Women in London's East End, *Sociological Research Online*, 13, 5, Available at: http://www.socresonline.org.uk/13/5/12.html [accessed 01/06/15].

immigration, asylum, community cohesion and counter terrorism, and as a culmination of policy papers from the start of the millennium. For the Labour government the issue of citizenship took precedence following the outbreak of violent clashes between Asian and white youths in four northern cities in England in the summer of 2001. An inquiry launched to investigate the reasons for the riots and present solutions to prevent such future conflicts highlighted segregation as a major factor in the dissent leading to the riots and suggested the need for a 'greater sense of citizenship' to encourage more cohesive communities (Community Cohesion 2001: 11).

The increased focus on cohesion and shared values as key to citizenship led to growing disavowal of multicultural policy (McGhee 2005) with accusations that multiculturalism, with its ethos of promoting and celebrating difference, rather than pursuing a core set of shared values, was a significant contributor to the problem of segregation (Phillips 2005); with some arguing that multicultural policies are highly gendered and can propagate cultural stereotypes of women (Dustin and Phillips 2008).

This gendering of policy continues with the raft of policy around citizenship. Whilst much of the policy seems ostensibly geared towards managing the male 'other', be that in the form of the stereotypically envisaged illegal immigrant, the problematic rioter, or the potential terrorist, the policies are highly pertinent to the position of minority women in society. Gedalof (2007) demonstrates how the female 'other' is not immediately visible in reports such as 'Secure Borders' (2002) but rather emerges from accumulated references made to women within and across Government reports. She argues that the documents problematise and construct migrant women as victims of 'linguistic isolation and limited awareness of cultural difference', battling with, 'backward practices of arranged marriage and gender subordination' (Gedalof 2007: 90). The representation of Asian cultures in this way does not allow for any heterogeneity within the communities based on class, gender, generation etc., instead presenting minority cultures as fixed and holding essential traits based on specific cultural markers including dress, religion, culture and language (Castles and Davidson 2000).

English proficiency quickly became the cornerstone of citizenship policy (e.g. Secure Borders 2002, Strength in Diversity 2004, Our Shared Future 2007), and the inability to speak English became grounds for pathologising communities as backward and incompatible with progressive western values and modernity (Alexander 2004). Language proficiency became a way of asserting who belongs and who does not. The focus on language clearly is more relevant to Asian women. Within Asian communities, first generation Pakistani and Bangladeshi female migrants have very low levels of English proficiency (Dale et al. 2002). Many of the women in this study have little or no formal education and lack literacy in their own language. In addition, upon arrival to the UK a combination of community structure, family obligations and cultural milieu discouraged or prevented women from venturing out beyond their immediate neighbourhoods and networks, so they did not have the opportunities to pick up language skills in the same way as men (Ahmed 2005a).

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Lack of English language skills have been highlighted as problematic in all aspects of life; low educational achievements of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi community have been linked to a lack of English spoken at home (Henry 2007). However, Cassen and Kingdon (2007) have shown that any comparative disadvantage that children brought up in a non-English speaking household face is relatively short-lived; and any difference is made up by secondary school. Thus low achievement cannot be simply attributed to this one factor. In their study, Cassen and Kingdon (2007) found minority ethnic children were more likely to attend poorly performing schools which had a negative impact on their learning. Studies which link mother tongue being spoken at home and lower achievement at school ignore the fact that the majority of these communities live in deprived areas with numerous structural problems including poor housing, crime and low employment opportunities. The impact that these factors may have on ability to study and motivation levels is rarely considered; they not only affect the first generation of immigrants but also limit the life chances of subsequent generations by preventing upward mobility, because such areas attract few and low quality options for work and training.

Yuval-Davis, Anthias and Kofman (2005) argue the lack of English proficiency amongst the mothers and grandmothers of the northern rioters posited them as the root cause of the riots. Blackledge (2004: 68) discusses the 'symbolic association' between Asian languages and the discourse around the riots; it might have been young men who were out causing the disturbance, but the underlying explanation for their behaviour could be found at home. This firmly locates responsibility for the riots at the heart of the community, cutting across gender and generation, rather than any reflection on structural factors of disadvantage that might have been relevant.

Language serves both a symbolic and functional role and has been gaining attention in studies of national identity (Joseph 2004). Language proficiency is increasingly being used to regulate the rights conferred by citizenship, and exclude those who are found wanting. Stricter language requirements make accessing citizenship more difficult for immigrants (Lægaard 2010); and impact family migrants most (Goodman 2011, Byrne 2012). Lack of English is seen as symbolic of backwardness, whilst the acquisition of English speaking skills is seen to demonstrate the erosion of backward traditions and cultures and symbolise a move towards progression and modernity (Alexander, Edwards and Temple 2007).

In 2001 Ann Cryer, member of parliament for Keighley, a northern town in England with a significant Asian population, demonstrated the potency of the symbolic association of minority language to tradition when she announced that much of the deprivation within Asian communities is due to low levels of English language skills. She argued low levels of spoken English primarily arise from the continued practice of marriages being arranged in the country of origin. She suggested that the lack of English proficiency among new arrivals leads to underachievement in children and thereby migrants are responsible for 'importing poverty' (Stokes 2001). Again the cultural practices of minority groups are heralded as far more significant in explaining their disadvantage than issues of deprived neighbourhoods and lack of opportunities.

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Ms Cryer's comments were denounced by many commentators from within the Asian communities, and bodies such as the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE). Shahid Malik, a member of the CRE and member of the Labour party National Executive Committee, described Ms Cryer's sentiments as 'sinister' and her opinion tantamount to the 'work of the extreme right wing' (BBC 2001). However, within the year David Blunkett, the then Home Secretary, unveiled plans in the 'Secure Borders, Safe Haven' report (Secure Borders 2002) for compulsory English tests for immigrants before they would be granted citizenship. This was further shored up by recommendations in 'The Path to Citizenship' report (Path to Citizenship 2008) suggesting all potential immigrants pass an English test even before they enter the country. Since October 2013, all migrants have been required to demonstrate their knowledge of language and life in the UK (KoLL) to qualify for citizenship. This is a two part requirement with a test on 'life in the UK' and a qualification on spoken and listening language in English.

The significance attached to the need for immigrants to learn English has been attacked by sections of minority communities as an attempt to enforce assimilation on the part of new and established immigrants. Critics argue the government is attempting to encroach upon private spaces and dictate practices within the home. Those approached to comment on Mr Blunkett's ideas were invariably men from the community. Shahid Malik argued that David Blunkett was 'targeting the Asian community' and would soon be telling them 'what they can eat'. Ahmed Versi, editor of *The Muslim News*, called the suggestions 'insulting' and defended the right to speak a mother tongue at home (Akbar 2002). The Labour MP Keith Vaz denounced Mr Blunkett's remarks as 'silly' and as apparently having 'no basis in reality' (BBC 2002). The important point here is that nowhere in the media were the views of women from the communities solicited to ask how they may feel about learning to speak English. This reinforces cultural stereotypes of Asian women as not being able to speak out for themselves and being given voice either by men in the community, or progressive white, non-Muslim women like Anne Cryer.

There has been a meteoric rise in the importance attached to English language proficiency as the most important element of integration. The 'Community Cohesion Report' (2001), the first of the wave of reports seeking to understand and redress segregation, describes consulting with 62 different organisations and their representatives. Of all those spoken to, only '[o]ne respondent registered support for the idea of applicants for British citizenship being required to achieve a minimum standard of spoken and written English before British nationality being granted' (Community Cohesion 2001: 61). From such relatively humble beginnings this minimum standard is now the benchmark for all would-be and established immigrants to achieve citizenship.

Despite the overbearing emphasis on English proficiency and the change in tone from encouragement to enforcement of recent policies, it is worth considering whether the emphasis on language learning should be welcomed for the range of opportunities it opens up for civic participation. The issue is not

whether learning English is beneficial to immigrants, but what barriers there may be preventing immigrants (especially women) from learning English and how these can be best redressed.

Desire to Speak English

All of the women in this study want to be able to speak English. For most, this is not to be able to gain employment or pursue education but just to get by on a day-to-day basis. Fatema has two young children, and cares for her husband who has mental health problems. She says:

> I just want to learn to talk properly, so that I can go to the school with my children and talk to the teachers and understand what they say. Or for myself going shopping or to the hospital with my husband. (Fatema 2000)

Not being able to understand English is frustrating for her:

> If I get a letter and I don't understand it, even after reading I don't understand it. So where do I go with that? That makes me feel really bad; I just think to myself, 'What have I been doing? I have been here this long and I don't even know the language', then I have to go to someone else for help. (Fatema 2000)

Fatema recognises that there are opportunities available, but taking care of her husband has been her main priority, nonetheless she feels bad about not having progressed since her arrival:

> I feel that there are lots of things that I could have learnt from being in this country that I haven't. I could have done courses and learnt things, there are so many things that one can learn and know, but I'm still where I was when I came here. And now, I just feel bad about it. (Fatema 2000)

The desire to learn English is prevalent amongst the whole group, mainly for a greater sense of independence and agency, to not only integrate but also tackle issues of inequality, Fahima is frustrated at her housing:

> These children need their own rooms. They shouldn't be sleeping together, boys and girls. If I could speak English then I would ask them, 'You sleep children one to a room. Would you put a 16-year-old girl and a 17-year-old boy in the same room, in the same bed? But you let Bengalis sleep like that'. (Fahima 2001)

The lack of ability to be able to voice one's frustrations and pursue the interests of their family was something many commented upon in 2001. In 2011, many

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respondents still express frustration at their lack of ability to speak English. As Leema and Rupa say:

> If you can't talk, you can't go anywhere. I wanted to go to the optician, there was a Bengali optician here but he has closed his shop so I don't know what to do – do I go to the English one – but I don't know how to speak English. It is such a problem isn't it? You get so stuck. If I could speak English then I wouldn't be stuck like this. (Leema 2011)

> When my son was young, the people from social services said that if I could just find one hour of time they would give me a teacher for free. But I just couldn't find the time. And now, today I am crying because of it. Why did I make such a mistake? Why did I make such a mistake? Today I have to take one of my children with me when I go to the hospital, or to the dentist. If I had just listened to them at that time then today I wouldn't have to ask my children. Didn't I make a big mistake by not learning – such a mistake. (Rupa 2011)

The relationship between host country language acquisition and place has been explored by Yagmur and van de Vijver (2012) who argue that one's native language is more likely to be retained in areas with large ethnic groups residing in concentrated areas, and where the language is held in high esteem. The large Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets does not create many opportunities for women to speak English. As discussed in Chapter 3, all Bangladeshis are aware of the struggle to maintain Bengali as the official language of Bangladesh and hold it in high regard, as the replica of the Shaheed Minar monument in Tower Hamlets, celebrating the language movement, testifies (Alexander 2012).

Work

'The Path to Citizenship' (2008) report discusses active citizenship – a level of demonstrable contribution to one's community which can lead to a shorter waiting period before one is eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain or full citizenship. Active citizenship pertains mainly to voluntary work in the community. This does not accommodate the efforts of women in raising families. Most of the women in this study have large families and their priority has always been to their family first and foremost. Beyond this, most view their chances of employment as being limited by their spoken English.

In the interviews in 2001 the desire for work was especially strong amongst those separated and widowed. Being single with a young family to raise women struggled financially; however, they lacked the resources and networks that can identify employment opportunities within the community. At the time of interview in 2001, Rukshana was 50 years old and suffering with ill health which affects her mobility. This in turn is hampered by the fact that she lives in a high rise block

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with no lifts. She has been in London since 1986. Unexpectedly, her husband passed away a year after she arrived leaving Rukshana essentially stranded and alone. Her eldest two children are married and live away, and her youngest is rarely at home. Her health and resulting lack of mobility add to her isolation. She has never worked, and when asked whether she would like to she says:

> I would like a job if I could get one. The DSS [Department of Social Security, now the Department of Work and Pensions] are chasing me to get into work. For the last two years they have been telling me to work. Since I stopped getting Child Benefit for my son they have told me to work. That's not a problem; I have to live by the rules of this country. I have said, 'Fine, give me a job – I have to get by, I need to live'. But how can I work? I am so ill I can't even walk. But I do want to work; I will do whatever I can. But I can't speak the language, I have never worked, where would I get a job? Who do I ask? But I have gone and looked for a job. I have asked in sari shops but they laugh at me. They say, 'We have young girls asking for jobs why should we give it to an old person like you?' If no one will give me a job what can I do? But I am looking the only way I know how; I ask people wherever I can. I would rather stand on my own two feet than bother the DSS. But what can I do if no one will give me a job? (Rukshana 2001)

Rukshana's frustration is clear. She has made attempts using her limited resources to try and procure employment. Her benefits are at risk of being stopped if she does not enter into some form of work. She complies with all the requirements and demands put upon her without fully understanding why she is being asked to do certain things. She explains:

> Tomorrow I have to go to [the college] again. They have been sending me there for the last few weeks. I don't know why they send me there. They don't tell me why I am there. And getting there and back is so difficult for me. But what can I do? I have to go. They take me to an office – I think it says 'Working Link' on the sign. But only I know my pain. Sometimes the pain gets so bad I think that I will stop breathing. Getting to [the college] is so hard – I walk to [the tube] station and get a train to Mile End, then I go to B___ Road and catch a bus to Limehouse. Then I have to change buses and get another bus to [the college]. (Rukshana 2001)

Ideally English classes would not only teach the language but also be a stepping stone to other resources and access to information on employment. In Rukshana's case, her lack of English is no deterrent to the push for her to get into employment, but there is no support for her to follow a logical route to employment. Her age and health are against her – certainly when it comes to the local Bangladeshi employers, and she lacks the skills and confidence to approach any other type of employer.

Policies have shifted to emphasise the obligations of would-be citizens more than their rights (Lister 1998), and 'The Path to Citizenship' report discusses immigrants' need to 'earn the right to citizenship' (2008: 12). Rukshana, like so many women, wishes to take up those obligations but lacks the means to do so. The main problem is of course her lack of English; this is compounded by her ill health, which is something she is unable to communicate to the welfare benefits services. During the interview she showed me her leg where there were series of very painful looking large sores/boils on her leg, and says:

> I have this condition on my leg. I don't know what it is called. The doctors can't even tell me. They don't tell me anything. And I have pains in my body all the time, especially my knee and stomach. Sometimes it gets very bad. The doctors don't tell me anything – that is what frustrates me so much. Whatever my illness is it has only happened because Allah has willed it, but shouldn't they tell me what it is? I don't go to the doctor for my own pleasure; I go for the pain I am getting. It is frustrating for me and it must be frustrating for them. What can I do? Whenever I go, all they do is give me paracetamols – if they give me anything at all. Now I don't go very often. (Rukshana 2001)

She describes how the treatment she did get was unsuitable:

> The doctor did send me to a hospital to have my leg treated. But the hospital said that they only treat people over 60 and I am not 60 yet. So they have told me to go to another hospital. They said they would write to the doctor and the doctor will write to the other hospital and then I will get an appointment there. I am still waiting. They won't give me any medication for it. I can't even walk anymore. I don't know what it is or how I got it. (Rukshana 2001)

Thus Rukshana's inability to speak English impacts on almost every aspect of her life, from leaving her isolated, to preventing her from accessing her rightful health and social services, to being unable to participate in the labour market. As with so many women in this study, Rukshana is prepared to work, but does not know how to realise this ambition.

When re-interviewed in 2011, Rukshana's situation had not changed at all. She is still receiving Jobseekers Allowance and having to actively search for work to maintain this. She continues to struggle to walk with her still undiagnosed leg condition. She says:

> I worry about how I can work and who will give me work. If someone would just give me a job I would do it. Whether I am any good or not I will try. But no one will give me a job, they look at me and they won't give me a job. I don't even know how to look for work. I can't speak English and how many Bengali people are there who will give you a job? But what can I do if the DSS won't understand this? They are killing me. But I don't know what to do. I am trying.

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> I am trying to learn, to find a job. I got a whole stack of papers from the library yesterday. But I don't know how to find a job in the paper. For one thing, I can't read! If I could read then I would understand. From what I can understand I can see that I am not suitable for the job. If I am not suitable then what is the point of me wanting that job and trying, they won't give it to me. But the DSS won't understand. What can I do? This is the situation I am in. (Rukshana 2011)

Her health problems have exacerbated:

> My health is so poor. I can't stand, I can't sit and they are chasing me to get work. Even if they gave me a job I am hardly fit to do any work am I? It takes me five minutes to come downstairs. If I could get a job and it was something I could do with my health I would do it. But no one will give me a job – what can I do? Every day I go out to look for a job. (Rukshana 2011)

Rukshana is still being chased for employment despite now being 60 years old. When at the start of the interview I clarified her age she was surprised:

> No I am not 60, if I was 60 they wouldn't be telling me to work. There must still be some time for me to be 60 […] Then why aren't I getting my pension? And forget pension, why they are constantly chasing me about work? (Rukshana 2011)

In accordance with the revised pension age for women, Rukshana at the time of interview in July 2011 was still a year away from being eligible for her state pension (Pensions Act 2011). Thus for Rukshana her ill health, lack of English proficiency, age and ethnicity are interacting to limit her access to the labour market.

Whilst many women would have been unable to work, or would have actively chosen not to work when their children were still young, many would have liked to have explored this option once their children were older and out of school. For this generation of women, many had started their families young and therefore have a substantial number of working years available to them if they have the opportunity to work. There appears to be a huge potential amongst migrant women to be able to participate in the labour market if the support and opportunities are there. Being engaged in the labour market, either in a paid or voluntary capacity can help encourage English language skills and facilitate a sense of citizenship and belonging by engaging outside of the home in the wider British society.

Family Responsibilities

Policies have changed from recommending that immigrants learn English upon arrival and before being granted citizenship, to a requirement from 2010 that those wishing to join a spouse must already have a basic command of English before entering the UK (UKBA 2011: 8). As well as affecting new migrants, these policies

affect older migrants who have not yet applied for citizenship. The respondents in this study have limited or no education and thus low or no literacy in Bengali. To require them to be able to demonstrate anything more than a rudimentary grasp of English is a considerable expectation. No doubt speaking English is a valuable asset, but attention needs to be paid to women's own capabilities as well as other obligations which may obstruct their learning.

Whilst women recognise the importance of being able to speak English the opportunity to learn often came after their family responsibilities no longer monopolised all of their time. Ruji says:

> I have been thinking a lot recently – I don't know a lot of English. I had one child after another when I came to this country and so I couldn't go to classes. Now there are classes all around me, I could go to these classes and that would improve my life. For example, if someone came to my house to check the electric or the gas, I couldn't really understand what they were saying. And what if they were lying – and just wanted to come in to steal something. I have to be able to understand what they say. I am happy that I can learn from my own children. The first couple of times I tried they laughed at me because I didn't get the sentence right. But then they realised that I was getting it wrong because I didn't know the right way of saying it and they would help me, and correct it for me. Now they help me all the time when I try to talk to them in English. (Ruji 2001)

Ruji is getting support and encouragement from her children in learning English. They are able to correct her and aid her learning in a much more active way than if she only had the support of attending a class. For women like Ruji, English classes only become an option as their children grew older, otherwise they cannot always meet the commitment needed to subscribe to a course. Some women such as Maya were encouraged to go to classes from an early stage of their arrival; however, their family obligations prevented them from doing so. Maya started to attend English classes once her children had grown older, but soon took on the childcare of her grandchildren which has again restricted her ability to continue with the classes. She says:

> I didn't do anything when I first arrived. My husband told me to go, but I didn't want to because of the children. My youngest was 3 years when we came. My husband told me to go so that I could learn some English, but I didn't want to, I wanted to raise them. Then when they grew up and were educated they made me go. They told me to go, so that I would be able to go to the doctor by myself, so I went for a while after that. I would still like to go, but because I am looking after my grandchildren I can't. I can't take them with me. (Maya 2000)

Maya is providing an unrecognised service to her family and the community. By looking after her grandchildren, her children are able to participate in fulltime employment. Her son is a head teacher of a school and his wife is

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also in fulltime employment; as is her daughter. If she was not able or willing to take on childcare duties for her children, they might have to resort to limiting their work in order to raise their families. This type of unpaid work that women engage in through caring for grandchildren enables other members of their immediate networks to fully participate in active citizenship and the labour market (Hank and Buber 2009), but is not always readily recognised (Igel and Syzdlik 2011). It can be argued that this family support work, making possible the active contribution to society made by Maya's children, is actually constitutive of citizenship. Current recommendations and policies make no mention of this.

For many Bangladeshi women, the only real time they can afford to learn English is when their family duties are absolved. This is apparent in the type of participants that attend English language classes in Tower Hamlets. Seema, a 23-year-old respondent in one of the young women's focus groups held in 2000, taught English. She describes her classes:

> I teach English as a second language and the majority of the students in my class, like 90 per cent of them, are Bangladeshis – and they're all older women. One of the things is that most of them have been in this country like 15 years, 20 years, but they don't know English. One of the reasons that they're trying to learn English now is that they've realised that now their children have grown up, they've got to come out of the house in terms of go shopping, take their children to school. (Seema 2000)

Only as children grow older and their own demands of education and employment prevent them from assisting their mothers with appointments and shopping, do women start to realise just how important it is for them to be able to manage daily tasks on their own. But even when they take the step to start learning English, their efforts can be thwarted by a lack of opportunities to practise what they learn in the classroom in an applied natural setting. As Fultara comments, in an area with such a concentrated Bangladeshi community, it is hard to attempt to speak English even if she wants to, as there is simply no need:

> In this area everything is Bengali, everyone is Bengali. You can't speak English anywhere, there aren't any shops or places where you could try and speak. Here they will just laugh at me because I can't speak it properly and I could get away with speaking Bengali. Otherwise I would have tried to practise speaking. (Fultara 2001)

Thus simply encouraging, or even coercing, individuals to learn English is not enough and cannot alone combat the issue of segregation. For those living in segregated communities, the ability to speak English may afford them little advantage, or indeed, as in the case of Fultara, lead to them being the object of mirth. Many women spoke about the lack of opportunity to practise what

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they were learning in a formal environment, in a more natural setting. Where individuals have no access to, or social relations with English speakers their learning and retention of information is compromised. Living in Tower Hamlets limits the opportunities women have to speak English and interact with the wider non-Bangladeshi community. This indicates the importance of considering the importance of place in discussions of citizenship. The sense of belonging and active citizenship that the respondents in this study display is circumscribed by the place of Tower Hamlets.

The requirement that even established migrants demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in English before being granted citizenship (Kiwan 2011) can be daunting for older women. Mariam says:

> How can I get my head around [learning English]? I don't have the ability to learn that. You wait till you get to my age and you have lived through the things I have – you see if you can just go and learn a language then. (Mariam 2011)

Gulabi has been living in the UK since 1980, and had lived here for more than 20 years before applying for citizenship at the behest of her son. She applied in 2004, just before the citizenship ceremonies were introduced. She says:

> I even signed the declaration. I said that I would live by the Queen's law. I stood witness to that – well I did it through the solicitor – I didn't do it myself. I did it before they bought all these tests and things in. I was saved. My older son made me. Thank goodness we did, otherwise there is no way I could have done all the things you need to do now. I can't read or write. I have a cousin-sister and cousin's wife who have done it; they had to run around so much. They have said that I am lucky because I am uneducated I wouldn't have managed it. (Gulabi 2011)

Most of the women in this study had at best a very limited education in Bangladesh. The whole concept of learning is new to them, especially learning a new language and being able to demonstrate an understanding of a British culture that, living in Tower Hamlets, they have little or no experience of. De Leeuw and van Wichelen (2012) argue that citizenship tests across Europe show scant regard for cultural and religious difference, instead propagating hegemonic western values, and ignoring the multi-layered construction and experience of citizenship (Yuval-Davis 2007).

Taking a wider and more longitudinal lens on language acquisition highlights how the home can be a learning environment; studies have found that older migrant women sometimes engage in learning English with their grandchildren (Gregory et al. 2007). Women I spoke to shared stories about how their grandchildren would bring home books from school that are designed to encourage young children to read, but the children see the potential in their application in helping their grandmothers to read. The role of the family over time in helping migrants learn English needs to be explored more fully.

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Isolation and Integration

Learning to speak English and gaining a knowledge of 'British life' have been presented as crucial to enable new migrants to settle and integrate successfully and have a sense of civic identity (Blackledge 2004). The Home Office argues that without these key skills, immigrants can remain vulnerable and unable to take a fully active role in society (Secure Borders 2002: 32). Active citizens make for active communities that will engage with each other and this will minimise the likelihood of segregation.

Recommendations repeatedly assert that the ability to speak English will allow and encourage communication between non-English speaking migrants and the host population. In this study, all the women recognise the difficulties and barriers that not speaking English poses. At the most basic level it can lead to fear and isolation. Women found their activities limited by not being able to speak English; they lack confidence in venturing too far from home. Dina describes how initially after migration she felt unable to take her children out of the home. She says:

> It was difficult for me. I couldn't speak the language so I couldn't go out. I was scared going out with my children. What if something happened and we got lost, how would we get back? (Dina 2001)

This enforced confinement would have repercussions on the children too as their movements outside of the home were restricted because of their mother's fears. The fear aroused from not speaking English was present within the seemingly safe confines of the home too. Rupa describes her early experiences of life in the UK, as well as contending with a whole new way of living, not being able to speak or understand English exacerbated her sense of confusion. She recalls her early experiences:

> At first it was a bit scary. Things like electricity – I didn't understand. There were so many new things. I was scared of being so alone; my husband wasn't there all the time. It was just me and the young children. I was worried because I didn't know how I would get on. I couldn't speak English; I didn't know how I would manage. If an English person came to the door what would I say? What if they came in and killed me? (Rupa 2001)

Rupa has a very real fear of being killed by a stranger. Thus an innocuous caller would be viewed with trepidation and fear. In 2011, whilst Rupa feels much safer in her environment, much of this is due to the growth of the community. She still has not grasped any English beyond being able recognise who letters are addressed to when they arrive, and continues to rely on her children to act as interpreters. Their role as interpreters has somewhat eased in recent years with newer social workers who are involved in the care of Rupa's grandson being Bangladeshi and speaking Sylheti.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the growth of the community in Tower Hamlets has led to a greater sense of safety in venturing outside as it is very likely respondents can find someone who speaks Bengali, should a need arise. As the community has become established, the second generation is becoming more educated and taking jobs within the community. Having Bangladeshi housing officers and Bangladeshi social workers means that women do not have to rely on English language skills or their children in order to engage with and access services.

Amongst the respondents there is a widespread recognition of the need and importance of not only being able to speak English, but also for integration, which is not wholly dependent on English speaking. This runs contrary to assumptions that immigrants choose not to integrate, and wish to hold on to and preserve their own culture in a rigid and untainted form. Most respondents see the value and need for a degree of integration and recognise that this does not necessarily mean a loss of one's own culture. Nazmin says:

> In this country I can't bring up [my daughters] exactly the same way as I grew up. There is a different culture here, and they are living in that culture. They need to have both cultures inside them. It is not good for them to become totally English, but then they can't get on in this country if they become totally Bengali. Look at me – what can I do? Nothing. Because I don't understand this culture, I can't speak the language. If my daughters were to become like me then they wouldn't be able to do anything with their life. That is why they need both cultures. (Nazmin 2001)

Nazmin is clearly aware of the limitations that not speaking English or understanding and participating in the British culture has had on her life. She does not want this for her children, but nor does she want them to lose touch with their Bengali roots, for her the best outcome is a balance of the two cultures.

The significance attached to speaking English in policies is warranted, but it is not a simple solution to solve issues of segregation and unrest. A level of tentative integration can and does occur without a common language. Shuara claims she has no friends other than Bangladeshis; however she gets on well with her neighbours. She says:

> I can't speak any other language so how would I make friends. They [neighbours] are nice to me and say 'hello' and other things, but I don't understand what they are saying. They do try and talk, but I don't understand what they are saying. The English and Jamaicans in this area are very nice. There is a Jamaican woman downstairs and she adores my grandson, she always stops us to talk to him. I don't have a clue what she is saying! (Shuara 2001)

Whilst the ability to speak English might encourage friendships, Shuara's experience shows that good relations are formed and continue to exist in the absence of a shared language. Integration requires more than simply speaking

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English. As Nagel and Staeheli (2008: 416) argue, integration is not about 'where immigrants and minorities live, but how they understand their membership in the places where they live, work and raise families'. These findings were reaffirmed in 2011 where respondents spoke about having good relations with their non-Bangladeshi neighbours and exchanging basic pleasantries. These nuanced inter-relationships are not discussed in public debates on integration.

Explanations for segregated communities need to move beyond accusations of self-segregation based on supposed inferior values and lifestyles characteristic of minorities to the recognition of the role of disadvantage or exclusionary policies (Smith 1993; Kundnani 2001). The assumption that the acquisition of English language skills will remedy problems such as segregation, social unrest and create cohesive communities is misguided. At best, it shows a gross misunderstanding of the issues that underlie the tensions within and between communities; and at worst, it shows a deliberate misrecognition of issues, and creation of policies which perpetuate racialised constructions of minority groups casting them as (sometimes deliberate) creators of their own misfortune. While speaking English can absolutely aid integration, in and of itself it will not eradicate segregation. Framing structural inequalities such as disparities in employment, education and housing sectors within such narrow parameters as the ability to speak English ignores the wider social and policy issues at play. The overemphasis on English proficiency serves to pathologise minority communities as inherently responsible for their disadvantaged circumstances. The opportunities of employment and upward mobility that learning English promises Bangladeshi women are limited by a range of other structural factors, such as living in deprived areas, racism, poor schools, limited employment opportunities, gender inequalities and family responsibilities, which interact in different ways at different times and cannot be resolved through speaking English alone. Learning English no doubt enhances women's lives and can open up a myriad of choices. But it is a proposal that will not be as easy to deliver upon as policy makers may hope. Not all immigrants are able to access the resources available to them. The barriers to women learning English are multiple. Some of these are considered next.

Barriers to Learning

Whilst the main barrier to taking up English classes after arrival to the UK may have been the needs of children, it was not the only one. Some women in this study only have access to mixed classes which makes them feel uncomfortable. Learning a new language can lead to awkwardness and embarrassment at getting things wrong. This is heightened when compounded by being placed within a culturally inappropriate setting. Amongst older generations it is not be the norm for a Bangladeshi woman to mix with unknown men, hence mixed classes are culturally incongruent and unlikely to be taken up.

As well as structural barriers to learning (such as the location and mode of delivery of classes) for some women there are other barriers which have to be negotiated within the parameters of cultural and patriarchal structures. Fultara's husband prevented her from attending classes as he did not see a need for her to learn; separated from him she rues the lost opportunity, she says:

> My husband wouldn't let me go to classes; he would tell me off and say, 'Why do you want to do that? What are you going to do with English?' But what could I do with it now? I couldn't get a job now, could I? Now there are so many young girls looking for jobs why would they want to give me a job? (Fultara 2001)

Barriers imposed on women's learning are partly due to fears of what might come from learning English; Alexander, Edwards and Temple (2007) argue that in acquiring a language one inevitably acquires a culture. Whilst culture is more than just language, learning a new language will expose individuals to a wider range of people and ideas. Husbands may feel the family is being destabilised and worry about their authority being eroded by the choices that women make (Siraj 2010). Some respondent's spoke about their husband's concerns regarding the independence that this might afford their wives and the possible consequences of this. Toslima says:

> I had been going to English classes – he [husband] argued about that too. He accused me of only going so that I would be able to get a social worker and take him to court. He would moan about how bad Bengali women had become after coming to this country. (Toslima 2001)

As discussed in Chapter 3, Toslima has gone on not only to attend language classes, but through this has gained the confidence to study further and is now working full time.

Concerns that learning English may change women are articulated by men, not only about their wives, but as head of the household about the whole family. Sani discusses the imminent arrival of her daughter-in-law from Bangladesh, and although she and her son can see the need for the new arrival to be able to speak English and hence have some independence, they are struggling against the views of her husband. She says:

> It will be hard for her. When she comes she will have to study a little here. She will have to learn the language. I want her to learn, my son wants her to learn, but my husband doesn't want her to. He is worried in case she becomes bad. But I think that if I am a good person then it doesn't matter if there are a hundred people around me. If a hundred people are dancing naked around me, if I don't want to dance naked then can they make me? What matters is the person. We'll see what we do when she comes. (Sani 2001)

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When re-interviewed in 2011, Sani remarked that despite encouragement from herself and her son, her daughter-in-law has chosen herself not to go to language classes. This is something Sani cannot understand given the fact that she had never had the opportunity. She continues to try and persuade this daughter-in-law, as well as another daughter-in-law who has since arrived from Bangladesh to attend classes. She says:

> I encouraged my daughter-in-law to go but she didn't want to. She hasn't done any classes. I will tell her again. I have told this daughter-in-law that she should go. I will make sure she does. It's very convenient there are classes just downstairs. It will be good for them if they learn. The older child is going to school from September, so I have said I will look after the younger one if she wants to go from now while she is at the class. They should learn, just for things like going to the doctor on their own. (Sani 2011)

The longitudinal element of this work shows how situations can change and barriers to learning can be lifted. When Nurun was interviewed in 2001, she lamented her lack of ability to speak English. At the time of interview in 2001, Nurun's mother-in-law had recently arrived to live with them and Nurun was her main carer (discussed further in Chapter 6). When interviewed in 2011, she spoke about how her husband had initially refused to let her go to language classes, but then encouraged her to attend when he tired of accompanying her and her mother-in-law to doctor's appointments:

> I didn't have those opportunities [to learn English when I arrived] did I? My husband wouldn't let me go. He wouldn't let me go out because people in the community would talk. And then – when he brought his mother to this country and she always needed to be taken to the doctor, he said to me, 'Go and learn English so you can take her'. So I went and I learnt and now I work six hours a week too, in a school. I work from three to five and on Saturdays I teach Bengali to the children. (Nurun 2011)

Nurun's mother-in-law has since passed away. No longer bound by the duties of care, Nurun has used her language skills to work on a voluntary basis. Much of her interactions are in Bengali, but the confidence she has gained from attending classes outside of the home, away from her family, have armed her with the assurance to continue to actively engage in the community. The school she works at has offered to send her on courses to get further qualifications, but she has refused. She is happy with what she is doing.

Framing the debate on access to employment solely on language acquisition fails to appreciate the intersections of place and people. What emerges from the narratives is that in area like Tower Hamlets, language is not crucial to employment. The skills women bring to employment are often just as important as language ability. Shamima has worked in a playcentre, she says:

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> I can do whatever I want. There is nothing stopping me [from working]. It is just that I am not educated, but I have worked. I have worked alongside girls with degrees. Now I am older and my health isn't good so I have had to give it up. I used to go to a community centre, just to pass the time, and one day someone told me about a job at the playcentre. So I went. I applied and I got the job. My daughters helped me fill in the [application] form. (Shamima 2011)

Here, the intersection of time and place become apparent. Shamima was not searching for employment through the job centre or the papers, she heard about it through her informal networks. Patacchini and Zenou (2008) argue that living among people from a shared ethnic background can make it more likely for people to hear about jobs. Shamima's daughter is now older and educated, and she filled in the application form for her. Having raised seven children of her own, Shamima is clearly experienced in being around children. Overly focusing on her ability to speak English as a criterion for her employment would have eliminated Shamima from the selection process. She admits that she can barely speak English and understands very little. In her workplace the staff are also Bangladeshi, this means that all her day-to-day interactions at work were conducted in Sylheti. This facilitated her ability to engage in formal employment.

Shamima's experience is very different to Rukshana's described earlier, and highlights the important role of adult children in encouraging and supporting female migrants into employment. Shamima's daughter helped her to complete the application form; Rukshana has no one to help her in this way. Of her three children, two live outside London and she rarely sees them, and the third lives at home, but according to Rukshana he does little more than come home at night to sleep. She does not have anyone to support her in the way Shamima does.

As children grow up there are fewer demands on women in terms of household duties, this frees up some of the women to consider attending language classes or other activities such as swimming or attending community centres. It also repositions women in the house as sons marry and daughters-in-law are brought into the home. Kandiyoti (1988) describes the 'patriarchal bargain', a situation where women strategically accept structures of patriarchy and subordination in order to maximise their security and authority within the home. This authority comes into full fruition when they assume the role of mother-in-law and have daughters-in-law to take over the subjugated positions. This is explored further in Chapter 5, but the relevance of this in limiting women's access to learning English can be seen in Amina's home. She says of her daughter-in-law who migrated from Bangladesh eight years ago:

> She did say that she wanted to go [to English classes], but I didn't let her. I can't manage the house on my own, I don't cook anymore. If she goes then it's a whole day gone isn't it? So she didn't go. (Amina 2011)

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Amina's strategy is to keep this son and his family at home until the next son marries and then she will allow this son to move out. At that point her daughter-in-law will be free to pursue language courses. It is not just men, but women can exert control over other women in the family, with in this case, negative consequences in terms of aspirations for learning English, working and citizenship.

Britishness

Citizenship debates are related to belonging (Lister et al. 2007), identity (Joppke 2010) and questions of inclusion and exclusion (Brubaker 1992). This section examines what constitutes the 'British' of British citizenship for migrant women. Questions of who can lay claim to 'Britishness' is not a straightforward debate (Ware 2007). In 2001, none of the 100 respondents interviewed identified themselves as British. In 2011, this changed significantly with 10 out of my 20 interviewees incorporating 'British' into their identity description. This highlights the importance of applying a longitudinal lens to examining communities. A British sense of identity clearly took a long time to emerge, but when it did, it jumped from zero to 50 per cent. However, all the respondents who claim this identity do not experience it in the same way. For some their Britishness was derived from the amount of time they had spent in the UK, Gulabi says:

> Obviously I have been living here for so long so I am British in a way, but if they wanted to get rid of us, they could, couldn't they? (Gulabi 2011)

Gulabi holds on to a fragile sense of attachment and belonging to the UK and sees her position in the UK as retractable by the Government.

As discussed, when re-interviewed in 2011, Toslima had gained a host of educational qualifications and is working as a nursery assistant. The sense of achievement and pride she has gained from her multiple qualifications and ability to work has increased her attachment to the UK. She feels a definite sense of belonging and strongly identifies herself as British in 2011 (yet only as Bangladeshi in 2001). By 2011 Toslima has imbibed a very strong British identity, to the point of being suspicious of 'foreigners' who 'abuse my country' she says:

> Even my own mother and father have not done as much for me as the British state has. I cannot thank the British enough; I will support them a thousand times over. It makes me so angry that foreigners are coming over to use and destroy this country […] I don't want anyone to take advantage and abuse my country in this way. This is my country. This is my country more than Bangladesh is. This is my country. I have had such a difficult life in this country. But it is only because I am in this country, it is only because of the British that I have been able to raise

> my children, been able to survive, have a place to live. Who in this world would help you in this way? I have to thank Allah for everything, but I also have to thank the British. (Toslima 2011)

Asma expresses a strong sense of British identity and secure sense of belonging which she attributes to her involvement in education:

> Since I have been studying I feel more British, I can feel the meaning of being British. Before it was just a word that I heard; it wasn't something that I felt. It didn't apply to me. I feel like I belong now, since I have been doing my learning. Before I didn't know where I was, where I fitted in. I just felt as if I was a '*half-fit*'. I was here but didn't understand, but now I understand and I feel comfortable here now. This is my country and I am Bengali British. I didn't used to feel that way, but now I feel that I am part of this country. That this is my country – everything I have is here. I belong here now, I have everything here. (Asma 2011)

For both these respondents their sense of British identity is firmly entwined with their sense of belonging. For others, their sense of Britishness is much more pragmatic and about a formal citizenship identity rather than emotional attachment as these quotes illustrate:

> Well you have to say you are British don't you? When you need to show documents. But I am still Bangladeshi. (Nazmin 2011)

> Well I have a British passport, so I suppose I am British. (Nurun 2011)

Whilst for others, the passport itself is not enough and they too make the link between language and Britishness:

> How can I call myself British? No one would call me British. I don't speak the language, how can I be British? I can't speak English. (Jannat 2011)

A positive sense of Britishness is not restricted to respondents who are involved in education and employment. Moymun does not speak much English, has never attended language classes or worked in the UK but she now feels British after having lived here for so long:

> I feel proud to call myself British. I feel British. I have been living in this country for so many years how can I not consider this to be my country? Where else would I call my country? Obviously my roots are still in Bangladesh where I was born, but I am living here, I will live here for the rest of my life, I will never go and settle in Bangladesh. So of course I think of this as my country and see myself as British. (Moymun 2011)

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Thus even though many respondents experience citizenship as what Hammar (1990) describes as 'denizens', who whilst having formal citizenship rights and entitlements through legal status and possession of passport, remain excluded from other arenas of citizenship and belonging (Mehta and Napier-Moore 2010), this does not eradicate a base for a strong sense of British identity. Britishness is experienced in different ways and has different meanings to those who own the identity.

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Conclusion

The focus on English proficiency firmly links English proficiency with citizenship. Whilst this will undeniably facilitate living in the UK, it will not eradicate the problems of racism, poor housing, religious and cultural misconceptions, inequalities in employment and social deprivation which subsequent generations of immigrants continue to be penalised by. These problems continue despite the second and third generation of migrants having the benefit of a full command of English and a British education.

The interviews show a strong desire on the part of female migrants to learn English and integrate with others beyond their cultural community, challenging notions of Asian Muslim communities as refusing to engage with others. There are multiple factors of family responsibilities, patriarchal regimes and lack of support which can intersect to obstruct women in their attempts to speak English or procure employment. But these barriers are not fixed, the lack of uptake of language classes at a given point should not be read as a rejection of classes. Engagement with English language classes ebbs and flows over the lifecourse, varying with other commitments. Enabling women to become more 'active' citizens and achieve the full status of citizens through tackling the barriers that prevent them from doing so, will not only benefit them individually but allow them to contribute more effectively to achieving social cohesion and integration.

Whilst speaking English can create opportunities to access further education and employment, and this in turn can contribute to a developing sense of Britishness, Britishness is experienced in different ways, and a British identity can be claimed at various levels of experience and is imbued with different meanings. Acquiring proficiency in English speaking is not a prerequisite for developing a strong sense of a British identity. For the women in this study British identification emerged slowly over time. As respondents' sense of emotional and affective belonging grew, their sense of attachment to the UK was recognised and expressed through a sense of Britishness. This Britishness was proudly owned by the women and had emerged from their own attachments; it was not enforced, granted by passing a test or proven by a citizenship certificate.

With immigration laws now requiring those applying for spouses to demonstrate their solvency, newly arriving young mothers may be in a better financial position than previous generations to choose to remain at home and focus on raising their

children in the first instance after arrival. This is despite the fact that they will have ‘proved’ themselves capable of work with tests of life in the UK and passing an English language test. Gender roles change over the lifecourse and impact the ability of women to engage in active citizenship such as work (voluntary or paid). Many migrant women arrive from communities where female gender roles do not include work outside the home. Women raising young families or with other care duties may not have the time or the resources to devote to learning the language and more visible work in the wider community whilst they have these obligations. At a later date when their families are older, or care duties subside, and women have adjusted to different cultural gender roles, women may wish to take on wider roles and be able to make contributions to society outside of the home, or may make their contributions within the home by providing a childcare service for their grandchildren thus enabling multiple members of the family to engage in employment. Citizenship and Britishness emerge from lived experiences of everyday life.

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Chapter 5
The Family

Migration leads to family roles, methods of child-raising and social norms being disrupted and reconfigured (Strasser et al. 2009), this can lead to upheavals and tensions within the family. Cooke (2006: 2) observes 'migration and the family are interdependent because a change in one nearly always involves a change in the other'. With the accelerating pace of globalisation, the multiplicity of choices and opportunities as well as modes of oppression increase; with this, traditional forms of behaviour and structures such as the family become more fluid and open to interpretation by family members (Trask 2010). Despite this fluidity, women who migrate as family reunifiers continue to be seen simply as dependants of their spouses with little exploration of the complexity of relationships they have within and outside the home and their role in renegotiating the family structure.

There is a growing recognition that the meaning and function of home become reinterpreted with migration (Ahmed et al. 2003, Blunt 2005). These reworkings of home life can occur immediately after migration or develop over time. In my study, the move from extended to nuclear family after arrival meant an immediate shift in responsibilities for women. Other changes, such as women engaging in paid work outside of the home, took time to emerge, but are the consequence of migration. With migration, school-age children often learn the language of the host country faster than their parents and take on interpreting roles (Cleghorn and Prochner 2008). This can lead to awkwardness and embarrassment in health settings for children and their parents when discussing personal issues, but such situations remain prevalent due to inadequate interpreting services (Gill et al. 2009). Greater command of the language of the host country by children can imbalance power dynamics between parent and child in settings such schools and doctors, to the extent of undermining or eroding parental authority (Pantea 2011). Of course there can be positive aspects too. As discussed in Chapter 4, Shamima's daughter filled in a job application form for her. Children can use their language skills to access resources such as benefits and apply for mortgages for their parents by filling in forms (Orellana, Dorner and Pulido 2003). Findings such as these point to the need to examine the ways in which migration, family and place interact to change family structures and obligations over time (Khanum 2001, Jayaweera, D'Souza and Garcia 2005).

This chapter explores the ways in which the family has undergone change since migration in terms of structure, roles and practices, reciprocal obligations and material circumstances. It analyses the changing structure of the family from the nuclearisation of the family in the early years after migration to the renewed extended structure that has developed as children grow older and marry. It also highlights the impact of intergenerational differences and the greater affluence

and upward mobility of the community as a result of family obligations and responsibilities. The interviews provide an insight into a period of accelerated change over 10 years which challenges the notion of a static and homogenous community resistant to change and integration.

The household composition of respondents in this study changed substantially in the 10 years between 2001 and 2011, with 70 per cent (14/20) of households experiencing a reduction in household numbers. For the 20 per cent (4/20) of respondents where household numbers remained the same as 2001, only one household composition remained the same as in 2001. Rukshana lived with her son as she did in 2001. For the rest that were the same in number, the family composition changed as daughters-in-law replaced daughters, and/or grandchildren replaced children within the home. Similarly, daughters-in-law and grandchildren made up the changes in the 10 per cent (2/20) of households which showed an increase in numbers.

Migration and Changing Kin Networks

The role of extended family in providing support to Bangladeshi women in the UK has been documented in the literature (Katbamna 2000, Barn, Ladino, and Rogers 2006). However, there has been little exploration of the impact of shifts in family structure, notably the transition to a nuclear family structure or modified extended structure post-migration. In the west the structure of families has undergone significant change in recent decades (Strong, De Vault and Cohen 2010). Demographic changes over the last few decades have led to family structures in western societies becoming more diverse, with 'blended' families (arising from remarriage), same-sex parent families and single parents all making up increasing numbers (Finch 2007, Farrell, VandeVusse and Ocobock 2012). Despite the greater diversity of families across western societies there continue to be broad differences across western and eastern cultures. In many non-western cultures, such as South Asian, Middle Eastern and African cultures (Jegatheesan, Miller and Fowler 2010, Sherif-Trask 2006, Tiemoko 2004), the 'family' refers to a kin network that extends beyond the nuclear family. In such cultures there can be high expectations of obligations amongst kin members with those deviating or not fulfilling obligations being ostracised by others in the network both locally and transnationally (Tiemoko 2004).

When Bangladeshi women first arrived in the UK they had to contend with a sudden 'shrinking' of the family (Kofman et al. 2011: 17) with the imposition of a nuclear family structure on to what had previously been a much larger extended family network in Bangladesh. The densely populated environment of Tower Hamlets with its high-rise buildings was vastly different to the open spaces of the village where women and children could freely walk. This new environment alongside Bangladeshi social and cultural norms of women remaining within the home restricted the movement of respondents and their children and kept them

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indoors. In Bangladesh women had rarely left their home; but the notion of staying at home is very different to the one experienced after migration. In Bangladesh, staying at home means activities are confined to the village, its people and its surrounds. Within the space of the village women are free to walk and visit others in the extended family system. In the UK, staying at home means literally that – staying within the four walls – many of the women interviewed compared it to being in a jail. Moymun who arrived to London in 1978 says:

> I didn't like it at all. I can't tell you how bad it was for me. I felt like I couldn't breathe. I was closed in by these walls. It must be what people feel like when they are in jail. It was that bad for me. I just wanted to go back. (Moymun 2001)

In rural Bangladesh children play freely in the village with other children and the care of children is maintained by the wider family who also live in the village. It is not uncommon for children to have what Collins (2000: 197) terms 'other mothers' in distinction from 'bloodmothers', referring to other female members of the family who contribute partially or even wholly to the raising of a child as part of their daily routine without any formal agreement. Rukshana's husband made four visits to Bangladesh in the 17 years between their marriage in 1969 and her arrival to the UK in 1986. In her husband's absence she would go back to her father's home for long stretches leaving her children to be raised by their 'other mother':

> I would leave my children when they were very young and just go back to my father's village and stay there for month after month on end. I could do that in Bangladesh. If people in this country hear that, what will they say?
>
> **Who would look after them there?**
>
> They had aunts and uncles there. And I have to say that they got more love from their *sasi* [wife of paternal uncle] than me – their mother. (Rukshana 2011)

Parenting can be stressful (as well as fulfilling) across all cultures (Ali and Frederickson 2011). Compounding the stress of migration, my respondents had the additional stress of coping with mothering alone. In Bangladesh they had not had parenting support from their husbands (who were in the UK) in the day to day raising of their children, but they did have support from other members of the family. After migrating to the UK, Rukshana could no longer leave her children. For her, as with other respondents, parenting became mainly their sole responsibility while their husbands were working.

The type of 'kinship care' that Rukshana's in-laws provided in Bangladesh is not unknown in the UK (Nandy and Selwyn 2012). Despite being a historical feature of British families where children have lived with other members of the family for periods of time (Aldgate and McIntosh 2006), it remains underexplored

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(Hunt 2003, Hunt, Waterhouse and Lutman 2008). In their study, Nandy and Selwyn (2012) use census data to map families, and find Bangladeshis to be over-represented amongst kinship carers in the UK, suggesting that these norms are retained after migration.

In the absence of extended families after migration it is not unusual for migrants to create kin networks based on non-blood ties for support. This 'fictitious kin' network (Levitt 2011) provides individuals with a sense of being part of an extended mutually reciprocal network. Fictive kin are usually made up of friends and neighbours or those living within relative proximity and usually sharing the same characteristics as the individual. They can be a source of comfort and advice to those who are removed from their close family members (Shaheen and Rahman 2001). Fictive kin are not restricted to migrants, many people in modern society create 'families of choice' (Trask 2010) comprised of those with whom they share social and supportive ties rather than biological. 'Families of choice' are usually an active choice based on those one wishes to incorporate into their constructed family network. For migrants the construction of a new family of fictitious kin relations after arrival is often a substitute for the unavailability of biological members. Choices are made on the basis of a shared common heritage rather than personal shared attributes as is often the case in western 'families of choice'. Shanaz who migrated in 1986 says:

> In this country relatives and non-relatives are the same – everyone is your relative. Nabiganj, Gulabganj, Moulvibazar – would we ever know people from those parts? If we were in Bangladesh we would never have met, but here everyone is together. Everyone is my relative now. (Shanaz 2001)

Fictive kin relations are not merely a response to the immediate aftermath of migration. When Rupa was interviewed in 2001 she spoke about being a single mother to her family of 10 children and two grandchildren she had custody of. But in addition she spoke about a girl that she had taken into the family:

> There is this girl who lives in Bow, who calls me mother, and sometimes she comes to stay. She doesn't have anyone. She was an only daughter. Her father brought her over when she was very young. Her mother died before she could come here. So her father re-married and brought her over with the new wife. And when she came over, her stepmother was very bad, and her father, listening to his new wife treated his daughter very badly. He would hit her so much. He broke her bones. The school saw what condition she was in and the teacher got her a social worker, who removed her from the house. Now she lives on her own. She is my fourth daughter's friend, and she comes around a lot. She said to my daughter 'You are so lucky, I don't have a Mum', so my daughter said, 'Why don't you call her mum too?' So she did. And she comes a lot. At least she can get some peace of mind and comfort from calling me Mum, can't she? (Rupa 2001)

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During Toslima's interview in 2011, a young woman let herself into the house and offered to make tea before saying she was going out and would be home later. The girl is the daughter of a neighbour who has long since moved away. But as the girl's workplace is in Tower Hamlets she spends some of her time living at Toslima's house, coming and going as she pleases. Toslima spoke of her proudly as if she was her own daughter:

> She really studied hard and worked hard too – she is a girl but she works like a man. She has helped me a lot as well. She is a brilliant girl. She worked really hard, she used to work in Primark and she would do translating – interpreting in a court. She took on extra shifts and was working with lots of agencies and she saved up £25,000 for her wedding. And she is still working hard; she is saving to buy a house now. (Toslima 2011)

The bond that had been forged with the girl's mother when she was Toslima's neighbour has become kin-like and Toslima has accepted the daughter as she would her own niece or daughter. Interestingly Toslima refers to this girl as working 'like a man' (in Chapter 4 she also referred to herself in the same way); as engaging in paid work challenges the traditional gender roles of Bangladeshi women. This points to the need to be aware of the gender roles of the country of origin, as these influence the structure of the family in the country of arrival more than the norms of the destination country (Lamb and Bougher 2009). Norms of the country of origin can continue to frame constructions of gender roles and identity even if the performance of gender contradicts them. Toslima and this girl have incorporated working outside the home into their female roles, but paid employment is still defined as a male role.

Had they not migrated, it is likely the respondents in this study would only have had contact with those with whom they have genuine (i.e. consanguineous) kin relations. Migration brought them into contact with people from different parts of Bangladesh and led to the creation of fictive kin. Over time as families began to settle and children grew up, the role of fictive kin altered. For some, like Toslima, the bonds remained tight. Others found their own families provided enough support. In 2000, one of the younger women from a young women's focus group described how things have changed from when she was young in the early 1980s. Ritaj's mother arrived to the UK 1972 and she was born in 1977. She says:

> Nowadays everyone only has time for their own families. It's changed in terms of the community separating as well. Even though we have all these centres, the community is not the same. I remember all my uncles – they weren't my real uncles – they were maybe from neighbouring villages, or my dad's friends that he met in this country. We call them uncles because our own uncles are in Bangladesh. These people used to come over every weekend or we would go to their house. There was this togetherness. Now they don't have time for us and we don't have time for them. (Ritaj 2000)

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Over time, the significance of blood relatives substantially diminished for some when the absence and distance that had been circumscribed by migration was overcome. In 2001 Rupa lamented the fact that she had not returned to Bangladesh since her arrival over 20 years ago:

> My brother cries all the time. It has been so many years since we saw each other. My brother is making himself ill because of me. I haven't seen him for so many years. He says 'One day I will suddenly die, and I will have not seen you again, and you will have not seen me again. I will die with that one regret'. I wish I could arrange to bring my brother over. If he could come over on a visit, and I could see him the once, then I would get some peace in my heart. I have only the one brother in this world – but what can I do? I wish I could find some way of bringing him over. He is my only brother and I am his only sister. If there was only a way of bringing my brother over to this country it would really help me. I need another person in the house. (Rupa 2001)

Caring for 10 children and two grandchildren, she felt that having a family member to support her in the home would be a huge benefit. When interviewed in 2011, she spoke about a family trip to Bangladesh in the intervening years. When asked about seeing her brother again she casually mentioned that he was now in the UK:

> He is here now, my daughter brought him over.
>
> **When did he come over?**
>
> It's been eight or nine years now.
>
> **Where does he live?**
>
> He lives in the restaurant where he works. He comes to visit occasionally.
>
> **Is that in Tower Hamlets?**
>
> No, it's in Walthamstow. He comes, sometimes. (Rupa 2011)

There was a distinct lack of enthusiasm in her voice when she spoke about him. When at a later point she was asked the question, 'Apart from your children where does your nearest relative live?' she replied:

> No. I have no one. I don't have any relatives here. (Rupa 2011)

Over time Rupa's family has altered. Immediately after migration she found herself struggling with young children in her newfound nuclear family, and continued to be emotionally attached to her natal family in Bangladesh. With no return visits

these relationships became idealised and formed her main source of emotional support. In 2001 she was desperately trying to find a way of bringing her brother to the UK; not just for emotional support but for the practical support he could offer her as a single mother with 12 children in her care, but she could see no way of this happening. When it did happen, through her daughter sponsoring him, it seems that the closeness and support she expected from her brother was not there and their contact was only occasional. Thus as Kofman observes, in the context of migration family relations are ‘fluid and constantly being reconstituted and negotiated, adapting across spaces and through time’ (Kofman 2004: 249).

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The Patriarchal Bargain

Bangladeshi social norms are intertwined with a collectivist culture where the needs of the group are prioritised over that of the individual. In such cultures, marriages are viewed as the joining of two families rather than two individuals. In 2001, 60 per cent (12/20) of the women had at least one child married, in 2011 all 20 (100 per cent) had at least one child married and all were grandmothers. Over time, as their children married the family structure returned to an extended form of family with the respondents positioned as potential matriarchs. However, this is a position only available to them if other factors are in place and everyone else plays their supporting roles. Many women looked forward to achieving the role of mother-in-law and finally getting the pay-off in the ‘patriarchal bargain’ (Kandiyoti 1988), where women accept structures of patriarchy and subordinate positions to maximise their security and authority within the home. As I will show below, this matriarchal authority comes into full fruition when they assume the role of mother-in-law and have daughters-in-law to take over the subjugated positions. Most families in Bangladesh exemplify this type of regime (Kabeer 2011). It is important to note that that the women in my study did not actively take on subjugated roles in anticipation of future benefit. As Kabeer (2011) argues, women in Bangladesh are constrained in the choices available to them. Importantly, some women do not see patriarchal regimes as unjust – they are simply part of the normative culture.

Women were performing normative gender roles as daughters-in-law and expected to be able to step into the normative matriarchal role of mother-in-law they felt they would transition into in Bangladesh. However, with migration and reconfigured roles, many older women have ‘paid the heavy price of an earlier patriarchal bargain’, and are left bereft at being unable to ‘cash in on its promised benefits’ (Kandiyoti 1988: 282). Many respondents spoke about how they had been let down by their children in the UK. Gulabi says:

> I did everything alone for them. My husband was at work, and they were all born so close together. I had to push a double buggy to the school to drop and pick up the ones that were at school. Dragging that double pram up and down the stairs was hard. I have struggled in my life and that is what saddens me, when I think

> about how much I struggled for my children and how they are today. But I have hardened my heart, what else can I do? (Gulabi 2011)

Whilst Gulabi's experiences are similar to many single mothers who live in high-rise buildings and have young families, the difference lies in her subjective expectations. Having come from Bangladesh where children accept the choices of their parents, she had hoped her children would do the same. The reward for her struggles in raising her children would be their compliance in adulthood. She cried during the interview and as I will detail later, her heartbreak comes from knowing she will not assume the role of matriarch and have daughters-in-law to take care of her, as she did for her mother-in-law.

But outcomes were not uniform across the women in this study; Asha was amongst the more affluent of respondents, in 2001 the family had already bought their home and two others. The family lived between two of the houses and rented out the third. At that time, she lived with her spouse, daughter, married son and his wife and her grandson in one house; while three other children lived in the house immediately behind theirs on a different street but with adjoining back gardens. One of her daughters was married and living in the next borough. When revisited in 2011 she had a further daughter married, and another son married. Each of her married sons was living in their own home minutes away from her. She explained that the house was no longer big enough to accommodate them all in terms of space, but it continued to be the hub of the family activities:

> In this house there are four of us, but we [the family] live across three houses. We have all our meals together and we live together; they just sleep in the other houses. My older son and his family are next door and my second son and family live just behind us. But they come here and cook, and we all eat together […] They come and have breakfast here or come just after breakfast and only go back to their houses to sleep. (Asha 2011)

Asha has managed to accommodate a traditional Bangladeshi family dynamic within the structural restrictions imposed by housing styles in the UK. This has been facilitated by greater financial capabilities of her family as she is keen to stress that they do not rely on social housing 'They [sons] didn't get houses – we bought them'. The financial solvency of the family has allowed them to buy homes within minutes of each other, and as far as possible live as an extended family. Unlike many of the other respondents, she has managed to take on the role of mother-in-law much as she would have done in Bangladesh, despite not everyone living under the same roof. Her daughters-in-law have taken over the role she once occupied. When asked how she spends her time, she says:

> I sit at home. I don't do anything else. My daughters-in-law cook. I may go out for a bit. I might pick something up from the market for them to cook. But I don't cook anymore. (Asha 2011)

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Other respondents had reinterpreted the notion of extended family with at least one married son living at home. Amina describes her strategy:

> My oldest son lives [separately] with his family; there isn't room for everyone to live together. There is no problem with us, there is just no room. He has two daughters and four sons and there is the two of them. There isn't the room for them here. When I got this daughter-in-law, I moved them out. When my third son's wife comes, then this son will move out with his family. (Amina 2011)

She points out that 'there is no problem with us' to stress the harmony of the extended family she has managed to raise.

Despite the restricted space, some families attempt to come to a compromise and retain some patrilocal marital traditions where the young bride moves into her husband's parental home (Kabeer 2011). Nurun is planning to get her son married, and whilst the ideal situation would be to have her daughter-in-law live in the same house, she recognises this is not feasible. She anticipates a short term solution which adheres to cultural traditions before having to respond to the practicalities of restricted space:

> The rooms in this house are very small so I don't think we can keep her in this house, at most it will be six months to a year, I don't think they can stay longer than that. The rooms are too small even for two people sharing. (Nurun 2011)

In 2001 Gulabi, who had yet to get any of her children married, stated her main concern was how to house any potential daughters-in-law:

> We can't afford to go to Bangladesh. If we find someone suitable here then we will get them married here. But right now my main worry is about my house. I can't get them married in this house can I? How would we manage it? Where would they sleep? (Gulabi 2001)

These worries turned out to be futile, when interviewed in 2011 she shared that none of her married sons lived with her and that:

> My greatest sorrow is that I have been blessed with five sons, and I didn't get to choose any of my daughters-in-law. That is my only regret. But I have resigned myself – it's their life – let them live it. (Gulabi 2011)

Families had no choice but to adapt to the realities of housing circumstances. It is impossible, because of the size of houses available, for full extended families to live under the same roof. The density and demand for housing in east London (Glynn 2005) means that children cannot always live as close as parents might like them to. Many like Nurun attempt to hold on to some elements of cultural norms of patrilocal households. But as Gulabi's experience highlights such

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hopes are predicated on the reciprocal involvement of others. In some ways, the lack of housing space offers a socially acceptable reason for families not to live together. As Amina points out, her married children cannot live with her for practical and not personal reasons. This does not mean that obligations and duties are dispensed with; rather they too are reinterpreted versions of what would be expected in Bangladesh.

The relationship between ageing and gender has commonly been viewed as a 'double jeopardy' (Krekula 2007), with the assumption that the dual disadvantage of ageism and sexism make ageing a more difficult experience for women. Whilst there is some evidence for older women being disadvantaged in relation to their financial situation in later life or where they have been widowed and do not have families to rely on (e.g. Gillen and Kim 2009), the notion of double jeopardy makes no room for culturally varied constructions of age and gender. The assumption of double jeopardy does not accommodate the gains that women experience with ageing including better relationships (Arber, Davidson and Ginn 2003). Furthermore, for many Bangladeshi women who might superficially be argued to suffer a triple jeopardy by virtue of the additional ethnic penalty; the notion of 'jeopardy' does not recognise the fact that growing older brings many benefits, such as when, as for Amina and Asha, the patriarchal bargain pays off. They have gained greater respect and are relieved from household chores as daughters-in-law take over those roles. These findings demonstrate the complexity of ageing. Ageing is constructed and experienced differently dependent upon the interaction of factors of ethnicity, place, generation and time.

Transnational Marriages

Respondents differed in their preference towards getting children married in the UK or Bangladesh. In 2001 there was a greater concern about finding someone who was suitably 'matched'. Asha says:

> We have to find someone who is as educated as she is, they have to match. If we can find someone that matches then we will get her married here. (Asha 2001)

However, for some, getting their children married in Bangladesh was not an option for financial reasons:

> I had to get her married here because even if I wanted to get her married in Bangladesh I couldn't afford to go there. (Rukshana 2001)

There continue to be high rates of transnational marriage between UK and Bangladesh (Wray 2009). Some respondents felt the best way to ensure the preservation of culture and tradition was to arrange marriages for their children in Bangladesh. Those who return to Bangladesh to marry have the advantage of

marrying into a higher class or zaat by virtue of their migrant status, and procuring a 'better' spouse (Georgiadis and Manning 2011: 553) than they would have the opportunity of finding in the UK.

Kibria (2011) describes how migration erodes class privilege and identity for Bangladeshis. This loss of previously held identity status is not welcomed by all: some feel that it eradicates differences in class position that would have been present in Bangladesh. The zaat system in Bangladesh is similar to the Hindu caste system and delineates social positions with little cross-zaat interaction. Unlike the British concept of class, people cannot move into a different zaat through education or financial affluence. One is born (or marries) into their zaat. Members of different zaat are often (but not always) identifiable by their family name. Dyson et al. (2009), in their work with Bangladeshi families, found that identifying with a class position in the UK was difficult for their respondents; however, many Bangladeshi parents in their study spoke about being from a 'higher' class in Bangladesh, indicating an alternative class system. The systems of stratification that operate in Bangladesh become less powerful with migration when most migrants are positioned and viewed in a similar way by the host country. Tower Hamlets attracts migrants of all class positions with its sizeable Bangladeshi community and resources. Maya comments on the impact of this on the ability to enforce zaat norms:

> Here because there is such a large Bangladeshi community [people] look at each other and think, 'If he can do that, why can't I?' they don't look at their zaat that 'I am a Choudhury, so I should behave like a Choudhury'. They don't understand the importance of zaat. I know outside London where it is more mixed people are more aware of different people doing different things. People don't see themselves as the same as each there. In this area they just look at people around them. (Maya 2000)

She suggests that in areas outside London where there are less concentrated Bangladeshi communities, Bangladeshis are able to hold on to and exert their zaat and exercise differences.

Respondents who mention zaat are more likely to describe themselves holding higher zaat positions and express concern about finding a suitably zaat matched partner for their children when arranging marriages, Moymun says of her daughters:

> If they chose someone for themselves then I would certainly consider it. But I would like the boy to be someone like ourselves; to match our zaat. Then they will understand our ways. (Moymun 2001)

Demonstrating the importance of zaat, some respondents who spoke about the importance of zaat said they would prefer their children to marry outside of the community than someone from a lower zaat. Marrying outside would not

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dilute the zaat of the family, whereas marrying below would tarnish their zaat. The matching of zaat remains a key reason respondents cite for returning to Bangladesh to arrange marriages for their children. But just as higher zaat migrants consider returning to Bangladesh for zaat-matched spouses for their children, lower zaat migrants are able to move up the zaat system by using the promise of migration as a bartering tool to marry into poor, but high zaat families, who in turn concede the loss of zaat for the hope of financial remittances and the possibility of further migration for other members of their family. These negotiations illustrate how the rigid social structure of families is being transformed by migration.

Transnational marriages create an opportunity to bring a fresh source of Bangladeshi culture into families in the UK – someone not 'contaminated by Western culture and morality' (Messent, Saleh and Solomon 2005: 332). Girls from Bangladesh are considered to be less independent than those in the UK. Zeba has a daughter-in-law from Bangladesh living with her. When I asked Zeba about her own daily activities and if she cooked, she replied:

> Do you think I got a daughter-in-law for me to still be cooking? (Zeba 2011)

When asked about finding a bride for her next son, she says:

> If they are from here [UK] they won't stay will they? If they like it they will stay, if they don't they will go. When they have children they start arguing about money and make the husband leave the family or they leave without the husband. (Zeba 2011)

The idea that a bride from Bangladesh is more likely to stay at home is prevalent across the community, and may contribute to the practice of transnational marriages. Figures from the Home Office (2011) show that 33 per cent of those applying for a spouse from Bangladesh were born in the UK; 67 per cent were not British-born but had acquired citizenship. Interestingly, of those who had acquired citizenship and applied to bring a spouse over, the time elapsed between gaining citizenship and applying to bring a spouse to the UK was 16 years. This suggests that these sponsors were relatively young when they had arrived to the UK, as the age of marriage amongst Bangladeshis remains comparatively young (Georgiadis and Manning 2011). The Home Office report also suggests that it is more common for men to return to marry than it is for women, perhaps in the hope of more compliant and less independent wives.

The report also indicates the age disparity between sponsors and applicants is on average four years. The average age difference of four years highlights the contextual nature of the age disparity between first-generation migrants and their wives that has been reported in the literature (Phillipson et al. 2000). Early migrants had often waited a long time before returning to Bangladesh to marry remitting and saving money in between arriving to the UK and their first return visit (Eade et al. 2006). When they returned to marry, the cultural norms of early

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marriage meant that the only women available for marriage were substantially younger than them – older women were already married. The Home Office report challenges data (e.g. Ullah 2007) which suggests that a large age difference between spouses is a defining characteristic of the Bangladeshi community.

Getting children married in Bangladesh strongly asserts the attachment migrants still hold to the homeland. When Sani was interviewed in 2001 she described her son's wedding which had been spontaneously arranged through the family in Bangladesh:

> He went to Bangladesh because my co-wife's aunt was ill. While he was there his uncles decided to get him married. They asked us and we said okay. We thought that as he was there he might as well bring back a wife from there. You can see what girls are like here. You know what it is like. (Sani 2001)

This quote illustrates a number of things. Firstly, the complexity of some Bangladeshi families – Sani is second wife to her husband; both wives live in the UK in separate houses with their children whilst he shares his time between them (see Shah 2008 for a discussion on the regulations around polygamous marriages). Secondly, it highlights the trust and bond between migrants and those who do not migrate. Sani and her husband agreed to the marriage of their first son without their presence and without seeing their prospective daughter-in-law. Full control of this decision was passed to the wider family. Thirdly, Sani's comment clearly indicates a disdain for potential brides in the UK despite having a daughter herself. In 2011 another son had returned to Bangladesh to marry, and her only daughter was 22 years old. Sani is planning to get her married in the UK as her daughter does not want to marry in Bangladesh. Across my interviews, where respondents wished to, or had the resources to get their children married in Bangladesh, they spoke about a preference to get sons married in Bangladesh and daughters married in the UK.

This gendered anomaly is understandable in terms of the gender norms of a society where a man is expected to provide for his wife. Cain, Khanam and Nahar (1979: 408) define the patriarchal norms in Bangladesh as: 'While men have power and authority over women, they are also normatively obligated to provide them with food, clothing and shelter'. Within this framework it is more advantageous for daughters to be married to men in the UK as they are able to provide for them better than an immigrant. A husband who arrives from Bangladesh will struggle to adapt, learn the language, and any qualifications from Bangladesh are unlikely to be recognised in the UK. The pervasive notion of women as bearers of culture (Ray 2003) across cultures makes it preferable to get a daughter-in-law from Bangladesh to reinforce cultural teachings to the next generation.

Maya spoke about the difficulties of getting daughters married in Bangladesh. She had chosen to prioritise zaat in her search for suitable grooms. Having been unable to find anyone of suitable zaat in the UK, she got two of her daughters married in Bangladesh. She acknowledges the problems this can bring:

> They are helping their husbands to adjust. There isn't much they can do here. We gave them that problem. If we could have found suitable boys here then it would have been better for them. My eldest son-in-law works in the day and studies part time in the evenings. And the younger one is working and going to language classes. It is so hard for my daughters, they must always be thinking, 'When will my husband be settled here comfortably?' If they had married someone from here it wouldn't be a problem. But there was no one suitable. (Maya 2000)

There are other factors that make it more difficult for women to marry in Bangladesh than men. The legal policies on immigration shape the possibilities for family migration (Kofman et al. 2011). The increasingly restrictive legislation on labour migration that began in the 1970s with the first wave of Bangladeshi migrants continues and means that marriage migration is the main option for migration and long term residence in the UK for non-skilled individuals from outside Europe (Kofman et al. 2011). Policies on family migration are also becoming more restrictive. Individuals wishing to sponsor a spouse from Bangladesh must show greater levels of financial solvency in order to prove their ability to support a spouse. Current requirements demand a minimum salary of £18,600 for a spouse, £22,400 if the application includes a child, and a minimum salary of £24,800 for more than one child (Home Office 2015). As men tend to marry later, there is more chance for them to meet Home Office guidelines of permanent employment, minimum threshold etc. Whilst the age of marriage of daughters of the respondents is higher than that of the respondents, at late teens and early twenties, it is still relatively low compared to the national average age of 30 for first marriage for women in the UK (ONS 2012a). In my study, parents were keen to get their daughters married as soon as possible after they finish studying. Waiting for a daughter to accumulate enough money to be able to satisfy immigration regulations to support a spouse from Bangladesh would mean waiting a longer period before they could get their daughter married.

Another reason that may account for the greater number of second generation men who return to marry is the higher educational achievements of Bangladeshi girls (Lindley 2009). This emerged across interviews, Gulabi says:

> I don't understand why boys don't study. I don't know why that is. Boys don't seem to be interested in studying but girls are. I have seen that in so many families where at least one girl is studying. None of my five sons went to university, just my daughter. (Gulabi 2011)

The emphasis put on 'matching' spouses means that there is a potential imbalance amongst the second generation with young women more educated than the men. Families are reluctant to consider getting daughters married to anyone who is not at least matched in terms of education. This may lead to a shortage of grooms in the marriage market, and to some extent accounts for the greater number of men who return to Bangladesh to marry as their lack of educational qualifications is

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compensated for by their migrant status in the marriage market there (Messent, Saleh and Solomon 2005).

For respondents who had taken their daughters to Bangladesh to get married, aside from the immigration and adjustment issues, they spoke about positive aspects of how this allowed the re-introduction and reinforcement of Bangladeshi culture into their children's lives. Sarful has arranged marriages for her daughters both in Bangladesh and London. She describes the difference:

> If you get them married in Bangladesh the grooms go back to see their parents. They have that culture, so they go back every two or three years. And the daughter that I got married in this country, her husband hasn't been back to Bangladesh since they married, it's been 12 years. His parents are here; his brothers and sisters are here so they have no tug to go back. There is no one there. (Sarful 2011)

Arranging marriages in Bangladesh is not always straightforward. With labour migration regulations increasingly tightened, marriage migration offers the best chance for migration. Shuara has experienced first-hand the demand for a British spouse and has resolved not to return to Bangladesh until her daughter is married, or not take her daughter with her:

> How can we go back to Bangladesh? If you do then your own will kill you before anyone else! When we went in '98, I had to pay an extra 30,000 taka [approx. £400] for an emergency ticket to steal her out in the night. They were going mad for me to get her married. There was no room to breathe – there was pressure from our own family as well as outsiders. And now they [daughters] are too scared to go to Bangladesh. (Shuara 2001)

The pursuit of her daughter was not limited to visits to Bangladesh. She was still considering her nephew who had come from Bangladesh, as a potential groom for her daughter but he was not the only contender in the family, she explains:

> Her father and I, and my sister would like to get her married to my sister's son. But her paternal aunt wants her for her son too. My older daughters are saying we should get someone suitable from this country instead. We haven't decided anything yet. She is doing a three-year course, so we will wait for her to finish that. We hope that Allah will make her well-educated, then she can decide. We have all decided that it will be best if she makes the decision. The others we got married before they had a chance to see anything of the world, but she has studied and has seen more of the world. It is better that she makes her own decision. It is up to her, whatever she thinks best.

When asked why she favours her sister's son, she replies:

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> He is educated – he has to come to this country to do his BA. Two of my nieces are here too studying. One of them is doing law and the other one has her BA, they are a very educated family. My sister-in-law's son isn't educated – none of them are. No one really thinks this is a good match, I think he [my husband] is a little keen, but only so that he can bring his nephew over. That is the battle we are fighting at the moment. We fought the same battle when we got our other daughter married. He [husband] wanted to get her married to his nephew. This nephew didn't have a house or a home, all he had was good looks and his matriculation [GCSE equivalent]. But even one of his [husband's] brothers said, 'Don't get her married to him; you will not be able to rest. As soon as he goes to London he will be plagued by phone calls to send money back to Bangladesh, and you will have to give it'. So in the end we got her married outside the family. (Shuara 2001)

Shuara's dilemma highlights the pressure that families can come under in arranging marriages whilst attempting to keep everyone happy. The decision to allow her daughter to decide emerges from a combination of factors. Shuara says, 'she has studied and has seen more of the world', than her sisters who are already married. Already older than her sisters were when they got married, Shuara's daughter is also more experienced outside of the home than they were. Higher levels of education are linked with later marriage amongst Bangladeshis (Dale and Ahmed 2011). And by resolving to let her daughter choose for herself, Shuara strategically avoids any further confrontation with her family.

Marriages within the family can be advantageous, as they offer a route to migration for wider family members in the country of origin and are a demonstration of solidarity and obligation to kin on the part of the migrant (Charsley 2007). Cousin marriages are relatively common throughout South Asia particularly amongst Pakistanis (Shaw 2001, Charsley 2007). In this study there is some evidence of cousin marriages but relatively few. Most respondents stressed a preference to avoid marriages within the family to minimise, as is the case with Shuara, pressures from both sides of the family in Bangladesh.

Non-arranged Marriages

Arranged marriages continue to be prevalent amongst second and third generation Bangladeshis in the UK, although they are conducted differently to previous generations (Pichler 2007, Rozario and Samuel 2012); and are more a form of introduction or 'assisted marriage' (Ahmad 2012) with the final decision resting with the individuals themselves. Bangladeshis continue to have high rates of endogamous marriage (Muttarak and Heath 2010) with the rates of exogamous marriage amongst Bangladeshis so low they do not even register in any large scale national surveys (Saggar 2008, Saggar and Somerville 2012). In 2001 none of the respondents (including the full sample of 100 and all the pilot and

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exploratory interviews) had a son or daughter who had married out of the community; but the interviews in 2011 revealed that some of the children who had married in the intervening 10 years had chosen non-Bangladeshi partners. Two of Rupa's sons had married white British girls, and during the interview she merely mentioned that they had chosen their partners and they were 'nice girls' without reference to their ethnicity. Our rapport developed through the interview, and when the interview was finished she brought out the wedding photographs and stressed how the girls weren't like other British girls, she explained they were homely and 'like us' and get along with the whole family.

The independent choice of partner is a notable feature amongst the second generation. This is something alien to first-generation migrants and viewed as being based on western patterns that prioritise personal satisfaction over social norms (Cherlin 2004). Whilst choosing their own partner would have been unthinkable for the respondents for themselves, most accept this as a real possibility for their children. Asma arranged her eldest daughter's marriage and is searching for suitable partners for her son and daughter. She says:

> I would like for us to choose their partners for them, but if they want to find someone themselves and have a love marriage then I don't mind. I will agree with their choice. I have asked my son if there is anyone he likes and just to tell me if he finds someone. Times are different now and we have to be open minded. If my son chose a girl and I refused to let him marry her and instead get a girl of my choice, if he doesn't bond with this girl and isn't happy with her then what good is that? Who will benefit? No one will benefit from that will they? I will just be destroying an innocent girl's life as well as destroying my son's life, and then there will be the other girl waiting for my son to marry her. I am looking for him now, but if it turns out that he has found someone himself and wants to marry her then I will be really happy. (Asma 2011)

This attitude appears to be very progressive compared to earlier times. In 2011 Nurun spoke about how times have changed. The stigma she had been subject to when her eldest daughter chose her own partner is no longer an issue:

> It was very hard but we got through it. It was very bad at that time because it was 10 years ago, everyone talked. Now no one talks if these things happen but then it was the worst thing that could happen. I had a very hard time. (Nurun 2011)

Nurun bore the brunt of a disdainful community for her daughter's choice. In migrant communities young women are seen to uphold not only the honour of the family but also of the whole ethnic group (Espiritu 2001), reinforcing the notion of women as the upholders of culture and tradition (Billson 1995, Yuval-Davis 1997). Whilst men are not subject to the same pressures as women, any behaviours which go against the norms of the community still impact the family. When Gulabi's son

fathered a child before his marriage it caused immense heartbreak and led to the onset of depression for Gulabi:

> I can't tell you how hard it was. No one knows how much I cried, the tears I shed. Only I know and my Allah knows. No one knows how hard it was. Of course people said all kinds of things, but what can you do? I couldn't just leave my grandson on the street could I? Whether I accept my grandson or not, he would still be my grandson. He would walk down the street and people would say, 'That is so-and-so's grandson'. (Gulabi 2011)

The choices that individual members of the family make have enormous implications on others in terms of their standing in the community, societal treatment of them and even their health. Every society has a favoured form of the family that is seen to be the ideal. Those who abide by this socially constructed ideal benefit from certain advantages such as the respect and admiration of their peers, whereas those who fall outside the remit and requirements of the perfect family can suffer from stigma and denunciation (Coontz 2000).Whilst there is evidence of shifting attitudes and practices, for first-generation Bangladeshi women in the UK, the ideal family form continues to be one where extended family codes are observed as far as practicably possible and where parents maintain the role and the right to arrange marriages for their children. For those whose children strive against this, the family run the risk of being castigated by their social network. This demonstrates that as much as 'the family' may ostensibly be located within the private realm of the home, it remains largely governed by external social and cultural norms. For the Bangladeshi community, as with many others, the responsibility to reproduce these norms within the home falls mainly with the mother.

Community attitudes to acceptable behaviour alter over time. There are power differentials between those who abide by the normative definition of gender (as defined within particular socio-historic and spatial contexts) and those who deviate, with those deviating being ostracised. Krekula (2007) argues that women whose experiences and actions do not conform to expected norms are 'othered' through the perpetuation of normative woman which concomitantly creates the 'other'. 'Othering' occur at all levels; Bangladeshi women are 'othered' by British women, Muslim women are 'othered' by non-Muslim women. But 'othering' occurs within groups as well. When individuals fall foul of norms, categories of exclusion apply; thus Gulabi and Nurun were shunned by their friends over their children's choices of partners. It was only when the norms of inclusion altered through greater prevalence of divorce and children choosing their own partners, that these respondents were no longer excluded. The interviews in 2011 show how over time social norms have changed and respondents have gone from being shunned to saying 'well it happens all the time now' as a means of explaining their renewed contact with other members of the community who had distanced themselves from the respondents at the time.

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Ageing and Changing Intergenerational Relations

A key feature of second generation marriages in this study is the later age of marriage. The later age of marriage for their daughters has made respondents reconstruct their own sense of ageing. Whereas in Bangladesh having daughters of marriageable age confers an older identity on to women, in the UK this is not the norm. Asma, who is 49, describes how her daughter's age would be linked with her own ageing identity in Bangladesh; but this is not the case in the UK:

> In this country people are so busy that they don't even realise that they are getting old. If I was in Bangladesh, my daughter is 23, people would be saying, 'Oh, your daughter is the same age as my daughter. But I have got my daughter married and she already has a son – and you haven't even got her married yet!' I would be old there. (Asma 2011)

Similarly, Zaima, who is 41 years old, says in Bangladesh she would be considered 'a very old woman now':

> It would be different in Bangladesh. The way of life is different there. In Bangladesh girls of my daughters' age are married. In Bangladesh people would say I was a very old woman now. I would be different too if I was living there. Here my children want to study and work and they can do that. In Bangladesh I couldn't let them do that. I couldn't do what I wanted to do. I couldn't let them do what they wanted to do. There would be 10 other people around me telling me, 'Why should you educate them? You should get them married'. Everything would be different there. (Zaima 2001)

Crucially, Zaima makes the point that if she was living in Bangladesh then she 'would be very different too'. In Bangladesh she would adopt the cultural norms of ageing and to use Hall's (1994: 394) term, 'become' old. Ageing identity is always in process (Ziegler 2012) and negotiated through the social and cultural milieus and personal relationships individuals are embedded in (Vanderbeck 2007). Both respondents choose to draw on the contextual elements and cultural norms of ageing in the UK rather than Bangladesh. In the UK women do not immediately 'become old' by having adult daughters. Asma and Zaima choose to adopt British norms of ageing to define their own sense of ageing rather than Bangladeshi norms where 'older' status is gained when children, especially daughters are of marriageable age. As Gullette (2004: 101) observes 'we are aged more by culture than by chromosomes'. Their experience demonstrates how ageing identifications are constructed reflexively and in relation to others; constantly being reproduced and reconstructed through performance in socio-spatial contexts.

Some respondents discussed the challenges of raising children in the UK. Shamima spoke about how her unmarried daughters prefer to live with their married sisters outside Tower Hamlets in Essex. She is uncomfortable

with their preference for western fashions and greater sense of independence. She feels this destabilises traditional norms, she says:

> I think if you are a little bit dependent then you run a family better. You can depend on each other. If girls want to get on and have a happy family they should stay with their parents. As long as they are with their parents they should listen to and respect their parents. Then when they are married they should get along with their in-laws and husband. That is our cultural way. (Shamima 2011)

Shamima also disapproves of her daughters' dress sense:

> My younger two daughters don't cover their hair, and they go about wearing trousers – they are going around in a way that I disapprove of. I don't like it […] Wearing these clothes is like the English isn't it? (Shamima 2011)

Research on immigrant families consistently finds a greater policing and control of the activities of daughters than sons (Suárez-Orozco and Qin 2006). There is some evidence from cross-cultural studies that suggests the greater pressure on girls to maintain traditional norms can make them more likely to rebel against them (Talbani and Hasanali 2000, Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001). In Shamima's opinion, her daughters behave rebelliously; however they do so outside of Tower Hamlets. In Tower Hamlets the size of the community may reinforce and reward the maintenance of traditional behaviours, and limit or restrict such acts of sartorial rebellion. No inappropriately dressed (short skirts, low tops etc.) Bangladeshi girls were seen during fieldwork. This suggests the space of Tower Hamlets influences how people dress and supports the notion that the relationship between people and place is dynamic with one influencing the other (Papastergiadis 2000). The social norms that migrants brought with them when they arrived, and that were reproduced across the new arrivals included norms on appropriate dress. As the Bangladeshi community has settled in place, these norms have been challenged by the next generation; not just through the adoption of western clothes, but also, as I will discuss in Chapter 7, the hijab. First generation Bangladeshi women have found themselves confronted by daughters either displaying a too modern dress sense, as with Shamima, or a too traditional dress code through the adoption of full hijab. The choices made by the second generation are altering the norms established by the first generation. On the whole, across Tower Hamlets, there is a greater visibility of young Bangladeshi women dressed in Islamic attire – from hijabs to full burkhas. These choices are redefining the social norms of dress; the greater number of women in Islamic dress has established this as the dominant norm for Bangladeshi women in Tower Hamlets. This may be why Shamima's daughters moved out of the borough. On the one hand they challenge the traditional customs of dress, yet do not feel comfortable expressing that rebellion within Tower Hamlets where the norms of dress are tied in with norms of culture and religion.

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The challenges made by children could potentially destabilise the family and older women's sense of the natural order of control over their children. Migrant parents can be unaware of the parameters of youth culture that exist in new countries (Pels and De Haan 2007) and some respondents may struggle with this. This lack of awareness on the part of parents, who rely on their children for information can lead to an imbalance of power within the family structure (Pantea 2011). Mariam describes the anguish of changing relationships, she recognises that all her sons will move away and she will be alone. She describes the plight of others:

> The children will all go their own way, won't they? They will get their own houses and move out and I will be here on my own. One of the houses here, it's a six bedroom house but it's just the mother who lives on her own. Her children come to see her, they come every weekend, she will cook in big pans and her five sons come with their wives and eat with her. Some people, their children don't even bother with them. There is a woman here who was crying, her sons just live on the corner there but they don't even come and see her. There are some sons who don't live with their mothers but they'll buy them a ticket if they want to go to Bangladesh, they buy them sacks of rice. Isn't that still a source of peace and comfort for the mother? (Mariam 2011)

This illustrates the various ways in which family norms have been reconfigured in the UK. From those who maintain a regular contact, to those who compensate for a lack of physical presence with financial contributions, and those who keep no contact at all and have moved away from the traditional Bangladeshi system of family obligations.

The discomfort over children's preference for western choices was evident in 2001. Shuara spoke about her daughter's preference to follow advice about nutrition for her baby from the doctor rather than traditional advice and foods. She found the expense of baby foods remarkable:

> Everything is different for them. The things they teach and feed their children, we could never have even dreamt about! I tell them, 'We never had these things and we survived, didn't we?' I told her to feed him some sagoo [tapioca], and she said, 'Sagoo doesn't have any vitamins'. I said, 'You all lived on sagoo in Bangladesh'. It is all very different for them here. We lived on ground rice when we were young, and I fed them boiled sagoo with milk. Now they won't feed their children sagoo because it has no vitamins. That's all different isn't it? […] The doctor says the children need to take vitamins till they are five years old. I listen to these things and laugh to myself. Doctors these days – they think they can kill the living and bring the dead back to life. Some of it is good, in Bangladesh children could easily waste away if they were ill. My granddaughter just eats and throws up. They have tried so many different things – those packets of food that you get – each packet is about six or seven pounds. They get those, but it doesn't work. But they get them because they are Londoni now. (Shuara 2001)

Shuara clearly feels a chasm between her daughter and herself when it comes to the raising of her grandchildren. She feels her advice is too readily dismissed because her children 'are Londoni now', i.e. British. Given the greater contact of the second generation with the wider society, there is a differential rate of acculturation between first-generation migrants and their children (Phinney, Ong and Maden 2000). Portes and Rumbaut (2001: 53) term this 'dissonant acculturation', when children's knowledge of language and customs of the host society exceed that of their parents. Within this scenario there is scope for conflict and dissatisfaction.

For some respondents the dissonance evaporated over time. When Toslima was interviewed in 2001 she spoke about the differences between herself and her daughters:

> Naturally I like to eat Bengali food. I eat a lot of fish, but my daughters don't like it. I don't force them to eat it because I know they will learn. Now they are busy, they are used to eating out and having fast food or sandwiches. But when they have their own families, then they will learn. Then they will eat properly and cook rice and curries at home. (Toslima 2001)

In 2011, Toslima's life had become hectic as she was working almost fulltime, she says:

> We don't really cook at home – we eat out a lot or get takeway. We are small family, my children don't eat much and neither do I. We just eat chips or eat out. I eat out with my children. I am out a lot anyway – I am not bothered about these things. (Toslima 2011)

It appears that rather than her daughters learning her ways, she has picked up theirs. The notion of women as bearers of culture is often reported in the literature in terms of migrant women reproducing cultural practices in a different country to try and inculcate these traditions to their offspring. My interviews show that second generation women can transfer their culture, imbued with characteristics of the host country, back into the home to their mothers. Cultural transference is not unidirectional.

Toslima's absorption of some her daughters' ways have risen from her being too busy focusing on her work to worry about cooking all the time. She is one of the many respondents who were buying their house in 2011. Her material circumstances have changed and her traditional home life has transformed to accommodate this.

The Changing Material Circumstances of the Family

When respondents were revisited in 2011 in almost all the interviews the greater affluence was starkly obvious; from impressive cars in driveways to expensive furniture and gadgets inside the home. Most of the women reported being more

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financially comfortable. The quotes below are Nurun's response in 2001 and 2011 to the question, 'How would you say your family is managing financially on a day-to-day basis':

> We are on income support but it is not enough. It is very hard. We have had my mother-in-law with us for five months; in that time she has not been able to receive any money. So it has been even harder for us. We have to pay the bills in instalments. (Nurun 2001)

> *Alhamdulillah* we are managing well. My sons work and they help. My eldest son pays the rent. I won't say that we don't have money when we do. (Nurun 2011)

The large family size of migrants can require austerity and involve financial hardship on arrival to a new country especially if the migrants are ill equipped for, or choose not to, engage in the labour market (as in the case of women who prefer to stay at home to raise their families). But over time, a network of family norms and obligations can lead to the main demand on resources – children – becoming the very source of rapid prosperity and financial mobility of the family as a whole.

When interviewed in 2001, 18 of the 20 women (90 per cent) were living in rented social accommodation (council or housing corporation) and 2 (10 per cent) were in the process of buying with a mortgage. In 2011, 13 were still renting (65 per cent), 6 (30 per cent) had a mortgage to purchase their property and 1 (5 per cent) lived in a freehold house. Of the 13 who continued to rent, 1, Leema, would have bought the house, but as it belonged to a housing corporation they were not allowed to buy the property, even though they could afford it. Her attachment to her home was such that she did not want to move to any other property even in the same area. Another respondent, Amina, had decided not to buy her flat as it was on the top floor and she did not see it as a worthwhile investment. She says, 'I didn't buy this because it is too high, if it was on the ground floor I would have bought it'. Since the interview in 2001 she has bought two businesses – a marriage/function centre recently built by the family in Bangladesh that her son was visiting at the time of her interview (and had reported a booming business), and a take-away business in Kent that another son is managing. This indicates that the family are likely to be in a position to buy their home if they had felt it suitable. Had these two women bought their homes it would reduce the number of those in rented accommodation to 55 per cent; a substantial drop in just 10 years.

As children grew up and into more secure or full time jobs their contributions to the household increased. In 2001, 70 per cent (14/20) of respondents said their children were making financial contributions to the household. In 2011 it was 95 per cent (19/20). It is worth noting the differences in contribution type. In 2001 many of the children's contributions came from weekend jobs while they were studying, whereas in 2011 most were in better paid, full-time employment. Shamima is the only respondent whose children do not make a regular contribution; however, she stressed that should they need money her daughters would help out.

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Her son had only moved back into the home the week before I interviewed her after a spell working abroad and was looking for a job in London. Otherwise it had been just her and her spouse (who at the time of interview had been in Bangladesh for about two and a half months of a five month stay). Thus it is not surprising that her children are not making a contribution to the household. In addition to the fact that they do not live at home, the rest of her children are all daughters and so there is less cultural expectation that they make a contribution to the household. Shamima spoke ruefully about their inability to buy their home:

> We didn't have the resources to buy the house and now the price has gone up so much. Everyone else has bought their house. (Shamima 2011)

Had her son not been the youngest of all her children it is possible that he would have helped in buying the property, but the six daughters before him were not expected to contribute towards buying the family home.

The rapid upward mobility of these families from tenants to homebuyers over such a short period of time has been facilitated by the system of extended family obligations. Of course there are problems that come with buying a property. Whereas the council could be contacted to fix problems in the past, this is not an option for those who have bought their homes. Rupa says:

> The roof leaks. It takes £900 to get it seen to each time, and now my son can't afford it. He has bought himself his own house in Walthamstow. He can't cover these costs too. (Rupa 2011)

Her son maintains his own family home which he has a mortgage on as well as paying for the family home in which Rupa and the rest of the family live. Apart from living with his mother in the traditional extended family sense that he would have done in Bangladesh, he maintains all other obligations of a son in his duty of care. My findings show that over time the rupturing of family life that migration initially causes, does not necessarily lead to an erosion of traditional family values and practices, rather an adaptation and reconfiguration of values to fit the social milieu of the host country (Landolt and Da 2005).

As children grow older and begin to earn money they are able to pay for respondents to return to Bangladesh and go on Hajj. The stringency that the first generation of migrants endured to make ends meet is being repaid by their children who make up for the return visits that respondents missed out on while raising their families. In 2001 the total return visits made by respondents was 42. In 2011 it had almost doubled to 83. Of the two respondents who in 2001 had never returned, Rupa has returned once, and Leema twice in the last 10 years. Some women have returned much more frequently: Asma who had only been back to Bangladesh once in 2001 has gone back a further seven times in the last 10 years. However, Asma's ability to fund these trips is not solely dependent on her children, she has started to work herself.

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Working children are also able to facilitate visits from family in Bangladesh by sponsoring them – something the respondents had never had the capacity to do. Gulabi's brother had come for a visit thanks to her daughter-in-law sponsoring his stay:

> I brought my brother over on a visit, my daughter-in-law sponsored him. She works in a disabled school. He came back with me; he only stayed for six weeks. (Gulabi 2011)

It is worth noting how the trip is seen as a collective effort: 'I brought my brother over' and the daughter-in-law facilitated the visa.

The Bangladeshi community gains more mobility through the second generation advancing in education and employment than it does through migration (Finney 2010). Greater educational attainment in the second generation has meant a decline in Bangladeshi self-employment rates (Clark and Drinkwater 2010), as second generation males move away from the entrepreneurial restaurant trade that first-generation migrants are so strongly associated with (Carey 2004). The move away from entrepreneurship and restaurant work to mainstream jobs also affects the family through the time that the men in the family can spend with their wives and children. This is perhaps moving the second generation of Bangladeshis towards a more 'democratised family' structure (Giddens 1998), with men and women able to engage equally in the labour market if they wish. First-generation female migrants had to contend with their husbands working gruellingly long hours, and with no recourse to childcare had little choice but to be at home if they had young children.

An indicator of the growing affluence of the community is the number of people that have moved away. Although as stated in Chapter 3, some respondents choose to remain in a 'deprived' area for the cultural resources available even when they have the financial capability to move to more affluent areas (Phillips, Davis and Ratcliffe 2007, Garner and Bhattacharya 2011). Respondents spoke of how their buildings had once been full of Bangladeshi households, but this is no longer the case. Futul says:

> Now people have moved out and there are more students and lodgers living in the buildings, Before, building after building, from top to bottom, were Bangladeshi. But now, people are renting out their flats. In our building everyone was Bangladeshi, now it's, one, two, three … four … five, six. yes, six homes are full of lodgers. English lodgers. We are just three Bengali homes, that's all, no more. (Futul 2011)

It appears that many Bangladeshis are buying their council properties and then selling them or renting them out to move to other areas where they can get more property for their money. This is the case for Sani, for whom buying their home was not about securing a place to live, rather it was to try and facilitate a move away from the area to allow the family to live in an extended household:

> [We have lived here for] such a long time and we have tried so hard to get them to rehouse us, for my husband's health, the doctor wrote so many letters. It's because they didn't move us that we bought the house. They gave us the discount to buy so we thought we might as well buy and then we can move somewhere else. (Sani 2011)

Unfortunately, Sani's husband passed away a month before her interview in 2011. This has halted their plans to move, she explains:

> I would have moved already. We had seen a house in Dagenham and we were all ready to move. But then my husband died and I used so much money sending his body to Bangladesh; three children went to Bangladesh with his body. These three had costs of living there and the cost of their flight, the cost of sending my husband's body, the cost of doing the *shinni* [feeding the poor as part of the death ritual]. So everything got delayed and now the house we had agreed the mortgage on, we have had to cancel the mortgage and we have explained to the seller that we just can't do it now. The down payment on a house is such a large amount isn't it? And everything that we had saved for that has gone, so what can we do? Let them all work and save the money again and then we can think about it again. We have to move. We need a bigger place with the grandchildren now. (Sani 2011)

Sani's quote demonstrates the collective input of her children to procure resources to buy a home that will enable them all to live together. The collective effort of the family is vital to ensure rapid mobility.

Toslima has made the decision that the family will pool its resources to support each other. As a single mother she struggled raising her children after an especially acrimonious split from her husband. She persuaded two of her children to take some time off their studies to ensure they were financially comfortable:

> My eldest daughter went to university and studied business and finance. My second daughter just went to college, she didn't go to university. I stopped her from studying because I was getting my older daughter married and needed money for the mortgage. My daughter who is at home with me now, she went to university and did nursing, and my son hasn't gone. He wanted to carry on studying, but I said to him, 'Look, your sister is of marriageable age, I have to get her married. You should work now to get some money. You work for a year and I will try and get a fulltime job. Let's get her married and then we can pay off our debts by even renting a room in our house. It is such a big mortgage, until we get her married, at least for a year get a job'. (Toslima 2011)

It cannot be argued that Toslima does not value the education of her children. She has studied immensely herself since being interviewed in 2001, and is committed to education. She is also determined to end her reliance on benefits and become self-sufficient. This may be why she is encouraging her children to work fulltime

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(both her son and daughter work fulltime in a retail store). Having been so successful in her own pursuit of education she no doubt feels that her children can return to it when the time is right. In a further attempt to maximise resources she has stopped sending remittances:

> I have sent money to Bangladesh all these days, but not anymore. I have totally stopped. I have even stopped phoning now. I am not giving money to anyone anymore. (Toslima 2011)

Remittances operate as a sign of commitment to families left behind (Gardner and Osella 2003, Tilly 2007). Castaneda and Buck (2011) argue remittances are a means of expressing the depth and intensity of attachment and obligation between migrants and the families who remain in the country of origin. As time goes on the frequency and amount of remittances alter and are contested as the needs of the migrant family in the destination country grow (Rindfuss et al. 2012). The evidence from this study suggests that there has been a shift in remittance behaviour with families sending less money to Bangladesh and focusing more on establishing a sense of security in the UK, although there is evidence of gendered differences in remittance behaviour. Some respondents reported their husbands continue to send remittances back to their families in Bangladesh despite the extra demand on resources in the UK entailed by having their family here. Respondents themselves are more selective about when and why they send remittances (e.g. for a family wedding or to help with funeral costs). It is arguable that men who are in low-paid jobs or in receipt of benefits in the UK might have their sense of provider compromised by their low earning position. Sending remittances is a way of asserting or reclaiming a masculine role as provider (Goldring 2001). For Toslima sending remittances was yet another masculine role she had taken on (in addition to working outside the home); by stopping her remittances she has sent a clear message to those who had so long received her support – her allegiances have shifted from Bangladesh.

Grandparenting

As shown in Chapter 4, first-generation women face a number of obstacles to work, from being limited by lack of English language skills to the demands of young families and patriarchal regimes. There are much higher rates of female employment amongst the second generation. Respondents accept that in this country girls are expected to work, as Leema acknowledges:

> They have to work in this country don't they? They can't not work. (Leema 2011)

There are multiple outcomes of this. Being in work allows young women to sponsor spouses (or other family members) to bring them to the UK. It also allows women to save money to pay for their weddings as many had to, and it

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allows them to contribute to the family pooled resources before (and sometimes after) marriage. Notably when young women (daughters and daughters-in-law) continue to work after having children, where they live close to their families the respondents take on childcare responsibilities for their grandchildren. This modern or western practice of women working outside of the home which was unknown to the respondents in Bangladesh helps to restore some of the equilibrium of traditional Bangladeshi family life that had been disrupted with migration. It offers respondents the option of being involved in the lives of their grandchildren as they would be in a traditional extended family system where everyone lives together, but which is difficult in the UK where families cannot live in large extended households. Babysitting their grandchildren overcomes the spatial family rearrangements that are necessary in the UK, and restores daily contact between respondents, their children, and grandchildren. If they were not required to provide this childcare it is unlikely that there would be daily multigenerational family contact.

Caring for grandchildren is a role that many older migrant women fulfil (Treas and Mazumdar 2002). The caregiver role consolidates the grandmother's position within the family and gives her status in the community through the realisation of the ideal grandmother role (Shankar and Northcott 2009). Crucially the childcare they provide allows the second generation to be actively involved in the labour market by freeing them of concerns over child welfare as well as saving money on childcare. Studies have found that for many women in work, their mother is the preferred choice of carer for their children (Wheelock and Jones 2002). The first-generation women are vital in supporting the occupational mobility of the second generation. Fultara shares the care of her grandchildren with their maternal grandmother, while her son and daughter-in-law go to work. She says:

> They are getting the love of their maternal and paternal grandmothers. If they lived somewhere else they wouldn't have that, and they would have had to pay someone to look after the children. (Fultara 2011)

It also reinforces norms of the extended family by ensuring regular, if not daily, contact with children who have moved out of the home. Sarful says:

> [My daughters] come here every day. My second daughter went on Hajj and left her 13-month-old with us. She had two and she left both of them with us and went on Hajj for four weeks. And my third daughter left her children with me for a week when they went on holiday – the youngest was just eight months. The children often spend the night here with us. My grandson is eight, he prefers it here. He would rather stay here than at home. He has to stay here at least two nights a week, he tells his mother, 'You stay at home, I am going there'. (Sarful 2011)

Sarful has daily contact with her daughters and grandchildren. The changing family structures in the UK mean that her daughters live in nuclear households and thus have the freedom to visit their mother every day. Had they married into families where they co-resided with their in-laws such constant visiting may not have been possible.

The maintenance of these relationships is crucial to wellbeing. Whilst most studies on social participation examine activities outside of the home (e.g. Greiner et al. 2004, Lee et al. 2008), one measure of social participation is social connectedness (Ashida and Heaney 2008, Kohli, Hank and Kuenemund 2009). In this regard, many of the respondents in my study score highly. Living with family members and especially where married children reside at home with their children, many respondents have social interaction with their children and grandchildren on an everyday basis. None of the respondents in this study lived alone, living alone can be increasingly isolating as people get older and severely limit social interactions (Owen 2001), for many respondents here, their social interactions increased as they aged and their families grew.

As well their social interactions increasing through their growing family network, some women engaged with community centres. Levasseur et al. (2012) argue that it is not the number of social interactions that individuals have, or indeed the size of their networks that is important, but rather the quality of these as understood by the person. For those always surrounded by others – as in the case of the interviewees who grew up surrounded by large families in Bangladesh, and subsequently went on to have relatively large families of their own in the UK – as they grow older, it is important to retain social engagement as it helps to strengthen a sense of belonging and attachment to place. My respondents place enormous value on their relationships and contact with their children. Having regular ongoing contact with their children defines a high quality of social interaction; spending time with their progeny is favoured above independent or other social activities. Thus whilst their interactions outside the home may be limited, the interactions within the home are numerous with multigenerational households and regular contact with married children who come to visit. As seen above Mariam speaks pitifully about her neighbour whose children never come to visit; family is a key source of belonging and attachment to place, and in turn sense of wellbeing.

The Mobility of the Family

Whilst women benefit from the upward social mobility of their children, which translates into the mobility of the family, it is important to recognise that their sense of social mobility is not exclusively dependent upon their children. Segura (1989) differentiates between objective (as measured on traditional scales of occupation and education) and subjective (self-measured) social mobility and found that some of the ways in which the women in her study identify upward mobility might actually be downward if viewed exclusively through an objective and dominant model of mobility.

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Van den Berg (2010) discusses the notion of subjective social mobility in her work with Moroccan women in the Netherlands and finds that whilst women demonstrate little mobility in the dominant scales of mobility (education, employment) they report high levels of subjective mobility through being able to provide an environment for their children to flourish. Like the respondents in van den Berg's study, my respondents use conventional definitions of mobility for their children and want to see them successful in education and employment. Yet ascribe different goals for themselves, centred on looking after their children and family and being able to practise their faith. The concept of subjective mobility is a useful one as it creates a space to recognise the value that individuals attach to their achievements independent of standardised measures. Bangladeshi women score low on measures of education and employment (Dale et al. 2002, Salway 2008), but consistently throughout both phases of my research, respondents spoke about their pride in being able to maintain cultural and religious practice within the home as well as their children's achievements.

Any form of employment respondents procured for themselves (even if these are jobs that would not necessarily be viewed as upwardly mobile jobs) provide a sense of personal attainment. This is why in 2001 Poroush was proud of her job as a cleaner, and in 2011 Nurun talks proudly about her voluntary work. She says:

> I work six hours a week in a school. I work from three to five, and on Saturdays I teach Bengali to children for two hours. And four hours during the week I do an after school club. I have been doing voluntary work for the last six years. I don't get paid for it. (Nurun 2011)

Nurun spoke at length about her job and work before saying she doesn't get paid for it. The fact that she got the job herself and went to work regularly was a source of pride and achievement.

Nurun was one of few women who worked. Most women did not work; however, they were keen their children take advantage of opportunities if only to avoid the marginalised place in society that they occupied. As Khayrun says:

> I don't want [my children] to work to give me money, I want them to sort out their own lives. I want them to have a good future. I don't want them to have to have a life like mine. (Khayrun 2001)

Khayrun's quote refers to the patriarchal bargain. Living in Bangladesh she had no choice but to follow the customs of the time. After migrating she witnessed her husband sending his money back to Bangladesh to his family. She doesn't want this for her children. She doesn't want them to struggle financially. Having lived in the UK she knows there are options for her children, especially daughters. She has not been able to take up the opportunities of education and employment that others like Toslima have, but she wants her children to maximise these opportunities.

Some studies on migrant mobility report children of migrants are committed to make use of the opportunities available that their parents could not easily access (such as education and employment) in recognition of the fact that their parents had migrated for the purpose of economic and social betterment (Buitelaar 2007). This observation is supported by the efforts of many of the children of my respondents who not only achieve for themselves, but ensure the family as a whole benefits. This research indicates that mothers have a real sense of achievement when their children take advantage of the opportunities that migration has provided for the family. There is a dynamic relationship between the mobility of the individual and the mobility of the family. The respondents in this study express a sense of social mobility through the achievements of their children.

Conclusion

Migration reframes the family, not only in the immediate aftermath as migrants adjust to changed structures and environments, but over years and generations. Changes are neither uniform nor available to all, some women find opportunities to redefine and renegotiate roles that are more advantageous to them within the family, whilst others must face traditional gender roles intensely reinforced without the support of extended family support that they might have had in their countries of origin. The narratives show how the family structure undergoes transformation with migration with the adoption of fictive kin which serves an important social role in the early part of migration. Over time attachment to fictive kin and to family in Bangladesh lessens as respondents own children grow older and become a source of support. In the UK traditional family values and obligations are adapted and reconfigured by the second generation in line with the demands of life in London.

Even traditional roles are subject to multiple influences and modifications. Some women are able to maintain traditional gender roles and appear to seamlessly transition into a matriarchal position within the home. For some, the patriarchal bargain pays off as they age in the UK and comfortably enjoy the attention and care of their daughters-in-law. This is facilitated by others in the family supporting them and performing their expected roles and duties. Most migrants have to compromise at some level and accept an altered family dynamic where relations are emotionally close but spatially more distant with the extended family reinterpreted in accordance with limitations of housing possibilities.

The findings highlight the need to position studies within socio-historic contexts. Large family size initially meant frugal living for respondents for a long time, but as children have moved into employment, the larger number of adults in the family has translated into rapid greater prosperity and home ownership in London, the most expensive part of the UK to own a home. Alongside this, as children have grown up the family has undergone restructuring again with first-generation women taking on active grandparenting roles which enable the second generation to engage fully with the labour market, and also restores

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the women as matriarchs of the family. Thus the structure and responsibilities within the family are renegotiated over time. For most first-generation women the migration gamble that they took to procure a better life for the family has paid off through their children's achievements.

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Chapter 6

Care and Welfare

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Care amongst minority communities is becoming an increasing area of research as first-generation migrants grow older. However, caring is not restricted to care of the elderly; families provide care to children whose health needs require specialist attention. There is a body of literature that has examined the experiences of informal carers from minority communities (Adamson and Donovan 2005, Katbamna et al. 2004, Mukadam et al. 2011), but Barnard and Turner (2011: 1) argue that 'the changing ways families across ethnicities and locations are managing their caring and economic needs' remains only partially understood.

The growth of an ageing population across Europe has increased demand for long term care for the elderly and led to attempts to understand the care needs of older people (Giuntoli and Cattan 2012). Gullette (2011: 11) refers to the 'current tsunami of alarmism' surrounding ageing populations and their resultant needs. The cost of providing care has led to the promotion of informal care within the family. Families already provide the bulk of care to those in need; supporting families in this provision can reduce the costs and likelihood of full care provision by services (Bonsang 2009).

Data from the 2011 Census highlights a growing ageing population in the UK with one in six people in England and Wales aged 65 or over (ONS 2012b). The increasingly diverse older population across Europe has heralded a greater focus on ensuring services are relevant in meeting needs sensitively (Worth et al. 2009). The disadvantage faced by minorities in the health system has been a concern for policy makers from the 1990s (Department of Health 1991, 1992) with policies introduced to encourage greater consideration of religious, cultural and linguistic differences (Department of Health 1997). The main outcome of these strategies has been the production of information literature in different languages and interpreters for existing services (Gerrish 2001), rather than a consideration of tailored services to meet the needs of a diverse ageing population. More recently the efficiency of health and care systems to meet the needs of a diverse population has been questioned (Bloom, Canning and Fink 2010). As migrant communities age in place their specific health and care needs are becoming of greater concern (Warnes et al. 2004, Kofman and Raghuram 2010) and warrant further exploration.

This chapter examines issues of gendered and family care provision and the use of services that that arose in the interviews. Bangladeshis are noted for their lack of engagement with care services. The narratives show this is not the case, whether it is children or the elderly being cared for. Where services are relevant they are used. As individuals age, relationships and responsibilities with family

members change (Connidis 2010), as does their dependence on health and welfare systems, the narratives detail this, especially for widows. Although not all of the respondents are involved in providing or receiving care, the experiences of those who are (or have been) carers is worth exploring as care is likely to increasingly feature in the construction and needs of the Bangladeshi community as they age in place. The demands of care provision can limit women's ability to engage in other areas such as employment or education (Carmichael, Charles and Hulme 2010), and thus it is important to explore the dimensions of care and the impact it has on women's everyday lives. Over time the care demands and duties respondents were faced with changed, and as women aged their care duties reduced rather than increased. This chapter shows how this arose from more integrated services that meet the cultural and religious needs of the community, and are provided within the community. This chapter also discusses the experiences of widows and the small group of women who are part of polygamous marriages where regulations around polygamy are vague and difficult to ascertain especially in widowhood. The chapter shows how declining health has created a dependency on the health and welfare system in the UK that for many precludes any permanent return to Bangladesh. This highlights the interaction of health, ageing, care, gender and place and offers a new insight into the complexity of the care needs of minority groups.

Care in the Bangladeshi Community

Bangladeshis in the UK are known to suffer from poor health and experience high levels of health inequalities compared to other minority groups as well as the wider population (Rhodes and Nocon 2003, Nazroo et al. 2004). High rates of long term health problems such as diabetes, respiratory problems and disability that have been noted amongst Bangladeshis can make it difficult to cope alone as well as increasing the likelihood of requiring care and support in later life (Victor, Martin and Zubair 2012). This leads to a greater likelihood of requiring health and care services (Merrell et al. 2006).

The Bangladeshi population in the UK still has a relatively young age profile, the 2011 census reports only 3 per cent of Bangladeshis in the UK are over the age of 65 compared to 18 per cent of the general population. However, the pattern of migration which saw large numbers of men in their twenties begin to arrive in the 1960s and 1970s followed by wives in the 1970s and 1980s indicates a growth in numbers reaching old age in the UK. As shown in the preceding chapters, migrants have come to realise that with their progeny comfortably settling in the UK the idealised notion of returning to Bangladesh to retire (Anwar 1979) will not be realised, and their locus of belonging is shifting to the UK.

There are over six million people in the UK who provide some level of unpaid care to a family member, friend or neighbour (Carers UK 2011); with higher levels of informal care provision amongst South Asian groups than black or white (Hutton and Hirst 2000, Wheeler et al. 2005). Bangladeshi carers are less likely to

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be aware of and accessing welfare entitlements such as carers allowance (Ahmed and Jones 2008). Parveen, Morrison and Robinson (2011) found differences across the South Asian groups in their experiences of caregiving and use of services and have argued that the degree of willingness to provide care amongst the British-born South Asian groups can be predicted by ethnicity (Parveen and Morrison 2009) with British Bangladeshis more willing to provide care. This supports Young, Grundy and Jitlal's (2006) findings where controlling for age and gender, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are twice as likely to be engaged in care provision as those from other ethnic groups.

The geographical distribution of care provision suggests a positive correlation between areas with high levels of poor health and high proportions of the population engaging in unpaid care (Wheeler et al. 2005). Despite higher need, Shaw and Dorling (2004) found that the areas with higher than average levels of poor health had lower numbers of healthcare professionals thereby decreasing the support available to carers and increasing the health inequalities. In line with the ethnic minority population distribution, the largest concentration of carers from minority groups is in London where a third of all carers are from a Black or minority ethnic group and Tower Hamlets houses one of the largest proportions of unpaid care provision (Young, Grundy and Jitlal 2006). The section below details the characteristics of the carers in this study.

Carers in the Study

Eight (40 per cent) of the twenty respondents had been providing care when interviewed in 2001. In 2011 this had decreased to half the number with four of the twenty respondents (20 per cent) providing care. Table 6.1 illustrates the situation for carers in 2001 and 2011. In 2001 many women in this sample had been providing care to an adult as well as raising a young family.

Reflecting the change in care patterns for interviewees, the use of services has changed over time. Sin (2006) argues that the use of services depends on understanding what they can offer that is relevant to the individual; and over time, as needs and expectations change, so does engagement with services. In the earlier wave of interviews in 2001 carers were more likely to be receiving external support where children were the recipients of care. Having services involved from an early age led to ongoing structured support in place to enable greater independence as children grew older. In the second phase of interviews in 2011, Suleya's daughter who has significant disabilities has moved out of the family home and is living in assisted accommodation that meets her needs and enables her to live life as independently possible. And Asha's daughter is also living in accommodation to support her health needs.

Rupa, Asha and Suleya all had contact with social services for support with the care and accommodation needs of their children. For all these respondents it had been health services or the school that had initiated their access to specialised

Table 6.1 Carers in the study

Name	Caring for in 2001	Caring for in 2011	Type of care in 2011
Rupa	Son with learning difficulties Grandson with muscular dystrophy	Son with learning difficulties Grandson with muscular dystrophy	Care for son has lessened, but care for grandson intensified
Asha	Husband with Parkinson's Daughter with learning difficulties	Husband with Parkinson's	Now have a live in carer to support care needs of respondent's spouse. Daughter has been residing in obesity clinic for eight months
Toslima	Elderly mother		Mother now lives with respondent's brother
Suleya	Daughter with severe disabilities		Daughter lives independently in assisted accommodation nearby
Gulabi	Husband with poor health	Husband with poor health	General medication and support with mobility
Jannat	Husband with poor health		Now husband cares for her as she requires regular dialysis
Asma		Mother-in-law	Mother-in-law exhibiting some dementia type symptoms (undiagnosed). In 2001 Asma's in-laws were in Bangladesh for a long stay so she was not recorded as a carer
Sani	Husband with ill health		Widowed in the weeks before the interview
Nurun	Mother-in-law		Mother-in-law passed away

care services when the children were young. When caring for spouses and parents or parents-in-law, care needs often gradually escalate and as such the care role is subsumed under the gendered role of 'wife', 'daughter' or 'daughter-in-law', hence care services may be less likely to be involved. This was more the case in 2001; in the second wave of interviews in 2011 there is greater evidence of use of care services – both formal providers and community organisations – for the care of adults.

Place affects the lived experience of ageing: living in the UK has provided older Bangladeshi people with access to resources they would not have in Bangladesh. Free bus passes for older people can encourage their mobility (Ziegler 2012),

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but do not guarantee mobility. For example, Toslima's mother's poor mobility requires her to use the bus for short distances, but her other health issues mean that she cannot travel alone. In 2001 Toslima was not working and spoke about her difficulty in meeting the bus fares to accompany her mother.

In the last 10 years the number of older people in the community has grown and as older people begin to use services the knowledge of the existence of such services trickles down the community and service engagement has become more acceptable; much in the same way that women's attendance at language classes was initially low until more and more women began to use the service and others in the community felt less threatened by them. The utilisation of care services by increasing numbers of Bangladeshi families presents them as less of an interfering force that challenge the community norms of familial care, and more as a support structure to help families provide effective care. Tower Hamlets has also seen new innovative community organisations established to support older people in the community, run by Bangladeshis and providing a range of activities and services that are relevant to the community, these are considered acceptable and even desirable places to attend. One organisation, Sonali Gardens, is discussed later. As discussed in Chapter 5, as children have grown up, access to wider and mainstream services has undoubtedly been broadened by the reduction in language barriers that have been an obstacle for older migrants. Children are able to liaise with services more effectively than their parents and this in turn increases the awareness and uptake of available and relevant services.

Gender and Family Care

Across cultures the vast majority of care is provided from within the family (Carers UK 2011) with women as primary caregivers. Care giving is almost universally synonymous with female gender roles (Brewer 2001, Spitzer et al. 2003). For many of the respondents in this study care duties were performed alongside raising young children. This has a number of known implications; women who are performing both the role of carer and parent are known to be poorer in later life (Evandrou and Glaser 2004). This is probably linked with the restrictions that care duties place on their ability to enter the labour force (Pagani and Marenzi 2008). Those caring for children and parents or in-laws are less likely to engage in healthy behaviours for themselves (Chassin et al. 2010), suffer poorer health (Young et al. 2006) and experience elevated levels of stress (Moriarty and Webb 2000, Lawrence et al. 2008).

Carers in the 'sandwich generation' (Grundy and Henretta 2006) care for dependent children as well as parents or in-laws. The growth in numbers of people who are in this situation has been attributed to greater longevity on the one hand and the choice of deferring parenthood on the other. Studies report those in the 'sandwich generation' are typically in their forties and fifties (Künemund 2006). For Bangladeshi women a combination of early marriage

and large family size intersect with cultural norms of duty and care for in-laws from the moment of marriage. This leads to women providing care for dependent children as well as elderly in-laws over a long period of time, often from straight after marriage. Thus the respondents in this study did not enter into the sandwich generation in their forties and fifties, but often in their teens and early twenties. Rupa married at 15 years old and immediately took on the role of carer for her elderly parents-in-law. She says about her husband:

> He didn't marry me for himself did he? He married me to look after his family. (Rupa 2001)

Aged 60 at the time of interview in 2011, she is still performing the role of carer for her grandson. It is important that categories of carer, such as sandwich carer, are open to cultural differences rather than being defined by purely western experiences. Otherwise support will be designed for, and targeted at, limited age bands and exclude those who do not fall into the age parameters. The support needs of people in their twenties may be very different to those in their fifties.

Spitzer et al. (2003: 268) argue that the role of women as natural carers has been constructed so efficiently that 'these activities can be acknowledged as exhausting or constraining but not as burdensome or oppressive'. In their study with Chinese and South Asian carers, they report that despite attributing stress, ill health and exhaustion to the demands of care, respondents deny that care is in any way a burden to them. This distinction is an important one because it implies a sense of wanting to care rather than it being a purely familial obligation. In my study, both Asma and Nurun talked effusively about their passion for caring for their mother-in-law and were glad that they had the opportunity to do this. Whilst the care was undoubtedly demanding, it was not viewed as a burden. The ability to fulfil their care duty was viewed as personally, culturally and religiously fulfilling (Chao and Roth 2000). Nurun also recognised the financial support she received for what is considered a cultural duty and relates positive outcomes from her care provision. She describes attempting to put her mother-in-law in respite care:

> I tried once and all she did was cry, she would hold on to the end of my sari and scream. When I came home I just couldn't eat, I felt so bad and unsettled and worried about her. So I brought her home and didn't put her in care again. I thought, 'If I am doing so much anyway, then why not this little bit more?'

> It was when my parents had come from Bangladesh, if they went to my brother's house, she would insist on going with them and if they didn't take her she would sit in the corner and urinate there and wail, 'Why didn't they take me? Why didn't they take me?' So that was when I wanted to have her in care. I booked her in for six weeks but I couldn't bear to see her so upset so I brought her back within days. I had to make myself stronger for her. May Allah bless her, she did

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> so much for me – I got lots of benefit money for looking after her didn't I? A lot of good things have happened in my life. I am happy. I got a lot of money for her and we got everything for her because she was so seriously ill. (Nurun 2011)

Asma, who is currently caring for her mother-in-law, says:

> I am so happy that she lives with us and that I can look after her even if she can be difficult. (Asma 2011)

This is in line with Islamic guidance where any child who has the opportunity to care for a parent is considered to be blessed. For Muslims, caring for parents in their old age is regarded amongst the highest of all blessings (Parveen, Morrison and Robinson 2011). The elevated status of care provision across cultural, ethnic and religious frameworks may be a reason for the endurance of willingness to care. Cultural norms and beliefs associated with care provision shape the practice of care (Cravey and Mitra 2011) and the cultural kudos as well as potential religious benefit derived from providing care may ameliorate some of the stress associated with care provision.

The gendered nature of care is especially pertinent in cases of cross gender care. This is a sensitive issue, particularly around intimate care. Whilst daughters-in-law are expected to cook, clean, do the laundry and support the care of a father-in-law in other ways, intimate care is ruled out (Katbamna et al. 2004). Victor, Martin and Zubair (2012) found that Bangladeshi women are reluctant to let any other women including nurses attend to personal care of their spouses. However, if a woman requires personal care, this is rarely taken on by husbands, and instead care duties are likely to be performed by a daughter or daughter-in-law (Victor, Martin and Zubair 2012). Of course this is not always the case. In my study, between 2001 and 2011 the care dynamic between Jannat and her husband has reversed. Her health has deteriorated to the extent that he is now her primary caregiver. With their youngest daughter at school most of the day, Jannat's husband assists her with most of her personal care needs.

Gardner (2006) argues that first-generation women played a vital role in establishing the patterns of migration from Bangladesh. In what she terms 'wife-work' (376) she purports that far from being passive actors in the migration chain, women's role in providing care to the families of their spouses enabled male migration to chart the course it did. Had women not performed gendered roles in the way they did, the whole family reunification process and the structure of Bangladeshi migration may have been vastly different. She argues that adopting this perspective reverses the role of the dependant, with men being indebted to women for creating the space to enable them to migrate by continuing the expected gender roles in Bangladesh in their absence. Shanaz was interviewed in 2001 and describes remaining in Bangladesh to perform care duties there. She married in 1965 at the age of 14, but it was over 20 years later in 1986 when she finally migrated to the UK to live with her husband. She says:

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> I came to this country after my mother died. She didn't want me to come while she was alive. She said, 'Don't leave me and go'. My mother-in-law also told my husband to not bring me while they were still alive. So I didn't come until they had all died in '86. (Shanaz 2001)

Sadly, her husband passed away in 1990 just four years after she arrived. Nargis was also in a similar situation:

> I have always had to look after people, right from my father, to my father-in-law, to my husband, and my mother. My husband fell ill two years after I came here. (Nargis 2000)

Nargis's care duties remained even after her husband passed away as she continued to care for her mother in Bangladesh financially and with visits whenever she could afford to go back. These accounts chime with Gardner (2006) who describes women's accounts of migration where they migrated only when they were no longer needed in Bangladesh; or only when their husbands required care in the UK.

Nazma was interviewed in 2001. Soon after her marriage at 18 her husband returned to the UK leaving her four months pregnant in Bangladesh. He never went back. Eleven years later, the hospital where her husband was an inpatient arranged for her to come to the UK with their son to care for him. But he was so poorly he never went home and remained in hospital till he died. She describes her situation:

> I never had my husband. We never spent any time together. When I came here he was already in hospital. I never cared for him at home. I hope Allah forgives me. As his wife, I couldn't do anything for him. They wouldn't let him come home. They put a tube into his stomach. All those years he couldn't have even a grain of rice – I could eat whatever I wanted – but my husband couldn't touch a thing. (Nazma 2001)

She talks of her sadness at the fact that her son never knew his father:

> My husband came back [to London] when I was four months pregnant. If my son hadn't come over he would never have seen his father. But he only saw him. His father couldn't speak a word to him. It was all through gestures. My son has that regret – 'I never heard my father's voice'. He only saw his father because we came, otherwise he wouldn't even have seen him. (Nazma 2001)

Nazma's husband remained in hospital until he passed away in 1996. He could not return home to the fifth floor of a housing block, so the hospital occasionally arranged for him to spend time at a daycentre where she could spend the whole day with him. From initially attending this centre to spend time with husband, at the time of interview she was volunteering at the centre. She describes her care role:

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> I do three days voluntary work at the centre. I help people who are handicapped, paralysed and disabled. Some have mental problems. It's a special centre – I don't know the name – it's a community centre. I go three days a week, I am a 'caring something', I don't know what they call it. I take them to the toilet, help them wash for prayers, get everything ready for them to eat. I have to put those things on – I don't know the name, to make sure they don't spill anything on their clothes. Some of them can feed themselves, others can't. I help them eat if they need help. (Nazma 2001)

Nazma's lack of knowledge of relevant terms is apparent, to the point of not knowing the name of the place she works – the same centre that she has been visiting for almost 10 years. She has a role within that organisation, but does not know her job title. Similarly she is not aware of what her husband's illness was other than he was paralysed and immobile and could not speak. For women like Nazma who migrate and fall into the role of caring for a spouse soon after, this often means that their husband as main source of contact with the wider society is not available to them. After migration her world revolved around the hospital and the community centre and is now focused predominantly on the community centre; but she lacks the ability to express where she works or what her job title is. Working in a Bangladeshi community centre has not helped her develop her language skills. But as I have discussed in Chapter 4, and as Nazma's experience shows, a lack of literacy or language skills need not be a barrier to active citizenship or an impediment to actively engaging in the community.

For many migrant women who provide care, their main source of support is their husband (Mir and Tovey 2003) who takes on the role of liaising with officials, pursuing benefits and household adaptations (Katbamna et al. 2004). Women like Nazma whose husband is the recipient of care, or single women like Rupa who provide specialised care as well as raising a young family are often highly isolated, with their access to services further limited by language difficulties.

Despite the strong association between Asians and family care, Bowes and Wilkinson (2003: 390) point out that the 'ideological commitment to care' is present across cultures but the practical application of care duties varies within and between cultures. Wanless (2006) argues that the expectation or desire that children will care for parents in old age is not a peculiarly Asian one. But for South Asians in the UK the pervasive stereotype of a preference to shun services and provide care within the household remains indomitable. The notion that 'they look after their own' (Department of Health and Social Services Inspectorate 1998), has repeatedly been challenged by numerous studies that provide substantial evidence to question the notion of larger Asian family structures and extended networks buffering against the stress of caring and providing additional support with care (Walker and Ahmad 1994, Atkin and Ahmad 2000, Katbamna et al. 2004). Whilst extended households continue to be prevalent amongst Asian communities and seemingly offer the potential of a number of carers, the reality is often much more restricted (Twigg and Atkin 1994). Members of extended households may not be prepared to engage in care duties.

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The complexity of providing care is demonstrated by Nurun's case. In 2001, Nurun's mother-in-law had recently come from Bangladesh for an eye operation for her failing eyesight. She had no recourse to public funds having been in the country for less than six months. At the time of interview, Nurun was unsure of the anticipated length of her mother-in-law's stay. When interviewed in 2011 her mother-in-law had passed away and Nurun detailed the decline in her mother-in-law's health and the support from social services:

> Social services were so good. There was a lovely man that helped me. He was the social worker and he did so much. He got us anything we needed – just everything. I can't say how much they helped me – it was so much. He saw that I was alone and I had no one to help me, so they really helped me. No one in my family wanted to care for her; they didn't like it, even my husband. She was just so messy and would soil herself deliberately and they didn't want to help. I told social services this and they helped me. They were so good. (Nurun 2011)

An unexpected outcome of the care duties that Nurun had taken on was the insistence of her husband that she learn English so that she could take her mother-in-law to appointments without the need for him to accompany them. He had initially taken them both, but the frequency of his mother's appointments led him to get frustrated and he pushed Nurun into learning English so she could manage this without him. In turn this increased her confidence to communicate with other services.

Nurun's experiences also highlight the lack of willingness of other family members to take on care duties despite their proximity (Katbamna et al. 2004). As daughter-in-law she was performing the expected role of carer (Sin 2006), but her in-laws were not willing to take on the care role as she had done. When asked if other family members had assisted with the care of her mother-in-law she responded:

> No. Not at all. She has another son here – he didn't come to see her once. He lives in Bethnal Green and didn't come to see her at all. His sisters phoned him from Bangladesh and begged him to come and see her, but he didn't bother. He is married, has four children, but he didn't come. His sister even came from Bangladesh and went to their house and begged him to come and see their mother – but he didn't. (Nurun 2011)

Nurun's experience of caring for her mother-in-law has forged her decision to not care for her own elderly mother. Having cared for her mother-in-law, Nurun's energies are spent and she does not feel able to care for her mother, and says her siblings aren't prepared to do so. Her mother had last visited the UK for Nurun's daughter's wedding and as with many ageing individuals expressed a desire to move to live near her children (Petterson and Malmberg 2009). Whilst Nurun wants her mother to be close, she cannot cope with the care duties. She describes the tensions in the family about who would be the primary caregiver and details

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the solution they have reached. Unlike Nurun, her brother's wives refuse to care for their mother-in-law. Nurun's brothers who live in Italy, America and the UK have compensated for this by paying for someone else to provide the care that they and their wives are unable or unwilling to. Nurun says:

> I would have liked to have kept her here, and she wanted to stay too – but who would look after her in this country? My brother's wife refused to, she doesn't like her. My brother is married to my cousin – she is the daughter of my mother's brother – so close. But she has said she won't do it. And I am too busy with my own family to care for her. I brought my mother over twice and she lived with me both times, but it was too much for me. So much pressure. I had to look after her 24 hours. Now even if she wants to come over, I won't bring her. It is better for her there. She is in the village and there are people there to look after her. Every month all three of my brothers send money for her care. My brothers have paid for women to live there to look after her. They have brought in a whole family to live in the village and care for her. But my mum just wants to have her own children around her in her old age. She wants her family. I shout at her and say, 'Why do you want that?' (Nurun 2011)

This highlights the ways in which caring responsibilities alter with migration. Hochschild (2000) discusses how care duties do not end, but rather 'bend'. Nurun's brothers (and their wives) would have been culturally expected to take on the responsibility of their mother's care as Nurun did for her mother-in-law. Nurun points out one of her sister-in-laws is also her maternal cousin and therefore should have an additional sense of familial care, but does not. Again this highlights the lack of being able to rely on family for care, and the fallibility of the continued assumption of services that Asian communities prefer to care for their own. In the absence of being able to meet their mother's wish to be near her own family, Nurun's brothers have supplanted an alternative family to provide the care that they as a family felt unable to provide in the UK, America or Italy. Practical care has been translated into financial support to ensure personal care is met. Physical distance does not eliminate care duties; rather it reworks care obligations to stretch across borders.

Just as Nurun's brothers reinterpret their duty of care across time and space, so does Nargis. Despite her brothers being in Bangladesh, Nargis is the primary carer to her mother, and has made the decision to place her mother in care. She says:

> I send money over all the time for [my mother]. I went and looked after her once, it is really hard. I don't blame my sister-in-laws because they are busy with their children. They have to look after their children and pay for their education. My mother's medication costs about 800 taka [£12] a month. I thought rather than paying all this money out for her medicine, I would put her in a clinic. It is a very good clinic. It costs 1.5 lakh taka [about £2,000] a year. She is there all week and comes home at weekends. My mother says, 'My seven sons haven't done as much for me as my one daughter. My one daughter is doing everything for me'. (Nargis 2000)

Thus even in Bangladesh family care cannot be relied upon. It is significant that Nargis's mother makes the distinction between her sons and Nargis. The company and contribution of sons is important to Asian elders and the care of daughters-in-law is expected above that of daughters (Spitzer et al. 2003). Highlighting the care that Nargis provides also highlights the lack of care on the part of her sons and daughters-in-law.

The concept of 'global care chains' has generally been applied to female migrant workers who travel from developing countries to richer countries to fulfil care deficits there (Razavi 2007). Thus the scenario of the nurse who is employed in a care home to look after the elderly whilst her own elderly parents struggle alone; or the young mother who has to leave her child with family members as she raises the children of wealthy families abroad (Leinaweiver 2010). The care duties they leave behind are not forgotten but transformed through migration (Hochschild 2000), and met through other means such as reliance on wider family or buying in care. Nargis and Nurun are both part of global care chains whereby their decisions are integral in the care of others. Nargis took on the financial responsibility of caring for her mother and took the decision to move her into a clinic. Nurun's realisation and assertion that she is unable to care for her mother alone in the UK without support from her siblings, has prompted her brothers to make the necessary financial arrangements to ensure her care in Bangladesh to compensate for their inability to provide familial care. The experiences of Nurun and Nargis show that it is important to understand the transnational care for parents by children in the diaspora, as this has implications on their finances and emotional wellbeing as they provide care from a distance. There is a body of literature that examines the notion of 'transnational mothering' where motherhood duties stretch over time and place (e.g. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997). However, the literature on migrant children's care for non-migrant parents remains relatively under-explored (Mazzucato 2007, Sun 2012).

Both Nurun and Nargis's cases demonstrate the agency of Bangladeshi women in making decisions about care provision. And such agency can also be expressed within a framework of cultural expectations about gendered care. Asahara et al. (2001) argue that reliance on family care is exacerbated by cultural barriers against seeking the intervention of outside sources as it can be viewed as shameful and indicative of a failure to maintain one's cultural identity. There was greater evidence of such attitudes expressed in 2001. Salma describes the demands of her care duties and her husband's refusal to have outside carers:

> He has had five heart attacks. He has diabetes, high [blood] pressure, skin disease all over his body, and psychiatric problems. Some days he is very ill, other days it's not too bad. He can hardly walk. I have to feed him his medication. He forgets things. When it becomes very bad, he forgets his own home – if he goes out then he will go past the house and carry on walking. Now he can't walk very much though. I am just kept busy by him. Give him this, give him that, he wants to eat this, then he doesn't, this is good, then it's not. That takes up my

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> whole day. They were going to give us a nurse to look after him at home, but he doesn't want that, he just says that he doesn't want a nurse; he wants me to do everything. And we just want to do whatever keeps him happy, so we haven't got a nurse. (Salma 2001)

However, despite her husband's refusal to engage with services, Salma expresses her own agency when things get too much for her. Most of the time she does her best to conform to her husband's wishes and perform the cultural role of dutiful wife providing care as he requests, but occasionally she needs extra support:

> Social workers help us and the hospital nurses come. Sometimes when it just gets to much the GP sends nurses to the house. If they get a letter or a phone call from the GP they come to the house and help me. (Salma 2001)

Her husband's authority has been diminished by his declining health status which has increased Salma's authority and decision making capacity in the house. This allows her to respect her husband's wishes, but overrule his choice when she is struggling to manage.

In 2011 respondents who were providing care often described the support they had from their children rather than extended family members or care services. When Rupa was interviewed in 2001 she described the unreliable support she was getting from care services:

> They gave us a helper to take me to the appointments. But she wouldn't take me. My daughters still had to take me. The lady would say that she had other things to do that day, so she couldn't take us. (Rupa 2001)

Rupa's experience of sporadic support from agencies coupled with the fact that she had not returned to Bangladesh since her arrival to the UK 20 years earlier made her lament the absence of family support. As discussed in Chapter 5, Rupa stressed how much she wanted her see her brother again, and when interviewed in 2011 she mentioned that he was now living in an adjoining borough. The practical support that she had imagined had not transpired with his arrival. This resonates with Spitzer et al.'s (2003) findings where Chinese and South Asian respondents spoke about how brothers had been brought over to Canada to help in the care of parents, yet after arriving they failed to provide any support with care.

For Rupa, a much more consistent and reliable source of support has been her own children. As they have grown older they have taken on a more active role in supporting her both practically and emotionally. When asked if she has any support with her care duties she says:

> My children. I don't have any other family or any other support. Sometimes my children will tell me, 'Mum, why do you worry so much? We are here for you'. Or if there is anything – at the slightest problem – they all descend here. (Rupa 2011)

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Children can provide a key source of support to carers. Rupa's reliance on her children reflects other studies which find that in many Bangladeshi families, female carers rely almost exclusively on their non-disabled children as they have no other source of support, formal or informal (Katbamna et al. 2002).

However, it is worth noting the gendered differences in care support. Katbamna et al. (2004) found evidence in their study that the presence of children was no guarantee of support with care. They report many female carers complained about the lack of willingness on the part of their sons to engage in any care related tasks, especially the intimate care of their fathers. Reinforcing the gendered nature of care, the respondents in their study spoke about how daughters willingly engaged in care duties and often took on full care duties if the main carer was ill. Rupa reports her daughter being more involved in supporting her with care related issues, whilst her sons make more financial contributions such as paying the mortgage. Lee (2010: 647) uses the term 'care work' to describe unpaid practical support (as opposed to personal care) that children make to elderly parents – things like making phone calls, arranging appointments, being a confidant, etc. This type of 'care work' can also be applied to those who perform such tasks to aid primary carers in the way that Rupa's daughter supports her in performing her care duties and accessing relevant services.

Family care is crucial to the care system (Dahlberg, Demack and Bambra 2007) and thus supporting families in providing care is essential. My findings show it is vital to understand the fluidity of family support networks amongst Bangladeshi families rather than the perpetuation of stereotypes of care provided solely within the home (Owens and Randhawa 2004). In the west multigenerational living is on the rise (Augustine and Raley 2012), with changes in demographic trends such as increased life expectancy meaning parents moving in with children and their families as they become less capable of looking after themselves, or adult children choosing to live at home as a result of financial constraints or outcome of divorce (Goodman and Silverstein 2002, Riley and Bowen 2005). Whilst multigenerational Bangladeshi households are still a common feature of this community, the numbers are decreasing. Increasingly, the second generation are living in nuclear units (Harries, Richardson and Soteri-Proctor 2008). Within this context familial care obligations are being reinterpreted all the time, and family carers cannot be taken for granted; this necessitates the need for appropriate care services to support families in providing care, and also for those who do not have family to rely on.

Use of Care Services

As the Bangladeshi community begins to age in place, service providers are becoming increasingly aware of the deficiencies in service provision to meet the needs of the elderly (Phillipson and Ahmed 2004). As discussed in Chapter 4, the ability to speak English enhances many areas of a migrant's life in the UK. South

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Asian women are far less likely to speak English than men. Most first-generation men had migrated to work and this daily interaction outside the house meant that men were forced to speak English in order to make themselves understood. Even when residing in shared accommodation and working in environments with mainly other Asian men, the practicalities of shopping, catching a bus, going to the doctor, opening a bank account, etc. all forced interaction and meant that men had to have or develop some grasp of the English language. When women arrived, they continued in their home-based roles and their husbands managed all their practical affairs negating the need, and reducing the opportunity, for women to speak English (Ahmed 2005a). The husband's role as interpreter was replaced by children as they grew up (Barron et al. 2010), especially when the children's language skills superseded that of the parents (Chamba and Ahmad 2000). Women whose husbands became unwell before their children were old enough to act as interpreters often suffered great difficulty in accessing services when they took on the role of caring for their spouse (Walker and Ahmad 1994, Butt and Mirza 1996). South Asian female carers with limited or no English receive less help and support from services than English speaking carers (Gerrish 2001).

For many South Asians (particularly women) care duties are thought to be an intrinsic part of family duties; however, as demonstrated by Nurun's experience, these obligations do not exist in opposition to support from services. Whilst family is the preferred option for care, Sin (2006) found high levels of expectation of support from the state as well as from within the family. Despite Asians being less likely to take up respite care (McGrowther et al. 2002), there is evidence that where services are appropriate and tailored to the needs of minority groups, they are utilised and appreciated (Cook, Maltby and Warren 2004).

For some who were wary of social services involvement, offers of help may have appeared as veiled threats to spilt up the family, and impacted their decision to engage with services. When Rupa was interviewed in 2001 she was caring for ten children and two grandchildren, she describes the help she was offered:

> Social services say, 'If you can't manage to look after them, then we will take them into care'. But as long as my eyes are open, I will never let them go into care. I will never let them go. (Rupa 2001)

This fear can make carers suspicious of services and make them less keen to discuss any needs they may have for fear of being deemed unable to provide effective care.

In their review of studies examining use of services, Wilson et al. (2012) found that access to healthcare services is impeded by a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity by service providers with inefficient use of interpreters and community services. Rejection of external care may be premised on fear of difference and worries that cultural and religious needs will not be understood or respected and thus not be met by service providers who lack a shared cultural understanding and background. In 2001 Asha was caring for her husband who suffers from Parkinson's disease, she describes providing most of his care needs:

> I have to feed him and dress him. He has had this for six years. He doesn't have feeling in his hands so I have to do those things for him – bathing him, dressing him, feeding him. They [social services] have offered to help, but I don't need any help. As I am capable of doing it, why should I take any help? If I can't do it then I will take their help. (Asha 2001)

At that point the family had been offered help from services but had chosen not to take it. When I visited in 2011, Asha's husband's condition had worsened and they now have a fulltime carer living at home. The family received formal support from social services to make adjustments to the house for her husband but have chosen not take support for his personal care needs. For this they have made their own arrangements with someone from the community. There appears to be a mutually beneficial arrangement in place with the carer, an overseas student from Bangladesh, having a place to live and meals with the family; and the family having an on-hand male carer to assist with personal care of the respondent's spouse. Asha describes his role:

> He is a student. He is here to study and he lives here and looks after my husband. I can't manage it all myself. He feeds him, does his washing, dresses him, takes him to the bathroom and takes him out. (Asha 2011)

At other times during the fieldwork the carer was spotted taking the respondent's husband around Whitechapel in a wheelchair. This is something the respondent herself would have struggled with and carers from a formal care provider may have raised issues around health and safety protocols preventing them from undertaking this task. By employing the carer themselves the family are able to set the terms of employment and expectations for his role. The fact that the family has enlisted a carer, rather than one of the sons taking on the care role, suggests that the family are more inclined towards western notions of buying in care, than of family providing care for their own. But only so far as this care meets their linguistic, cultural, ethnic and religious requirements.

Asha's decision to bring in care for her husband highlights the gendered nature of care duties. Hiring a carer from the community to live in the house as a permanent carer for her husband allows her sons to continue working, whilst her daughters-in-law maintain the household chores. However, had it been Asha who required the care it is questionable as to whether the family would buy in a carer. In such a situation it is likely her daughters-in-law would be expected to meet her personal care needs.

Suleya's daughter was born with disabilities that would significantly impact her ability to cope independently in her life. Services were involved from her birth to ensure the family had adequate support in caring for her. As she grew older the support altered to meet her needs with Suleya providing continual care. When interviewed in 2011, her daughter, despite being severely disabled, is living in assisted accommodation. Suleya says:

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> Now she has carers and support so we don't have to do anything. She has her own house and she has people there to help her. It has been six years since she has been living independently. It's like a hospital system, there are always people there. There are doctors and nurses that come in everyday. There are three or four people there all the time to help. (Suleya 2011)

Suleya's experience contradicts notions that the religious and cultural beliefs of Asians inhibit their uptake of services for disabled children (Bywaters et al. 2003). Suleya is confident that the services and accommodation that her daughter is receiving meet her needs and enable her to live far more independently than would be possible at the family home. Her daughter continues to often stay at the family house and was visiting at time of interview, but living in assisted accommodation allows her greater independence and alleviates the care duties for Suleya.

The findings show where services are appropriate individuals are happy to engage with them and find them beneficial. In 2001 carers were more likely to be in touch with services when they were caring for a child and most often their point of contact for other services was the schools or GP. Fazil et al. (2002) report similar findings in their study of Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents caring for disabled children where access to care services is often negotiated through schools and doctors who initiate the contact and referrals. In 2011 there was a greater engagement with care services for older people, particularly care organisations that have been developed in Tower Hamlets to meet the specific needs of an ageing Bangladeshi population.

Studies have found that residential segregation can impact health and access to care (Williams and Sternthal 2010). Areas with large minority concentrations often have greater levels of poverty and lack of service provision (Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda and Abdulrahim 2012). However, this is not always the case. In Tower Hamlets the provision of health and care services for the elderly and those with healthcare needs has been driven by the size of the population (Smith 2009). As the community ages in place, there is a greater requirement for services that meet their specific religious and cultural needs. During the first phase of interviews in 2001, St Hilda's East Community Centre provided a luncheon club and assistance with appointments for the elderly Bangladeshi community. During fieldwork the manager was interviewed and spoke about the majority of users being male, with provision for females but fewer numbers making use of them. The women who were regular attendees tended to be older and widowed and more isolated than other women of their age. By 2011 St Hilda's had substantially increased its range of services and had acquired new premises in the form of Sonali Gardens Day Centre. The growing Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets has led to the development of more tailored services. Having these services in place, in tandem with the acceptance on the part of migrants that their much longed for dream of returning to the homeland is unlikely to come to fruition, has led to the uptake of resources that meet their needs. Lee et al. (2012) found that older immigrants are more likely to make use of day care centres when they are sensitive to their

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cultural homeland heritage. Centres offer a space for social participation, and an opportunity to interact with others in the community (Levasseur et al. 2012). This has been found to be related to positive health outcomes (Nummela et al. 2008).

Interestingly, during the first set of interviews in 2001, none of the 100 respondents randomly selected, nor those purposefully selected for pilot and pre-pilot interviews (including those who used community centres) mentioned St Hilda's in any way. As discussed in Chapter 2, in 2001, Saleha spoke about the demands of caring for her elderly in-laws. She lived very close to St Hilda's but was not aware of the organisation. When informed she was enthusiastic about their services but expressed a lack of confidence in contacting them herself. So I made the initial contact with the service for her and explained the situation in Saleha's presence, who then continued the conversation. This supports the notion that low utilisation of services is more likely to be due to a lack of knowledge rather than an active resistance to services (Manthorpe et al. 2009).

In 2011, Sonali Gardens was mentioned by numerous respondents. Some of the older women attend the organisation. Zeba is a regular user and even extended an invitation to go and meet the other users of the centre. But it is not just the users of the centre that expound its virtues. Other respondents spoke about Sonali Gardens as a place that provides good resources for the elderly community and claim they would happily use the services themselves. Toslima describes Sonali Gardens:

> My mother goes to the Sonali Gardens. Wow – it's so beautiful and there are so many carers there for them. They have people to help them do everything. If they go to do *wudu* [ablution for prayer] there is someone there. They spend the day gossiping, playing carom, watching TV, singing songs. They have an Imam there just for them who will lead their prayers. Their food is cooked for them. What a comfortable life they have. They get picked up from their house in a car even though they have a freedom pass [bus pass allowing pensioners unlimited free travel on buses and tubes across London]. (Toslima 2011)

The manager of Sonali Gardens told me that many of the users had anticipated returning to Bangladesh in their old age. Given this, none had planned for growing old in the UK. As the community settles, increasing numbers of people are realising they will not return to Bangladesh for good. As well as looking forward to enjoying Sonali Gardens, Toslima is planning ahead for old age:

> I bought this house because it is so convenient for me, the hospital is close, East London Mosque is close, the market is close. So when I am older and I am on my own everything I need will be close to me. (Toslima 2011)

The importance of place to older people in reinforcing their sense of belonging has been recognised (Evans 2009) and many respondents spoke about the importance of having their familiar surroundings around them. Toslima's assertion that she

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will be on her own when she is older shows that she does not harbour any cultural expectation of her children living with her or providing care in her old age.

Comparisons with Bangladesh

As well as care services available for older individuals, respondents discussed the importance of health and welfare services as they grow older in the UK. However, the positive aspects of these are balanced against a sense of greater isolation in old age in the UK compared to having people around for company in Bangladesh. There is a general sense that Bangladesh offers more personal care whereas in the UK it is much more practical, Rukshana says:

> In this country it is the norm that anyone who doesn't have someone to look after them, they will give them someone. In Bangladesh people have their families around to help them and look after them. When my parents got old and ill there was no shortage of people to look after them. The house was full of people, and there were people from the village and surrounding areas. There were endless people who would come and sit and talk to them. Day and night they had company, they were never alone. That is something unique. I have seen it myself, if there is an elderly person in the house then people from the surrounding areas will come in the morning, afternoon, night, to sit with the elderly person and talk to them and make them laugh. I think laughter and happiness is a medicine. Laughing drives away so many illnesses. It keeps your mind happy. (Rukshana 2011)

Clearly as the experiences of Nurun and Nargis show, care cannot be depended upon in Bangladesh. But what does seem more prevalent from respondents' accounts is the availability of social networks that Rukshana and others talk about. This is in contrast to the high social isolation amongst the elderly has been recorded in western countries (Golden et al. 2009). Studies have found that many older people prioritise social engagement over physical health in reference to ideas about positive ageing (Depp and Jeste 2006). My respondents suggest that in Bangladesh they would be more socially engaged and less isolated than in the UK.

Whilst all women recognise the value of health and care services in the UK, they sometimes question the quality of services. Three of the respondents make reference to people being 'dumped' in hospital and left alone. Shamima, like Rukshana, discusses how in Bangladesh individuals are never alone:

> [Health services] are good here, but haven't people always survived in Bangladesh? They lived. There are doctors there. There is nothing special about this country, in fact it is worse. They just dump you in hospital. You don't have anyone of your own to look after you. If you fall ill in Bangladesh there will be

> 10 people at your side to look after you. There are cousins and lots of family, everyone will come and see you. (Shamima 2011)

She talks of her fears of services that do not meet cultural and religious needs:

> [In Bangladesh] they will give you halal not haram, they will read the Kalima to you; they will read the Quran next to you. They will pray with you. What do you have in this country? You go to hospital and you are with the whites. You have to pick through the food to see if there is anything you can eat. You don't know what the food has been mixing with. They give you some medicine and just ignore you. You could lie in bed and scream in pain all day, they just don't care. (Shamima 2011)

Gulabi weighs up the costs and benefits of living in the UK and comes to the conclusion that:

> It is better to die in Bangladesh but better to live in this country. In this country there are free doctors, in Bangladesh everything is on money. (Gulabi 2011)

Gulabi very concisely articulates what many of the respondents express – a sense of being reliant on the healthcare system in the UK, but still yearning at some level to return to the homeland. Sun (2012: 1,249) reports similar findings with his Taiwanese respondents in the USA; one of his respondents describes America as a 'lonely paradise' and Taiwan as a 'happy hell'. Bangladesh offers the comfort of not being alone in old age; being able to go out and understand and be understood when talking; and being respected for their old age (Gardner 2006). But this is offset against the UK where they have access to free healthcare in close proximity. Of course, as well as this, as discussed in Chapter 3, respondents are also tied to the UK through their children. It is not purely the health and welfare system that binds them to the UK.

Some respondents recognise that care in Bangladesh is not ideal, Rupa talks about the dependency on others that would ensue if she was to age in Bangladesh:

> If you grow old in this country then you have support, it doesn't all fall on your children. They give you people to look after you. In Bangladesh your children have to look after you, and sometimes they will kick you as they care for you. In this country they provide carers for you, even if it is just to dump you in the hospital, they will make sure you are looked after. You don't know what the future holds, there is no guarantee is there? Today your children are looking after you, tomorrow they might not. Is there any guarantee they will? (Rupa 2011)

Other respondents also do not expect their children to care for them. Whilst some studies report a clear expectation by Asian and Bangladeshi migrants that their children will care for them if the need arises (e.g. Victor, Martin and

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Zubair 2012), in my study respondents are much more cautious about making any such assumption highlighting the diversity across and within minority group expectations of elder care.

Comparing care in the UK with Bangladesh, Mariam describes the practical healthcare support in the UK that would not be available in Bangladesh. She says:

> In Bangladesh you have to go and buy your medicine. Here, they have seen that I can't go and get my medicine so they drop it off to me. They package the medicines so that you don't forget or get confused, you know which day and what time to take them. It is written there. They would never do that for you in Bangladesh. (Mariam 2011)

It is not simply a case of better medication and treatment in the UK, although this is crucial, but also the practicalities of getting to health facilities in the town from the rural areas in Bangladesh. In 2001 Jannat had been caring for her husband, whilst her daughter-in-law cared for her. The housing situation has meant that her son has moved out with his family and the care role between her and her husband has reversed. Jannat has to be stretchered out of her flat twice a week for kidney dialysis. Her husband arrived towards the end of the interview and remarked about Jannat's treatment:

> It is much better here [in the UK]. If we were in Bangladesh we would both be dead by now. In Bangladesh how would we get the treatment? There wouldn't be a single bit of treatment like this in Bangladesh. Even if there was, how would we get there? We would probably have died on the roads trying to get to the hospital. (Jannat's husband 2011)

The rural areas of Sylhet from which respondents migrated would not have the facilities to manage Jannat's poor health.

In Bangladesh there are multiple obstacles to accessing care, including paying for medical treatment and having to travel into town for healthcare from rural areas. Evidence from Bangladesh has borne out the greater access and use of health services by those from wealthier households and those who live in urban areas (Rahman 2006). Health services are unequally distributed across the country with all the hospitals and medical colleges based in cities, whilst over 80 per cent of the population of Bangladesh reside in rural areas (Davis 2001). Given the costs and time associated with accessing health services in Bangladesh, women's health, and especially older women's health is often compromised with younger and male family members health needs prioritised (Hossen and Westhues 2010). The efforts of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Bangladesh have begun to highlight the needs of and support younger women of childbearing age, but older women who are longer reproducing are less of a health priority in Bangladesh (Hong 2000).

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The interviews show that there are advantages and disadvantages with ageing in Bangladesh. Individuals spoke about older people being treated with more respect and less likelihood of isolation in old age. However, ageing in Bangladesh can also be detrimental for women, with older women being excluded from health resources. Hossen and Westhues (2010: 1,197) report older women in rural areas find their age and gender working against them when seeking healthcare. They report that in rural Bangladesh '(f)or a typical family, the order of priority for seeking healthcare was: baby boy, baby girl, father, grandfather, mother, and then grandmother'. Following this hierarchy of health, my respondents would be last, or last but one on the priority list. By contrast, in the UK women have full access to healthcare albeit with some barriers of language. And in Tower Hamlets these barriers are increasingly being assuaged by the greater number of receptionists, doctors and other health professionals from the community. As discussed in Chapter 3, the growing number of second-generation Bangladeshis in professional occupations encourages women to engage more actively with services.

The complexity of 'geographies of belonging' (Blunt 2007) is demonstrated through interviewees' dependence on the health and welfare system in the UK which provides essential care, and their emotional attachment to Bangladesh as place to grow old surrounded by others. For some respondents growing old in the UK is a trade-off between the social care and company that they would receive in Bangladesh through their networks, and the medical care and welfare support they receive in the UK.

Ageing and Widowhood

For many women the experience of widowhood after migrating to the UK fundamentally changes their identities and roles. Whilst widowhood is a universal experience for married couples, there are differences in the way it is experienced and its impact on the individual. There is limited research on the experience of widowhood in general (Bernard et al. 2000), and even less on cultural contexts of widowhood. Most studies on widowhood examine much older groups (cf. Koren and Lowenstein 2008, Carr and Bodner-Deren 2009) where aside from ethnic differences, experiences are often less comparable due to the sample being retired, not having the responsibility for raising a family, and having adult children for support.

Ageing in Bangladesh is particularly precarious for single older women. Widowhood or divorce/separation can lead to a change in a woman's standing in the community, leaving them unsupported and feeling vulnerable (Katbamna et al. 2004). Welfare and immigration policies continually intersect throughout the lives of migrants (Jordan and Düvell 2002), and my findings show the welfare system in the UK is especially important for widows. In Bangladesh the situation for widows can be dire (Munsur, Tareque and Rahman 2010, Erb 2011); certainly for those who, as in this study, lack educational qualifications and live in rural

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areas with little chance of employment (Abedin 2003). In such situations, older women who have adult children rely on them for support, and younger widows have to rely on the charity of their husband's family or return to the natal family and earn their keep (Roy, Kane and e-Khuda 2001). Moymun talks about how as a widow she would have struggled Bangladesh:

> In Bangladesh it would be problematic; in this country there is a system in place. I am a widow: if I was in Bangladesh who would support me? Who would feed me? How would I get by? I would have to look to others for support to help me out all the time. It is because of the system in this country that people like me can survive. (Moymun 2011)

However, welfare for widows is uneven with some receiving bereavement support (prior to 2001 known as widow's benefit) and others not, Moymun had never received this benefit, she says:

> I don't get widow's benefit. You know how before men would say that they already had a wife, so I have those kind of problems. Actually he never had another wife, but we were never able to convince them of that, they don't believe it. So I don't get widow's benefit, I only get income support. (Moymun 2011)

It is unclear why Moymun would not receive her entitlement if there is no other claimant for the benefit. She appears to have accepted the reason she has been given. Howard et al. (2001) argue that minority communities and especially Asian women have particular difficulties accessing welfare benefits. They highlight how the requirement for uninterrupted National Insurance contributions 'militates against those who have irregular earnings, absences abroad or short working lives in the UK. The consequent over-reliance on means-tested benefits means that minority ethnic families are more likely to suffer from the associated problems, such as low take-up, administrative complexity and the poverty trap' (2001: 153). The administrative complexity has led to Moymun not pursuing her rightful claim more thoroughly.

Similarly in 2001, Zeba reported not receiving widow's benefit as her husband had two wives. Both co-wives live together and have asked for just one to receive the benefit, but were told that co-wives are ineligible for widow's benefit. In 2011 her situation remains unchanged. Sani had been widowed in the weeks preceding her interview in 2011, and the issue of bereavement benefit was discussed:

> I have applied, but they have said that it could take six months or more. Maybe it's because there are two of us. He has another wife doesn't he? I think they are trying to find out what the truth is. We are not hiding anything from them. Now the law is that you can't bring two wives, but he brought us over before that law. So I think they are looking into all of that. (Sani 2011)

She is confident of receiving the benefit, she says:

> There is a family like ours who live in this area and it is maybe three or four years now since their husband died, but both wives are getting [the benefit].

These cases demonstrate the arbitrary and complex nature of the welfare system where some people are able to access benefits and others are not. Accessing the welfare system is often more difficult for people from minority communities (Greasley and Small 2005). The relationship between polygamous marriages and access to welfare is unclear. No information is available on Government websites, and when I contacted the Department of Work and Pensions, they confirmed that in polygamous marriages standard policy is that neither remaining widow receives the benefit (DWP, personal communication, 22 October 2012). The experiences of this small group of women who were part of polygamous marriages illustrates the complexity and unevenness of the welfare system.

Housing and Care

Any discussion on welfare and care cannot ignore the importance of housing. The interviews conducted in 2001 were overwhelmingly weighted towards discussions on overcrowding and housing regardless of care needs. With children growing up and moving out of the home, the issue of overcrowding was not as salient in 2011. In 2001, between all 20 interviewees, 54 housing problems were identified from a list of options including damp, overcrowding, etc. In 2011, this had dropped to a third of the original number with only 18 problems identified across the sample. In 2001, the main issue was overcrowding affecting 60 per cent (12/20) of interviewees. As discussed in Chapter 5, in 2011, 70 per cent (14/20) of households had a reduction in number of residents; and the problem of overcrowding had dropped to 25 per cent (5/20). This is primarily due to the changing structure of the family with children growing up and moving away either through marriage, buying/renting their own home, or being allocated their own social housing. Those who continue to have problems with their housing are predominantly those with care issues. Rupa cares for her grandson and describes her situation:

> I share a bed with him, we sleep top to tail and neither of us gets any sleep, I sleep under his legs and he sleeps under my legs. We are hoping that they will be able to find a more suitable place for him to make his life easier. They keep tell us that we need to bid – but if there are no homes with facilities for him, then what is the point of bidding? Here his hospital is close, his social worker is close, everything is in this area, I can take him where he needs to go – the doctor is just there. If they send him to Docklands or the West End or Stratford then how would we travel to here? Everything I need and know is in this area, so I want him to have a place that is suited to his needs in or

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> around this area. If he is in this area he will feel happier and safer too. He has always lived in this house. But they won't give us anything. They can't find anything and just tell us to bid. If nothing suitable comes up for bidding then how can we bid? (Rupa 2011)

Rupa's experiences support findings from Fazil et al. (2004) who found high levels dissatisfaction with housing amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi families caring for children with disabilities.

It is worth commenting on the bidding system. In 2001 individuals who were in social housing and wanted to be re-housed applied to the council who would allot them points based on needs and place them on a waiting list. When properties became available, if the points were sufficient, individuals were invited to consider the available property. If they chose to decline, they would be offered a subsequent property that became available that matched their points. In 2002, Tower Hamlets Council introduced the bidding system following the Government's guidance on offering individuals more choice in their housing (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions 2000). This system, also known as the 'choice-based lettings' or CBL, requires individuals to 'bid' for properties made available through local newspapers or websites. Individuals interested in the released properties can bid for the property by post, online or telephone. This system puts the onus on individuals to look out for relevant properties and then bid for them. The decision for allocation of the property remains with the council who decide based upon need.

Despite this system purportedly increasing choice, it clearly disadvantages individuals with a lack of literacy and favours those with computer access and literacy (Pawson et al. 2006). The approach does not increase access evenly across individuals who require social housing. Older migrants will have to rely on their children's literacy skills to navigate this system,[1] but those without such support, such as Rukshana, are penalised by this scheme. It has been argued that far from providing choice, CBL may serve to limit the choices of disadvantaged groups (Pawson and Watkins 2007; van Ham and Manley 2009, 2014). CBL may also contribute to residential segregation where individuals and families with urgent need bid on houses in the least desirable areas in order to maximise chances of being successful (van Ham 2012).

Conclusion

Care provision in the Bangladeshi community is fluid and will be of increasing relevance as the community ages in place. In Tower Hamlets the provision of health and care services for the elderly and those with health needs has been

1 Of course, a disadvantage arising from lack of access to and literacy with computers applies to many people and not just older migrants.

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driven by the size of the population. Services such as Sonali Gardens have been developed to meet the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious needs of the community. These services can offer important lessons for those engaged in minority elder care outside of the borough in areas with less concentrated minority community distribution. Policy makers and service providers need to move on from assumptions that Asians are resistant in engaging with care services and expect care to be provided from within the family. Over time the increasing availability of culturally appropriate services in Tower Hamlets has supported women in accessing care services for their children, spouses and themselves that are relevant and acceptable. In addition, the welfare system supports women who are providing care, and ensures women are able to remain independent and not rely on others to support them in the case of widowhood.

The care role performed by migrant women is part of the wider process of the reproduction of gender roles that migrant women perform, and whilst many appropriate this role within their gendered, ethnic and religious framework, where appropriate support is available, it is utilised. Women exercise agency as carers in making decisions about those they care for, making decisions and choices about providing care and enlisting outside help when they require it. This is accommodated within their sense of care obligations, showing that care provision need not be defined as exclusively the responsibility of either family or services.

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Chapter 7
Religion

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The growth of Muslim communities in the west has led to a substantial increase in research on Muslims in the diaspora, particularly European Muslims (Phillips 2009). Kong (2009: 171) notes, 'a noticeable proportion of work in the post 1990s is focused on Muslim geographies, that is the geographical analysis of Muslim populations – their places, identities, communities and societies – at various, local, national and transnational scales'. Research in the 1990s predominantly focused on disadvantage faced by Muslim communities living in the UK (e.g. Runnymede Trust 1997). In the new millennium studies have provided evidence of prejudice towards Muslims in areas of education, employment and the media (Weller, Feldman and Purdam 2001, King and Ahmad 2010). Post-9/11 the study of religion has further expanded with the 'War on Terror' and the representation of Islamic fundamentalism as a global threat (Kong 2010). Alongside the rise in academic interest, reports suggest an increase in Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime after 9/11 (Sheridan 2006, Lambert and Githins-Mazer 2010) which appeared to intensify after the 7/7 bombings in London (Hamid 2011).

In 2015 there have been numerous reports of young Muslims, especially Muslim women, travelling to Syria from across the UK to join the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS). Young girls have travelled from schools in Tower Hamlets and the media spotlight has returned to areas with high Muslim populations with accusations of a lack of responsibility amongst the community itself. In a speech in June 2015, the prime minister, David Cameron, accused sections of the Muslim community to be condoning radical ideas. This was immediately denounced by the Muslim community and leading Muslim figures including the Conservative peer Baroness Warsi who argued that such comments undermine the work of British Muslims in attempting to combat this issue and serve to fuel antagonism towards the majority of Muslims who are as repelled by IS as anyone else (Mason 2015). The speech by the prime minister echoes the response of the government after the northern riots discussed in Chapter 4, where the whole community is seen as collectively responsible for the actions of a few and positioned as rejecting British ideals. There has been a huge surge in Islamophobic attacks, especially against women, reported since the rise of IS (Sanghani 2015).

The increasing numbers and visibility of Muslims has opened debates on the private and public practice of religion. Beaumont (2008) argues that we live in a post-secular society; in such a society, Muslim women have increasingly been constructed as problematic, especially since 9/11 (Amiraux 2003, Salih 2009). Whilst representations of Muslims have become more prevalent in both political

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and public discourse, there has been a substantial focus on issues of hijab (Moors 2009). This has come to be associated by many non-Muslims with oppression and terrorism (Silvestri 2011). The use of the hijab positions women as outsiders in the UK as a whole (Joppke 2009). Muslim women have become synonymous with traditions of arranged marriages which in turn are conflated with forced marriages (Grillo 2011, Ahmad 2012). The constant iterance of these images in the western media perpetuate stereotypes of Muslim women as being a homogenous group who self-segregate.

The hijab immediately communicates the faith of the wearer to the observer who may read any number of associations into this. Such a visible assertion very firmly takes religion into the public space. Media representations of Muslims since the early 1990s have perpetuated the notion of Muslims as fixed in their identities, presenting them as different from the rest of society and potentially threatening (Byng 2010). Since 2001 the media has increasingly portrayed Muslims as the 'other' in British society (Saeed 2007); constructing Muslims as the alien 'other' in society makes it easier to assume a fixed Muslim identity (Smock 2005). The media presents Muslim men as potential threats to the security of the nation (Hussain and Bagguley 2012). Jackson (2008) argues that post-9/11 young Muslim men have replaced young black men as the figure of fear and mistrust, and have come to represent the potential criminal or 'terrorist' within. Media representations of Muslim women have largely described them as downtrodden and without a voice (Ho 2007); however, recent accounts of second-generation Muslims who have travelled abroad to join militant Islamic groups have destabilised these stereotypes by highlighting the educational success and independence of young women (and men) who have joined such groups. The question of why young British Muslims choose to leave the freedom of the UK has again placed the spotlight on the homes and first-generation parents, questioning again the role of migrant women.

Claire Dwyer (1999, 2000) has shown how the second generation of South Asian Muslim women are defining for themselves what it means to be a 'Muslim woman'. Positioning themselves as distinct from, yet related to, the understandings and practices of their parents, their practices include the codes of the society that they have been socialised in. The identifications that they choose are both geographically place-bound in terms of the context and space they inhabit as well as culturally bound to some extent in line with what is permissible within the confines and dictates of their communities. Drawing on Hall's (1992) assertion that identities are processual, Dwyer (2002) discusses the ways in which young Muslim women continually construct and re-construct the meanings of home in negotiating their identity. She argues that the different facets of identity or identification that became prioritised at different times and in different places create the space for multiple levels of belonging.

Dwyer's argument is persuasive, but I argue is by no means limited to the second generation. The second generation through access to education, employment and a more varied social group may have more spaces which can contribute to the multiplicity of identification (i.e. school, work, friends, family, online spaces) and within which to articulate their identity; but this does not necessarily negate

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the same processes from impacting identity in the older generation. Whilst the first generation may not be involved in educational institutions or be employed as much as the second generation, their lives are not limited to the homestead. The spaces they encounter – markets, doctor's surgeries, school playgrounds, shops, community centres as well as transnational social fields – all influence their identity. Yet until now there has been no exploration in the literature of how the interaction in these spaces influences the identification of migrant older women.

Diehl, Koenig and Ruchdeschel (2009) argue that Muslim women have to continually contend with the stereotypical assumption that 'Muslim immigrants are ill-equipped to adapt to Western norms of gender equality' (Diehl, Koenig and Ruchdeschel 2009: 281). These stereotypes are more pervasive for older women given that the research on younger women highlights the advances in education and employment being made by the second generation who are closing the gap on gender inequality. The fact that older women have not made such advances on measures of education and employment wrongly implies they remain stagnant, inhabiting the same social, familial and cultural position they did when they migrated. Hopkins' (2006, 2008) work in Scotland has challenged the dominant presentation of Muslim men as aggressive and oppressive by highlighting the fluidity and multiplicity of young Muslim men's identity, illustrating how experience and expression of faith differs across gender and generation.

Since Nagel's (2001: 69) assertion that 'geographical literature on the Muslim world is sparse, and on Muslim women, even sparser', there has been a discernible growth in the study of Muslim women. However, most of this research continues to focus on younger women (e.g. Zine 2006, Dwyer and Shah 2009), leading Ryan (2011) to comment on the dearth of literature exploring older Muslim women's experiences. The continued lack of older women's accounts of their religiosity in the literature serves to reinforce the notion of them as passive and disengaged from society (Bilge 2010). Mack (2003: 153) argues that many feminist scholars view those who choose to structure their lives in accordance with religious dictates as having 'no agency or limited agency'. This view has been applied to Muslim women, especially older women, who are viewed as being fixed in their practise of faith. It is what Chaves (2010) terms the 'religious congruence fallacy', where it is assumed that an individual's religious beliefs and behaviours remain constant across time and situations; Chaves argues this is a key reason for the demonisation of Muslims. However, religious identity is far from fixed, it is as fragmented and contested as any other aspect of identity such as ethnic, cultural, national etc., and as different elements of identity interact they produce different ways in which a person produces or performs their identity.

Despite numerous studies on Muslims, little is known about how the everyday experiences of Muslim women interact with their faith (Silvestri 2011). Examinations of migrants afford little focus on their everyday religion or the fluidity of their experiences over time as they age (Silvey 2006). In her review of intersectional studies, Hulko (2009) notes the category or identifier of religion remains unexamined, and McLoughlin and Zavos (2013) call for the need for

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locality-based explorations of religion. This chapter examines the changing everyday religious experience for respondents and how religion interacts with generation and place in Tower Hamlets. It discusses how women's engagement with space changes over time and alters their religious practice; and demonstrates the fluidity of religious identification and practice amongst first-generation female migrants.

Religion and Arrival to the UK

Religion is a source of comfort and coping for immigrants (Vasquez 2005) and is often highly relied upon post-migration to help cope with the intense demands of adjusting to a new country. Casanova (2009) argues that the persistence of religion lies in the way it shapes societal values and creates norms for individuals to abide by. Migrants transport their social and religious norms with them when they migrate (Levitt 2008). These can help establish a sense of routine and normalcy when presented with alternative norms in a different society. However, maintaining these norms is not always practical or possible. Saleha describes the way she had lived in Bangladesh:

> Our father wouldn't let us go out much, and if we did, we would have to go in a rickshaw that was covered over by a big piece of cloth so that no one could see. And then, as we got older, and the times changed as well, our father would still tell us to not go to the market, or pass through the market, and not go here or there. So we would go to school in a sort of diagonal way, not cutting through the market, but through the land. (Saleha 2001)

She contrasts this with her life in the UK where despite living here for 20 years she remains aware of the difference between her strictly controlled life in Bangladesh and here:

> In this country, I have to go shopping, so I have to go out. Our religion says that we shouldn't go out too much, and when we do, we should be properly in *purdah*. But I don't always do it properly. I go to the bank, to the shops. I am aware of what I am doing, how much I am doing. (Saleha 2001)

In Bangladesh when Saleha ventured out into public places she would take her private space with her – under the cover of a cloth – into the public domain so that she could not be seen. Such measures are not possible in the UK where she has had to take on roles that she would not have done in Bangladesh. She remains aware of the precarious balance of the requirements of her faith alongside the daily requirements of her life in the UK.

Post-migration migrants often experience a heightened sense of religiosity (Warner 1998). This may be explained through the rituals associated with religious practice offering a sense of comfort through the reproduction of

familiar roles and activities in an unfamiliar space, or the role of religion as a useful coping mechanism helping migrants to adjust to the migration experience (Pargament 1997, Raghallaigh and Gilligan 2010). But increased religious practice may also arise from the lack of other activities in a new and unfamiliar land. As discussed in Chapter 5, after arrival many women spent long periods of time alone (or with young children) in the house whilst their husbands worked. Too afraid to leave the house alone, religious practice may have offered a distraction. Many of the respondents found that the reduced family size post-migration afforded them greater time to focus on their prayers and religious practice. Sarful notes:

> I think it is easier to follow the faith in this country. You sit alone and read in complete concentration. In Bangladesh there are so many people coming and going all the time, you may sit down in the morning to read but someone will come and you have to get up. Even when you pray sometimes you only have time to pray the *fard* [obligatory part of prayer] and someone or another will turn up before you have time to do the *nafal* [optional part of prayer]. In this country you can do whatever you want, whenever you want. You have the time to do it. (Sarful 2001)

Migrants may have felt their sense of self being threatened by the immense difference in attitudes, dress, customs and behaviours they were confronted with. This in turn may lead to the need to enact their religious identity as a means of validating their identity when confronted with potential threats. This phenomenon is not restricted to those who migrate over large distances. A focus group with younger women conducted in 2000, revealed that leaving the security of a familiar space led to an awareness and assertion of cultural and religious identity:

> It's funny; when I was younger I used to go to a youth club. We used to go on trips and camping. Every time we went on a trip I used to become more Bengali. We'd go to Scotland and Yorkshire, and every time we went I would pray all the time; at home I didn't used to pray. But when I was out of Tower Hamlets I used to pray, everything. I used to be more Bengali and more Muslim when I was out of the house than when I was at home. (Seema 2000)

Seema, a second-generation Bangladeshi, is firmly embedded in a large community of Bangladeshi Muslims who share the same cultural and religious tradition as herself. In the space of Tower Hamlets, rarely confronted with any difference, Seema takes her identity for granted and does not feel the need to assert it. In much the same way, my respondents had felt safe in their identity in Bangladesh and only became aware of difference when they migrated to the UK. Like Seema who feels compelled to assert her identity in a different place, when respondents arrived to the UK they reproduced familiar practices including religious ritual to validate their identity to themselves.

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Seema has grown up in Tower Hamlets with a large Bangladeshi observant Muslim community, but this was not always the case; Sarful compares the religious environment when she arrived 40 years ago to now:

> It has changed a lot in this country now, and people are turning more towards Islam and understanding it and practising it properly. Before in this country you would see men smoking cigarettes during Ramadan. I saw it with my own eyes, grown men not fasting. Now even very young children are excited about fasting. And parents take young children on *umrah* [mini-Hajj] during school holidays. Things have advanced a lot for Islam; there are a lot of mosques and *madrasas* [Islamic schools] here now. (Sarful 2011)

Sarful's description suggests that the size of the community has led to greater enforcement of religious norms. It may of course be the case that rather than a uniform practise of the faith, those who do not wish to comply with fasting may just be better at being more discreet knowing that there are more vigilant eyes in the community. But the need for discretion in deviating from religious expectations demonstrates the power of the community in its collective disapproval of those who do not comply. In earlier times when the community was not so large, the disapproval of a few was not as threatening as the risk of mass disavowal.

The Importance of Religion

Chapter 4 discussed the lack of literacy skills amongst the respondents. The importance afforded to religion and religious education is reflected in the fact that despite low literacy levels across the group in both Bengali and English, all of the respondents are able to read the Quran in Arabic. They had all been taught to read the Quran at home or in a mosque when they were young. They learnt to read Quranic Arabic, but did not understand what they were reciting. As I will discuss later, one of the benefits of living in the UK that women identified was access to Islamic teaching (through the media, mosques and children) which explained the meaning of the Quran. The importance afforded to religious education is not to suggest that it is absolutely favoured above a conventional education. Rather, it more likely points at contextual factors of that time and place, where women's access to education was limited by the distance needed to travel to school, and the fact that women tended to marry in their teens. Afsor recalls:

> It wasn't really the fault of my elders [that I stopped going to school]. To go to school I had to swim. So it wasn't really appropriate for a 10/11-year-old girl to be swimming and drying her clothes on the bank. I used to swim over, wait for my clothes to dry and then carry on to school. And then do it all again to come home. I was very keen on studying and I was a really good student but I had to stop going to school. (Afsor 2000)

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The work of Berns Mcgowan (1991) highlights the experience of Somali refugees who experience heightened religiosity in a new country. They share this with their children, partly to shield their children from the stress of living in a non-Islamic country, and also to impart the positive aspects of faith – the sense of coping and support they have from their own faith. My respondents prioritised the religious education of their children just as it had been prioritised for them. Some respondents talked about how they had struggled financially to meet the costs of religious education. Gulabi says:

> We don't have a mosque near our house so we got an Imam to come and teach them at home. In this country you have to pay for religious teaching. I have gone without so that we could teach the children about their faith. (Gulabi 2001)

Mariam was left widowed with five children aged five and below, despite the immense financial pressure she was under she was determined to provide her sons with a religious education:

> I have sent one to the madrasa here, that costs £1,500. I sent another one to Bangladesh and kept him there for a year at the madrasa, but after a year it was clear he didn't want to study there so I brought him back. That takes money doesn't it? I don't know how well they are doing or not doing. I have sent them to madrasas but you need a man to go and check how well they are studying. How would I know? All I want is to make my children into good people. I am turning my blood into water, but I want to make them good people. If even one of them becomes a good person then my heart will be satisfied. (Mariam 2001)

Initially she had turned to her family for support but it was not forthcoming and so she went ahead herself. She regretted not having sent them to madrasa earlier:

> I should have sent him when he was seven. They should go from the same time that they go to primary school. That's when they take to school. I told everyone that I wanted to send my son to the madrasa. I was waiting to see if anyone would help. I should have had more faith in Allah, instead I kept looking to people for help. Then one day it all got too much for me and I went and took them both out of secondary school on the same day. I sent one to Bangladesh and one to the madrasa here. I shouldn't have looked to others, I should have trusted Allah. At least now I can answer to Allah and say that I tried. My children can't say that their mother never sent them because of money; I have gone without food to look after them. I just want my children's lives to be good. It doesn't matter what my life is like. (Mariam 2001)

In 2011 Mariam felt vindicated by her decision. She spoke proudly about the religiosity of her sons who are respected by all. She recalls the initial financial pressure she was under as a widow with five young sons:

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> I sent them to madrasa and Darul Ummah [local fee-paying Islamic school]. All I was getting at that time was £48 and with my child benefit it was £80 a week. And I was paying £12 a week rent, and I had to give them dinner money. (Mariam 2011)

But she feels the hardship was worth enduring for the men her sons have grown into:

> My son has brought so many young boys on to the right path, there were so many boys who had turned bad, but my son spent time with them, he paid for them and took them on umrah with his own money. The greatest of scholars aren't as committed as my son. (Mariam 2011)

Religious education and instilling religious values were central to the concerns of all my respondents after migration. Compromises and sacrifices were made to ensure this happened. In the early days of migration respondents were fearful that their children would stray from Islam in a non-Islamic country. They could not have foreseen the changes in Tower Hamlets that would help facilitate the reproduction and reinforcement of religion.

The Spatial Dynamics of Religion

The focus on religion post-9/11 has brought it into the public gaze in what Casanova and Phillips (2009: 7) refer to as the '"de-privatization" of religion as a relatively global trend'. Casanova (2007) argues that religion has returned into the public sphere as a contentious issue. Much of the research on Islam in the west tends to focus on public spaces of religious practice (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2009). Kong (2001) urges that whilst global and national studies are important, any study of religion must have a place-specific focus. This section explores the dynamic relationship between the Bangladeshi community and Tower Hamlets in religious production.

The role of religion in daily life, or what McGuire (2008) terms 'lived religion' and Ammerman (2007) refers to as 'everyday religion' has largely been ignored in research studies. Orsi (2002: 172) argues that lived religion 'cannot be separated from other practices of everyday life'. It is impossible to understand the migrant experience without acknowledging the importance of the way place interacts with religion. Locality-based studies are important in understanding how religion is interpreted and practised in diaspora. Migrants will necessarily imbibe some of the cultural values and expectations of the place they reside in; they adapt to their locality sharing their beliefs and traditions whilst unavoidably adopting some of those of the wider culture in which they are located into their everyday practices.

Spaces are not static, they are fluid and dynamic and open to contestation and interpretation (Lefebvre 1991). They reflect the varied configurations of the way religious, social, cultural and political practices are reproduced and enacted

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therein. Individuals respond to the aspects of space that are salient to them. As discussed in Chapter 3, the way that Bangladeshi women experience a space may be different to that of women of other ethnicities, and there can be differences across generations within the same cultural and ethnic group. To understand a place and the meanings associated with it, it is important to explore the religious activities and practices that occur within it and the way they influence and recreate space (Brace, Bailey and Harvey 2006). Even those who do not necessarily participate in a religion will be affected by the religious activities that occur in that space – from congested parking on a Friday afternoon as men gather for *Jummah* prayers at the local mosque, to changed opening times in Muslim run grocers and stores during Ramadan – non-Muslims in Tower Hamlets are also affected by the changes in the religious constitution of the space.

Migration leads to changes in the environment. Immigrant communities can lead to the establishment of ethnic/religious enclaves which initially are a vital source of support for migrants through offering access to and support with housing, jobs, finances and general adjustment and coping (Brown 2000). The arrival of women and families tied male migrants to place more than when they were single and independent. The realisation of being settled in a place led to the need to have a space to express their religious identity (Samers 2003). The establishment of mosques by migrant groups in their neighbourhoods is partly an expression of their sense of settlement and partly about creating a sense of belonging (Agrawal 2008). The environmental changes in turn lead to alterations in individuals who inhabit that space; as discussed in Chapter 3 greater resources allow individuals to feel more confident in exploring and using the space. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996: 208) emphasise that place is 'inextricably linked with the development and maintenance of continuity of self'. Thus as Tower Hamlets began to provide greater resources for the community, it attracted more Bangladeshis to the area. This increase in the Bangladeshi community made people feel more comfortable in outside spaces as they did not feel as vulnerable and different, and allowed individuals to explore opportunities such as language classes and leisure activities.

As the Bangladeshi community has grown in Tower Hamlets so have the resources to meet their cultural and religious needs. Some have come from within the community itself, such as the establishment of halal butchers, ethnic grocers, sari shops and religious book stores. And some provisions have been met through the assistance of the local government who have worked to meet the needs of the community. These include the incorporation of the traditional salwar kameez and hijab into the school uniform, the provision of halal school meals and women-only sessions at local leisure centres and swimming pools, as well as planning permission for mosques. Even local branches of national businesses have responded – banks and supermarkets provide staff with coordinating hijab to match the uniform, as do the Metropolitan Police (who also provide uniform coordinated turbans for Sikh officers). All of these represent significant markers of the Muslim presence (Saint-Blancat 2002).

There are currently over 50 mosques in Tower Hamlets, with the number of actual prayer spaces being much higher as many places of employment provide a designated prayer space for employees within their organisation. The growing access to religious space has facilitated the practice of faith; Futul talks about the greater access to mosques:

> When we first arrived [to Stepney], my husband would have to go to Brick Lane to go to a mosque, and so he would just go on Fridays, he couldn't go five times a day. Now in this area there are mosques here and there, all around the building. There are so many mosques, he is spoilt for choice, he can go to any one that he wants to. He goes to the mosque five times a day now. Before it wasn't like that. My son goes to the mosque to pray *Fajr* [dawn] prayers. (Futul 2011)

For Futul's husband, walking to Brick Lane Mosque would take about fifteen minutes, having a mosque closer means that his observance of congregational prayer has increased from once a week to five times a day. It is likely that her son's regular attendance to the dawn prayers also relates to the proximity of the mosque.

The relationship between place and people is evident in their use of mosques. Levitt (2008: 768) argues, '[n]ew religious architectures create and are created by […] religious communities'. As the Bangladeshi community grew in Tower Hamlets the demand for cultural and religious resources increased. As provision increased it encouraged people to attend the mosque more frequently, and attracted other Bangladeshis to the area, thus boosting demand again. The more the space reflects the needs of the Bangladeshi community, the more the Bangladeshi community's association with the place. Across academic studies, and within the Bangladeshi community in the UK and abroad, Tower Hamlets is synonymous with Bangladeshis.

The desire to be close to amenities has contributed to the description of the Bangladeshi community as 'encapsulated' (Eade, Peach and Vamplew 1996). Phillips (2006) discusses Muslims in Bradford and argues they exercise 'bounded choices' about where they live, weighing up aspirations to move out to more affluent areas against the convenience of religious and cultural provision that have evolved out of ethnic residential clustering. Sarful notes the changes in religious provision for children:

> I taught them Arabic at home; we had an Imam come to the house. He lived in the next block and he would come and teach them at home. In those days we didn't have a mosque in this area. Today there are mosques and madrasas all around. Now it is better than Bangladesh here. It is easier to educate your children in Arabic and Bengali here than it is in Bangladesh. I have seen that in Bangladesh children are 10 or 12 years old before they start reading the Quran, one of my grandsons is eight and he has already read 10 chapters of the Quran. (Sarful 2011)

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Tower Hamlets now boasts better, or at least more accessible, religious provision than the rural areas of Bangladesh the respondents come from. The strong community encourages early religious instruction of children. This convenience is partly the reason that many choose to remain in Tower Hamlets rather than move away.

Migrants bring with them a sense of personal faith and as communities become established and numbers grow they create a religious infrastructure in their place of settlement through religious organisations, places of worship and religious classes (Eck 2001, Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2008). From initially establishing functional services such as places of worship that met needs and requirements of the faith, over time the religious provision has extended into much more commercial and consumer-based resources (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2005).

The growth of the community has facilitated religious practice and people feel able to practise their faith freely in Tower Hamlets without any question of difference. But changes in religious practice are not limited to public spaces; they are undergoing change in the private domain of the home too.

Women, Home and Religion

The heightened focus on faith has led Peach (2006b: 353) to declare that religion has now superseded race and ethnicity as the main area of sociogeographic inquiry. Much of the research on Islam in the west has explored public spaces such as mosques and Islamic schools (Kong 2001, Naylor and Ryan 2002) rather than private sites of religion or the reworked dynamics of religion in immigrant families (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2009). Whilst there are some studies which have explored the domestic experience of faith (Min 2005, Thompson 2002) there remain substantial gaps in the understanding of home-based faith practices and how they influence and are influenced by wider faith practices in the community and globally. The experiences of first-generation Bangladeshi women's home-based practise of religion show how over a 10-year period of this longitudinal study, practices have undergone negotiation and change as the public space of Tower Hamlets intersects with the private space of home.

Post-migration the women in this study spent much of their time at home raising their children. The resources for religious practice outside of the home were scarce and a woman's place continued to be viewed as within the home. Bangladeshis brought with them the norms of their homeland and to some extent these continue to dominate the relationships in Tower Hamlets. Mohammed (2005a) argues that the ongoing social, kinship and marriage links between Pakistan and the UK for Pakistani communities in Britain serves to reinforce a conservative view of Islam where women's actions are guarded. This also largely applies to first-generation Bangladeshis who continue to maintain such transnational connections with Bangladesh.

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Despite the growing literature on Islam and migration, there has not been a focused exploration of the way religion is practised and reproduced within the home. Much of the literature discusses the role of Muslim women as bearers of culture and tradition and highlights their role in the transmission and reproduction of religious practice and understanding in the home. The ways in which this occurs and how it may be contested and negotiated has not been widely explored. Evidence from this research questions the notion of a unidirectional religious transmission. Many respondents have been influenced by information shared by their children who are accessing religious literature and information which respondents are unable to, either for literacy reasons, or other factors such staying at home. Young people often attend lectures at the mosque or at the Islamic Society at their universities and relay the information they learn back to their parents in the home. But despite having less access to information than their children, the respondents have more access to religious material in the UK than they did in Bangladesh. For those literate in Bengali, there are religious books which offer explanations of the meaning of the Quran as well as translations of the Quran in Bengali.

Maya shares how as her knowledge of Islam grew, she began to disaggregate the religious and cultural elements of her practice:

> In Bangladesh, my grandfather told us to pray five times a day so we did. We did whatever our grandparents taught us, whether it was Islamic or Hindu tradition. And Bangladesh has a lot of Hindu tradition. Looking back I can see all the Hindu traditions we followed that are not Islamic at all. Now I understand more about what is Islamic. (Maya 2000)

Rozario and Hilsdon (2006: 331) argue Muslim women find themselves in an 'increasingly complex and changeable position within their families and communities and in relation to national and international politics'. With migration the respondents' position in the household changed with the demand of extra roles and responsibilities. In addition the various requirements of living in the UK put pressure on many such as Rukshana, discussed in Chapter 4, being hounded to find a job despite a host of limitations that inevitably preclude any chances of employment. The global focus on combating Muslim extremism has placed Muslim communities under pressure and highlighted the how little is known about these communities; particularly older women who are seen to remain secluded in the private sphere of the home.

However, the distinction between public and private space is not absolute. There are multiple ways in which they collide and intersect (Staeheli 1996). The home is typically viewed as a private space with the spaces outside of the home considered to be public spaces. As such the home with its privacy is largely associated with femininity and the public space with male attributes, although this oppositional stance has been challenged in the literature (Domosh and Seager 2001). Doreen Massey (1992) argues the meanings of home are influenced by social relations placed well outside of the home; and the home is never experienced in the same

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way by all those who share it. Differential power positions held within the home affect the way individuals view and experience home. It is virtually impossible to have an absolute separation of the home and the outside space. The Islamic education that children are gaining outside the home is brought into the home and shared, transforming religious practices within the home.

Women's Religious Groups

The situated context of religion influences the way gender roles are experienced and negotiated (Halvorson 2005). For women migrating to Tower Hamlets, the space has allowed for a greater understanding and exploration of religion not limited to instructions from male members of the family. Religious practice and doctrines can work to both enable and restrict the mobility of women (Freeman 2005) depending on the way they are expressed. Aaftaab (2005) discusses the ways in which Afghan women contradict the stereotypes surrounding the notion of oppressed women, and are keen to pursue education and empower themselves within a religious framework. This is true for the respondents in this study who are able accommodate their exploration of greater independence within the framework of faith, from venturing out of the home into wider public spaces to attending language classes and working. One of the key ways in which women are asserting their religious understanding is in the changing practise of faith, moving from individual private prayers to group prayers.

As the community grew and a desire for greater religious learning developed amongst the older generation of women, informal religious study groups were established around the mid-1980s. Initially these were held in people's homes. The use of homes as spaces to engage in communal religious activity expands the idea of home as a private familial space into one where public activities of worship are enacted. As these groups became larger women moved into community centres to meet. This meant that women were leaving the home for activities other than those related purely to the children or the household, such as school runs or shopping.

As women's confidence grew they attended classes run to understand the Quran. East London Mosque has been offering such classes since the expansion of its premises and their move to the current location on Whitechapel Road in 1985. These classes are often facilitated by female scholars (the pioneers in this field tended to be the wives of Imams). This removes the need for the traditional mediation between text and explanation by males. Being able to access religious texts and information without the intervention of male clerics and other authority figures creates space for greater agency and female religious subjectivity (Heller 2001, Casanova and Phillips 2009).

These women-only groups are found across Muslim communities. Berns McGowan (1991) found that Somali women in London held regular prayer groups with other women to further their learning of the Quran. These new ways of practising allow migrant women to retain their Islamic values within

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the space of a non-Islamic society. The shared spaces for religious practice form part of their religious identity as collective recital is an important aspect of Islam (Metcalf 1996). But it also provides an important social function as well; by facilitating a space for women to meet it can create a resource for migrants who have left behind their social networks.

Religious education groups function as informal spaces where women can learn more about their faith. As membership of these groups increased, some groups became formalised and incorporated into the activities of the mosque. This pattern of group religious activity has been noted elsewhere as well. Predelli (2008: 252) in her work with Norwegian Muslims reports:

> [S]everal interviewees recounted that in their country of origin women visited each other's houses with the purpose of praying, reading from the Quran and learning about religion. In Norway, their homes are less spacious, and they choose to attend the mosque instead to create and participate in a religious community of women.

On a practical level this allows greater numbers of women to participate than when held in someone's house, and as my respondents pointed out, alleviates the host from the costs and effort of entertaining. In many ways it is not so dissimilar to the earlier religious practices of male migrants prior to the availability of mosques, who initially gathered in homes to pray congregationally before being able to secure larger spaces to accommodate their growing numbers.

As well as furthering their own knowledge about Islam, a key feature of many of these groups is to actively promote *Da'wah* (literal meaning 'invitation'), inviting others to learn about the faith. Little is known about such groups, but Casanova and Phillips (2009) argue that despite the prominent image of Islam and terrorism that pervades the west, it is the Da'wah movements that will be most influential in the way Islam is transformed and transmitted. Farhana describes her Da'wah activity:

> I spend a lot of my time with my Islamic practices. I am part of a group and we go out and give Da'wah to other people. We meet as a group every Saturday, but we go out to people's home during the week. It is important that I spend a lot of time studying Islam, if I go out to teach others then it is important that I know, isn't it? When I came to this country [1979] I didn't know the things that I know now. I didn't understand. Now because of our strong community we have come a long way. You can see lots of young girls with their heads covered. We didn't do that when we were young. We didn't understand the importance. Lots of children understand the importance, but there are still many who don't. (Farhana 2001)

In 2011, some respondents spoke about attending these groups but found their attendance is limited by their childcare duties for their grandchildren. Shamima spoke favourably about the groups and wished her daughters would attend:

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> There are groups that encourage women to go and learn about Islam. That is so nice. My younger two daughters don't cover their hair and they go about wearing trousers – they are going around in a way that I disapprove of. I don't like it. I wish they would join a group like that then they would get some guidance.
>
> **Do you go to these groups?**
>
> I can't find the time to go, and my health isn't very good either. If I go out too far I feel unwell, People do tell me to go. I would like to go, I would like to improve my reading of the Quran. (Shamima 2011)

Gulabi used to regularly attend these groups but has recently stopped as she now looks after her grandchildren during the day. Thus engagement in semi-formal religious practice such as these groups ebbs and flows over time. When the respondents were younger such groups were not as available, and regardless, respondents with young children may have struggled to regularly attend. At a later stage in their lives, respondents are caring for grandchildren to allow their children to work, and this affects their ability to attend.

These religious groups are not limited to older women. Shamima wants her daughters to attend, and many young women also attend such groups made up of their own peers (Bhimji 2009). In Bhimji's study, the prayer circle women attend is at the mosque, she discusses how as well as learning more about their faith, young women are transforming the meanings of gendered practise of faith through their dress. Bhimji describes how women 'help change the traditional meanings attached to the mosque, determining appropriate ways of dressing for the mosque which [is] modest and comfortable yet stylish' (2009: 371). Young Bangladeshi women's appropriation and reinterpretation of Islamic dress is discussed later in this chapter.

Women's Use of Mosques

The presence of women in mosques has fundamentally changed the space of the mosque from a male-dominated space to a community space. It is not just the groups that have encouraged women to attend the mosque, but also the increasing range of services available through the mosque which has opened up the mosque as a space for women to attend. Mosques offer a space to reinforce values and identity for Muslims (Brighton 2007).The growing number of mosques in East London (and across the country where Muslim communities have settled) has been referred to as the Islamisation of space (Eade 1993, Metcalf 1996). This transformation of space has not always been easy to negotiate in terms of planning (Gale 2005) and can sometimes be viewed as a threat to a traditional British identity (McLaren and Johnson 2007). In contrast, for many Muslims, the mosque operates as place of safety and protection from the perceived threats of a hostile

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environment (Werbner 1996); and for new migrants mosques can offer a sense of continuation in the dislocation that migration causes (Kalra 2000).

Women's introduction to the mosque may not have been initially religious practice based. McLoughlin (2005) reports mosques in the diaspora offer a range of services (such as advice centres, and providing space for large functions such as weddings) to migrants that would be unimaginable for mosques to provide in the home country. These events attract women's attendance thereby acting as a precursor to future mosque visits. Mosques have in recent years become appealing sites to promote health awareness messages (Bader et al. 2006) as a means of accessing minority communities who might otherwise not be reached (Ghouri 2005). Mosques can also play a vital role in the sense of coherence for minority communities, and keep young people connected to the first generation and their practices (Wardak 2002). Jamoul and Willis (2008) discuss the way that faith-based organisations operating from within (or outside) mosques can be viewed as a link between a marginalised community and the wider society giving each access to the other.

Kong (2010) comments on the interrelationship between politics and faith that arises from faith-based organisations which provide social welfare services; located at the heart of the community they have a much wider reach than programmes otherwise might. They can support new migrants to adjust through offering language classes, financial advice, 'cultural assimilation' advice and help in finding housing and employment (Ley 2008). The provision of welfare advice and support from within the safe and trusted space of the mosque and community centres has made migrants more comfortable in accessing resources. Yet it has also loosened the tight bonds of community relations that existed for early migrants who felt compelled to help each other. Meena says:

> Now there are centres everywhere so people don't really go to each other for help, they go to the centre or to some other place. (Meena 2000)

The growth in the number of women attending mosques challenges the notion of the mosque as a male space (Casanova and Phillips 2009). The increased use of mosques by women transforms the meanings of such spaces that have traditionally been dominated by men (Bhimji 2009). In 2011 Asma declared that now there are no spaces that are off limits to women, highlighting the mosque in particular:

> Now there are no places that women can't go. If I want to go to East London Mosque to pray then I can, there is no issue with that. I can pray in peace. Even if I want to attend the mosque for classes on reading and understanding the Quran, then I can go and learn there. I have read the Quran, but I want to learn more, I want to make my recitation better and I want to memorise parts. I can do that if I want to. (Asma 2011)

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The ability to practise faith freely is important and can help engender a sense of belonging and wellbeing for migrants and encourage civic commitment (Levitt 2008). Predelli (2008) argues that the use of mosques by women is an enactment of their citizenship and participation rights, with women involved in pushing forward their rights for equal access. This view of citizenship goes beyond simply the rights of holding a passport or having the ability to vote. Citizenship operates and is enacted in social and cultural arenas as well as political and legal domains and is always being negotiated. Applying a broader view to citizenship is useful as it is increasingly clear that citizenship does not necessarily equate with a sense of belonging (Hampshire 2005).

In my study, the type of religious engagement varied across respondents, and despite the accessibility of mosques, some women still chose to stay away. Mariam says:

> I am a good person, I may not be a religious scholar, I don't cover my face and hide my eyes, but I have never walked with my head uncovered. I have covered it with a scarf. We never walked about with our heads uncovered, but nor will I ever cover my face and hide my eyes, and I won't go and pray in the mosque either. No one could make me go and pray in the mosque. Allah has said to pray in the four walls of your home and your prayers will be accepted, so why should I go to the mosque? Let them go if they want, if they think that is right, I am happy the way that I am. (Mariam 2011)

There can be social pressure to publicly demonstrate religiosity through engaging in rituals or following a sanctioned dress code (Deneulin and Rakodi 2010), and refusal to comply may lead to individuals like Mariam feeling the need to justify their choice. The narratives show differing levels of religious activity within generations as well as across generations.

East London Mosque (Figure 7.1) currently provides a range of educational and welfare services for women. The Maryam Centre (named after the mother of Jesus: perhaps as a nod to multi-faith dialogue), a nine storey extension to the building, opened in 2013 to provide services exclusively for women including a gym (there was already a gym as part of East London Mosque which had alternate gender-access days), education services, health clinics, domestic violence support and counselling services as well continuing the crèche facilities already provided by the mosque.

The dynamic relationship between people and place creates space for identities to be negotiated. Within these spaces religious identities can influence and inform the changes in place, from the planning of mosques to a more generalised development of space and community provision with mosques providing public services (Beaumont 2008). The interaction of migration, faith and place has paved the way for women's engagement with mosques. All of these factors have helped to increase a sense of physical belonging to the space of Tower Hamlets to support the psychological and spiritual sense of belonging derived from faith.

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Figure 7.1 East London Mosque
Source: © East London Mosque Trust.

Religiosity of the Second Generation

The earlier literature hints at greater attitudinal similarity between generations; for example, Rashid (1981) found that both first- and second-generation women practised religion in the same way, highly inflected with cultural elements. Subsequent studies have reported differences in the way religion is practised across the generations, with the younger generation exploring faith more independently than their parents had (Dwyer 2000, Brown 2006). This study shows that the resources available to British Muslims to develop their faith are quite different today than they were in the early stages of the migrant community settling in the UK. The growth of a global Muslim community and availability of religious resources in English and Bengali from numerous sources means that individuals can seek out information and knowledge for themselves and not be restricted to accepting what they are told.

Rozario and Hilsdon (2006) discuss how across much of the world young Muslims exhibit behaviours that are seen as indicative of a greater level of religiosity than their parents or grandparents. This desire to adopt or display more religious behaviours amongst migrants, and especially second-generation migrants, may derive from their greater exposure to other Muslim groups in the diaspora. The variation of practice can lead to an examination and return to original sources and scholars to try and practise a more authentic or pure Islam (Ahmed 2005b). Samad and Eade (2002) found that young British Muslims are more thorough in disaggregating religious, ethnic and cultural factors in negotiations of potential

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marriage partners, and critical of their parents continued conflation of them. However, my study finds that this is not restricted to the second generation, and that as first-generation women have become more engaged with Islamic guidance many of them are also critical of the conflation between religion and culture.

Afshar, Aitken and Franks (2006) found that young Muslim women apply their textual understanding of the Quran to negotiate and challenge cultural impositions by their parents. This assertiveness that young women demonstrate is based on the immutable authority of the Quran and makes it difficult for parents to raise objections. Older women who engage in textual analysis can also benefit in the same way by using Quranic evidence to support their desire to be more empowered and independent. Predelli (2008) discusses how women in Norway highlight the activity of women outside of the home during the time of the Prophet Muhammad as a strategy to engage in discussions about their own choices outside of the home.

Religiosity is thought to be passed down to children within the family (Bengtson et al. 2009, Scourfield et al. 2012), with mothers viewed as especially responsible for imparting religious knowledge, as Muslim women are considered to symbolically embody Islam (Silvestri 2011). However, as Pinquart and Silbereisen (2004) demonstrate this is not always the case; adolescents can transmit salient values to their parents. When backed with Quranic evidence this makes for compelling persuasion for first-generation Muslims. Woodhead (2010) argues that in modern society with so many influences and avenues for exploration and information, children cannot imbibe religion solely from their parents. The influence of actual and virtual social networks and media provide young people with differing perspectives and sources of information which they can then take back to their parents. In my study respondents spoke about Islamic lectures that their children had attended at university and the information they brought back and shared in the home, thereby educating the first generation and changing their practice; for example, pointing out to their parents elements of their religious practice that are clearly culturally defined and often in opposition of Islamic dictates.

Younger people are exhibiting behaviours such as women adopting a fuller version of the hijab, young men growing beards and using Islamic terminology in their everyday language to demonstrate a greater understanding of the faith and a higher level of piety than their parents. Rozario and Hilsdon (2006) argue that this is not so much a return to the roots of Islam as many emphasise, but rather the emergence of a new ‘international Islam’ which takes the commonality of the practices of the diasporic Muslim communities that live in proximity and renders obsolete ‘the more varied local Islamic beliefs and practises found in different regional and cultural contexts’ (2006: 332). In the diaspora, Muslims (especially young Muslims) are encountering Muslims of different cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. The commonalities that they find on the basis of faith transcend these differences (Herrera and Bayat 2010) and can be taken back into the home and shared with parents.

Over time the cultural inflections of religious practice become trimmed back to achieve a more uniform practice of Islam. Many Bangladeshis of the second generation (and increasingly the first generation, mainly on the insistence of their children) now do not touch the feet of elders as a mark of respect. A ubiquitous practice across South Asian cultures, its cultural roots only became apparent when South Asian Muslims encountered other Muslims in the diaspora who had never known such a practice. Similarly, Bangladeshi migrant women's attitude to covering their hair, based on Bangladeshi norms, often involves only a flimsy scarf or the end of their sari (Werbner 2007). But as the second generation have grown up, it has become a far more contested issue with the hijab denoting a full covering of the hair.

Hijab

Saba Mahmood argues that 'the vexing relationship between feminism and religion is perhaps most manifest in discussions of Islam' (Mahmood 2005: 1). More than any other issue, the hijab has become symbolic of the tension between those who view Islam as oppressive and those who argue for the liberation that Islam offers (Hancock 2008). In the west the hijab is generally viewed as a tool of oppression, and clearly there are many women who may be pressured to wear hijab to maintain familial and cultural expectations and absolutely view it as oppressive (Nafisi 2004). But for many others the hijab is a mode of self-expression and empowerment. Mernissi (1991) argues that the hijab is a way of symbolically protecting oneself from the intrusion of western values and ideas, although it's perhaps more accurate to state that it protects against un-Islamic ideas and practices rather than all things western.

The dress of Muslim women is used to portray Muslim women as either passive victims of patriarchal regimes or as self-segregating outsiders refusing to integrate into British society (Meer, Dwyer and Modood 2010). The hijab has come to symbolise a lack of integration by Muslims into their countries of migration (El Hamel 2002), spurring legislation in countries such as France to ban the headscarf as apparently a means to encourage integration (Fekete 2004). Khiabany and Williamson (2008) argue that since 7/7 Muslim women have been increasingly represented as wittingly resisting 'British culture', with the enduring and increasing popularity of the hijab being purported as evidence for this resistance to the British way of life. Some studies have found that young Muslim women adopt the hijab as an active assertion of faith in response to discrimination (Shirazi and Mishra 2010). The wearing of the hijab has been argued to represent backward traditions (Werbner 2007), especially amongst older women or new migrants. In the second generation of younger women who have lived in the west all their lives, the hijab is often seen as indicative of inequality (Chakraborti and Zempi 2012) and of the rise of fundamental Islam in the west (Walterick 2006, Abdo 2008).

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Mahmood suggests the potency of the hijab lies in the fact that it raises the question, 'why would such a large number of women across the Muslim world actively support a movement that seems inimical to their own interests and agendas, especially at a historical moment when these women appear to have more emancipatory possibilities available to them?' (Mahmood 2005: 2). In my study, respondents raise this very question with their daughters. Saleha says:

> There are jobs that they don't want to do. Even if I tell them to go, they won't apply. They are very involved in Islamic talks. I tell them to go to Sainsbury's, but they don't want to wear the uniform. I have said to them, 'Your lives will be hard, the way you are going. You have to get on with the world and its ways'. But they don't want to. They think carefully about what they do, and the jobs they will do. One of them worked in a bank and she was allowed to wear what she wanted, and so she took the job. (Saleha 2001)

Saleha's daughters are involved in attending religious discussions and groups and view hijab as integral to their practice and are not prepared to compromise their faith on any grounds. Since the interview in 2001, supermarkets and other organisations have begun to allow/include hijab as part of the uniform. This illustrates the ways in which place and faith interact as spaces accommodate the needs of the people that reside within them. This option provided by many employers has increased opportunities for people who might otherwise not have pursued certain employment routes on the basis of dress code.

But, whilst wearing the hijab may make life difficult when engaging with the wider community, not wearing the hijab can create problems within the community. As discussed in Chapter 2, I made a conscious decision not wear hijab or to cover my hair in any way during the fieldwork. Within the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets, this can lead to negative assumptions of character being made. As Maya says:

> You don't cover your hair, I can't say anything – my eldest daughter doesn't cover her hair. But there are many people in this area who do talk. They say, 'Her youngest two daughters wear hijab but the eldest goes without *purdah*'. Let them talk: I know that her heart is true – she prays five times a day – but no-one sees that. You are Muslim; I have met you so I can truly say that you are a lovely girl; that you are very decent and cultured and you know about our community and our ways. But if you are just walking down the street then someone might say or think something bad simply because you don't have your hair covered. (Maya 2000)

In the second phase in 2011, Moymun and Asma express similar sentiments about their daughters not covering their hair and their refusal to insist that their daughters cover simply because it is expected by the community. Thus place, religion and ethnicity interact in specific ways in Tower Hamlets, where the size of the Bangladeshi community in this part of the UK makes wearing hijab more normative than not wearing it.

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There are a range of different covering options for women, but media discourses rarely distinguish between these (Macdonald 2006) and increasingly the full jilbab/burkha and niqab (face covering revealing just the eyes) have come to represent the image of Muslim women. Choices about dress are a situated practice (Entwhistle 2000) and something that can take on new meanings depending on context and intention of the wearer as well as the reading of the observer. It has been argued that in many religions women's bodies and their dress symbolise the pattern of social control within that cultural setting (Yuval-Davis 1992, Afshar 1994, Werbner 2007). This perspective does not always allow for the interplay and agency of women's choice, and the factors that might influence the decision at any given time.

The globalised message of Islam affects the way it is symbolically expressed. The long flowing dress and the way that hijab is interpreted by the second generation increasingly represents a version of an Arabised Muslim expression of identity. Despite Islamic Jurisprudence allowing for and encouraging cultural diversity amongst Muslims, many Muslims have in recent years adopted an Arabic mode of dress as the preferred or perceived authentic version of Islam. This has been observed in other cultures such as Malaysia (Othman 2006).

Ask and Tjomsland (1998: 11) suggest that the clothing young Muslim women choose, 'reflects innovation made by the younger generation of women who use change of clothing to accentuate their identity and response to a changing world, and thereby even create a resourceful place for themselves within that world'. The young women are able to negotiate a mode of dress that fits into all the spaces they inhabit. In recent years the hijab has been reinterpreted by the second generation (Tarlo 2007). East London, as elsewhere globally, has seen a proliferation of specialist hijab stores which sell an array of scarves in innumerable designs and styles to meet the demands of the fashion-conscious hijab wearer (Stratton 2008). It has evolved into highly fashionable attire, with hijab stores providing multiple types of scarves and hijab tutorials available online to demonstrate different ways of wearing the scarf. The emergence of colourful highly embroidered and more form-fitting jilbabs which are embroidered to the same level of intricacy and cost as much as expensive saris allows the fashion conscious jilbabi to accommodate both her religious and fashion sense. These jilbabs embroidered in typically Asian motifs and patterns have begun to bridge the gap between flamboyant and colourful traditional Asian attire and the more austere black jilbabs, thus re-translating the Arabic attire to accommodate a more Asian style. Globally the fashion world has recognised the potential of the 'Muslim pound'; in 2014 the fashion design house 'DKNY' launched its Ramadan collection. This has been followed by the fashion retailer 'Mango' launching its 'modest collection' for Ramadan 2015 (Ilyas 2015).

Despite the fact that the hijab has come to be the signifier of the Muslim woman, it is not without contestation within a given culture and across generations. Poroush talks about her confusion over the way that young women choose to cover their hair:

> They are practising [Islam] in the way they understand. In the way it is in this culture. Now they have brought out wearing a hijab. This has really taken off; it's part of this culture. How Islamic is it? I don't like it. And I have seen with my own eyes what they get up to. They will wear the hijab when they leave their house, and as soon as they leave they take it all off. Even in my own building. I don't say anything, and the mothers will talk about how wonderful their daughters are. I don't say anything, why should I? I have a daughter, I don't know how she behaves out of my sight, why should I talk about other people's daughters? (Poroush 2001)

For Poroush the wearing of hijab is constructed as a cultural interpretation of the faith that is peculiar to the west, in much the same way that the touching of feet as a mark of respect is viewed as a Bangladeshi cultural interpretation of the faith by the second generation. She also feels that young women are using the hijab in order to present a version of self to their parents which will allow them greater freedom. This 'strategic veiling' Werbner (2007: 171) allows young women greater freedom and mobility to access spaces that they may otherwise be restricted from. In her work with Pakistani women, Werbner says, '[v]eiling is a mobile form of purdah that secludes a woman while at the same time allowing her to move around freely in public. For Pakistani girls living in encapsulated, highly conservative, immigrant residential areas, veiling is often a small price to pay for freedom of movement' (Werbner 2007: 175). Moymun's perception of the hijab reveals a sense of the strategising that some women use in their decision to cover their hair:

> When I first came here I didn't wear [hijab], I have only recently started to cover my hair. The people here they are from the villages […] I grew up in the town, we are from a rural area but I grew up in the town and got married from the town, I didn't live in the village. What I am saying is that we grew up in a different way to other Bangladeshis who came to this country. The other Bengalis who have come to this country have almost all come from the villages that is why their mentality is different; and my mentality is different from theirs. I understand that you can't force anyone to do anything. If someone wants to do something they will do it from their own self. And the truth is that just because you cover your hair you don't become a saint. I have seen a lot amongst those who wear hijab. I think that as long as your mind is in the right direction then everything is alright. (Moymun 2011)

Interestingly Moymun's quote echoes the sentiments of many western feminists; she implies that women who cover their hair display a backward or village mentality, compared to her own more progressive and cosmopolitan outlook. Whilst the reasons for her decision to take up hijab only recently were not probed in the interview, it is likely to be as a response to her getting older and having married children. Culturally, in Bangladesh people present themselves appropriately to

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signify their aged status. Hence women begin to cover their hair and men grow beards (Gardner 2009). Judith Butler's work (1990a, 1993) on performative identity offers a useful conceptual lens to analyse this further. As women get older in Bangladesh, to assert their 'older' status the ritual and repeated actions of covering their hair (or maintaining the beard for men) reinforces and reproduces religious meaning and identity. As discussed in the Introduction, ageing in the Bangladeshi community is not chronologically defined. Adulthood is conferred with marriage and 'older' status with married children or children of marriageable age. For some of my respondents and certainly the generation before them that they grew up with, early marriage and early childbearing meant that a woman could have a daughter of marriageable age when she herself was only in her twenties and be a grandmother in her thirties. Thus symbolic markers of ageing were often a useful practical measure to demonstrate status acquired with ageing.

Whilst the hijab has been described as 'a powerful and overdetermined marker of difference' (Dwyer 1999: 5) clearly marking out Muslims, in a heavily Muslim area like Tower Hamlets the non-adoption of hijab by Muslims is the signifier of difference within the community. Shamima laments her daughters' choice of wearing jeans and western clothes. Her daughters have chosen to go and live with their sisters in Essex rather than remain in Tower Hamlets. By doing this her daughters have strategically avoided the critical gaze of the community, and Shamima is spared the critical comments.

This chimes with Secor's (2002: 8) 'regimes of veiling'. Through her work in Istanbul she demonstrates the fluidity of hijab. She describes how wearing the headscarf is influenced by the spaces that women inhabit. As they move through the city the degree to which they cover or not is affected by the 'regimes of veiling' that operate in different areas. Dakkak and Mikulka (2012) report similar findings with girls in Palestine. It appears that Tower Hamlets operates a much stricter 'regime of veiling' than Essex. Like Shamima's daughters, Mohammed's (2005b) Pakistani respondents describe how they appropriate their religious and ethnic identities through dress. Dressing in a more acceptable or traditional manner within the community and changing their sense of dress when in spaces that lie outside 'the community border' (391). The association made between dress and morality is not limited to the older generation who are less used to western modes of dress; it has a gendered facet to it too. In interviews with young Muslim men, Hopkins (2006) found they categorise girls as 'good' or 'bad' girls based on the way they dress. His participants acknowledge that young women are subject to an ongoing surveillance by the community, something that they perpetuate in their own judgements. The important point that emerges from these analyses is that the hijab has no single, stable meaning, and is contested and negotiated across gender, generation, time, and place.

Younge (2005) argues that Islam has moved from being a personal faith to a 'highly politicised identity', and whilst individuals can control how much attention they give to that identity by choosing to assert elements of it or not, they have no control over the relentless scrutiny it comes under from external elements which

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force the individual into recognising or defending that identity. Many women who may not have considered wearing the hijab might have felt compelled to in order to show their support and defence of their right to that identity (Haddad 2007). Thus wearing the hijab may in part be influenced by global and political discourses on the meaning of Islam and assertions of identity, the heightened interest in Islam amongst the second generation, but also (for older women) partly in response to expectations of their role as they age.

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Global Media

The emergence of global media has transformed the lives of migrants and the ways they position themselves in their countries of destination (Karim 2003, Hopkins 2008). The channels not only beam in information and programmes from the countries of origin, but also present news and debate programmes based on the community in the UK. The relationship between global media and religious identification remains underdeveloped; the narratives in this study offer new insights into how women use this media to empower themselves. Many first-generation migrants rely on these channels for the news. In addition to cultural programmes there are a multitude of religious programmes and channels to choose from in Bengali and English. Evidence suggests that whilst the cultural programmes are watched mainly by the older generation (Begum and Eade 2005), the appeal of the religious channels cuts across generations. Fultara says:

> We have Islamic programmes on TV that we can watch and learn from. I think a lot of people are doing that. My children watch Islam channel and it teaches them a lot. I think everyone has benefitted from these channels. (Fultara 2011)

Sani discusses the ways in which the Islamic channels help to encourage the ritual practice of faith across generations and over time:

> There is so much you can learn now. You can follow your faith in a more committed way now. Before we didn't have all these Islam Channels did we? It has changed a lot, it is better now. And the children can learn from these too. It keeps them on the right path, they are not straying from our faith and culture because the Islamic Channels are there to guide them, tell them. They can learn from them. It is good. It wasn't like this before in the days when my husband came. Now there are mosques everywhere and for those who can't go to the mosque you can sit at home and watch the Islam Channel. Isn't that a good thing? Hasn't it all changed so much? (Sani 2011)

Sani's comment highlights the fact that with this media Islamic learning is not simply located outside of the home in the mosque, but is brought into the home and accessible to all.

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But whilst global media offers a source of enjoyment and information and allows for a sense of belonging for those who utilise it; outside of the community such channels have been viewed with suspicion. Muslim media channels have been contextualised within discourses of security risks and problems (Rigoni 2006). This is in line with much of the discourse around Muslims being framed in terms of risk and securitisation (Hussain and Bagguley 2012).

The global channels appear to enhance religious learning but to some degree at the expense of cultural learning. Fultara is one of the more educated respondents who had frequently helped her neighbours with their correspondence when she arrived to the UK in 1980. She says the availability of Bengali language TV has completely cut her off from the English language:

> When no one else could speak English I could speak English. And now I am too slow. I have become slow. Now they have Bangla Channels and that has made us all into cripples. We just sit and watch those. We don't go out and don't hear any English. (Fultara 2011)

Living in Tower Hamlets and surrounded by the Bangladeshi community, the only occasion many migrants have to hear English is on the television. And whilst they can make the choice to watch English programmes, the availability of Bengali programmes can prove too tempting to resist. Many respondents also feel uncomfortable watching British television for the risk of seeing something inappropriate or embarrassing, especially when viewing with family. Leema says:

> In this country I spend my time watching television, however much I might observe purdah, there is still a purdah of the mind isn't there? It is not possible to have that purdah here – when you put on the television, everyone will sit and watch it. The television shows everything. There is no shame in this country. (Leema 2001)

Whilst Fultara talks about how she indulges in watching these channels and it has limited her English language, it has not become a source of distancing from her children. Through watching the news on these channels migrants can engage with their children on current issues; Gillespie (2006) shows that whilst such programmes may be watched alone, discussions arising from them involve others. Gillespie highlights that these practices become more intense during crisis or conflict describing how after 9/11, there was greater involvement in following news developments on these channels and dissecting the situation with others (Begum and Eade 2005).

Ehrkamp (2005) argues that migrants who watch satellite channels do not simply engage in passive consumption of it, rather it is a crucial part of the tools with which they negotiate their identity. The channels allow individuals to retain contact with their homeland, and at the same time, having access to local news and debate programmes in their own language makes them feel more solidly located in their local place.

The Islamic and Bengali channels all break in the programmes to broadcast the call to prayer. In addition they broadcast live prayers from Mecca and more locally, since 1999, residents in Tower Hamlets have been able to access live radio links to East London Mosque. These resources echo the experiences that women would have had in Bangladesh, where even though women do not attend mosques, they lived in enough proximity to a mosque to hear the call to prayer. In Bangladesh the call to prayer structures the lives of individuals and everyone stops to pray when the call to prayer comes. This was not available to migrants till the advent of global media channels and local radio links. Having prayer times announced through the day means that the whole family can stop and pray at the time for prayer and the religious rituals of Bangladesh can be replicated much more closely than after migration. Asma describes how much things have changed:

> When I arrived [in1981] I didn't even know what time prayer times were. I didn't know when to pray, when it was *Zuhr*, *Asr*, *Maghrib*, *Isha* [name of daily prayers]. I didn't know what day was *Shab-e-Barath* [religious event], or when Ramadan started. Now you get everything as soon as you switch on the TV, all the different moons and different events. It is so much easier now, before you had to find out, read books to know when the auspicious times were. I had to go looking to know which [Islamic] month we were in. If I couldn't find the information I would have to ask at East London Mosque or Baitul Alam mosque. At that time there were no Ramadan timetables – you couldn't buy them. And now everything is so easy. (Asma 2011)

The findings show the impact of the global media in the way that subjectivities are formed and expressed (Georgiou 2012). It has transformed the experience of religious practice for migrants making information much more accessible and available. In many ways it has been empowering and enabling for migrants, especially women, who are more likely to be based at home by presenting religious and cultural information directly into their homes. However, such media developments have also led to a disabling of connection with the wider community; for many the television is their main source of information about life in the UK and prior to the availability of ethnic language channels migrants were forced to attempt to comprehend what was being said. This illustrates the multiple and complex ways of belonging; for many migrants the television alleviates isolation when home alone. But the enhancement of experience of living in the UK comes at a cost of becoming more distant from the mainstream English-speaking society.

Conclusion

Islam and Muslims are under scrutiny like never before. Whilst the literature on religion and migration acknowledges the reproduction of religious practice, it does not explore the fluidity of this process. The accounts of older first-generation

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women demonstrate that they are neither passive nor disengaged from society in their practice of Islam; rather they actively engaged in the changes that occur in the space around them. Migrant women's collective religious practice has moved from homes to the more public space of formerly male-dominated mosques.

Taking a longitudinal perspective illustrates generational differences and similarities. The impact of children growing up is highlighted through the bi-directional transmission of religious knowledge, from parents to children in the early years and then subsequently from children to parents. The narratives show how the hijab is contested across generations, and the way it is being reinterpreted in a fashionable way which also represents the Asian heritage of wearers. The hijab can be used strategically across generations. For the first generation it can be used to communicate an 'older' status; and for the second generation as a means of gaining access to outside spaces. There is a powerful relationship between place and perceived piety, with some second-generation girls who do not wear the hijab feeling compelled to move outside Tower Hamlets.

The global media has a significant impact on religious practice and belonging. The availability of satellite television channels has transformed the religious experience for the community by providing information in the local dialect as well as allowing individuals to engage with their faith on a global scale from within the space of their home.

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Conclusion

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This conclusion brings together the findings within a longitudinal and intersectional framework. The combination of a longitudinal and intersectional approach challenges stereotypical and homogenised constructions of first-generation migrant women and demonstrates how, far from being static, they experience a multiplicity of identifications over the lifecourse with continuing contestation between and within categories of identity. By including categories such as age, family, religion and care, that have not traditionally been explored in intersectional research, this study has broken away from the focus on the 'race–class–gender trinity' (Monture 2007: 199) and revealed the fluidity of identity among first-generation migrant women.

Intersectionality moves away from definitive representations of any category, it 'deliberately argues for non-finalised reconstructions of the social structures and processes involved' (Bürkner 2012: 189), and for particular attention to be paid to the socio-historical context (Cole 2009). This is key given the findings from this longitudinal study. After a period of seeming stability post migration whilst young families were being raised, there has been a seismic change in a period of 10 years in the material circumstances and social mobility of the family, and undoubtedly situations will change again as the Bangladeshi community ages in place. Crucially, the longitudinal findings have shown a community that is proud to be British, an identity that has emerged from the intersection of time, place and family. The experience and adoption of a British identification highlights the flexibility of the meaning of British as an identity category. For migrant women their sense of Britishness emerges from the interaction of progeny and place.

Categories are fluid and evolving all the time they appear to be constant and fixed. The narratives have shown how the normative category of gender differs across Bangladeshi and western constructions. Migration intersects with place to redefine the category of gender; women who take on paid employment have to negotiate and incorporate male attributes of working outside the home into their female gender identity, exposing the shifting of category boundaries over time. The fallibility and western ethnocentrism of categories is illustrated in the category of the 'sandwich generation' carer. By examining the interaction of ethnicity and care the findings shows how the age group that the term is generally applied to in the literature is not representative of all ethnic groups. Migration has also reinterpreted the category of ageing for migrant women, giving them the opportunity to appropriate western measures of aging, which do not automatically impose an aged identity with adult children, into their ageing identity construction.

A longitudinal perspective complements the intersectional approach by showing not only how the categories examined (ageing, gender, ethnicity, family, religion, place) function interdependently, yet irreducibly to each other, but also how these configurations change over time. And the same categories can produce very different experiences depending on the negotiation of them. For first-generation Bangladeshi women in 2001, walking along Brick Lane, in the heart of Tower Hamlets, was considered taboo. This was not the case for women of different ethnicities nor for younger Bangladeshi women. Over time first-generation Bangladeshi women have also begun to use the area, demonstrating the importance of historical context. Brick Lane offers a definitive example of how processes and interactions of multiple categories within a space can produce, reproduce or challenge oppression and exclusion. From being a place that operated ethnic and gendered exclusions, these constructs have been challenged and over time more Bangladeshi women feel comfortable on Brick Lane.

But it is not simply the passage of time that has led to these changes; it is an outcome of the social relations that occur within that time and place, and the renegotiation of relationships within the family and across the community to sanction this. Renegotiated relationships of power over time have led to other changes such as the increased presence of women in mosques and the greater involvement of women in language classes. Thus an examination of temporal effects adds a greater depth to our understanding of intersectionality by highlighting the ongoing (re)construction of categories. The combination of an intersectional and longitudinal approach challenges the 'misery perspective' that so often characterises research on ageing and gender (Krekula 2007: 163) by showing how older women can benefit from ageing as home duties subside and family reconfigurations restore an extended family system.

Much of the literature on migrant communities' residential patterns discuss clustered communities in negative terms, focusing on structural disadvantage, poor housing and lack of access to jobs. An intersectional analysis which examines the interaction of gender and ageing with residential clustering presents an alternative perspective. Migrant women take comfort in a sizeable community. Far from being negative, for many older women such concentrated communities have been the precipitating factor in developing a sense of belonging, and a growth in confidence and independence. The confidence they feel in a concentrated community along with the lessening of home duties means older migrant women can finally embark on language classes and engagement outside the home. This illustrates how citizenship, ageing and place interact with each other in different ways. The findings contradict much of the data that argues that residential clustering can have negative consequences on health and access to services (Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda and Abdulrahim 2012) by showing it can promote a sense of belonging and positive wellbeing. Migrant women's access to services is increased by living in concentrated communities where services are staffed by members of the community. For migrant women seeking voluntary work or even paid employment such clustered communities can offer opportunities where

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their skills can be applied without them being penalised by lack of language skills and/or qualifications. This type of work encourages confidence and in turn can be a stepping stone to engaging in language classes and the wider community more actively.

Through ethnic density new services are born transforming the space further. Services such as Sonali Gardens have been established to meet the needs of Bangladeshi elders in Tower Hamlets. Such services demonstrate how sensitive and appropriate services are always engaged with and offer examples of positive engagement with services that can yield lessons far beyond the locale to other areas seeking to develop services for minority communities. As ageing, place and gender interact, migrants are forced to balance the promise of greater social support in Bangladesh alongside better health and welfare support in the UK. Many feel that it is better to become old in Tower Hamlets than in Bangladesh. Respondents are aware that provisions are not so readily available not just in Bangladesh but also outside Tower Hamlets, confirming the attachment to specific place. Older men spend protracted periods in Bangladesh as they age, sharing their time between the countries, whilst older women prefer to remain in the UK with their children and grandchildren. For widows especially the option of growing old in Bangladesh does not hold much promise.

The development of culturally relevant services creates space for a broader definition of care space which goes beyond the family and home and into the community, thus notions of care are reinterpreted in diaspora as place and health interact with ethnicity. Service provision in the UK allows people to live more independently in assisted accommodation where appropriate and supports others in providing care at home. The availability of formal support in care provision empowers migrant women to make decisions about the care they provide and highlights how tenuous expectations of family care provision (from within the family, community and formal service providers) can be.

The impact of migration on family boundaries and norms is revealed through a longitudinal perspective. The family unit and size was restructured in the aftermath of migration moving from large extended families in Bangladesh to much smaller, often nuclear family units. In the absence of family or an established community, migrants created fictive kin to substitute real family. In a community with highly structured norms about contact between men and women, and with outsiders, establishing a fictive kin network helped circumvent difficulties associated with non-familial contact. The family emerges as a key factor in establishing belonging. The realisation that their children are settled in the UK, coupled with the fact that their kin in Bangladesh have either also migrated or in the case of many parents, passed away, means migrants have less longing for Bangladesh and more belonging to the UK. This acceptance of permanent settlement often came decades after arrival.

Whilst migrant women may be viewed as responsible for imparting tradition and culture, the flow of information is not unidirectional. As children grow older they bring home practices and perspectives that first-generation migrants

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incorporate into their own repertoire. These include ideas about education, employment, gender roles and religious practice. Migration and the family interact in such ways that the traditional power relations between parents and children are disrupted and parents rely on young children for information. Over time that transfer of information from child to parent becomes part of an exchange of information and dialogue that is different to family norms in Bangladesh. Children encourage their mothers to leave the home and attend language classes and assist them in completing application forms for jobs. This allows women to take on and share experiences of education and employment. The spatial and familial changes that occur over time empower women to explore and engage with their space more actively which reinforces their sense of belonging and citizenship.

People, place and faith interact in the production of religious practice. Chain migration led to the settlement of a large Bangladeshi Muslim community whose religious needs have transformed the landscape of Tower Hamlets with the growing number of mosques, community organisations and other resources for the community. Temporal shifts of religiosity occur not just over the life span, but in regular waves through the year, e.g. during Ramadan, or even on a weekly basis with men who do not pray regularly, but always attend Friday Jummah prayers at the mosque. The establishment of the religious resources available in Tower Hamlets have made them more accessible and has increased the sense of security and belonging that individuals feel; this in turn leads to greater attachment and belonging to the place.

Meanings of what constitutes Islam or ideas about 'being Muslim' vary across and within generations and the meaning of Islam emerges through a 'web of narratives' (Benhabib 2002: 7) constructed from (re)produced, contested and shifting accounts of Islam across time and different contexts. The longitudinal lens allows for an insight into the way categories such as religion, gender and culture are constructed and reconstructed. Over time cultural practices are weeded out of diasporic religious practice; women's religious attire is reproduced in line with global Islamic trends. Hijab is contested within and across generations. Far from hijab being enforced on young women by their community as is sometimes suggested in the literature, many older women resist the full hijab as worn by the second generation. Global media has brought a new category into the analysis of religion and is transforming the religious experience for the community and in much the same way that Anderson (1983) argued print media was mobilising the sense of an imagined community, the global visual media is creating a sense of a global imagined Muslim community, especially for migrant women. Older migrant women are less likely to engage in internet-based religious communities than the second generation and with poor literacy rates also less likely to be able access written material. Whilst more women are attending mosques and women's religious groups, the demands of childcare mean they are not able to attend religious sermons as frequently as men. Thus for migrant women the visual media plays a key role in the transformation of their religious understanding and practice. These findings have applications to the theorising of Muslims in the diaspora.

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Applying a longitudinal analysis highlights the premise of intersectionality that no category (or theme of exploration) supersedes another. In this study ageing, gender, place, family and religion are all important and became salient at different times and with different effects over time. These changes can be fleeting or long lasting. The structuring processes of gender, ethnicity, age, religion and place are not fixed: they are contingent upon time and context. The categories of 'woman', 'Bangladeshi', 'Muslim' are irreducible to each other; yet they cannot be understood without reference to each other and without acknowledging the multiple ways they interact and function with each other and multiple other positions including but not limited to, age, location, family position and political structures.

The experiences and identities of migrant women are no less fluid and changeable than anyone else. There are variations of experience within and between groups. Taking a longitudinal and intersectional perspective exposes how as much as older migrant women are reported as home bound with lives and attitudes that have altered little since migration, their identifications, allegiances and practices are constantly being renegotiated. Migrant women have changed dramatically since their arrival as young pioneer female migrants, and their identities will continue to evolve as they inhabit a multitude of translocational positions that shift, contradict and contest in their everyday lives.

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Appendix

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Table A.1 Details of the 20 respondents who form the core of the longitudinal research

Name	Age at interview (2001/ 2011)	Year arrived	Age at migration	Years living in UK (2001/2011)	Age at marriage	No. of children	Marital status	Number of people in house (2001/2011)	Area	Area in Bangladesh	Date of interview (2001)	Date of interview (2011)
Shamima	49/59	1982	30	19/29	15	7	Married	7/3	Whitechapel	Balaganj	31.08.2001	27.06.2011
Asma	39/49	1981	20	20/30	14	3	Married	5/5	Stepney	Sunamganj	05.07.2001	27.07.2011
Toslima	39/49	1978	16	23/33	16	4	Divorced	6/3	Whitechapel	Moulvibazaar	23.05.2001	22.06.2011
Rupa	50/60	1980	29	22/32	15	10	Separated	11/7	Whitechapel	Balaganj	14.05.2001	21.06.2011
Suleya	45/55	1978	16	25/35	20	5	Married	7/4	Whitechapel	Nabiganj	10.05.2001	27.06.2011
Zeba	50/60	1988	38	22/32	22	4	Widowed	9/9	Wapping	Jagganatpur	20.08.2001	07.07.2011
Nazmin	46/56	1986	31	15/25	13	8	Widowed	8/5	Wapping	Beanibazar	09.08.2001	25.07.2011
Sarful	46/57	1972	21	29/39	21	6	Married	5/3	Shoreditch	Nabiganj	04.05.2001	08.07.2011
Nurun	39/49	1981	19	20/30	18	5	Married	7/4	Poplar	Gulabganj	18.10.2001	26.07.2011
Rukshana	50/60	1986	35	15/25	18	3	Widowed	2/2	Bow	Bishwanath	16.07.2001	06.07.2011
Fultara	42/53	1980	21	21/31	19	7	Sep./ wid.*	6/6	Stepney	Zakiganj	26.06.2001	25.07.2011
Sani	45/55	1993	37	8/18	14	6	Marr./ wid.*	6/8	Poplar	Gulabganj	04.10.2001	23.06.2011

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Leema	54/64	1976	31	25/35	14	9	Married	10/8	Whitechapel	Jagganatpur	03.05.2001	24.06.2011
Moymun	45/55	1978	22	23/33	19	4	Widowed	5/3	Stepney	Balaganj	31.08.2001	22.06.2011
Futul	44/54	1978	21	23/33	19	7	Married	9/5	Stepney	Shodor	13.08.2001	21.06.2011
Amina	53/63	1988	40	13/23	20	6	Widowed	4/9	Poplar	Gulabganj	11.10.2001	05.07.2011
Gulabi	40/50	1980	19	21/31	16	8	Married	10/6	Bow	Bishwanath	07.08.2001	27.06.2011
Mariam	45/56	1977	21	24/34	15	5	Widowed	6/4	Stepney	Bishwanath	30.08.2001	24.06.2011
Jannat	37/47	1994	30	7/17	12	4	Married	6/3	Wapping	Shodor	17.08.2001	24.06.2011
Asha	55/65	1981	35	20/30	20	6	Married	6/5	Whitechapel	Beanibazaar	10.05.2001	25.06.2011
Average	**46/55**	**1981.80**	**26**	**19.70/29.70**	**17**	**5.85**		**6.80/5.10**				

Note: * Change in marital status between 2001 and 2011.

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Table A.2 Respondents from the 100 randomly selected sample in 2001 who were not followed up but whose quotes inform this book

Name	Age at interview (2001)	Year arrived	Age at migration	Years in UK (2001)	Year of marriage	Age at marriage	Years between marriage and migration	Number of children	Marital status	Number of people in house	Area	Area in Bangladesh	Date of interview (2001)
Shuara	48	1991	38	10	1975	18	16	3	Married	2	Shoreditch	Sunamganj	30.04.2001
Saleha	37	1981	17	20	1981	16	1	5	Married	6	Whitechapel	Gulabganj	01.05.2001
Salma	53	1976	27	25	1967	16	9	6	Married	8	Shoreditch	Gulabganj	01.05.2001
Khayrun	42	1984	42	17	1975	14	9	8	Married	10	Whitechapel	Jagganatpur	08.05.2001
Anwara	49	1989	37	12	1968	12	23	8	Married	8	Whitechapel	Jagganatpur	11.05.2001
Aklisun	50	1984	33	17	1966	15	18	8	Married	6	Whitechapel	Chattak	14.05.2001
Nazma	41	1990	30	11	1978	18	12	1	Widowed	2	Bethnal Green	Jagganatpur	17.05.2001
Fahima	42	1984	25	17	1979	20	5	7	Married	11	Stepney	Balaganj	25.06.2001
Monwara	39	1979	17	22	1978	16	0	5	Married	7	Bethnal Green	Bishwanath	26.06.2001
Shanaz	52	1986	37	15	1965	14	21	9	Widowed	5	Bethnal Green	Chattak	29.06.2001
Ranu	49	1985	33	16	1976	15	11	5	Married	6	Stepney	Bishwanath	12.07.2001

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Nazia	49	1986	35	15	1974	23	12	7	Widowed	6	Poplar	Moulvibazaar	07.08.2001
Ruji	37	1987	24	14	1984	21	3	6	Married	6	Shadwell	Balaganj	14.08.2001
Gulnehar	36	1984	19	17	1983	17	1	5	Married	7	Wapping	Chattak	09.08.2001
Farhana	44	1979	22	22	1973	16	6	8	Married	8	Bethnal Green	Chattak	30.08.2001
Zaima	41	1978	18	23	1975	15	3	7	Married	9	Wapping	Bishwanath	20.09.2001
Poroush	42	1988	22	23	1976	18	12	3	Widowed	2	Whitechapel	Shodor	03.10.2001
Dina	52	1984	35	17	1966	17	18	8	Widowed	10	Poplar	Nabiganj	08.10.2001
Nazifa	53	1987	39	14	1965	15	18	3	Widowed	3	Wapping	Gulabganj	13.05.2001
Jusna	46	1979	21	22	1972	15	7	5	Married	7	Bethnal Green	Balaganj	05.09.2001
Average	**45.10**	**1984.05**	**28.55**	**17.45**	**1973.80**	**16.55**	**10.25**	**5.85**		**6.45**			

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Table A.3 Other respondents from different phases of the research whose opinions inform this book

Name	Interview type	Age at interview	Year of arrival	Age at arrival in UK	Years in UK (2001)	Year of marriage	Age at marriage	Years between marriage and migration	Number of children	Marital status	Number of people in house	Area in Tower Hamlets	Area in Bangladesh	Date of interview
Afsor	Focus group	44	1972	16	39	1970	14	2	6	Married	Not recorded	Not recorded	Not recorded	28.06.2000
Meena	Focus group	38	1986	24	14	1980	18	6	3	Married	Not recorded	Not recorded	Not recorded	20.06.2000
Fatema*	Pilot 1	35	1982*	16	19	1984	19	n/a*	2	Married	4	Shoreditch	Nabiganj	02.08.2000
Maya	Pilot 1	50	1983	33	17	1965	15	18	6	Married	4	Stepney	Shodor	20.09.2000
Nargis	Pilot 1	40	1986	27	13	1976	17	10	3	Widowed	3	Whitechapel	Shodor	30.08.2000
Shalina	Pilot 1	41	1982	22	18	1976	16	6	8	Married	10	Bethnal Green	Fenchuganj	02.08.2000
Parveen	Pilot 2	35	1983	16	18	1981	14	2	6	Married	8		Jagannatpur	22.02.2001
Ritaj	Young women focus group	24			Born in UK					Single	Not recorded	Not recorded	Not recorded	26.06.2000
Seema	Young women focus group	23			Born in UK					Single	Not recorded	Not recorded	Not recorded	26.09.2000

Note: * Fatema arrived to the UK with her father and married two years after arriving.

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Glossary

Afa	Bengali term for sister
Alhamdulillah	An Islamic expression of happiness and thanksgiving. Translates as ‘praise be to Allah’
Asr	Afternoon prayer
bhai	Bengali term for brother
burkha	A loose overgarment worn by women
Da’wah	The act of inviting people to Islam by spreading the message of Islam
Fajr	Dawn prayer
fard	Obligatory part of prayer
Fenchuganj	District of Sylhet
Gulabganj	District of Sylhet
Hajj	Pilgrimage to Mecca that is expected of all Muslims at least once in their lifetime if they can afford it
halal	Permissible in Islam
haram	Prohibited in Islam
hijab	Literal meaning is modesty. Applies more generally to a headscarf
imam	Religious leader in a mosque
Isha	Night-time prayer
jilbab	Alternative name for a burkha
Jummah	Friday congregational midday prayers at the mosque. Attended by men only
Kalima	Islamic prayer
khala	Maternal aunt
madrasa	Religious school for Islamic instruction
Maghrib	Evening prayer
mama	Maternal uncle
Moulvibazar	District of Sylhet
Nabiganj	District of Sylhet
nafal	Optional part of prayer offered in addition to the obligatory

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niqab	Worn additionally to the headscarf the niqab covers the face exposing only the eyes
purdah	Literally translates as 'curtain', or 'divide'. Can be used to describe a woman's scarf used to cover her modesty. Or can refer to the act of gendered seclusion
salwar kameez	Traditional dress across South Asia comprised of a long tunic and loose trousers worn with a scarf. Traditionally in Bangladesh as opposed to other South Asian countries. Worn predominantly by unmarried women (although this is not as widely the case in the UK where the practicalities of salwar kameez have made it increasingly popular among married women)
sari	Traditional dress across South Asia comprised of six yards of material wound around the body and worn over a petticoat and fitted bodice. Traditionally in Bangladesh, as opposed to other South Asian countries. Worn predominantly by married women (although this is not as widely the case in the UK where saris are highly fashionable outfits for young women)
Shab-e-Barath	Fifteenth day of the Islamic month of Shaban. Translates as 'Night of Salvation' where prayers are held through the night. One of the contested Islamic events due to some claims there are no references to this night in the Quran. Celebrated predominantly across South Asia and Iran
Umrah	Also known as Umrah Hajj, this is a mini-Hajj which incorporates the elements of the main Hajj but can be performed at any time of the year
wudu	Ablution before prayer
zaat	Class system of Bangladesh. Unlike the British concept of class, people cannot move into a different class through education or financial affluence. One is born into (or marries into) their class position. Zaat is often (but not always) identifiable by name
Zuhr	Midday prayer

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