

**Parallel Lives? Working-Class Muslim and Non-Muslim
Women at University**

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to explore how experiences of class are mediated by positions of faith and ethnicity. Currently in the UK, class is gaining increased attention within the disciplines of sociology and women's studies. However, faith and ethnicity have been absent from these debates and the vast majority of qualitative studies on class have focussed on white British people, with the experiences of minority ethnic/religious groups largely ignored. In order to move debates on class and its intersections forward, this thesis critically analyses class identity in a comparative perspective as experienced by Muslim and non-Muslim women. Based on interviews and a focus group with 18 Muslim and 11 non-Muslim women, I interrogate the way in which positions of faith and ethnicity influence class experiences and identity for northern women from working-class backgrounds at university. Using feminist engagement with a Bourdieusian theoretical framework, I discuss the similar and different experiences of class for the two groups of women, concentrating on themes of individual, family and community. Using concepts of class capitals and habitus, I analyse the decisions made about higher education (including course, institution and residential status) and experiences of university, centring on 'fitting in' to 'university life' and the balance between studying and employment. Analysing plans for the future, I focus on residential status, career and partnership, and I also explore the women's accounts of class mobility in relation to notions of past, present and future. The central difference between the two groups of women is that the non-Muslim women saw education as a way to 'escape' their working-class lives and localities, whereas university for the Muslim women was a strategy for upward mobility for families as a whole.

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Author's Declaration

Although the research and writing in this thesis are original, several sections in Chapter Two have been published as review articles:

Mellor, J. (2007) *Diaspora Communities in the UK*, Study Guides 1 & 2, ICS Press: Glasgow.

Mellor, J. (2007) review of Ponzanesi, S. 'Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture: Contemporary Women Writers of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 14 (4): 368-370.

Mellor, J. (2006) review of Power, S. et al. 'Education and the Middle-class', *Gender and Education*, 18 (3): 327-329.

Mellor, J. (2005) 'Higher Education in the 21st Century: Divisions of Gender, Class and Race', *Gender and Education*, 17 (1): 103-107.

Mellor, J. (2005) review of Devine, F. 'Class Practices: How Parents Help Their Children Get Good Jobs', *Sociology*, 39 (5): 130-132.

Mellor, J. (2004) joint review of Ball, S. 'Class Strategies and the Education Market: The Middle-classes and Social Advantage' and Walker, T. 'Illusive Identity: The Blurring of Working-Class Consciousness in Modern Western Culture', *Sociology*, 38 (5): 1053-1056.

Mellor, J. (2004) review of Shain, F. 'The Schooling and Identity of Asian Girls', *Gender and Education*, 16 (2): 272-273.

Mellor, J. (2003) review of Bettie, J. 'Women Without Class: Girls, Race and Identity', *Feminist Theory*, 4 (3): 376-377.

Chapter One: Introduction

During the summer of 2001 the former mill towns of Burnley, Bradford and Oldham, in the north of England, were hit by several nights of violent disturbances. These areas, which were witness to perhaps the ‘worst riots in Britain for 15 years’ (Carter 2001, cited in Shain 2003: vii), dominated media headlines and were subsequently labelled as ‘problematic multicultural’ communities, seen as housing a growing ‘underclass in *pardah*’¹ and characterised by strong BNP presence.² In the run-up to these disturbances – and since – the BNP has gained power, becoming much more integrated into mainstream politics (Kundnani 2007). However, the racist actions of far-right parties or the police were not mentioned in the official reports on these disturbances (Shain 2003). These reports, commissioned to ‘root out’ the causes of the ‘riots’, depicted Asian and white communities as living ‘parallel lives’. Implicit in these reports was the claim that the self-segregation of Asians was to blame for the polarisation of communities (Phillips 2006). This accusation was also prevalent in the media, pinning responsibility for the disturbances on young Asian men (Shain 2003; Hussain and Bagguley 2005).

Class inequality was a central factor in these disturbances (Shain 2003; Kundnani 2007; Hussain and Bagguley 2005), particularly because residents were ‘suffering the negative consequences of disinvestment and the economic restructuring of an obsolete industrial base’ (Phillips 2006: 26). It is within traditional northern Labour wards – now localities affected by urban decline and high unemployment – that the BNP is strongest. The BNP:

...presents itself as the true representative of the white, working-class and its message, if not the party itself, appeals to a significant number of voters in ‘white flight’ areas, for whom immigration and asylum have become symbols for failures in housing and education (Kundnani 2007: 37).

¹ *Underclass in Pardah* was the title of a BBC Panorama documentary, screened on March 29th 1993, which centred upon ‘problems’ caused by young Muslim men in Bradford, who, owing to the supposed deficits of these men in the educational system, were characterised as the new underclass, leading to more problems (Shain 2003).

² The British National Party (BNP) is a UK based far-right racist party.

11th September 2001, commonly referred to as 9/11, occurred in the US only a few months after these disturbances. Almost 3,000 people died when four commercial passenger jets were hijacked by terrorists affiliated with al-Qaeda. Two jets were flown into the World Trade Center, the third crashed into the Pentagon, and the remaining jet crashed in rural Pennsylvania. On 7th July 2005, 52 people were killed, and over 700 injured, by several co-ordinated explosions in London, and on 21st July 2005, similar bombs were left on public transport in London which failed to detonate. Several young British Muslim men had organised and carried out these attacks in July 2005, some of whom came from West Yorkshire. The 2005 British bombings are particularly significant to this project because at the time of these events I was conducting interviews ‘in the field’.

Since these events, the BNP have been gaining an increased foothold. In the local elections in 2006, 33 BNP councillors were elected, including 8 in Burnley/Pendle and 8 in Yorkshire/Humber. The BNP now has 46 council seats in England. Muslims are not the only groups affected negatively by Islamophobia and ethnic prejudice. As Haylett (2001) notes, ethnic and religious prejudice has been mainly attributed to white working-class communities, who have been discursively constructed as ‘symbols of a generalised “backwardness”’ (Haylett 2001: 351), allowing middle-class people to distance themselves from blame. These damaging media portrayals have significant consequences for everyone inhabiting these localities. Once negatively labelled, areas will struggle to attract investment, ‘white flight’ increases, unemployment rises, and the area becomes associated with deprivation and crime (Din 2006; Howarth 2002).

These circumstances highlight the urgency of research that contributes to an understanding of the lives, experiences and representations of Muslim and non-Muslim people from these northern localities. Islamophobia is a class issue; Muslims in the UK – the majority of whom are working-class – are at the receiving end of the government’s ‘war on terror’ (Shain 2003; Afshar et al. 2005; Kundnani 2007). As a feminist, I became concerned about how working-class young women – both Muslim and non-Muslim – would respond to their surroundings, what would happen to their communities in the future, and how these negative representations would impact on geographical movement in and out of the locality. These questions were especially crucial considering the recent changes to student higher education (HE) funding

regimes, shifting HE from an elite to a mass education system aiming to widen university participation (Callender 2002). If the women were to ‘escape’, ‘get out and away’ (Lawler 1999), what would become of the communities left behind? I wanted to explore religio-ethnic differences in how young women respond to these events, and if the spatial and temporal location would impact differently on the class stability/mobility of Muslim and non-Muslim groups.

These events are still unfolding – at the same time as the ‘blossoming’ of class research in Britain – yet no studies have paid attention to how class interrelates with faith and ethnicity (what I call religio-ethnicity). Though there is some feminist research on the intersections between class and ethnicity (Archer and Francis 2006; Bettie 2003; Reay 1998), issues raised by the Islamic revival – when discussed – have only received superficial attention. This research has arisen from a dissatisfaction with the absence of a linkage between the positions. By utilising the conceptual frameworks of feminist class theorists, I wanted to explore current events as experienced by Muslim and non-Muslim women, and to contribute to a widening of feminist class research which includes the experiences of minority ethnic/religious groups.

The Study

The task I have set myself is first, to begin to explore how class research in multicultural Britain can be more attentive to the post-colonial context by broadening the scope of class analysis. Secondly, I aim to contribute to this widening of class debates by comparing the similarities and differences in class identity and experience for minority and majority religio-ethnic groups. By interrogating the ‘obviousness’ as well as the nuances and silences of class for Muslim and non-Muslim women, this research seeks to redress the monolithic category of a ‘working-class woman’ often presented in media depictions and academic debates alike.

This research explores the class experiences and identities of working-class Muslim and non-Muslim women from the localities affected by the 2001 disturbances. Traditionally, women have been absent from class analysis (Crompton 1998) and currently they are marked by absence in debates around the 2001 ‘race riots’, 9/11 and more recently, the London bombings in 2005. An analysis of the class experiences of women is

particularly crucial because they play a central role in the transmission of class practices (Ball 2003). Muslim women, moreover, are the ‘cultural carriers’ of the family and community, as well as religious and ethnic culture (Anthias 2000). As the ‘public face’ of their community, it is women ‘who are burdened with guarding the honour of the family by their behaviour, their garments and their attitudes’ (Afshar 1989b: 271).

The women who took part in this research were all students at university, providing a particularly interesting case study in the climate of the ongoing changes to student funding regimes in Britain. This is also an interesting group to interview because, as Lawler (2000) notes, individuals who experience class ‘transitions’ are particularly reflexive in their accounts of class, family, individualism and community.

The data on which this thesis is based is drawn from interviews with 29 Muslim and non-Muslim women. The Muslim women are mainly ‘second generation’, children of parents who migrated from Pakistan in the post-war era. The non-Muslim women are not religious and are daughters of white British parents. All the women were born and brought up in Burnley, Bradford or Oldham, or surrounding areas. The women are all from working-class backgrounds and – with the exception of one – represent the first generation in their families to attend university.

Research Questions

The project explores how faith and ethnicity intersect with class to shape identity and experience, paying attention to class experience, identity, mobility and stability.

Subsidiary research questions include: what are the constraining and enabling factors involved in women’s applications to university? What are the roles played by family members in this? How do women experience class at university? How is class cross-cut by other positions and identities, such as faith, ethnicity, gender and sexuality? Do the women ‘fit in’? How do the women negotiate relationships with family? How do they balance employment and their degree? What kind of futures do the women see for themselves after graduation? Where do they hope to settle? What kind of career do they seek? What type of partner are they looking for? And what do they hope for their children’s lives? Centrally, class identities are explored: where do the women place

themselves on the class 'hierarchy'? How do the women envisage their class position in the future? How is this cross-cut by faith and ethnicity?

Reinserting Class

This project is written in reaction to the 'death of class' thesis (Pakulski and Waters 1996). Giddens' (1994) and Beck's (1992) work have emphasised individualism, the loosening of ties to kin and community, but I am sceptical about how their arguments can be generalised to all social groups. As Ball argues, such theories give inadequate attention to 'the uneven distribution of resources, of different kinds, which enable reflection and choice' (2003: 4). There have also been numerous challenges to the risk society thesis (Crook 1999; Ball 2003). For instance, Ball argues that Beck 'fails to take adequate account either of the social differentiation of risk or of the existence of different regimes of risk and risk management' (2003: 148). My project emphasises the day to day realities of individual and family practices surrounding educational and career progression and as such, I do not rely on abstracted theories, or grand narratives. Considering that a common critique of class research is that definitions of class are left unclear or unstated (Pakulski and Waters 1996), I will be as transparent as possible. This thesis situates class process as 'emerging out of the dialectical interplay of varying forms of social and economic capital and habitus on the one hand, and the distinctive opportunities – across a range of fields – offered by metropolitan marketplaces on the other' (Robson and Butler 2001: 71). This project has been heavily influenced by feminist appropriations of Bourdieu's conceptual framework, in particular, how capitals in the educational field enable class to be reproduced or challenged (Bourdieu 1984, 1990). I also draw on Ball's (2003) analysis of the 'doing' of class to explore how class is an achievement, bound up within relationships, and a silent presence which remains despite claims otherwise.

Though this thesis pays attention to the boundaries between the middle-class and working-class, I emphasise that because of the complexity of the women's varying positions, these divisions are neither clear cut nor certain. I seek to analyse the women's complex class experiences in their movement in and out of education, family, community and paid work, and to contribute to the limited research in the UK on class,

ethnicity and faith. This thesis is written against the assumption that all working-class women experience class in the same way.

The effects of Islamophobia, ethnic prejudice and homogenisation have encouraged ‘a heightened sense of “difference” between what often become presented as fixed “Pakistani Muslim woman” identities and “white” female identities’ (Lloyd Evans and Bowlby 2000: 263). In particular, as Kundnani (2007) notes, ‘Islam has been singled out for its negative treatment of women. British values with regard to women are construed as exclusively “modern” while “Muslim values” are essentially backward’ (2007: 40). Reifying these dualisms is what I seek to avoid. While this comparative focus on two ‘opposing’ or ‘parallel’ communities may risk the perpetuation of such polarisation, especially for the white non-Muslim researcher, an interrogation of the similarities *as well* as the differences between the two groups of women offers a way to challenge polarised understandings of them.

The danger of a focus on class mobility is that it may detract the emphasis from how class inequalities are largely fixed, how movement is the exception rather than the rule (Skeggs 2004; Reay 2000). However, throughout the thesis I emphasise that class mobility research necessarily involves also looking at how class inequalities work (Devine 2004b). This thesis is about social closure, about the barriers the women hit against – repeatedly – as they progress through education. Though conventionally the women I interviewed may be considered the ‘winners’ of the education system, ultimately, this thesis leaves the story only half told. The women’s actual class moves are not guaranteed as their future paths remain uncertain. And because of the current climate of Islamophobia, it is likely the two groups of women will face divergent class trajectories in the future.

This thesis refers to the concepts of ‘mobility’, ‘social mobility’ and ‘class mobility’. I use ‘class mobility’ when the women are specifically discussing class. However, I often use ‘mobility’ or ‘social mobility’ when referring to the movement for the Muslim women that not only involves class movement but also an *ethnic* mobility. By becoming educated the Muslim women hoped to protect themselves against the worst effects of racism and Islamophobia. Of course, social mobility and class mobility are not wholly separate phenomena, but neither are they collapsible. Due to the Muslim women’s

emphasis on faith, I concentrated more on how class intersects with faith than ethnicity. However, the categories of faith and ethnicity closely interrelate for this group. The term ‘religio-ethnicity’ is an effective linguistic device which allows me to convey the reality of the interlocking nature of these positions.

Religio-Ethnic Classifications

This thesis is about the complexity, ambiguity and fluidity of identity categories. Nevertheless, the issue remains that in order to discuss the similarities and differences *between* the two groups of women I interviewed, some use of ‘basic’ religio-ethnic identity categories from the beginning of this thesis is necessary to facilitate discussion. Judging by the reactions to the work I have presented at conferences, the labels I use here – which reveal privileges that are usually silenced – are contentious. In order to make transparent the aims behind the terminology, I detail the decisions which lay behind this use of language.

Like other researchers (Afshar et al. 2005; Phalet and Swyngedouw 2002), I have utilised the term ‘minority’ when speaking broadly about minority ethnic/religious communities. Although this term is ‘not without its semantic ambiguities or evaluative connotations’, it is a useful term to refer to all ethnic/religious ‘non-dominant groups in relation to more dominant referent groups within the same state’ (Phalet and Swyngedouw 2002: 26). However, speaking about individuals or communities from particular religio-ethnic groups requires much more specificity. As Cressey notes, ‘[d]ue to the history of colonisation, in Britain the term “Asian” is often used to mean “South Asian” which in turn is usually taken to mean of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi descent’ (Cressey 2002: 14). Relevant categories used by the Census, which have been utilised in some qualitative research projects, are ‘white’ and ‘Asian’, ‘South Asian’ or ‘Pakistani’. However, such ethnic classifications can be problematic. I am in agreement with Din that the ‘concept of “grouping” communities is far more complex and elaborate’ (Din 2006: 71) than has been appreciated by authors of various reports and surveys:

...classifications used within the Census are problematic, as some ethnic groups are categorised in part by ‘colour’, such as ‘Black African/Black

Caribbean', and others, such as Asians, according to national origins, such as 'Indian/Bangladeshi/Pakistani'. (Ross et al. 2006: 1.2)

Categories used commonly in the media (and by some researchers) to refer to the two communities in the northern areas from which I recruited are 'white' and 'Muslim'. However, these labels create an inaccurate dichotomy, indicated most clearly by the one white Muslim I interviewed: whiteness is an ethnicity and Islam is a religion, and as such, these labels are not able to compare like with like. The problem of the language used to describe the children of migrants has been discussed by others (Din 2006). My concern was that at a time when second and third generations are defending their claims to equal citizenship (Hussain and Bagguley 2005), naming the women 'Pakistani' or 'Asian' would be (re)asserting foreignness and non-belonging and denying their British nationality, especially as most of the young participants in Modood et al's (1997) study described themselves as 'British' rather than 'Pakistani'.

It has been common for researchers to (try to) avoid this problem by labelling respondents using a hyphenated identity, most commonly 'British Pakistani' (Bolognani 2007; Ramji 2005). More research is labelling respondents 'British Muslim' (Dwyer 1999; Ahmad 2001). These categories have come to dominate discourses within sociology, becoming the 'mainstream'. Problematically, however, these groups are still being counterpoised to 'white' (Din 2006; Abbas 2004), which fails to foreground a critical examination of identity for *both* groups. By drawing attention to the nationality/ethnicity of the minority group only (e.g. 'British Pakistani' or 'Mexican American'), that of the majority (i.e. 'white') community is normalised, and dominant discourses of foreignness, non-belonging and unequal citizenship are left unchallenged. For these reasons, these labels were inappropriate for the aims of this thesis.

As identity is an important theme of this thesis, I sought to define the women with some consideration of the terms they themselves use. After a lot of thought, I decided to label the two groups of women 'Muslim' and 'non-Muslim'. This was no easy decision; ethnic and religious identities entail a complex negotiation of chosen and ascribed identity, where some terms are used interchangeably (Jacobson 1997), where several conflicting identity categories are utilised by individuals in a single account, and where communities and individuals 'choose to describe themselves in different ways' (Din

2006: 71). Recent sociological thinking suggests that ‘identities are more fluid, provisional, and multi-faceted than some more traditional characterizations of cultural difference would suggest’ (Mason 2000: 143). Though the Muslim women’s identities were complex and relational, and characterised by hybridity, most women situated their faith as the most salient identity and position in the current temporal and physical space – at least when speaking to me – and often placed the traditions or cultures of the older generation as less important (c.f. Jacobson 1997; Dwyer 1999). On the other hand, on most occasions the non-Muslim women are marked by a lack of ethnic and religious identity. Previous research has also found that advantaged groups, such as men or the middle-classes do not recognise their privilege and therefore do not hold this category as an identity (McIntosh 2003; Baumann 1996). None of the non-Muslim women identified with the category ‘non-Muslim’, but neither did they use any other labels in their accounts, be it ‘white’, ‘atheist’, ‘Christian’ or ‘British’.

Due to my positioning, as a non-Muslim, white researcher, the categories ‘Muslim’ and ‘non-Muslim’ were advantageous. By defining the women as non-Muslim I was able to bring their ‘normal’ position into question. Representing both groups of women accurately and applying the same level of attention was essential, and something I revisited reflexively on a number of occasions. I was careful not to critically analyse the Muslim women’s experiences more than those of the non-Muslim, in order not to ‘exoticise’ the Muslim women (Said 1978). I did not want to situate the Muslim women as ‘other’, different, less. By placing the Muslim women at centre stage I was provided with the linguistic tools to help challenge my internal ‘blocks’ and to interrogate my own privileged religio-ethnic position.

The categories of ‘Muslim’ and ‘non-Muslim’, like all terminology used in research, are in fact ‘necessary fictions’ (Hall 1992), artificial categories which allow debates to be aired, questions to be asked, and ultimately, this thesis to be written. Whilst every category has a limitation, the exploration of alternative categories may allow alternative relationships to be opened up and different truths to be heard. A note of caution comes with these categories, however. Labels are inherently complex; the simplicity of the two titles suggests homogeneity within the groups, and difference between the groups (Parekh 2005), which is particularly problematic in the current situation of growing hostilities against Muslim groups (Shain 2003). However, this thesis pays attention to

both the differences and similarities within *and* between these two groups. Sometimes, all the women shared experiences; they were, after all, from working-class backgrounds, at university, ‘born and bred’ in the North of England, and had all experienced financial burdens, paid work, and so on. In places I refer to ‘some women’ or ‘many of the women’, or I name the women individually.³ There were also significant differences between the two groups of women in relation to faith, ethnicity and class.

Structure of the Thesis

In the next chapter, I discuss feminist engagement with Bourdieu’s work, highlighting the strengths as well as the limitations of this work. I challenge the monolithic ‘working-class woman’ presented by some feminist class scholars by arguing that class intersects with both faith and ethnicity, yet these points of connection have largely been untheorised. In chapter three, I interrogate the ways in which methods of researching class have concentrated (in the main) on the experiences of majority ethnic/religious communities. In describing the research process, I analyse the way in which data was generated through interviews and a focus group discussion, paying attention to how the accounts were influenced by my positionality as a non-Muslim white woman from a working-class background.

Chapters four to seven comprise the substantive sections in this thesis, and explore the empirical data, utilising concepts of family, community, habitus, and class capitals. The first of these chapters explores routes to university, analysing how economic, social and cultural resources (or the lack of these) impacted on the opportunities available, and the different ways in which families were involved in decision making processes. The next chapter focuses on the women’s experiences of university, addressing issues of ‘fitting in’ to the culture of the university and the changing kin relationships. I pay attention to how the women balanced their degrees, family duties and paid work. Chapter six explores the women’s future plans and aspirations in relation to the locality in which they would like to settle, career plans, and hopes for partnership and children, looking particularly at the role of cultural capital in the women’s partnership preferences. The final substantive analysis chapter brings together the previous three chapters by

³ Pseudonyms are used throughout.

exploring the women's accounts of class identity and class mobility throughout their movement through school, university and anticipated locations in the future. I explore the similarities and differences between the Muslim and non-Muslim women and interrogate the relationship between class and caste at 'home' and abroad. Analysing the women's experiences as a whole, I place the women into categories based on their class identity and hopes for future mobility. The concluding chapter revisits the intersections between class and religio-ethnic position, exploring the numerous themes arising from the data, and suggests several recommendations for changes that might enable universities to be more inclusive of non-traditional students.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Debates

In this chapter I situate my research in the broader context of existing debates on the intersections of class, faith and ethnicity. By highlighting the religio-ethnic silences in class research, pointing to the inseparability of class, faith and ethnicity, I challenge homogeneous notions of the 'working-class woman' or the 'working-class family'. Most studies have highlighted class or ethnicity, but rarely both, and faith has usually been subsumed under ethnicity. Taking class and religio-ethnic locations as analytical categories, this chapter aims to explore the points of connection between them. To understand the complex historical and social relations that have shaped the differences between the two groups that I examine in this thesis, the British colonial context is also discussed. According to Shain, imperialism has been reproduced by globalisation; 'its ideologies are re-worked in the shifting relations of late modernity' (Shain 2003: 38).

Class Definitions

Class is one of the most ubiquitous terms in sociology, yet 'there is no agreed definition' (Roberts 2001: 2). Various schemas with different theoretical bases have been used over the years, but nevertheless they 'usually identify much the same main divisions' (Roberts 2001: 24). Whatever scale is employed, it is important for theorists to consider the views of 'lay people', who are unlikely to think about class using these concepts. To be clear, on the few occasions in this thesis when I have used a schema (for instance, when assigning the women to a working-class position, based on the occupations of their parents), I have relied on the Registrar General's classification. It was the schema that the women sometimes referred to when I asked about their class position, because they had learnt about this at FEC or university. However, since my project is about the women's subjective experience of class, I did not over-rely on these models. Nevertheless, as class schemas have dominated definitions of class, I briefly outline class categories here.

The Registrar General's classification was used by the UK government until 1998, and comprised six classes, roughly based on levels of occupational skill. However, this scheme was without a 'plausible theoretical justification' (Roberts 2001: 24), because there had not been rigorous research on which to base the classifications. The Registrar

General's classification was replaced by the ONS 1998 schema. This scale, which 'purports to group together occupations which have common market situations and work situations' (Roberts 2001: 25), is considered neo-Weberian and includes an 'underclass' as well as a petit bourgeoisie. This schema is generally considered more theoretically robust than the previous Registrar General's classification. Although it is very similar to the Registrar General's classification, the ONS schema includes eight categories based on market and work situations.

There are a number of other scales used by academics, including Goldthorpe's (1980) schema, and the Wright scale (Wright 1985). Goldthorpe (1980) and Devine (2004a) have discussed class categories in the context of changes to the labour market and occupational hierarchy in the post-war era. The Goldthorpe schema (1980), based on a national survey conducted by the Oxford Social Mobility Group, concentrated solely on the class position of men. Goldthorpe used this classification to research social mobility, indicating that there had been considerable upward social mobility in the UK since the Second World War. The development of the welfare state system in 1944 and the changing class structure, involving 'the growth of routine white-collar work followed by an increase in high-level professional and managerial jobs' (Devine 2004a: 3) allowed for more movement between classes (Goldthorpe 1980). Alongside these structural changes, however, relative rates of mobility had not changed; children with middle-class parents 'were still much more likely to arrive at middle-class destinations than those kids who started from the working-class' (Devine 2004a: 3). Despite the illusion of an increasingly changing and meritocratic society, the continuity of intergenerational class inequalities persists (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992).

Goldthorpe's work was criticised by feminists for the absence of women (Crompton 1980). The family was regarded as sharing one – the same – class position, and the occupation of the male in the household was used to assign class position (Goldthorpe 1980). An absence in all these schemes has not only been gender, but ethnicity (Roberts 2001: 50). There are concerns that mobility research places emphasis on movement rather than fixity (Skeggs 2004), adding to the 'death of class' thesis. Though 'Britain is a far more prosperous country now than in the 1960s, [...] a substantial section of the working-class has not shared the benefits' (Roberts 2001: 108). However, a major aspect of geographical movement for immigrant groups to developed countries is inter-

and intra-generational class mobility (Loury et al. 2005). This may involve not only changes to relative and absolute levels of income for migrants and their children, but also to the advancement and deployment of cultural and social capitals (such as English language training and educational qualifications). The global hierarchies between countries raise questions about class inequalities between – as well as within – nations, and if class research is going to be taken seriously in the European and international context, class analysis needs to engage with such questions. By recognising the distinctions of class in diverse locations, and the way class manifests itself within and between countries, scholars can more effectively include minority ethnic/religious groups in class analysis, as well as broadening out discussions to a global perspective.

Global Class Hierarchies

It is widely acknowledged – particularly since the entry into the EU for East European countries and the subsequent immigration from these countries – that the UK offers a high salary and has low unemployment and a generous welfare state system. There is an assumption – held by many European and international scholars and ‘lay people’ alike – that because the US and UK are countries with political and economic power, class inequalities and poverty do not exist in these nations. Simpson (2004) argues that the middle-class ‘gap year’ participants she interviewed saw poverty as the defining ‘difference between the developed and the developing world’ (2004: 210). Though they recognised ‘that “poverty” may well exist in the UK, participants felt this to be less ‘real’ than in South America’ (2004: 210).

The global power of the ‘Anglo-American cartel’ has been emphasised by European women’s studies (Griffin and Braidotti 2000), which has compared the current powerful position of Britain and the US to colonialism (Ponzanesi 2005). Ponzanesi, in her comparison of Afro-Italian and Anglo-Indian writers, argues that their works are differentially positioned because of inequalities between the empowering language (English) and a minor one (Italian) (see e.g. Alasuutari 2004). Although this attention rightly highlights the privilege English speakers receive ‘in the new global economic transactions’ (Ponzanesi 2005: 12), the central problem with this analysis on postcolonial inequalities is that language and nationhood are prioritised and class is silenced. Not many would disagree that a host of advantages arise for those writing in

English. However, these arguments are based on the life chances of a small and elite group who have the opportunity to write and get published at all. In addition to focusing on linguistic power hierarchies, I would also ask: which class do the successful writers come from? What roles do social capitals and networks play in the route towards international stardom? Is it the case that all British people, regardless of class and ethnicity, benefit equally from speaking English?

Despite the cultural, political and economic dominance of the 'Anglo-American cartel', class exists in all countries (Zmroczek and Mahony 1999), including the UK and US. However, class divisions have important regional, national and global dimensions which influence how power is practiced in diverse localities. Pattanaik notes that on arrival in Australia, 'I realized exactly where my country stood on the international economic ladder' (Pattanaik 1999: 197). Discussing her native India, Pattanaik argues that class relations have an important regional dimension:

So disparate are the economic conditions among the various Indian states that someone who is middle-class in Orissa would be considered quite poor in Andhra Pradesh. This became even more obvious a few years later when I moved to Gujarat, a state rich in business and industry. (Pattanaik 1999: 194)

There are differences in the absolute and relative poverty levels within and between countries, and levels of poverty in the UK or US can in no way be compared to those of developing countries. Nevertheless, by focusing not only on income or on what individuals own materially, but on what is needed to participate fully in social life as an equal citizen, it is possible to demonstrate how relative poverty in Britain impacts heavily on life chances by perpetuating hierarchies in education, health and employment (Skeggs 1997).

British Feminism

Until recently, class has been the least explored aspect of women's lives (Skeggs 1997). However, in the current period, a small 'school' of British feminists, most of whom utilise Bourdieu's conceptual framework (Skeggs 1997; Reay 1998; Hey 1997; Lawler

1999; Walkerdine et al. 2001; Anthias 2001a; 2001b) are putting class 'on the map' to the extent that class has a possibility of becoming a mainstream issue within women's studies.

These works have challenged conventional, male-stream definitions of social class (Goldthorpe 1980) by focussing on class as an ongoing process, which is experienced subjectively, within arenas other than employment. In particular, this body of literature has explored auto/biographical accounts of class mobility as experienced by women from working-class backgrounds (Mahony and Zmroczek 1997). The central way in which working-class young women sought respectability through style, taste and appearance has been highlighted by Skeggs (1997), who identified the powerful, complex and unspoken ways that the body is marked by class distinctions. Hey (1997) explores the way in which representations of social class in England are linked to a hierarchy of social worth and intelligence through accents and vocabulary. Hey argues that idioms and dialects carry 'sedimented and constantly reactivated meanings linking the demography of class to the geography of accents and their place in a hierarchy of social positioning' (Hey 1997: 140-1). In an exploration of women's narratives of class mobility, Lawler emphasises the 'pain and the sense of estrangement' involved in class mobility (1999: 3). Although on the face of it, upward class mobility may be seen as a straightforward move out of class disadvantage, Lawler argues that class is part of an individual's history, and is 'inscribed into the self', which 'raises particular difficulties for the idea of an "escape"' from a working class background (1999: 3).

Feminists have highlighted how, in Bourdieu's writing, habitus 'is a complex concept that takes many shapes and forms' (Reay 2004b: 431). It consists of a 'sense of one's place' and a 'sense of the other's place' (Hillier and Rooksby 2002), a 'feel for the game', or a 'second sense' (Johnson 1993), a set of embodied predispositions that form an individual's 'way of being' (Bourdieu 1992). As Lawler notes, from birth, 'habitus derives from one's position in a particular family form (with its attendant economic, cultural and symbolic capital), as well as within systems of education' (1999: 13). Habitus refers to the reproduction of historical relations, the embodiment of dominant structures through cultural understandings, values and beliefs, and is closely related to Bourdieu's concepts of capitals and field. At first glance, the concept of habitus, which emphasises reproduction, excludes the possibility of change (e.g. class mobility).

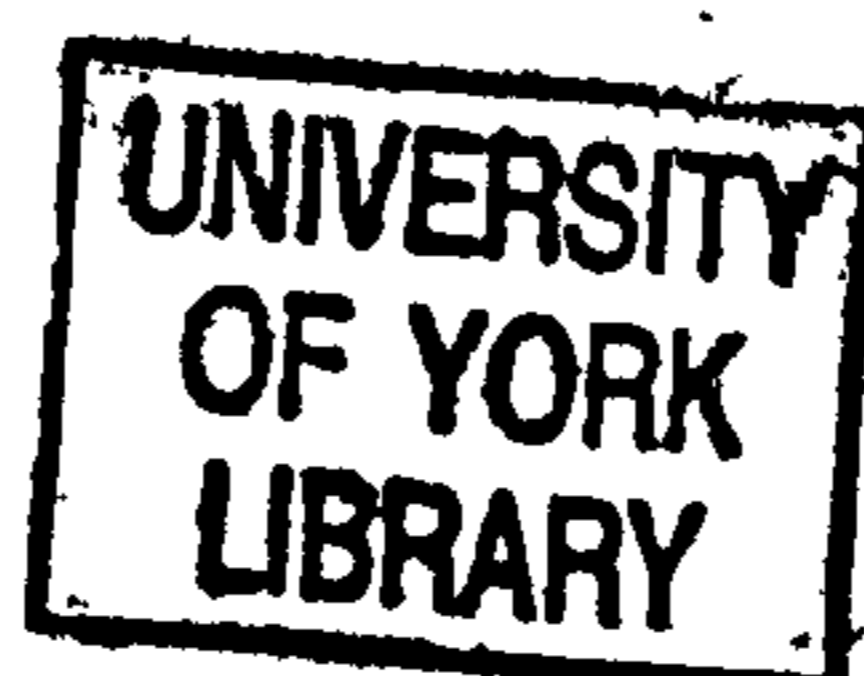
However, several theorists have acknowledged that such readings of Bourdieu overlook the ‘potential generative capacities of the habitus’ (Hills 2006: 542). Bourdieu’s theory can provide a more dynamic account of change within habitus (Lawler 1999; Adkins 2003; McNay 2000; Holdsworth 2006). Of particular significance to class mobility research is how the past influences the present (Holdsworth 2006; Lawler 1999). Lawler emphasises the way in which ‘dispositions can become “sedimented”, so that traces of *earlier* “second sense(s)” remain’ (1999: 14). Lawler adds to Bourdieu’s framework by introducing the ‘disrupted habitus’ to explain ‘the pain attached to this mobility’ and the ‘complex and sometimes contradictory model of the self’ (Lawler 1999: 16). She argues that some women she interviewed expressed a ‘disrupted habitus’:

Their ‘feel for the (middle-class) game’ is relatively weak, and this is manifest in their expressions of lack. All of the women’s narratives told of feeling such a lack in the past, especially at school or university, but for some, it continued as a feature of their present lives (Lawler 1999: 14).

These – and other – feminist studies have changed the face of class analysis and women’s studies by emphasising the interrelationship between class and gender.

This thesis has been inspired by, and founded on, the basis of this feminist research. At a time when feminist class analysis has become more established within both UK women’s studies and class research, it is perhaps time to emphasise the gaps in the present body of knowledge. In particular, most of the British feminist work on class has concentrated on white women. For example, in this well-cited description of class, Kuhn refers to the ongoing importance of the ‘English’ class system:

Class is not just about the way you talk, or dress, or furnish your home; it is not just about the job you do or how much money you make doing it; nor is it merely about whether or not you went to university, nor which university you went to. Class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your psyche, at the very core of your being. In the all-encompassing English class system, if you know that you are in the ‘wrong’ class, you know that therefore you are a valueless person. (Kuhn 1995: 98)



But what about individuals who are not English, or who belong to a diaspora community? The classed experiences of minority women have rarely been explored, and the ethnic/religious privilege of white women has been left unacknowledged. This 'ethnic' gap is particularly startling considering the attention to difference in the 1970s and particularly 1980s within feminism. Notwithstanding more than 30 years of discussion about difference, 'the charge of cultural imperialism' remains levelled against Western feminists for silencing the views and experiences of non-Western and minority ethnic/religious women (Afshar and Maynard 2000: 812). For instance, despite recent events such as 9/11 and the 'war on terror', Islamic feminism – which does not share many 'of the most important goals of mainstream Western feminism' (Afshar and Maynard 2000: 811) – has until very recently received little attention from women's studies in the West.

Taking this accusation of cultural imperialism seriously means paying attention to the class experiences of women from minority ethnic/religious communities (Hussain 2005). Class analyses that are based on British white secular women may not be an accurate portrayal of class for all women living in the UK. For instance, the linguistic hierarchies discussed by Hey (1997) may not only operate on class terms, but may open up the experience of racism through accent. Skeggs' (1997) emphasis on class distinctions operating through appearance may work differently for minority ethnic groups, particularly those who cover. The attention Lawler (1999) pays to class mobility as an individual movement resulting in pain and disruption may be different for minority ethnic/religious women who see themselves as are part of a kinship group rather than as 'individuals'. Tackling cultural imperialism also means being attentive to how white working-class British women may be privileged by their religio-ethnic position.

Conceptions of Ethnicity

In US social sciences, the study of race has had a long history of dealing with the intersections between class and race, almost as a matter of course (Kelley 1993; Kluger 1977; Trotter 1991; Gabaccia 1988). This project is a development of these US theories, particularly those which also explore gender in addition to race and class (Higginbotham 2001; Lareau 2000; hooks 2000; Bettie 2003). However, although the

US is perhaps the closest cultural 'neighbour' of the UK, this thesis departs from US race theories for a number of reasons. The different imperial histories, policies and laws in the US (e.g. racial segregation) as compared to the UK have given rise to diverse experiences of race/ethnicity and class for minority and majority communities in these countries. US scholars have concentrated on African Americans and – much more recently – on Hispanics. Research on race – defined as colour – has been prioritised in the context of the experiences of Black people whose language, culture, religion and other ethnic elements were lost during slavery (hooks 1990; Waters 2001). Now the African-Americans – who have roots in the US going back one and a half centuries – share much the same culture as their white American neighbours, and ongoing inequalities are understood as a racial, rather than cultural, phenomena (Waters 2001). More recently, research in the US has started to explore the experiences of Hispanics. Bettie (2003) – using data from an ethnography based in a Californian high school – explores class subjectivity for white and Mexican American girls, addressing the intersections between class, gender and race. In particular, Bettie analyses upward mobility experienced by a minority of working-class girls who aim to continue their education in college, exploring the contradictory, painful and confusing positions occupied by these young women. She also pays attention to the experiences of the majority of working-class girls; those who do not manage to be upwardly mobile, who are likely to experience similar class deprivations to their parents.

Though US research has developed the sociology of race over a number of years, there has been much less focus on ethnicity and less still on Islam. What little research there has been on Muslims in the US suggests that numbers are small, and that most are 'middle-class and mainstream' (Pew Research Center 2007). In contrast, European women's studies have highlighted the diverse experiences and outcomes of migration in Europe, where scholars have concentrated upon 'ethnicity' rather than 'race' (Griffin with Braidotti 2002). For instance, in the UK, most non-white migrants arrived in the post-war era, and thus, black/white race relations are much more of a recent phenomenon in comparison to that of the US (Mason 2000). The majority of migrants arrived from the former colonies of the Indian subcontinent and the West Indies. For these groups and their offspring, colour is only one important issue. Other central aspects to the experiences of migrants and their children include faith, language, nationality and transnational kinship ties (Mason 2000).

In the UK, there has been much less discussion about the relationship between ethnicity/race and class than in the USA. Writers in the 1970s were concerned with how immigrants fitted into class structures in relation to the 'indigenous' working-class (Miles 1982; Castles and Kosack 1973; Westergaard and Resler 1975; Rex and Tomlinson 1979). Rex (1970), for instance, in his race relations studies in the 1960s and 1970s in Birmingham, analysed race and class. These theories built on racial stereotypes which saw Asians as unthreatening, 'docile' and 'passive' (Shain 2003) and Afro-Caribbean men as demonstrating a problematic, violent masculinity. In 1979, Rex and Tomlinson noted the differences between Afro-Caribbean and Asian migrants:

If the West Indian is plagued by self-doubt induced by white education, and seeks a culture which will give him [sic] a sense of identity, the Asians have religions and cultures and languages of which they are proud and which may prove surprisingly adaptive and suited to the demands of a modern industrial society. (Rex and Tomlinson 1979: 237)

Writers from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), namely Carby (1987), Hall (1992) and Gilroy (1987), attempted a more radical approach which shifted academic discourses from a biological to a cultural understanding of race and racism, and introduced how gender relations interrelated with race. However, Modood (2003) is critical of the arguments of the CCCS; this corpus concentrated in the main upon Black migrants from Africa or the Caribbean, and did not fully consider the differing experiences of those from the Indian subcontinent, different from Black groups in relation to religion and language in particular. He is also sceptical of notions of a plural 'blackness' into which South Asians are slotted. Caribbeans use skin colour as a self-description, whereas 'it was religion that was prominent in the self-descriptions of South Asians' (Modood 2003: 79).

There are a few projects that have explored the intersections between class and ethnicity, though this relationship remains under-researched.¹ Many studies on class

¹ Intersectionality theory has been developed by Anthias (2001a; 2001b) which has analysed the interrelationship between gender, class and ethnicity/'race'. However, because this work is interested in a macro-analysis of the intersections rather than subjective aspects, I have not engaged with this work here.

have included minority groups alongside white people, but have not specifically examined how ethnicity intersects with class (Walkerdine et al. 2001). The sociology of ethnicity has been equally dismissive of class. For instance, Hussain's (2005) analysis of ethnicity, gender and generation within the creative works of British South Asian women – which emphasises the 'different ways that aspects of the "host" or "majority" culture are perceived by women brought up and educated within that culture, compared to the perceptions and valued judgements of their elders' (2005: 3) – rarely mentions class divisions. According to Hussain (2005), 'what has been written and read for pleasure is a fair index of the interests and attitudes widely shared among contemporary British South Asian women' (Hussain 2005: 3). If we accept this suggestion, then contemporary creative works can provide access to previously unresearched experiences, providing eyewitness accounts of 'hard to reach' social groups and issues of religious, political or cultural sensitivity. However, the absence of class within Hussain's work is perhaps not because this theme was not present within the works covered, but because it was not given enough attention by Hussain. For example, rather than considering how Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* may legitimately portray the perpetuation of class divisions within minority communities in Britain, Hussain critiques this novel for what she sees as a preoccupation 'with petty class and status snobberies within the Bangladeshi diaspora in Britain' (2005: 94). Moreover, Hussain's analysis of Chandha's films suggest that these works redefine emblems of 'White Britain' (such as football and seaside holidays) as culturally plural, 'so that David Beckham can be as inspirational to a South Asian girl as he can be to a white girl' (2005: 132). However, this analysis of what it means to be British has important classed aspects which are under-examined by Hussain.

In Hussain's (2005) work, caste is also not discussed in any detail. Hussain concludes that because the creative works do not mention caste, it must therefore mean that caste does 'not figure prominently within the self-identifying concerns of diasporic womanhood' (2005: 15). Although creative works are a medium through which women are able to air their grievances (Ponzanesi 2005; Hussain 2005; Silva 2004), the questions I have already raised remain important: what are the class and caste backgrounds of these writers? Can these works adequately represent working-class diaspora communities? It cannot be overlooked that most of the writers featuring in Hussain's (2005) work are from privileged class/caste backgrounds.

Silva's (2004) discussions of class and caste in her analysis of literary representations of nation and gender contrast starkly with the findings of Hussain. Analysing creative works depicting recent periods of significance within the Indian subcontinent, her discussion centres on how 'hegemonic nationalism, established as a unifying force against imperial domination, holds the greatest threat to women, non-bourgeois classes and minority groups in South Asia' (2004: 19). After the separation of Bangladesh and West Pakistan, Silva suggests that these countries saw a 'greater degree of Islamisation at the state level' (Silva 2004: 39), which protected the interests of elite, powerful groups. Silva pays attention to how class and caste intersect with gender and nationhood in the Indian subcontinent, perpetuating unequal power relationships along various social divisions.

There are a few projects that have explored the intersections between ethnicity and class, using a Bourdieusian framework, including Abbas (2004), Ramji (2005) and Byrne (2005). Byrne (2005) has explored the intersections of race and class for British white mothers. However, this work – in focussing on middle-class women in the main – does not offer an analysis on working-class women's whiteness. Ramji (2005) and Abbas (2004) compare working-class and middle-class minority groups in the UK. Abbas' work pays attention to the intersections between class and ethnicity for a group of working-class and middle-class British South Asian families negotiating the school system, whereas Ramji (2005) focuses on the differences of ethnic identity between 'professional' and 'non-professional' British Pakistani men. The working-class men Ramji interviewed considered that their 'Pakistani Muslim background confined them to working class occupations' (Ramji 2005: 5.3), and linked middle-class identities to whiteness. They used 'their ethnicity as a way of acquiring status and recognition' (Ramji 2005: 5.10), and connected social mobility to 'selling out and ultimately corruption of ethnic and religious ideals' (Ramji 2005: 5.13). On the other hand, the middle-class men did not link Pakistani ethnicity with a working-class identity, and tried 'to renegotiate a different way of understanding and being Pakistani' (Ramji 2005: 6.1). In particular, they were sceptical of 'pan-Islam', which they saw as

...highly political and having little relevance to their lives. It [Islam] was dangerously high profile and associated with a backward move for the

Pakistani community. Pan Islamic allegiance threatened to marginalize them further in the British context and this was not desired. They needed to accumulate the right kind of social capital and had to be careful with whom they associated. (Ramji 2005: 6.12).

However, both Ramji (2005) and Abbas (2004) explore the experiences of only one ethnic group, and though Ramji claims to engage ‘with questions concerning similarities and differences between and within ethnic groups and how boundaries are regulated and crossed’, this attempt is somewhat limited because the experiences of majority groups are not analysed (2005: 7.1).

When religion is discussed within the sociology of ethnicity it is often alluded to rather than explored directly or centrally (Mason 2000). However, recent literature on British South Asians – particularly Muslims – has drawn on the importance of faith, the relationship between ethnicity and religion, and the separateness of these categories. Jacobson (1997) argues that young British Pakistanis distinguish between ethnic and religious identities. Whilst ethnicity – which is associated with the traditional cultures of the elder generation – is rejected, faith is privileged as the more ‘authentic’ identity. The importance of faith for South Asians is notable; faith is of personal importance to 90 per cent of South Asians, in comparison to 13 per cent of white people (Modood 2003). Whereas religion is becoming much less significant amongst white people, especially the young, the opposite seems true for minority groups. For instance, 5 per cent of whites aged between 16 and 34 considered religion to be important in how they led their lives in comparison to two-thirds of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (Modood 2003).

Abbas (2003) explores the overt and subtle differences between educational aspirations and South Asian women, particularly the differences between the role of religion for Muslim, Sikh and Hindu women, of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian origin. He argues that for both working-class and middle-class Muslim women, religion featured as the most important part of their identity. Acculturation is less common than for those of other faiths because ‘for Muslims contact is less permissible with non-Muslims, whereas for Sikhs and Hindus people of other faiths are not as excluded’ (Abbas 2003: 418). Class intersects with faith, producing diverse and complex experiences for different faith groups. Abbas (2003) argues that Sikh and Hindu women’s integration is

aided by increased wealth, though not for that of Muslims, because religion restricts integration:

For non-Muslims, higher levels of social class generate economic and social opportunities, allowing for improved integration and ultimately greater acceptance by the host society. For Muslims, higher social class does not always provide access to non-Muslims because of restrictions imposed by the religion. (Abbas 2003: 418)

Muslim women of both classes have a strong bond with their faith. However, middle-class Muslim women 'tend not to experience the negative culturally defined interpretations of Islam that affects their lower social class counterparts', whereas working-class Muslims hold 'certain negative religio-cultural norms and values' that can inhibit the economic and educational progress of women (Abbas 2003: 424).

Education, Class and Ethnicity

One field in which scholars have analysed the intersections between ethnicity and class has been education. Working-class people have been viewed as having a problematic relationship to education, being represented 'as lacking in ambition and, by implication, their lack of ambition explains why they occupy lowly positions' (Devine 2004a: 256 f.n., 24). There is a long history of scholarship which has explored working-class people's relation to education within the disciplines of sociology and education (Jackson and Marsden 1962; Willis 1981; Weis 1990; Lareau 1987; Lawton 1968). Most of these early works concentrated on school children. For instance, Jackson and Marsden's groundbreaking project, *Education and the Working-class* (1962), was a biographical study of working-class children who attended grammar school in West Yorkshire. Concentrating on how disadvantage was translated into success in education and the job market, this study highlighted how intelligent working-class students were made into middle-class citizens, involving the social uprooting experienced by many of those interviewed, who became culturally alienated from their families of origin. For some, upward mobility also entailed geographic mobility.

Though most studies during this period focussed on white students, there was a small corpus of work that contributed to knowledge about the educational experiences of the children of immigrants (Troyna 1984; 1987; Shain 2003; Craft and Craft 1983). These works highlighted the attempts of the government to use education to encourage assimilation or multiculturalism. The assumption was that – due to their ‘different’ culture – migrants and their children would be disadvantaged in the school system, but that this ‘cultural lag’ would disappear with time (Mason 2000). Initially education policies were based on this premise, focussing on teaching minorities to ‘adapt in ways which would enable them to fit into an education system which was seen as a model of meritocracy and opportunity’ (Mason 2000: 68).

Debates about minority ethnic groups in education have in the main focussed on the (alleged) ‘underachievement’ of these groups. Nonetheless, Afshar’s (1989b) study argued that many Muslim girls persisted with their education, despite the experiences of frequent racial harassment. Many Muslim parents and elders regarded education as a way to escape the poverty trap, and saw education as the most effective way to deal with racism. This esteem for education endured in the face of a curriculum which ‘falls short of their needs and expectations’, and which ignores the culture, language and geography of their home countries (Afshar 1989b: 263).

More recent work on the educational progression of minority ethnic students has emphasised the growing differences between groups. As Zhou (2005) argues, minority groups do not have similar experiences. Zhou (2005) challenges traditional theories of immigration which view upward mobility as inevitable and simply about time to assimilate. Instead, Zhou argues that because the diverse strategies adopted by migrants influence mobility outcomes, time does not work equally for all migrants: ‘ethnicity can work to accelerate the upward progress of some groups, while keeping others from advancing, or possibly even pushing them further down toward the bottom’ (Zhou 2005: 133).

Shain (2003) challenges mainstream representations that position Asian girls as timid, passive, and as victims of an oppressive culture, instead, demonstrating the heterogeneity of the girls’ identities and communities through an exploration of the coping mechanisms the girls employ to deal with the experiences of ethnic and religious

prejudice, sexism and class inequalities at secondary school. Shain interviewed Asian girls from secondary schools aged between 13 and 16, including girls from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian backgrounds, and from Muslim, Sikh and Hindu religious backgrounds, and explored how government responses to September 11th and the Burnley, Bradford and Oldham disturbances of 2001 added to misconceptions and 'Islamophobia' directed against Asian communities. Such representations, she argues, influence how Asian female students are positioned and position themselves within the school, the home and the wider community. In adopting a feminist poststructuralist stance, Shain attends to theories of resistance, defence and survival, identifying four types of resistance strategy, dealing with themes relating to schooling such as friendship patterns, dress, language and family. First, the 'Gang girls' utilised the strategy of 'resistance through culture' that involved forming all-Asian female friendship groups. The Gang girls defined their oppression in terms of racism, and adopted an 'us and them' approach to education, making up the lower ability groups. The 'Survivors' occupied the higher sets in school and conformed to dominant stereotypes of the Asian girl as quiet and hardworking. Despite their apparent passivity however, Shain discusses how the girls were actively involved in a strategic balancing act between commitments to school and home in order to enable their future educational aspirations. Although they were aware that both racism and sexism operated within the school, they preferred resistance strategies involving methods of non-retaliation. The 'Rebels', on the other hand, recognised sexism as the main constraint at school and at home, sometimes referring to Asian cultures as 'backward'. Shain interrogates how the girls' strategies enabled them to play an active role in transgressing the cultures of their families and communities, whilst at the same time carving a positive identity arising from a commitment to their religion. The group who prioritised racism (particularly opposition directed against their religion) are named the 'Faith girls'. Their main source of identity arose from religious affiliations, and they pursued academic success in the hope of continuing education after school.

Despite the constraints they face, 'even among those groups alleged to be most prone to underachievement, levels of commitment and motivation are as high or higher than among white pupils' (Mason 2000: 73). Due to particularly low rates of post-compulsory education, Muslim women of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin 'have been highlighted as particular causes for concern in the widening participation project'

(Archer 2002a: 361). However, minority groups are more likely than their white counterparts to stay in education after the age of 16, contrary to normative assumptions. The over-representation of minorities in post-16 education may not be for positive reasons; it could be that many attend college to re-sit exams, 'having to compensate for the degree to which the school system has failed them at an earlier stage' (Mason 2000: 63).

Higher Education: Class

Since the changes to the student funding regimes in 1998, much more research on education has focussed on students at university. Several studies have examined the complexities of how social inequalities are maintained through higher educational practices, policies and institutions (Hayton and Paczuska 2002). For instance, Callender (2002) focuses on some of the unintended consequences of the HE reforms for working-class students, arguing that New Labour changes to student funding have undermined its commitment to widening participation. Despite efforts to include underrepresented groups, the number of working-class students entering HE remains virtually unchanged. The poorest groups are exposed to the largest debts and the greatest financial strain, facing intense risks if they decide to go to university. As an alternative, Callender contends that a more effective approach would be based on a system where funding acts as an incentive, rather than a disincentive, for poorer groups. Policy initiatives and educational research in the main have concentrated upon rates of HE participation, overlooking the experiences of students once they are at college or university. The over-emphasis on participation rates has resulted in a neglect of other important aspects of the educational experience.

Holdsworth (2006) explores the implications for 'fitting in' to university life for students who live at home. The research was based on questionnaires, and interviews with 34 women and men students at HEIs in and around Greater Merseyside.

Holdsworth notes that residential status is a 'key demarcating factor in how successfully students feel they adapt to being at university' (2006: 495). Though she argues that their socio-economic situation matters, local students 'face additional barriers to overcome in their experience of university life, which are related to practical issues, orientation to university life and the assumptions made by other students' (2006: 515). In a similar

study, Christie et al. (2005) addressed the experiences of young and mature students who had attended a widening access course before embarking on their university studies at Scottish, elite universities. The research involved interviews with 27 female and male students, though the ethnicity of these students is not mentioned. The students construct themselves as 'day students' who 'see being day students as a pragmatic response to their financial and material circumstances', yet the authors argue that they are disadvantaged 'within the university system, both through their limited ability to participate in the wider social aspects of student life and through their exclusion from networks through which important information circulates' (Christie et al. 2005: 3) In relation to how the students balance employment, studies and family life, three types of 'day students' are considered: 'absorbed students', 'pragmatists' and 'separate worlds students'.

Higher Education: Ethnicity and Faith

Bhopal (1997) has argued that for Asian students, a necessary part of participating in education and class mobility is the inevitable loss of tradition, faith and community values. However, Ahmad challenges this dominant representation that positions South Asian women as "victims" and recipients of oppression in patriarchal family relations, or as women with fixed religious identities.' (Ahmad 2001: 138) Instead, Ahmad suggests that women are 'far more culturally and religiously aware as a result of and despite their educational experiences.' (2001: 139) She problematises the duality between on the one hand 'traditional' and on the other hand 'modern/Westernised' positions, because this ignores how these experiences overlap.

Ahmad (2001) considers the motivations for British Muslim women entering HE, and argues that they experience both self-motivation and potential encouragement in their decisions around higher education. The women were driven by a need to have an education for a better quality of life, and desire to be better qualified than the white majority in order to counter racism. However, issues of personal development involved in moving away to university, and experiencing student life were also important considerations for the women:

The opportunity to learn and engage with academic material that was of interest to them, coupled with the prospect of future economic independence, and to lead lives that were, for some, qualitatively different from their parents', was immensely attractive. (2001: 148)

For the women that Ahmad spoke to, an appealing part of attending university was the prospect of moving away from home, but this does not necessarily signal a desire to discard their background. Thus, Ahmad disagrees with the suggestion that education at advanced levels necessarily relates to an abandonment of their culture and faith. Furthermore, contrary to research and mainstream assumptions that situate 'Muslim fathers and families as exercising extreme patriarchal restraints on the education of their daughters' (2001: 146), most of the parents and daughters interviewed by Ahmad regarded university as 'an absolute necessity' (2001: 143). Educational achievement was seen as a guarantor against financial insecurities within marriage, providing a 'safety net'. Not only was education used for economic reward and social mobility; Ahmad argues that a daughter's education can secure what she calls 'prestigious capital'. Both mothers and fathers encouraged daughters to pursue university education to increase the family's social standing. Education also offered the women 'confidence, not only in their abilities, but also in their cultural, religious and personal identities' (2001: 147).

However, these aims, as much as they are empowering, expose the family's reputation to greater risk and can have negative consequences. Like Afshar (1989b), Ahmad suggests that moving to live at a university far away from home encourages gossip and suspicion within some parts of the community, or encourages a fear that a daughter will become too Westernised and reject her religious and cultural background. Another anxiety for both the parents and the daughters is what Ahmad calls the 'double-bind' situation. One of Ahmad's respondents was concerned that '[t]oo little education and the family could be viewed by the rest of the community as "backward" and "old fashioned"; too much education and daughters could risk "pricing themselves outside the marriage market" and "going past their sell-by date"' (2001: 147). Choices surrounding entry to university involved assessing complex terrain:

Prestigious career choices such as medicine, dentistry and law continue to be pursued and highly regarded within South Asian communities. At the same time though, female Muslim students are ‘branching out’, studying topics such as English language and literature, history, economics, international politics, media studies, fashion, and (even) anthropology and sociology. (Ahmad 2001: 148)

For the women in Ahmad’s study, attending a ‘good’ (pre-1992) university was important, and they showed an awareness of the distinctions within higher education. The status of the university attended can be converted into ‘prestigious capital’ for the family.

Higher Education: Class and Ethnic Privilege

A focus on class inequalities and practices in education necessarily requires at least some attention to the privileged group: the middle-classes. As Hayton and Paczuska (2002) suggest, a concentration solely upon poor students is in danger of perpetuating a deficit model of the working-classes as lacking, as being to blame for not ‘fitting in’. As Gewirtz argues, ‘rather than valoriz[ing] the competitive, instrumentalist and “pushy” orientations of many middle-class parents, we need to expose the damaging effects of these modes of engagement’ (2001: 376). Class inequalities are relational; ‘the actions of one set of class agents have effects upon, and consequences for, the fate of others’ (Ball 2003: 178). The privileges of middle-class students impact directly on the life chances available to working-class groups, by contributing ‘to the perpetuation, inscription and reinvention of social inequalities both old and new’ (Ball 2003: 5).

Three recent studies on middle-class perpetuation of privilege across the generations (Ball 2003; Power et al. 2003; Devine 2004a) have highlighted various ways in which middle-class practices in education reproduce social advantage. These works have all drawn attention to the ways in which recent economic and political changes have intensified ‘the context of class competition in education’ (Ball 2003: 18). Relying on concepts of risk, uncertainty and fear, all three works indicate that the perpetuation of familial advantage in contemporary Britain is ‘more vulnerable to interruption and diversion’ than common representations allow (Power et al. 2003: 150). As middle-class

social reproduction ‘is fraught with difficulties and beset by anxiety and “the fear of falling”’ (Ball 2003: 149), despite the class advantage enjoyed by these families, ‘the possibility of failing works to maintain high levels of anxiety and assiduousness’ (Ball 2003: 168). As Savage indicates, ‘people now have to achieve their class positions’ (Savage 2000, cited in Ball 2003: 7). Nevertheless, it remains the case that the middle-classes are ‘disproportionately successful at gaining access to institutions capable of reinforcing their advantages’ (Power et al. 2003: 152).

Power et al. (2003) analyse the educational and occupational pathways taken by middle-class families. Drawing on experiences in secondary school, university and beyond, the authors pay attention to differential choices of educational provision between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ middle-classes. Using the conceptual frameworks of Bourdieu and Bernstein, the authors pay attention to the heterogeneity of middle-class consumers in secondary school pathways and university experiences. In the majority of cases the young people reach, or advance the social positioning enjoyed by their parents. The strength of this work is that it examines those who experience educational failure and downward mobility – those who fail “against the odds” (2003: 103). ‘Failure’ in its myriad of subjective and objective dimensions is considered, including a comparison to parents’ position and to contemporary national standards (using the British Cohort Study data) as well as failure relative to one’s aspirations (and the ‘Oxbridge’ disappointment). Such an analysis, which indicates the difficulty – even for middle-class students – of succeeding in education, puts into perspective the inequalities faced by working-class students.

Devine (2004a) – whose methodological approach differs from that of Power et al. (2003) – uses qualitative life history interviews with 86 middle-class parents from Manchester, UK and Boston, Massachusetts in the US. By using a double-sided comparison, she first examines generational differences by contrasting the class context in the post-war era with the current political and cultural climate. Secondly, she analyses the similarities and differences between the accounts of the British and North American parents. The strength of this work is that it emphasises the specificities of class within Britain, in comparison to those in America. Though these countries may be considered ‘cultural’ neighbours, the nuances of middle-class advantage and identity vary considerably. Devine explores the importance of economic, social and cultural

resources – and the intersection of these – in the reproduction of middle-class advantage, interrogating ‘how middle-class parents mobilise their resources to help their children through the education system and into good jobs’ (Devine 2004a: 11). In considering the HE student funding policies, Devine highlights the importance of economic resources in the perpetuation of class inequalities, and though imparting a certain prominence upon economic resources, the strength of this work is that it avoids framing the resources in a hierarchical order, thus eschewing the problem both Goldthorpe and Bourdieu encounter in privileging one form of capital above another. This enables Devine to explore the complex interconnections between the three types of resources. Problematically, however, Devine at times overlooks the relational nature of class advantage, and thus, the negative effects this privilege exerts on working-class groups is not explored.

Ball (2003) offers a sociological exploration of the everyday practices involved in negotiating and perpetuating advantage by middle-class families. Like Devine (2004a) and Power et al. (2003), Ball considers key concepts such as risk, policy, social closure and values, which feature alongside analytical themes including ‘boundaries, ambivalences, responsibility, fear and uncertainty, individualism, and reflexivity’ (2003: 13). However, where Devine’s (2004a) research downplays how working-class students are affected by the strategies of middle-class families, the strength of Ball’s analysis is in its contextualisation of middle-class strategies within wider social structural inequalities. He considers a wide range of educational spheres, from nursery schools through to higher education, sketching the ways in which middle-class parental choice perpetuates class boundaries and leads to a greater inequality in life chances. His thesis is that educational policy is aimed at satisfying the middle-class, and he examines the practices utilized by the middle-class when influencing policy in their own interests. Like Devine (2004a) and Power et al. (2003), an engagement with Bourdieu provides the main theoretical framework for Ball’s analysis. In particular, Ball highlights ‘social closure’, considering how middle-class parental choice involves classed boundary making and boundary protection. Ball also highlights the importance of social capital, particularly the differences in the use of social networks between working-class and middle-class families, and the ‘broad and complex body of social capital that is made available to the children’ who attend private sector schools (2003: 86). However, despite Ball’s assertion that middle-class reproduction of privilege draws ‘heavily upon

the unpaid work and emotional labour of mothers' (2003: 77), he does not discuss the different roles of mothers and fathers – as well as other family members – in securing social advantage.

These three works have contributed to UK class studies – including working-class studies – by emphasising how middle-class families perpetuate class advantage by 'colonising' the field of education, providing conceptual frameworks in which can working-class relationships to education can be considered. However, all three studies problematically fail to engage with how the perpetuation of class advantage not only involves social closure directed against minority ethnic communities. In examining parental choice, these works fail 'to capture the ways in which class is produced through racialized practices and vice versa' (Byrne 2006: 1007). In her research on the mothering practices of middle-class white women, Byrne (2006) highlights the 'mutually implicated discourses of class and race' in women's choices of their children's schooling and social lives (2006: 1002), where getting the right 'mix' of class and race was central; classed and racialized "'others'" posed potential threats to the children', though these threats were not often specified (Byrne 2006: 1015).

Conclusion

In this chapter I explored how the literature on class has – or has not – engaged with ethnicity and faith by highlighting the connections and gaps in these works. I argued that despite assumptions from various quarters, we have not seen the 'death of class' (Pakulski and Waters 1996), neither in the UK nor elsewhere. Focusing in particular on feminist engagement with Bourdieu's work, I highlighted the utility of these discussions, but also the problems with this corpus when analysing class from a post-colonial context. I aimed to challenge the monolithic 'working-class woman' presented by some feminist class scholars by arguing that class intersects with both faith and ethnicity, yet these points of connection have largely been untheorised, both by class scholars and also within ethnicity studies.

Chapter Three:

Reaching Beyond the White British Working Class: Reflections on Researching Faith, Ethnicity and Class

Introduction

The questions this research explores were prompted by recent events which placed Muslim communities in the UK at the very centre of media attention and political concern. This study is centred on three ex-mill towns in the North of England – namely, Burnley, Bradford and Oldham – which have become renowned for the ‘racial’ disturbances of 2001, urban deprivation and the rise in BNP politics.¹ Though Muslims have always occupied media attention and political concern, for example, since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the *Satanic Verses* Affair in 1989, and the 1992-6 Bosnian war (Poynting and Mason 2007), the 2001 ‘riots’, 9/11 and – more recently – 7/7, have heightened this ‘witch hunt’ against Muslims in the UK.² This study was inspired by a desire to research the class subjectivity of a group of ethnically/religiously diverse women from working-class backgrounds, coming from these Northern localities. By drawing on the emerging class research methodologies developed by feminist scholars (Skeggs 1997; Reay 1996; Lawler 2000; Devine 2004b), I aimed to compare and contrast the women’s class experiences, identities and movements, and qualitative research seemed appropriate to do this (Mason 2002a).

In this chapter I explain my recruitment methods, highlighting the benefits of the snowballing method and online recruitment. Exploring how class and other issues were discussed in the interviews and focus group, I compare the accounts of the Muslim and non-Muslim women. By drawing on my own positionality, I discuss the complex and fluid ways in which positions of faith and class influenced the dynamics of the interviews and the accounts produced, challenging simplistic notions of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ positions. Finally, I highlight my methods of analysis, discussing the difficult, messy and complex process of analysis in relation to class research.

¹ The British National Party (BNP) is an extreme right-wing political party in the UK.

² On July 7th 2005, 52 people were killed by suicide bombers on public transport in London. The media made links between 9/11 and this event, often referred to as 7/7. A similar attack occurred on 21st July 2005, though these devices failed to detonate.

First, however, I discuss the research design of this project, and the dilemmas, decisions and difficulties at each stage of the project. I explore the existing literature on the methodology for exploring class, in particular the contributions of Savage et al. (2001) and Devine (2004a), and the gaps within this body of knowledge. I then discuss the rationale for using interview and focus group methods to research class, and the advantages of triangulation.

Research Design

Don't Mention the 'C' Word! Methodology for Exploring Class

Feminist research methods are now established within the social sciences (Stanley and Wise 1993), and attention is currently being placed on the importance of ethnicity within feminist research (Gunaratnam 2003; Archer 2002b). However, discussions on class methodology have only very recently begun to emerge. Many British feminist and post-structuralist researchers working on class have paid attention to class from an interpretivist epistemology and constructivist ontology, arguing that traditional methods of assigning class position by occupation are not sufficient to analyse the class location of women (Skeggs 1997; Crompton 1998). These writers have recognised the importance of identity, subjectivity and the 'felt' dimensions of class, and use qualitative methods such as ethnography, focus groups and in-depth interviews (Skeggs 1997; Lawler 2000; Walkerdine et al. 2001).

However, this emerging methodology for exploring class has not necessarily made analysing or accessing class any easier. Virtually all class researchers in the UK have reported that accessing definitions and experiences of class is difficult, with both middle- and working-class respondents from all class positions denying the relevance or existence of class, or when asked to define themselves, disidentifying from a class position (Savage et al. 2001; Skeggs 1997). Devine notes that those to whom she talked

...had strong pejorative views about class and some of the older interviewees spoke with considerable bitterness about the effects of class on people's lives. Many did not know what to say about such a negative topic,

often distancing themselves from it by referring to its importance in the past and its declining significance. At the same time, when asked, they were also prepared to acknowledge its continued effects, their place in the class structure and their class identity. (Devine 2004b: 200)

The problems of talking about class do not arise, it is argued, because class is no longer important. Instead, findings indicate that social class remains a sensitive issue that taps into painful memories, ongoing problems and unjust social divisions which people may not want to discuss (Ball 2003). Not only are the middle-class defensive and the working-class embarrassed about their place on the social hierarchy (Sayer 2005), but a general decline of class identity or politics following the neo-liberal assumptions of 'meritocracy' has rendered social class inequalities invisible (Skeggs 1997). Furthermore, class identity research has 'been beset with problems of measurement, method and conceptualisation' (Ball 2003: 175). Since the research of Marshall et al. (1988, cited in Devine 2004b) was criticised for utilising a problematic methodology which was seen to cause seemingly high levels of class identification, class researchers have been cautious of imposing class onto the general public.

Respondents' accounts of class do not 'speak for themselves' and there are various ways in which accounts can be analysed. Payne and Grew (2005), who researched a similar sample as Savage et al. (2001), argue that in the context of Payne and Grew's research, the widespread use of 'I suppose' during discussions about class indicates that respondents recognise the complexities of class boundaries. Rather than respondents distancing themselves from class identifications, as Savage et al. (2001) claim, according to Payne and Grew, participants are simply indicating that such class categories do not sufficiently explain their experiences. Payne and Grew argue that there is a much higher level of class identification than Savage et al. (2001) suggest.

However, there are several omissions in these works. Class identity research has been dominated by scholars in the UK and US. Not only does this literature not consider class identity as experienced by minority ethnic/faith communities, but a concentration solely on Western class contexts ignores possible variations throughout the world. The comparative research of Devine (2004b) indicates how class identity and experience in two Western countries varies drastically. Looking at middle-class families in the UK

and US, Devine (2004b) notes that only about half the UK sample referred to class spontaneously, and tended to use euphemisms when talking about class, in particular being 'ordinary'. However:

...the majority of the American interviewees spontaneously described their standard of living in class terms and invariably to describe it as middle-class or lower middle-class (even when it did not seem to be the case) (Devine 2004b: 201).

The UK and US are culturally, economically and politically very similar: both are Western, English-speaking, broadly Christian countries. Yet the different ways in which middle class people in the UK and US discuss class, Devine (2004b) argues, relates to underlying tensions around the moral judgments of superiority present within the British class system. If class identifications in the UK and US are so different, it is possible that class hierarchies and definitions in non-Western, Muslim countries will differ vastly from those in the UK.

Measuring (both subjectively and objectively) class position and intergenerational class mobility for immigrant and diaspora groups may require different sets of tools from those used by researchers studying the white British population. Some approaches (for instance, those in the edited collection by Loury et al. 2005) suggest that in order to get an accurate picture of intergenerational class processes for migrants, it is important to look 'back' to previous generations in the home country, rather than simply relying on occupation in the host society. This is because some immigrants from privileged backgrounds will experience downward mobility on arrival in the host country and may take one or two subsequent generations to reach a similar, or higher, class position (Loury et al. 2005). Though these discussions on class identity as experienced by minority groups in the UK do not offer any solutions to these problems, these discussions have usefully highlighted issues for consideration.

Most class research has utilised interviews, but McDermott (2004) has raised particular problems with this method when researching working-class people. Based on a comparative analysis of the dynamics of class and sexuality in the interview setting, McDermott (2004) suggests that interviews – especially those that rely on a level of

abstraction – may be intimidating or exclusionary for working-class people. Being relaxed, content and articulate influences the kinds of accounts told, which according to McDermott (2004), allowed the middle-class women she interviewed to speak for longer and with more confidence than those women of working-class position.

Rationale for using Interviews and Focus Groups

Despite McDermott's concerns, I chose to rely on individual accounts as the main source of data, whilst resolving to keep in mind the potential disadvantages posed by the interview method for working-class respondents. Interviews are the most effective way in which to explore women's experiences of class subjectivity, facilitating accounts that are complex, contradictory and personal, and which are difficult to access through other qualitative methods (Mason 2002a). Interviews elicit the reflexive identities of individuals (Bourdieu 1999), by allowing space for people to reflect on their practices (Ball 2003). Compared to other qualitative methods, one-to-one interviews allow 'greater confidentiality [...], particularly when discussing personal issues' (Hennink et al. 1999: 540). The flexible nature of interviews allows researchers to probe into inconsistencies and to follow up leads. Potentially, interviews offer a voice to previously unheard women if the interviews are conducted in a sensitive way (Mason 2002a). Feminists such as Oakley (1981) and Finch (1984) have for a long time highlighted the advantages of two-way relationships which can allow the sharing of information between researcher and participant, facilitating 'non-hierarchical, non-exploitative and reciprocal research' (Egharevba 2001). One-to-one interviews create room for 'modifying one's line of enquiry, following up interesting responses' (Robson 2002: 272), which may not be possible with the focus group method. A disadvantage is that interviews can require heavy participation by a single person, which can be intimidating or tiring for some. Faced with this issue, Abbas (2006) lightly prompted 'younger respondents who were sometimes shy or nervous' (2006: 322).

By triangulating interviews with focus groups, some silences in the interviews may come to light (Jones and Bugge 2006). There is less pressure on members of the group discussion to continually participate because there are several participants in a focus group. Participants may be encouraged to practice a different kind of reflexivity than

required during an interview, producing data in which contrasts and comparisons are debated:

Group discussions provide direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants' opinions and experiences as opposed to reaching such conclusions from post hoc analyses of separate statements from each interviewee. (Morgan 1997: 10)

Focus groups may encourage participants to discover new kinds of knowledge, through providing a space to articulate feelings which have previously been silenced, or by challenging 'topics that are either habit-ridden or not thought out in detail' (Morgan 1997: 11). Sharing knowledge through collective discourse enables participants to listen and speak together, enabling support in the face of pervading inequalities. Such group support may allow the discussion of sensitive topics which are often not accessible in one-to-one interviews. As Clough and Nutbrown note, '[o]ne comment – one spoken thought – stimulated another and as the conversation went on a verbal sculpture was created, ideas were crafted, expressed and re-expressed' (2002: 74). Whilst in an indepth interview it is ethically questionable for the researcher to challenge the views of a participant, diversity within a focus group may ensure that participants 'are forced to explain the reasoning behind their thinking' (Kitzinger 1994: 113). Focus groups are a 'rich and productive way of gaining access to well rehearsed "public knowledge" [...] highlighting the way in which social exchange reinforces such hierarchies' (Michell 1999: 36).

I aimed to represent the broad religio-ethnic make-up of these three Northern localities, and thus I carried out in-depth interviews and a focus group with Muslim and non-Muslim women. I hoped to speak to women from working-class backgrounds (defined by the occupation of their parents), who were the first generation in their families to attend university. I sought to interview young women under the age of 30. This age range was defined to encompass both women who progressed to university straight from school, as well as those starting university after paid work, exam resits or pregnancy. It is also the group targeted by the British Government's widening participation strategy.

Bradford, West Yorkshire has been the ‘hot spot’ of much media attention, political action, and subsequent social science research (Bolognani 2007). To explore the experience of women living in areas which are not as notorious as Bradford, I was also interested in speaking to women from Burnley (Lancashire), Oldham (Greater Manchester) and the surrounding areas.

Research Process

How I Recruited the Sample

Hall (2004) notes that ‘outsiders’ may find it particularly difficult to gain access to groups to which they are not connected. Because of this I set aside eighteen months of my timetable to recruit participants (see appendix A). Though I searched persistently, at some stages it seemed impossible to encourage any women to participate. Recruitment was by far the most unsettling part of this research. Before embarking on this research project, I had no contacts within the Pakistani diaspora. Though contacting ‘gate keepers’ or community leaders may have been the quickest route, there is a danger that:

Gatekeepers ‘vet’ the research and they decide whether they should allow access to individuals. Participants that are selected by gatekeepers are often ‘hand picked’. Others considered as being ‘unsuitable’, such as separated/divorced women, are overlooked. (Din 2006: 16)

Instead, I started by contacting local newspapers, including press targeted at the Pakistani diaspora, and some promised to put a small notice about my research in the next edition. However, I did not see any of my notices in the newspapers and I did not hear from any participants in this way. Though I had explained my research in detail, sometimes journalists seemed suspicious of my research and my motives, wanting to know what I was ‘trying to show’. Next, I travelled to local universities, handed out flyers and placed posters in communal spaces such as libraries, supermarkets, cafes and halls of residence. However, I got the impression that the posters were not displayed for long; on a few occasions, when I returned to these venues, my posters had been removed. Despite the long hours I spent handing out flyers and putting up posters

(invariably in bad weather, which influenced the willingness of women to accept a flyer and stop for a chat), I only managed to recruit three women using this method.

I compiled a short questionnaire to distribute to A level students at a local FEC about to embark on degree studies. The questionnaire, which would allow me to select a suitable sample, asked for demographic details and whether working-class women would like to participate in an interview (see appendix B). I received several completed questionnaires from women willing to be interviewed, most of whom were Muslim. Although most of these women would objectively be considered working-class (according to the occupation of their parents), some of the women identified as middle-class or upper class. This varies considerably from the response Tett received from Scottish mature students, who all 'identified themselves as working-class in response to a question in the initial application form' (Tett 2000: 185). As I was interested in speaking to women from working-class backgrounds – regardless of whether they identified as working-class or not – I planned to contact these women for an interview when they had settled into university.

Snowballing friends was the most successful method for starting recruitment. By snowballing my friendship networks, I found three women to interview, and snowballed these women to find a further six. However, it is worth mentioning the potential pitfalls of using the snowball method in class research. A woman whom I had interviewed put me in touch with several of her friends. However, when conducting the interviews I realised that some of these women were actually from middle-class backgrounds, and had parents who were graduates. Though I was very sorry to waste the women's time, I decided not to transcribe or analyse these accounts because I was specifically looking for women from working-class backgrounds. Nevertheless, these interviews contributed to my understanding and knowledge of university and class relations in general. This problem with snowballing is more likely to happen when researchers are put in touch with people that are not well known by the respondent. When relying on the snowballing method I tried always to make sure the women belonged to the class, communities and religio-ethnic positions in which I was interested. However, sometimes this was impossible; though sending an email with a questionnaire attached enabled me to be more selective, not many had access to the internet during the university holidays, when most of the interviews were conducted. It did not seem

appropriate to enter into a discussion on class identities and family histories during a brief phone call with a virtual stranger.

I contacted the women who had completed the questionnaires. All had left addresses, and some had also included an email address and/or telephone number. Because of the 'norms' of communication, Lareau (2000) found it much more effective to telephone working-class respondents, and for middle class people, preferred to send a letter. However, as a non-Muslim researcher I did not feel confident in contacting the Muslim women on their home telephone numbers in case this caused the concern of or misunderstanding for family members. Instead, I emailed all those who had left an email address, and for all those who did not, I posted a letter. Disappointingly, however, only three women contacted me. I later interviewed these women. In hindsight, this follow-up contact included many, largely irrelevant, details. If I did this research again, I would make sure communication is precise, relevant and explains exactly what is needed from participants.

Eventually, eight months after starting the search, I had exhausted all my contacts and had only interviewed seven women. Lareau (2000) recommends that researchers calculate how long they imagine it will take to complete the research process, and then double this allocated time period. I think this is very sound advice. Fieldwork involves a lot of waiting: waiting for others to ask suitable friends to be interviewed as promised; waiting for return calls, emails or questionnaires; waiting for participants to be given their university timetables or work rotas; waiting, I hoped, for the sudden rush of participation that I desperately needed. Invariably, this never came!³ However, I used the broad spread of the interviews to my advantage. A more relaxed timetable allowed valuable thinking time; I was able to transcribe, start preliminary analysis and writing, and continue reading literature before moving on to the next interview. I felt I understood the issues better because of this, and I could streamline the interviews according to emerging interests and themes.

I was becoming increasingly concerned about not finding more participants.

Encouraged by my desperation – and despite the wariness of colleagues towards this

³ Though in July and August 2005, days/weeks after the bomb attacks in London, the numbers of Muslim women volunteering to participate seemed to rise after these events, not fall, as I had expected.

unorthodox method – I decided to try the *Friends Reunited* website as a method of recruitment.⁴ By paying an annual membership of £7.50 I was able to email site members. Overall, I sent about 100 emails to old friends, acquaintances and strangers who were (from what I could tell) women, of Pakistani origin or white, who attended schools in the areas from which I was recruiting, and who were currently at university. In the email I told them about my research, who I was interested in talking to, and asked if they knew anyone willing to fill in a short questionnaire (see appendix C).

Recruiting in this way proved highly successful. I discovered the potential of this site relatively late in the fieldwork process, but had I known about it sooner I would have recruited the sample much easier. By using this site I interviewed nine women and snowballed another one. My emails had a ‘success rate’ of about one in ten, though after taking into consideration the probability that some students I contacted, who did not fall within the remit of my research and thus counted themselves out (e.g. men; those from middle-class backgrounds; from other religio-ethnic groups, or those who had already graduated), the success of this method is probably much higher.

Recruiting participants online has many advantages: email communication is straightforward and free – apart from the minimal joining fee – with no postage costs or telephone bills. It was much more convenient to email from my desk rather than travelling for hours to universities or FECs. The main disadvantage of using *Friends Reunited* was that minority ethnic/religious groups and working-class people were less likely to be registered on the website.

I aimed to conduct a few focus groups. Encouraging the women I had previously interviewed to participate in a group discussion seemed most effective. However, the women – who had already given an hour or so for the interview – were very busy with paid work, university and family responsibilities, and they had only limited free time. Finding a place convenient for several women to meet at the same time proved

⁴ www.friendsreunited.co.uk. On the website there is a message board allowing people to leave a note about themselves under the school they attended and year of departure. The website has open access to browse the messages that ex-students have written about themselves. Commonly these messages give information about their current jobs, present whereabouts, partners, children and educational achievements. The website allows users to search for old friends in different localities, under type of school (ie. grammar, comprehensive, public), and the details left often give an indication of class, age, gender, sexuality, religion and ethnicity of the ex-students.

impossible. It seems that researchers who conduct focus groups with pre-existing groups are much more successful than those attempting to get several strangers together for a one-off group discussion (Barbour and Kitzinger 1999). For this research, however, there was no pre-existing group that matched the specific requirements for participation exactly. I could have approached a relevant pre-existing group, for instance, university Islamic Societies or even LGBT groups and ‘cherry picked’ those to whom I wanted to speak. However, I did not want to divide the group; members of groups presumably enjoy meeting and engaging in activities with the other members and I did not want to disrupt this space by choosing who and who not to include. I had reached the end of my fieldwork and I was ready to give up the idea of conducting a focus group when, by chance, one of my emails reached a Muslim woman who was willing to organise group discussion with some of her friends who met the demographic requirements of this study. With the help of this woman I was thus able to conduct one focus group.

This, therefore, is an account of how I managed to generate my sample (summarised in appendix D). Despite the disappointments, worry and ethical dilemmas at each stage I want to emphasise that the fieldwork was the most enjoyable part of the research. Though like Devine, I too fear that traditional academics will render my recruitment methods ‘unsystematic and haphazard’ (2004a: 198), but at the end of the day, this is how most qualitative research happens! I thought long and hard about the most effective ways to generate the sample, and I made use of what was available to me at the time. In the end, these were the methods that enabled the participants to come forward and the research to take place.

The Women

Altogether I spoke to 29 women (see appendix E for interviewee biographies).⁵ I interviewed 15 Muslim and 11 non-Muslim women, and I conducted a focus group with

⁵ I decided to stop data collection after I had spoken to these 29 women. I had half a dozen more contacts willing to talk with me, but felt that at this stage I had reached ‘saturation’. All the women had rich, diverse experiences, but in relation to the questions that I was interested in, I am not convinced that I would have found different answers had I continued the interviewing.

three other Muslim women.⁶ All women were British-born. The non-Muslim women and their families were white and of British origin. All identified as having no faith, apart from one, who defined herself as from a Catholic background but is now non-believing. With the exception of one Muslim woman who identifies as a white convert, and has British parents, the Muslim women were second-generation British, of Pakistani origin.

Though all the women were HE students of roughly the same age, there were significant differences between the participants. The women were students at a range of institutions; 13 women studied at post-92 HEIs, and 16 attended pre-92 universities (see appendix F). A third of the women commuted from home, with the rest living away from their parents. As my methods of recruitment relied at first on questionnaires distributed in an FEC, and then snowballing, most of these women were first-year students (13), with fewer numbers in their penultimate or final year (11). I also spoke to a woman who was on maternity leave and another who had recently graduated, as well as 3 postgraduate students (year groups summarised in appendix F). Most non-Muslim women studied humanities (4) or social science subjects (4), and most of the Muslim women were enrolled on applied/pure sciences (11) or law/business degrees (5). Most women were born and brought up in Lancashire (19), though 6 came from West Yorkshire and the remaining 4 from Greater Manchester (see appendix F). The women came from different towns within these communities – areas that varied significantly in relation to transport links, availability of educational institutions, religio-ethnic segregation and level of deprivation – but for reasons of confidentiality I do not disclose individual towns, educational institutions or other identifying features.

Finding Out

As the study was likely to elicit sensitive material, it was particularly important to uphold ethical research practices. Before the interview I discussed ethical issues, informing the women that they could stop the interview at any time, and that they were not obliged to answer any questions. I asked the women if they were happy to be

⁶ While all the Muslim women were Sunni, there were differences in the ways in which religion was practiced (e.g. whether they prayed 5 times a day; how they interpreted the *Koran* and *hadith*; to what extent they covered, etc).

recorded, which all were. Recording the discussions was important because my analysis depended on repeated listenings and on the production of a transcript. I usually used two dictaphones in case one failed, and having two recorders improved sound quality in particularly noisy settings, picking up sounds that only one recorder would have lost. The women seemed to forget the presence of the recorders straight away.

After the interview I planned to ask the women to sign a consent form, stating that I could use the interview data (see appendix G). However, after conducting several interviews I decided not to continue to use this consent form. Asking the women to sign the form, after having shared personal experiences, turned what had been an informal and enjoyable discussion into an ‘intimidating business relationship’ (Blake 2007: 417). Requesting the women to sign seemed like I was asking them to hand over their ownership of the material and lose their right to pull out of the research at any time (Blake 2007). Instead I decided to use the questionnaire as a record of consent, whilst emphasising their ongoing right to decide the extent of their participation.

Interviews

As the women’s class experiences, identity and movement were complex, contradictory and reflexive, the one-to-one interviews provided the most effective way to find out about class. Following Mason’s (2002a) advice, I decided not to have a list of set questions to ask in the interview, considering this too rigid an approach to deal with the complexities and specificities of each interview. Instead I had a list of bullet points, loosely structured around three topics: the women’s educational experiences before HE; their experiences of university, and their hopes and aims for the future (see appendix H). I tried to give the women enough room to talk about what they wanted to within the structure of a semi-structured interview. I tried to ask questions in a non-threatening way, such as ‘I was wondering if you could tell me about...’. In this sense I was the passive, silent partner in the dialogue. At times some women did not want the space I gave them to talk at length about themselves and they seemed more confident with a two-way conversation. The women occasionally asked about my experiences of higher education, or to establish what I already knew about the location in which they lived, or the subject they studied. When I did talk about myself it was sometimes in relation to offering ‘some form of help, assistance, or other form of information’, what Johnson

calls ‘complementary reciprocity’ (Johnson 1983, cited in Rapley 2004: 23). The interviews were tiring and demanding for the women, and I tried to keep them under 90 minutes in total.

My approach to discussions on class was informed by the experiences of researchers working on class identity (Skeggs 1997; Devine 2004b; Savage et al. 2001). Before we started the interview, I explained that I sought to understand the women’s own class definitions. When I asked a direct question about class identity or position, some challenged the existence of class, whilst others wanted clarification of how I defined class. Corresponding to the experiences of Savage et al. (2001), in the interviews I conducted I was mindful of raising direct questions about class at the ‘right’ time, because class embarrassment often worked to ‘kill’ the rapport if I introduced class too early.

Mindful of the discussions in Loury et al.’s edited collection (2005) about the differing class trajectories of migrants and diasporic groups in comparison to majority ethnic groups – especially the class position of family prior to migration – I asked the Muslim women about the class of their grandparents and parents before migration. However, in most accounts, accessing much data was not possible. The women – who are second and third generation – offered only limited discussions about Pakistan because, for the large part, they did not regard the country as relevant to their lives in the UK. Many others simply did not know the details of their parents’ lives before migration, their knowledge being limited to their parents’ memories and reminiscences about Pakistan, told to them when they were children (Bettie 2003).

The women discussed their family’s situation in Pakistan in the current time, emphasising their privileged position in Pakistan, but it is probable this wealth is newly acquired, the result of remittances, rather than part of a long history of family wealth and land ownership. Their responses highlighted the importance of caste. Though many minority groups in the UK have roots in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh or Sri Lanka, caste has been almost completely ignored within existing methodology for exploring class. The women’s reactions to completing the questionnaire emphasised several ways in which I could have improved the questionnaire if I did this research again. I realised that the questionnaire I produced had relied on ‘white’ UK models of class. Some said that

occupations in the UK and Pakistan, especially for farmers, are not comparable. Others pointed to the centrality of the job of their older siblings to the income of the household, rather than that of their father. If I did this research again, I would consider broadening the questionnaire to cover these issues, though there is no guarantee that all women have the knowledge to answer these additional questions.

Before embarking on the PhD, I gave this research a 'trial run' for my Master's dissertation study. Though this short piece of research gave me some useful experience, I did not regard these interviews as being conventional 'pilot interviews' which would then lead on to a list of set questions that would remain fixed. Instead, after each interview for the PhD study, I reviewed each one, and if necessary changed anything that was not working. For instance, in the later interviews in 2005 I stopped asking about the 2001 'race riots' because this question failed to generate the discussion it had done in earlier interviews.

Rapley argues that the environment and atmosphere in which the interview takes place impacts on the accounts produced:

...when interviewing someone in a coffee shop and we turned to the subject of his sexuality, he began to speak in hushed tones. After the interview he noted that 'This is a small community and I don't want to upset future business clients' (Rapley 2004: 18).

Mindful of this, I always tried to provide a safe, quiet space in which the women would be as comfortable as possible. Most interviews were conducted in the women's homes, but when this was not possible, other convenient sites included a private room in a university library and my office in the Centre for Women's Studies at the university. Sometimes, however, there was no where else to go apart from a coffee shop (see appendix J). These cafes were chosen – usually by the participants, as I was often unfamiliar with the area – for their central location. I also wanted to show the women that – especially in the present circumstances of religious hatred – I was a bone fide researcher, and meeting a stranger in a public place seemed to provide this reassurance. I was reminded of Rapley's emphasis on the importance of providing a safe and comfortable interview venue when one time – a few days after 7/7 – a Muslim woman

and I walked into an expensive café to conduct an interview. As we sat down and ordered drinks, I immediately half-regretted it; I had not realised from the outside that this place was frequented only by ‘posh’ white people. With the dictaphone on the table, I could feel eyes burning into us as she whispered her short responses to my questions. Because of the poor sound quality I was unable to transcribe some of this interview.

Focus Group

The ‘21/7’ bomb plot in London occurred the day before the focus group was scheduled to take place. On the recommendation of my contact, I decided to continue the meeting as planned. However, only three women turned up (Sara – the recent convert to Islam – and Shoneen and Farzana), which led the participants and myself to wonder whether the low turnout was related to the events of the previous day. Usually focus groups are conducted with more than three participants, and though I was disappointed that more women had not arrived, the number of participants carried advantages. The atmosphere, for most of the discussion, was intimate and friendly, allowing them to raise issues that were directly relevant and important to them. Though I had planned to follow a similar structure and discussion schedule to the interviews (see appendix H), the focus group departed considerably from the discussions in the interviews. The women knew each other very well, and a large part of the discussion was led by the women, who asked questions and responded to each other’s comments. They challenged each other in a way that I – as researcher – could not. As Morgan (1997) has indicated, the group elicited data of a necessarily reflexive nature, without prompting from me. In particular, Sara – the recent convert to Islam – facilitated the discussion of the similarities and differences between Muslim and non-Muslim women.

The focus group was much less demanding for the participants in comparison to the interviews. Whereas one-to-one interviews rely on the active discussion of a single participant throughout, the focus group enabled a sharing of responsibility for discussion. This allowed more time for reflection, passive participation, and the women

were also able to exit for the bathroom, for a drink, or to perform *namaz*.⁷ The length of the focus group was just under three hours, double the timing of most interviews.

The small number of participants was sometimes disadvantageous, however, because in practice, responsibility was placed on all the women to speak frequently, in response to every issue raised. As Robinson (1999) notes, focus groups may allow extreme views to predominate, or to be led by a dominant participant, which corresponds to my experience of facilitating this group. Though most of the time the group discussion provided a supportive environment, in this specific context where the topic of covering was frequently raised, it was significant that one woman did not cover (Shoneen), and the other two were *mohajebeh* (Farzana and Sara). Farzana and Sara emphasised the importance of covering, placing Shoneen in a difficult position:

Sara: Excuse me, I don't want to slag you off [glances at Shoneen]

Shoneen: No [laughs]

Sara: But one of the basics that Muslims will admit is that hijab is compulsory.

Farzana: yeah.

Shoneen remained quiet for much of the remaining discussion. As a researcher, and a stranger to the group, I felt it was not my place to intervene when controversial or cross words were exchanged. Perhaps if there were more women at the discussion, particularly more women who did not cover, discussions in the group would have been more of an equal debate.

It is possible that the focus group produced accounts which compared the experiences of Muslim and non-Muslim women because Sara – a white woman, and a recent convert to Islam – acted as a ‘bridge’ between myself and the Muslim women, seeing the points of

⁷ I did not take the advice of Din (2006) about considering prayer times when organising a meeting. I left it up to the women to agree a mutually convenient time. Perhaps because the focus group was less demanding than the interviews, the women were able to take a brief break to perform *namaz*, before resuming.

disjuncture, misunderstanding and similarities between us. My positionality in relation to those of the participants was central to the accounts produced, not only in the focus group, but during all the fieldwork, and indeed, the entirety of the project. This research was often considered contentious because of my positioning as a non-Muslim researcher, yet the women and I were similar on a number of levels, including class background, gender, age and locality, which also influenced the fieldwork dynamics. The importance of 'matching' researcher and participant has been promoted in some feminist and ethnicity studies debates, but as this research indicates, labels of 'insider' and 'outsider' are complex because individuals inhabit more than one position.

Positionality and Situatedness

There is a growing body of literature that explores the interpersonal dynamics in fieldwork. Feminists in the 1980s assumed that women were most effectively interviewed by female researchers, because a shared gender identity might enable greater understanding (Oakley 1981). To some degree these feminist debates have influenced the field of ethnicity studies (Shah 2004). For instance, Egharevba notes the salience of suggestions in the field of ethnicity studies that encourage minority ethnic researchers to study their own communities and white researchers to focus 'their attention on racism in white structures and institutions' (Egharevba 2001: 230). This advice is guided by fears that researchers with different positionings may misinterpret and/or misrepresent minority groups. Yet, a growing number of reflexive accounts challenge the assumption that outsider and insider positions are necessarily in opposition, emphasising instead that the 'boundaries between the two positions are not all that clearly delineated' (Merriam et al. 2001: 405). These accounts point to the problematic nature of 'matching' researchers and participants on ethnicity, gender or other identities. 'Matching' assumes that there is a 'single truth to be discovered' (Rhodes 1994: 547). By equating a shared identity with a shared experience, matching can fix identities and experiences as unitary, one-dimensional and unchangeable (Subedi 2006). In relation to class identity, Reay (1996) highlights the dangers of 'insider' researchers misrepresenting accounts, by equating their experiences with those of the participants. Because identities are multiple, fluid and intersecting, Archer notes that on a practical note it is impossible to 'match researchers/participants exactly in all criteria' (Archer 2002b: 111).

Reflexive works have highlighted the haphazard and ambiguous nature of power and rapport in fieldwork relationships, exploring the advantages and disadvantages within each position to indicate that dynamics work in complex and contradictory ways (Thapar-Björkert and Henry 2004). For instance, many have noted the (unexpected) advantages that outsiders bring (Egharevba 2001; Hall 2004). Because certain experiences may remain unspoken when researcher and participant are matched (Reay 1996; Rabe 2003; Hall 2004; Parmer 2006), the 'gap' in experience between researcher and participant 'creates a space for respondents to describe and tease out meanings and assumptions that may otherwise remain unspoken' (Carter 2004: 348). The majority of reflexive accounts have analysed race/ethnicity and/or gender. There have been no detailed explorations of class dynamics within the interview setting, with the exception of Reay (1996) and Skeggs (1997). Faith has usually only been referred to implicitly as lying within ethnic or cultural positions, though recently researchers working in the UK have drawn attention to dynamics of the religio-ethnic position in relation to the British Muslim community (Bolognani 2007; McLoughlin 2005). I discuss my situatedness in relation to faith and class, also paying attention to how other positions (of gender and ethnicity) intersected with these positions.

Faith

Due to recent events, Muslims in the UK are now suspicious of researchers and journalists (McLoughlin 2005), and particularly in some cities in the North of England feel over-researched (Bolognani 2007). With no links to the 'community', I hoped my academic credentials – a PhD student at an elite university, with an office, phone and name on the door – would present me as a sensitive and bona fide researcher.

In the interviews, the Muslim women frequently drew upon our different positionings in order to situate their lives in relation to mine. For instance, in response to my first question, which was something along the lines of, 'tell me about your cultural background growing up', the women often replied, 'in *our* religion...' or 'in *our* community...'. Comparisons between the Koran and the Bible were also ubiquitous. The Muslim women discussed the 'obvious', perhaps in order to aid my understanding. This is data that 'insider' researchers may neither be able to access nor want to hear

(Reay 1996). They spoke with authority on Islamic issues, without fear of disagreement and seemed guided by the Islamic requirement for Muslims to educate non-Muslims about their faith. My (assumed) ignorance about Islam seemed to encourage these accounts. Like the Muslims interviewed by Bolognani (2007), the Muslim women I spoke to took charge of the direction of conversation and introduced new topics they deemed relevant, almost embodying a critique of representations of Muslim women as meek and oppressed.

Archer (2002b) suggests that as a white woman, the British Muslim/Asian women she interviewed were reluctant to discuss ethnic prejudice because of rapport arising from a shared gender position. However, in relation to the Muslim women to whom I spoke, my gender seemed to *enable* the women to challenge Islamophobia. All the women I spoke to defended their faith against frequent media accusations of sexism (c.f. Ahmad 2006), though my questions mentioned neither gender nor sexism, at least not directly. The women's discussion of gender was influenced partly, it seems, by my position as a student within the Centre for Women's Studies. At the end of the interview I asked if there were any themes I had missed. Gazala remarked, 'Maybe like a few more female questions, on gender, possibly. I don't know, I'm just thinking of you being in the Women's Studies Centre'. The women may have presumed either that I was most interested in sexism, or indeed that I held prejudices concerning gender and Islam myself. I was touched by how honest and open some of the Muslim women were. Some shared details of their lives that were unknown to their families, such as their love relationships, and their experiences of social events and intoxicating substances. As Bolognani (2007) suggests, it is possible that participants can discuss 'taboo' issues with non-Muslim researchers. As I was an outsider there was little risk of judgement, gossip or backlash.

One way in which feminist research methodology has dealt with power relations, especially when researching disadvantaged and minority groups, has been to send transcripts and draft papers to respondents. Though there is little published material on this practice, I have much anecdotal evidence that many feminist researchers send transcripts (and other documents) as a matter of course to participants if/when these are produced, and some consider it imperative that researchers consult the participants about any work involving them before it is published. Not only does this offer an

opportunity to correct or explain misinterpretations or mistakes (though see McDermott et al. 2005), it ensures the women remain involved and have control over their words, if they so wish.

For ethical reasons I followed this, and sent all the participants a hard copy of the interview transcript. However, some Muslim women had strong concerns about confidentiality, and seeing the transcript served to increase their anxiety. Two women requested to delete sections of their transcript, so I sent the transcript in an email attachment, and they returned the altered version to me. It was this copy that I analysed, and I discarded the original version.⁸ In addition to confidentiality concerns, it is quite possible that the Muslim women felt representative of Islam or/and their communities, and were anxious not to betray their communities by representing them in a negative light. It is possible that seeing the transcripts highlighted their important responsibilities to their kin. The women could see in the cold light of day what a white non-Muslim person knew about their life, family and community.

It has been much more difficult to consider my positionality in relation to the non-Muslim women. We both share a privileged religio-ethnic position that is rendered invisible because of this advantage, and has rarely been discussed by previous researchers. Unlike the Muslim community in the UK who are now suspicious of researchers (McLoughlin 2005), and feel over-researched, the non-Muslim women – as part of the religio-ethnic majority – did not have these concerns. Because we share a religio-ethnic location, it is possible the non-Muslim women felt they were representing themselves as individuals, rather than being representative of their community. Whereas the Muslim women may have participated in the research for political (and Islamic) reasons, I got the sense that the non-Muslim women were doing me a favour by agreeing to be interviewed. The non-Muslim women did not have anything to challenge or to prove; their interviews were usually shorter and much less participant led than those of the Muslim women. As the non-Muslim women had not taken many/any risks in participating, this probably influenced the non-Muslim women's interest and

⁸ I plan to send all the women a (CD) copy of this thesis. I will also send the women draft copies of articles written for publication in journals, relating to this thesis, inviting feedback on these and the thesis. I imagine that for the women, the articles will be less problematic than the transcripts because the articles will allow the women to see their contribution alongside those of others, to see how their account adds to the research as a whole.

participation in the project after the interview. I sent transcripts to all the non-Muslim women but did not hear back from anyone, so assumed the transcripts were okay.

If I am realistic about what the interview meant to them, I imagine some would struggle to remember me if I contacted them now, several years after the interview.

Class

Reay (1996) highlights the dangers of researchers from working-class backgrounds equating their experiences with those of working-class participants. Whilst I tried to remain mindful of this throughout the research process, I came to the research with the expectation that the non-Muslim women and I would share a similar class identity, politics and experience. However, whilst we shared a shared class background there were many other class experiences that were not shared because of our different age, sexuality and so on. Perhaps most strikingly, as a PhD student, I was differentially situated on the 'class continuum' from the women. Whereas my class mobility was much more guaranteed, most of the women were in the early stages of their undergraduate degrees, and their futures were less than certain. As I was analysing the accounts, I noticed that on occasions my expectation that we would share a class identity influenced my interview technique, especially when I first started fieldwork. For instance, when the women did not demonstrate the working-class identity that I had expected, my first reaction was that they had not understood my question, so I asked again, in a different way.

In the previous section I explained my attempt to present myself as a bona fide researcher (particularly in order to gain the Muslim women's trust during discussions about Islam), and in line with my research questions, I had emphasised my interest in class. However, I got the impression that sometimes the women regarded me as an expert on class research. I was dismayed that they often seemed to answer my questions on class position as if I was testing their knowledge on formal classifications. When I asked the women to assign themselves to a class category – emphasising the women's *own* class definitions and experiences rather than relying on pre-existing categories – some women strained to remember specific categories on the Registrar General's classification. For instance, when I asked Jasminah about her class background, her

response – including her tone, the hesitation and her looks for reassurance – indicated that she was anxious about getting the answer wrong:

Jasminah: I know already my social class, if you've done that already, in your actual education, you kind of know where you are. And I think my dad was skilled manual, which means he's probably four, I think, if I'm right? Because he's a bus driver.

JM: What class position would you say you are now?

Jasminah: One, because my husband's a doctor, it's based on his social class, isn't it? It's your husband or your father, isn't it? I'm just trying to clarify.

My emphasis on discussing the women's own identity categories did not answer their questions on what working-class and middle-class 'really are', but my avoidance of their questions seemed to further confuse them. For instance, when I ask Gayle about her class identity, she responded to my questions with questions of her own:

Gayle: Working-class, yeah. Yeah, because I'm working. The upper class don't work do they?

JM: Buggers! [laughs]

Gayle:[laughs] Yeah, middle-class still work but they are quite well off, is that right?

JM: So, is middle-class, for you, about money?

Gayle: Well, it's also...about status as well, isn't it?

In later interviews, I highlighted the problems with existing classifications and emphasised my interest on the 'feelings' of class at the beginning of the interview as well as before asking the class questions, to avoid making the women anxious about

getting the answer wrong. Many qualitative class researchers in the UK report similar findings of respondent hesitation when assigning themselves to a class position (Savage et al. 2001; Devine 2004a). This phenomenon has been related to a lack of discourses around class in the cultural and public domain, which instead situate class divisions in the realm of the 'personal' (Johnson and Lawler 2005). While I agree with these explanations, I also think interview dynamics play a part in this, and these discussions would benefit from further debate on the matter.

On other occasions, the intersections between class, faith and ethnicity became prominent during interviews with the Muslim women. Often, this limited discussions about Islamophobia and racism. Problems of multiculturalism, including BNP politics and inner-city racism have been attributed to the white working-class population (Haylett 2001; Scheepers et al. 2002), particularly in the Northern communities from which I recruited. Owing to the representations of Muslim/non-Muslim polarities in these towns, I got the impression that the Muslim women were reluctant to discuss interpersonal experiences of ethnic/religious prejudice with someone from a working-class background, and a non-Muslim from the same locality. This may have been due to my associations with the 'opposing side', especially so for those who attended the same schools as myself.

The complexity of these shared/differing experiences and positions influenced the dynamics of the interviews in ambiguous and fluid ways, sometimes opening up discussions and other times closing them down. Some issues were left unsaid or underdeveloped, especially if I did not press the women for details (c.f. Reay 1996). In their discussions of growing up and being a student, economic resources were frequently alluded to but rarely explained. Because financial struggles seemed 'obvious', the women seemed puzzled that I was asking them something (they imagined) I already knew. Other times, our shared experiences *did* open up accounts, especially relating to accent/dialect and locality. Even though I did not ask specifically about this, accent was mentioned by every participant, and occasionally it was the first thing a woman commented on after we had met. Perhaps the women – unconsciously or otherwise – were reminded of their accents in hearing mine, as we sat together in an elite university building.

Transcription, Coding and Analysis

I transcribed all the data in full and found the repeated listenings were an important part of becoming familiar with the data. I decided to note interruptions to speech, such as pauses, laughter and so on, to gain a better sense of the atmosphere. However, I decided not to transcribe each 'er' and 'um'. These were so frequent that they detracted from the account, rather than adding to it. As Watson notes, it is ironic that 'the greater the attempt to convey nuance through transcription conventions the less natural the transcription appears' (Watson 2006: 374). Other than this omission, however, I typed exactly what was spoken. I did not correct grammar, as this would serve to delegitimise the women's accent/dialect, but unlike Charlesworth's work (2000), I decided not to give an indication of accent through spelling words phonetically. Such a transcription was not necessary for the method of analysis I was using, which concentrated on the women's accounts rather than the way the words were spoken. I anonymised the data as soon as I produced the transcripts. As I worked on public transport frequently, carrying transcripts in my bag, I was touched by horror stories about loss or theft of data (Yuill 2004).

Once I had transcribed, I read through the accounts over and over again, jotting down ideas onto hard copies. I used Word documents to store notes and later, for analysis. Because of difficulties in finding respondents, there were gaps of weeks or even months between each interview, giving me time for preliminary analysis whilst reading the transcripts alongside the literature and discussing ideas at conferences. I was eventually able to focus in on specific themes, which were based on a combination of the women's accounts, the literature, the research questions and my own emerging ideas. Thus, developing themes was a loose mixture of *a priori* and grounded theory. I coded the material by using these themes. Conventionally, data collection and data analysis are considered two separate phenomena, but these in reality 'should not be regarded as sequential stages' (Richards and Richards 1994: 149). Like Richards and Richards (1994), I saw the coding process as an important part of the analysis of the material. Coding was often confusing, messy and at times seemed impossible. Though the danger of getting too bound up with coding is that this may 'distract and distance the researchers from the tasks of analysis' and writing up (Richards and Richards 1994:

148), I sought to consider the context of the words within the overall account, in relation to the overall project (Mason 2002a).

I placed each emerging theme in a separate Word file, and in each file I tried to see what the women were 'telling me'. I began to look at both the similarities and the differences between the two groups of women. The analysis involved literal, interpretive and reflexive readings of the accounts (Mason 2002a). I placed attention not only on the participants' response, but on the context of the interaction more generally. I added to my notes, continued with fieldwork, and started to develop preliminary arguments. This stage was also messy and disheartening, not helped by the fact that the accounts seemed contradictory and ambiguous. My thinking was clarified by making use of visual aids such as spider diagrams, time-lines and 'continuums' which enabled me to see each woman's position in relation to the others. Up until now I had been analysing the two groups of women largely separately, but by seeing these visual aids I was able to draw on similarities and differences by looking at the group as a whole. As I continued to write, read and discuss, some lines of argument became central, and other arguments, I realised, were weak and subsequently abandoned.

Conclusion

This chapter has identified gaps within the emerging scholarship on methodology for exploring class. If feminist and class researchers want to escape the accusation of 'cultural imperialism' it is necessary to open up new ways of researching class that can effectively access the experiences, identities and positions of both diaspora groups in the UK and migrants from countries with class systems that differ vastly from those in the UK. I have sought to offer a contribution to these debates by discussing the research design and process of a project that attempts to research class identity, experiences and mobility for two religio-ethnic groups.

In this chapter I have discussed the rationale for using interview and focus group methods and the benefits of triangulation. The recruitment methods used were numerous and varied, but the most effective methods were online recruitment and the snowballing method, which was perhaps related to my position as a non-Muslim 'outsider'. I have indicated that my situatedness in the research influenced the dynamics

of the interview and the accounts produced. By exploring positions of faith and class (and their intersections), I discussed the complex and fluid interview dynamics, challenging both the practice of 'matching' and simplistic notions of 'insider' and 'outsider' positions. Finally, methods of transcription, coding and analysis were discussed, and I brought attention to this difficult, messy and complex process in relation to class research.

Chapter 4: Routes into Higher Education

Introduction

In chapter two I explored existing literature about the progression of non-traditional students at university. As these studies indicate, the women I interviewed for this research are ‘already exceptions’ because for the ‘majority of working-class young people, not going to university is part of a “normal biography”’ (Ball et al. 2002: 53). They have managed to proceed through education and gain a place at university despite the odds, and this progress breaks from the traditions of generations in their families. In this chapter I explore how the working-class women managed to gain a university place, analysing the restraints and enabling factors involved in their paths to HE.

I first explore the role of schools and further education colleges (FECs) in the women’s progression to university. The majority of women attended local FECs, institutions that offered only basic assistance with university applications. I argue that it was the non-Muslim women, as ‘individual’ choosers, who were most disadvantaged by the system, whilst the Muslim women, who negotiated university with the help of families, benefited from a wider network of social capital, however limited. Later in the chapter I expand the central theme of individual, family and community, by focussing specifically on how the women and their families reached decisions about university. Analysing decisions about subject choice, residential status, higher educational institution (HEI) and student loans, I explore the similarities and differences between the Muslim and non-Muslim women. The central difference was the availability and deployment of familial networks in decision-making processes. Buying into traditional notions of the student experience as a ‘rite of passage’ into independent adulthood, the non-Muslim women and their parents understood university as a means of ‘escape’ from the working-class communities in which they were born. The women were encouraged to choose the paths that they preferred, without a great deal of assistance from parents. On the other hand, university choices were a series of decisions for the Muslim women and kin to negotiate as a strategy of upward social mobility for the family as a whole. Stereotypes of traditional student life involving alcohol and individualism were concerns, and in comparison to these mainstream representations,

they expected to retain close ties and family obligations during university and beyond. Before this, however, I explore the women's motivations for progressing through education, analysing the relationship between their success in education and the class position of their parents.

Growing up: Why was Education Valued?

For the Muslim women, one of the strongest – albeit indirect – influences on their educational progression came from seeing the limited prospects of their mothers, as uneducated housewives, struggling to manage the household on a tight budget. Bettie (2003), in her research with upwardly mobile girls, also found that Mexican-American girls were encouraged to prioritise education by being witness to their mothers' difficult lives. Because of early marriage and migration, the majority of the Muslim women's mothers had no opportunity for education or training. Due to cultural/religious preferences, most mothers did not engage in paid work outside the home, a finding which corresponds with the figures on education and employment of South Asian women explored in the previous chapter (Mason 2000b; Phizacklea and Walkowitz 1995). Of the small number of Muslim women's mothers who worked, or who had worked previously, like the respondents interviewed by Lloyd Evans and Bowlby (2000), they 'had been forced by financial necessity to change their ideas of what was "appropriate" for Pakistani Muslim women to do' (2000: 472). Most of those who worked did so in the home, either sewing or childminding. However, there was little choice to this employment, and they had to endure difficult working conditions, instability and low pay. Phizacklea and Wolkowitz (1995) challenge the assumption that homeworkers are autonomous and self-employed. Instead, most Asian women homeworkers they interviewed 'did not control the amount of work they were given, how or when it was to be completed or to whom it was sold' (1995: 62).

By getting a degree, the Muslim women aimed to avoid the 'fate' of a strenuous life as a housewife:

JM: What were the motivations for you to go to university?

*Kaleemah: To be honest with you, because I'd saw my mum having a difficult life, erm, I didn't want to follow the same kind of footsteps. [...]
Erm, I really couldn't think of being married, having a family with nothing behind me. I just want to improve myself really.*

And similarly, for Aaisha:

I just don't want to end up getting married and being tied at home to the kitchen. No disrespect to my mother, getting married, et cetera, and there are people out there who do. But I wouldn't want to do that (Aaisha).

Some Muslim women were also encouraged to do well educationally by being witness to the difficult working lives of their fathers. Due to the urgency of finding work and sending remittances, fathers – as uneducated migrants – only had access to low-paid manual work. Nuzzat's father was '*always constantly working 7 days a week all day long, come home, sleep, go back to work*' and Basheera describes her father's early work experiences:

There was about 7 or 8 people living in one room, that's how it was then, people worked night shifts and then when they came in, the people who were working in the morning would go, and the nightshift people would share the bed. That's how it was then, it was just trying to economise as well. So they lived their life like that. (Basheera)

According to the findings of Leathwood and O'Connell (2003), one of the reasons that students decide to go to university is 'to make others, especially parents, proud [...]' especially as so many were the first in their families to go to university' (2003: 604). This was also an important motivation for the Muslim women I interviewed; families (including older siblings) had sacrificed much to enable the younger family members to progress and parents' lost opportunities were placed onto the younger generation. If the women succeeded, their parents' ongoing sacrifices would not have been in vain:

Cantara: she's [mother has] always motivated us. She had great dreams for herself but she, her dad wanted her to get married, made her get married, so

she never got to fulfil those dreams, but she's a very capable woman; she could have easily gone on to do medicine which is what her dream was. She'd always instilled in us the power of education, and how important it was.¹

Bilqis: Because my dad, he really wanted to get educated, but because we were poor and he had to come over to this country to work he didn't get the chance to get educated, so he really wanted his kids to have education and to have a good life. So he's always been supportive of us, all the way through.

The working lives of parents also inspired the non-Muslim women to make the most of the educational opportunities open to them to avoid monotonous, poorly paid work with long hours, meaning a disrupted family life. For the non-Muslim women's parents, their schooling experiences in the era of the tripartite system were often characterised by humiliation and limited opportunities. Bethany's father '*really really regrets it, that he didn't go [to university]. Because... - he went straight into [work], or near enough*'. Most of their parents left school at the first opportunity:

Olivia: My dad, he can't read very well – he can't spell... [...] I think he went out to work, actually, I think his mum was depressed, and he went out to work and he never really went to school.

Many of the non-Muslim women's mothers worked, or had worked, in low-grade jobs including secretarial work, cleaning/caring roles or shop work, whilst balancing childcare responsibilities.² The work of fathers included labouring jobs as well as factory and shop work. Helen remembers that as a child '*it was just a struggle, because like my parents worked like really hard and I didn't spend a lot of time with them*'. The past experiences of parents worked as subtle, and not-so-subtle, cues to their daughters to take education seriously.

¹ It seems likely that Cantara's mother experienced downward class mobility when she married and migrated to the UK (c.f. Lloyd Evans and Bowlby 2000).

² Although it was the case that the non-Muslim women's lived in smaller families than the Muslim women, and their mothers were more likely to be in paid employment, five out of the eleven non-Muslim women grew up in single-parent families (all the Muslim women lived in extended families, including two parents), meaning that the women as a group came from families with similar economic resources.

‘Institutional Habitus’ and University Pathways

As is shown by previous research on working-class children’s school choices (Reay and Lucey 2003; Reay 2004a), the vast majority of the women I spoke to experienced a lack of choice around school and FEC provision because they, and their parents, did not possess the required capitals in order to compete for a place at high-achieving institutions. Though the non-Muslim women’s parents were schooled in the UK, and the Muslim women’s parents in Pakistan, most families had a similar lack of ‘hot knowledge’ about high-performing schools in the vicinity, and how to get access to these. As Jasminah notes, all the schools in her area were the same (low) standard: *‘well everyone went to Wells High, you didn’t really have chance to pick schools’*.³

However, I would argue that the Muslim families, with their position in the close-knit Pakistani community, had more access to social resources (especially in the form of emotional capital) than the non-Muslim women. Nevertheless, this social capital was low-value and offered ‘fairly limited descriptive information and bland recommendations’ (Ball 2003: 82). As Kearns and Parkinson (2001) argue, working-class communities are ‘an arena for “bonding” social capital’, enabling ‘people to “get by”, rather than as a platform for “bridging” social capital’ which allows people ‘get on’ (Kearns and Parkinson 2001, cited in MacDonald et al. 2005: 884).

Grammar or other selective schools were often not considered by parents. This has been found by Connelly and Neill who argue that for working-class families:

...taking the 11+ exam and the chance of going to grammar school was not even considered as an option. Their immediate futures seemed to be already mapped out for [the children] in terms of progressing onto the local secondary schools in their area (Connelly and Neill 2001: 114).

The families of Cantara, Aaisha and Munazzah were in a financial position – however precarious – to make strategic decisions about utilising the small economic resources

³ Names of schools and FECs have been changed.

they had to provide a high-quality education for one or more of their children. Family members who invested economic capital into school fees worked together to help manage the financial burden, with some siblings agreeing to receive less to enable other siblings to progress, which would benefit the whole family.⁴ The parents of Aaisha and Munazzah prioritised their daughters' religious and moral education and sent them to a fee-paying Islamic school. Cantara's parents worked '*all the hours that God sent*' and forfeited luxuries in order to find the money to send all three children to a predominantly white, secular, fee-paying school nearby.

Whilst the three sets of parents invested economic capital into their daughter's schooling, it was for different reasons. Cantara's parents wanted a good academic education for their children, as well as ensuring they mixed with the 'right kind' of students. Due to urban deprivation and industrial restructuring, white (and generally middle-class) people are moving out of areas of high disadvantage, resettling in prosperous towns with more jobs, opportunities and 'better' schools (Mason 2000). This 'white flight' has widened the division between poorer school catchment areas and those with a privileged student intake which perform very well (Reay and Lucey 2003; Reay 2004a). It is not only white middle-class children and their parents who want to steer clear of schools labelled as predominantly minority ethnic and working-class. Some Pakistani parents Din (2006) talked to preferred not to send their children to predominantly 'Asian' schools because it was accepted that 'examination results for the GCSE and 'A' levels are higher where the school has a majority of White children' (Din 2006: 46).

Whilst Cantara's parents sent her to a fee-paying school to maximise her social and cultural capital, Aaisha and Munazzah attended Islamic school to uphold the *izzat* of the family.⁵ Their parents were also suspicious of the religious, moral and cultural guidance

⁴ When the women started school, in 1995, the costs were about £3,000 and £1,500 respectively, per annum. The women indicated that the majority of girls at the school were working class, and were often struggling with payment and were behind with instalments. This corresponds to research on girls attending an Islamic primary school, which found that although fees had to be paid, '60 per cent of families received charitable support and were paying at a subsidised rate' (Osler and Hussain 2005: 129-130).

⁵ Basheera described *izzat* as '*what really shouldn't come to harm, and you know, they [family] have to keep that on a clean slate, sort of thing. And once your family's been given a bad name, the whole of the sort of the extended family will know about it and will talk about you*'.

offered to girls at nearby state schools. Munazzah's parents told her that the private Islamic school would be “*the best thing for you, growing up and stuff, from a religious point as well, and we think it would benefit you and stuff*”. Islamic schools are single-sex institutions, which parents favour for providing a more effective educational atmosphere (Van de Gaer et al. 2004; Jackson 2002).

Though the economic capital invested in the Islamic school was primarily to secure the *izzat* of the family, the consequence was that both women achieved excellent GCSE grades. This success encouraged their parents to allow them to continue with their education, especially as the women had gained their parents' trust in their ability and responsibility:

Munazzah: But then when you get the grades like that, my mum and dad were like 'you know what, you should just like go for it, with whatever you want to do, you should just go for it' and stuff. [...] [her parents] go 'we know our own daughter, we trust our daughter' so they sent me to [local FEC].

Recent research on private sector schools has highlighted how, in the climate of risk, uncertainty and fear, middle-class parents mobilize their economic resources to guarantee class privileges for their children (Power et al. 2003; Devine 2004a), assuming that:

...when parents invest in private education for their children they are buying into a broad and complex body of social capital that is made available to the children and in relation to which they young people develop their own investment skills. (Ball 2003: 86)

As my research indicates, however, it is neither the case that all students who attend fee-paying schools are from middle-class backgrounds, nor is the sole purpose of paying for an education always about ensuring class privilege. It cannot be overlooked that parents want their daughters to attend Islamic school to ensure *izzat*, which may accrue familial

respect and lead indirectly to enhanced status within the community.⁶ Christian families have access to a large number of state faith schools, and children who do not attend a church school are educated from a broadly Christian perspective. However, the overwhelming majority of Muslim parents who want their children to attend an Islamic school will have to fund it themselves, at considerable expense (Osler and Hussain 2005).

Fee-paying schools were out of the question for the majority of women I interviewed. However, a minority of families who lived near a Catholic school tried to get their daughters a place, because of the reputation for high academic standards at these schools. Marsha – the only woman from a Catholic background – gained a place at Catholic primary and secondary schools:

*My education was a really high standard to say that it was a free education. There were always extra-curricular activities and you were, we had Italian classes in primary school. Just things like that. And it just, you know, you just speak to other people in county primaries, 'oh you know we didn't even have French, we didn't have anything until we went to secondary school'.
(Marsha)*

Zahida, Gazala and Lisa managed to get a place at high-performing Catholic secondary schools. According to Zahida the school she attended was considered '*one of the best schools at that time*'. These women benefited from the 'institutional habitus' of the school, gaining social and cultural capitals from mixing with middle-class white students. Gazala and Zahida put their places at the school down to 'luck'; competition for places at Catholic schools was intense and Zahida was on the waiting list for years. Olivia's parents also sought a place, but did not succeed, because she lacked the required contacts: '*you had to have loads of references*' which she did not have. As Olivia's family had no 'insider' information, such as 'social access to teachers or professional educators' (Walkerdine et al. 2001: 127), they did not know how to 'play the game'. However, by utilising economic resources to pay for independent schooling,

⁶ Din notes that practicing Islam is linked to status in the *biraderi*: 'those who attend mosque are given a higher social status while those who don't are labelled wayward', and their morality is questioned within the community (Din 2006: 133).

Cantara's family was able to guarantee her a quality education without having to go on lengthy waiting lists or to attend a Catholic school.

When choosing an institution to attend at age 16, the women were either not aware of, or not interested in, league table results. Due to limited choices, the vast majority attended FECs, which were preferred for practical reasons. The women were pragmatic about the options open to them; although FECs were not considered to have a glowing reputation, the women did not have access to alternatives, and hoped they would not be disadvantaged if they worked diligently.⁷ These institutions were often the closest, and pressures of income and time (study, paid work and family commitments) served to limit choice. For instance, Marsha *'didn't want to spend like £20 on bus fare, so you know, I could just walk down to [local FEC]'* even though the course and the institution were of poorer quality than the alternative, further away. FECs also offered a flexible timetable to fit in with commitments of paid work and family and offered more study options than, for instance, sixth form centres/colleges or school sixth forms, including GCSE resit opportunities, a greater number of 'new' subjects and combinations not available elsewhere. Whereas the Muslim women studied 'traditional' A level subjects such as sciences and law, the non-Muslim women studied a more diverse range of subjects and courses. Most studied A levels, mainly humanities and social science subjects, although four chose vocational courses, including an NNEB in childcare, a BTec in Leisure and Tourism, and a BTec in Fine Art.

Despite the practical advantages of FECs, the poor performance and reputation of these institutions concerned some women, who noted the lack of organisation. Gayle changed her choice of A level subjects several times, partly because *'they kept changing the rooms so I never knew which room I was in [...] If you missed one you didn't know where you were after that because you couldn't tell.'* Olivia expressed disappointment that the FEC held low levels of expectation for the students:

in the whole first year I just sat there staring out the window because I was so bored in the class, because I'd done it before. He [teacher] actually gave

⁷ For some women it was only after attending university and meeting others who had different experiences that they became aware of the disparities between various institutions. For instance, Olivia told me that *'often like people say, "we did this through school, we did that through school", and we never got offered any of that'*.

me extra work, because I was so bored. I just sat there, and he went around the room just asking what was, for me, simple questions, very simple.
(Olivia)

Gayle considers herself disadvantaged by the flexible and laid-back atmosphere of the FEC. Although she was able to maintain two part-time jobs, her work suffered because of the unstructured timetable: *'you only had an hour or so in lessons, what did you do for the rest of the time, basically I just went home [...]they give you about an hour worth of work and that's about it.'* Having met students at university that did not go to an FEC, Gayle – in hindsight – recognises the benefits of school sixth forms:

It's more like a school form, in fact you've got to be there at 9am and leave at 3.30pm. You've got all your classes in there; you've got to be there. It's just more structured, and it makes you do your work (Gayle).

Jasminah, who applied for a place to study medicine, was concerned that the FEC would count against her, either directly or indirectly. Previous research has also noted the influence of different types of institutions on student progression to university. Bettie (2003), referring to her study of a Californian high school, argues that:

Being working-class and attending a well-funded school with a middle-class clientele where a curriculum of knowledge that is highly valued by society is made available is a far different experience than attending school in an isolated working-class community where the mere exposure to a college-prep curriculum is limited (Bettie 2003: 145).

Though there are differences between the pre-HE educational systems in the UK and US, Bettie's argument does point to a 'school effect', or what other researchers refer to as 'institutional habitus', where school is seen as an 'intervening variable, providing a "semi-autonomous" means by which class, raced and gendered processes are played out in the lives of students and their HE choices' (Reay et al. 2001: 1.3).

The findings of Reay et al. (2001) suggest that careers provision varies according to institution. Students at selective schools receive extensive careers advice over a number

of years, but ‘institutions in the state sector uniformly had far lower levels of resourcing’ and are ‘often responding to very different student needs’ including financial and geographical limitations to students’ choices’ (Reay et al. 2001: 3.3). Corresponding to these findings, some women I spoke to attending FECs reported being ‘left on their own’ with a lack of information and guidance about higher education:

Marsha: I really struggled, I went to like a UCAS meeting with like three people there, and this was the whole college, and I went to, and I went for like statements, and I really wanted to do well, so I was always pestering the tutors and I just didn’t get, they were always like, ‘this is an occupational based course and you’re going to have to work’.

Though most of the women attended FECs, it was the non-Muslim women who most often struggled with the lack of structured guidance and help. Perhaps one reason for this is that Muslim women received support and monitoring from their parents and siblings, benefiting from strong networks of familial and community support, whereas the decisions of the non-Muslim women were often self-directed, and thus they were ‘alone’ when institutional support and the help from college advisors was not offered. There were religio-ethnic differences in the interaction between the women and their families when making decisions about university, particularly in relation to the response to images of the ‘typical’ middle-class student experience, living away from home, drinking and becoming independent.

University Negotiations

In addition to the influence of the schools and FECs on the women’s paths to university, the family was a site of discussions and negotiations about university for the Muslim women, whose choices were highly influenced by family expectations and encouragements about what was best for the family as a whole. On the other hand, the non-Muslim women were ‘individual’ choosers, who were encouraged by their parents to choose the routes they most enjoyed.

Muslim Women

As Archer notes, ‘popular public discourses have positioned Muslim girls as having limited “choices” due to restrictive gendered cultural values and practices’ (Archer 2002a: 359). What is often left out of analyses of Muslim families and communities are the positive aspects of kinship for women, such as facilitating progression to university if this is seen as worthwhile.⁸ The findings for this research study support previous research on the ongoing importance of the moral economy of kin for diaspora groups, especially Muslims (Afshar 1989a). Parents played a central role in the lives of the young, and respect for elders was not only a ‘cultural’ practice, but an Islamic requirement:

Shoneen: it’s like a code of conduct, for a person, I’ve been sent rules from God: my parents are most important to me. I must respect them, the role my brothers and sisters play for me. And if they’re in need, I must help them; that’s my duty. And if one day, one of my brothers, like they’ve got no money and they want to, instead of giving to charity I should give to them. Help them.

The extended family – which consists of siblings, grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins, nephews and nieces, distant relatives and the *biraderi*⁹ in the UK and Pakistan – plays a central role in everyday life. Together family members discuss decisions about education (as well as marriage and paid work), considering the most effective way for the family to progress. The women and their families were following a strategy of class advancement: if the daughter was supported to go to university, the family as a whole would benefit.

For diasporic groups, the community remains highly influential in day to day activities, maintenance of status hierarchies and the perpetuation of cultural traditions (O’Reilly 2000; Werbner 1990; Bradby 2002). The majority of women I interviewed were also

⁸ Devine challenges what she regards as the overemphasis paid by Bourdieu and Goldthorpe to the family, arguing that parents ‘do not have total control over their children, not least because their children have many and varied experiences outside the family from an early age’ (Devine 2004a: 250, f.n.30). Though I emphasise the importance of the family for the Muslim women’s progression through education, this is not to downplay the women’s agency or to deny the role of other factors in these negotiations.

⁹ *Biraderi* refers to clan members, or ‘brotherhood’ (Moldenhawer 2005: 59).

embedded in the close-knit community of the Pakistani diaspora. Sara suggested that according to Islam, other Muslims are treated almost as family: *'if you lived in a Muslim community where none of you had family, you would all call them aunty and uncle'*. For Farzana, even though her neighbour is *'not related to me'* she would still welcome her into her house because *'it's something that is open, it's an open community'*. Within the close-knit nature of the community, 'group identity is strengthened while the small size of the group means that community "surveillance" of the behaviour of its members is facilitated' (Lloyd Evans and Bowlby 2000: 465). In such circumstances, gossip thrives. As I go on to discuss later, the fear of gossip – considered the most negative aspect of women's hometowns – can play a role in the women's educational progression because upholding *izzat* rests largely on the behaviour of women. *Biraderi* and community surveillance mechanisms are powerful in Pakistani diaspora communities because 'in a town in which racist attitudes are widespread and in which there are a fairly small number of Pakistani households, the risk of being ostracised [...] is one that many women will not be willing to run.' (Lloyd Evans and Bowlby 2000: 472)

Existing literature on intergenerational class reproduction within education indicates that this work is heavily gendered, relying on the emotional capital of mothers (Smith 2000; Reay 1998), although previous research on migrant parents has emphasised the differing roles of parents in their children's educational development, noting that mothers and fathers play an equally important, but different role. For instance, because migrant fathers are more likely to have advanced English skills compared to mothers, they play the 'front of house' role in communicating with educational organisations (Tyrer and Ahmad 2006; Din 2006; Abbas 2004). In this research study, there was no obvious gender split in this emotional labour or other assistance given by parents to their daughters. The family were, as a whole, 'responsible' for following the strategy of advancement by encouraging the education of the women, and each family member contributed in various ways. In some families, mothers were the main providers of emotional support for their daughters. For instance, Ameena's mother *'helped me when I've been down about university, but she's always helped me in that respect, "mum, I've been rejected"'*. In other families, it was the father:

Basheera: He [dad] has been the support for me throughout.

JM: Really?

Basheera: Yeah, and I don't think I could have done it without him, to be honest. [...] In the sense that... – he's like a counsellor, he listens to you and things like that. He'd always sort of counsel you if you had a problem, and just talk to you. I think we've just got that level of understanding with each other. And that's what's made me, especially, sort of stronger, in what I've done, and what I believe in. And I think if it wasn't for my dad, I wouldn't be here, where I was.

Grewal et al. (2004) argue that for their Gujarati and Punjabi Pakistani respondents, children who lived with their extended family had 'a higher degree of day-to day involvement' with grandparents, as compared to white British families (Grewal et al. 2004: 743). The findings of this study also indicate that the women who were living with, or close, to grandparents enjoyed mutual emotional and practical close reliance. Siblings have often been viewed as negatively influencing achievement because of the assumption that 'parents' opportunities to provide their child with high-quality, uninterrupted time are scarce when there are many children in the home' (Israel et al. 2001: 56). Social capital theorists such as Putnam, Coleman and Bourdieu have tended to regard 'children as passive recipients of parental social capital rather than active producers' (Holland et al. 2007: 97). However, research on minority ethnic families in the UK has found that older siblings play an important role in educating younger children. In a research project on children of Bangladeshi origin in London, Gregory argues that older siblings:

... played a crucial role as 'teachers', as 'mediators of school practices', as well as 'bridges between languages and cultures'. They had the responsibility of taking on the role of the parents, and particularly that of the mother, as far as any 'teaching' in English was concerned (Gregory 2004: 99).

Crozier and Davis, whose research explored Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities, found that parents often 'delegated the responsibility for the child's education to the older brother or sister' when parents were unable to be actively involved (Crozier and

Davis 2006: 683). Romero, in her research on Chicanas in the US, found a similar division of household labour, arguing '[o]lder children were expected to babysit younger brothers and sisters and were responsible for more household chores' and the 'general situation seems to be: if the daughter(s) was the oldest child at home, she frequently did more than her brothers' (Romero 2002: 68). The women I spoke to also came from families which delegated educational and care 'duties' to older siblings, and the place in the 'sibling hierarchy' was significant for the chances that were open to them. Many families relied to a large extent on the eldest daughter's care of younger siblings to help the family 'run' effectively. For instance, because parents could not easily converse in English and were not familiar with regulations in the UK, families relied on the help of older siblings for translation or negotiation with school for younger children. For instance, when Aisha 'rebelled' at school, '*as a guardian, my sister would always come in and she would stick up for me*'. Older siblings who had been to university were able to assist their younger sisters with progressing with university applications, as well as A levels examinations and coursework:

Yafiah: He [brother] did a maths A level so when I was doing my maths AS that was it, I was forever telling him. So whenever he came home I was like 'don't understand this: double fractions' and all this sort of thing. I would always go to my brother. Because my parents aren't educated it was easier to go to him and he knew.

In order to maintain family *izzat*, older daughters in many families were found a marriage partner as soon as they left school. Though some families regretted not investing in the elder daughter's education, it was generally accepted that the eldest daughter(s) needed to sacrifice opportunities in order to allow the younger children to progress. Women who were the youngest in their families acknowledged that they had been able to benefit from the coaching from older sisters and feelings of guilt and indebtedness were expressed by some who had gained in this way. However, not all families relied on older daughters to this extent. Some women who were the eldest children were grateful to their mothers for allocating an equal division of housework to each sibling, regardless of gender or age. For instance, Jasminah notes that her mother took on the whole burden of the household and '*pushed me on the academic side of things, not to cook and clean really*'.

Some older generations in particular regarded university with suspicion, due to the institutional emphasis on drinking and representations of student life which involve young people becoming independent. Farzana indicated that for working-class Muslim parents, it is *'this uncertainty that causes a lot of restrictions'*, blowing these myths of student life out of all proportion:

Farzana: they [parents] haven't experienced, like, the social atmosphere, because they've always been in factories, they've always...- even their wives, like the mothers, they've only known their neighbour, or the aunty down the road. And they've only known what they've known, which is quite restrictive.

Some community members were unsure of the benefits of university for women, considering their future duties as a wife and mother. *Izzat* requires that women 'behave and dress "modestly"—interpreted as a requirement to wear the *shalwar kameez* and headscarf and not to be in the company of men unchaperoned' (Lloyd Evans and Bowlby 2000: 465). Especially for families who practice *purdah*, university may be seen as antithetical to the role of women.¹⁰ In response to community and family suspicions of university, the women I spoke to used Islam as a tool in order to support their progression to university, by arguing that education is a requirement of their faith. Yusra suggested her gender was exactly why her education should be prioritised: *'it's seen to be better to educate a woman than a man [JM: Yeah, she educates the children?] Yeah. And a man just educates himself'*. Cantara argued that the survival of Islam itself requires that Muslims receive an advanced education:

Cantara: Islam is very pro-education. It asks you to seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave, from the womb to the tomb, that there shouldn't be a point in your life where you're not seeking knowledge, because words are more powerful than a sword. You know, if you have the eloquence, if you have the power of speech in life you can choose anything. And if we don't

¹⁰ Although a university education was still relatively rare for women in the community, some – using examples of the diverse experiences of their younger siblings and cousins – believed this norm is slowly changing.

have educated people, people who can't spread the word, people can't get rid of the ignorance.

This 'new' Islam embraced by young Muslim women, particularly upwardly mobile students, has also been found in other recent research (Afshar et al. 2005; Dwyer 1999; Jacobson 1998; Butler 1999). As these studies have indicated, young Muslim women are rejecting what they regard as 'culturally' based interpretations of Islam practiced by elders in favour of a textual interpretation of Islam. Tact was central to these family negotiations, as Cantara suggests: *'you have to be careful because it might be someone close to you that's doing it, so you have to kind of like be very diplomatic in what you do'*. The women worked hard to find a compromise with their families that would suit everyone. As university was seen as a tool to improve the life chances and interests of the family as a whole, and not only the individual preferences of the women, families understood university to be a worthwhile economic investment for all. As Ahmad's research indicates, an educated woman can also command a 'better' husband which in turn bestows status on her family (Ahmad 2001).¹¹ As I discuss later in this chapter, families were determined that daughters would not lose the chance to study because of a lack of economic resources.

On a practical note, some families were concerned that they would not be able to manage without the help of their daughter's physical and emotional support if she were to live away from home. It was decided that if women were to attend university, they would be obliged to continue their caring responsibilities. The difference between Muslim and non-Muslim family forms was noted by Sara, a recent convert to Islam and the only Muslim in her birth family. Though her family only see relatives *'for a wedding, or every so often we'll get together to go camping'*, but this does not mean *'that the family isn't important to us'*:

Sara: English society has got to the stage where we all live at four corners of England. And it's not unusual for you to... – my cousin's from Dorset and she's just moved to Edinburgh, and that makes it [meeting] impossible. [...]

¹¹ As I discuss in chapter 6, the most prized husbands for the Muslim women were educated British Pakistani men (sometimes from a similar caste) from a 'respectable' family who would be supportive and welcoming of the new wife.

obviously the Pakistani community has moved into [home town], and then you'll live there, your granny will live across the road.

In contrast to the importance of *biraderi* and community for Muslim families, the non-Muslim women belonged to no 'community' as such, a non-belonging marked by its absence in their accounts. Farzana, a Muslim woman, talks with surprise about the lack of community in the host society:

Farzana: in western societies you wouldn't really know your neighbour because of that individualistic way of life. [...] Even the white people don't want to know the white people because this is their life, this is their family. No one oversteps that on English...- Whereas in a Muslim family: my next door neighbour, she wanted to come into the garden, and walked through my house. I wouldn't see a problem with that.

Non-Muslim Women

In comparison to the Muslim households who had a family 'strategy' for advancement, there was no similar plan in the non-Muslims families. The Muslim women often expressed feelings of guilt in relation to their success and the limited life chances of older sisters, but the non-Muslim women did not express such feelings. Perhaps this is because they did not rely on the assistance of siblings. In fact, the non-Muslim women rarely mentioned siblings at all. Because the women were based in small, nuclear families, without links to extended kin networks, other family members, such as grandparents, aunts and uncles did not feature prominently in their accounts of everyday life.

Perhaps this was because non-Muslim, white families, as part of the ethnic/secular majority, did not need to maintain ethnic traditions or religious practices in the face of racism, or did not need to access alternative support networks such as those offered in the community. Not belonging to a church may also have been a factor in the absence of community feeling. For most non-Muslim families, education was not generally given special priority above other paths, which may have been related to the previous negative educational experiences of parents. And as opposed to the centrality of educational

attainment and the perpetuation of class privilege within middle-class (white) family strategies examined by Ball (2003), Power et al. (2003) and Devine (2004a), the non-Muslim women I talked to were encouraged by their parents to pursue, first and foremost, their happiness and well-being. However, like the practices of some Muslim women's mothers, of particular concern for some of the non-Muslim women's mothers was that their daughter's educational opportunities should not be restricted because of their gender. Hannah told me that education '*was always really important to my mum. I think because she didn't get much support from her mum*'.

Compared to the Muslim women, who frequently discussed the role of their fathers in relation to their educational progression, the non-Muslim women rarely mentioned the input of their fathers. When parents were mentioned by the women, it was usually mothers. Although the emphasis on individual choice in the non-Muslim families encouraged the women to make their own decisions, the absence of fathers in the women's accounts may also be related to the fact that three women were brought up by their mothers only.

Previous research has found that girls – as opposed to boys – were 'far more willing to engage their parents, mothers especially, in how they went about choosing higher education' (David et al. 2003: 35). However, the non-Muslim women I talked to rarely mentioned parents or other family members in their university decision-making processes. Walkerdine et al. (2001) argue that what characterises working-class parents' attitude to their children's education above all is that their children are content. As I have discussed, the non-Muslim women to whom I spoke were encouraged by their parents simply to choose the path that they enjoy. In this context, the women explained that the desire to advance in education arose from within themselves:

Wendy: They [parents] wanted me to get... – once I decided that I wanted to do these things, they obviously pushed me. Well, not pushed me. But encouraged me to do as well as I could. But I think – maybe – more of it was just making sure that I grew up well... – and socially...

JM: Adept?

Wendy: Yeah, as well as academically.

For their parents, university was associated with the transition into adulthood and becoming financially, emotionally and physically independent. University, it was hoped, would lead to a professional job and was a tool of 'escape', to 'get out and away' (Lawler 1999). Although the women did not want to leave their parents behind, a greater distance was expected to be part of higher education. A resistance from families towards working-class women and mature students progressing onto higher education has been found by previous research (Mahony and Zmorcek 1997; Edwards 1993). Though Connolly and Neill found that mothers play a role in 'restricting their children's aspirations' (2001: 116), the non-Muslim women I spoke to emphasised how accommodating and supportive their mother was.

This freedom given to the women by their parents was considered an important way in which the women were supported by their families. For Dawn, who attended several stressful auditions at theatre schools, her parents encouraged her *'to make sure I did go, rather than giving up, after I didn't get into places and stuff'*. Parents also provided important practical assistance, such as taking days off work to drive them to university open days and offering to help move their belongings to university. Parents also offered to give the little economic support that they could to the women if they went to university, though this usually meant providing accommodation and food during the holidays without expecting any financial contributions. Knowing that this support was available reassured the women a great deal. Though family helped emotionally, the women could not and did not rely heavily on parents to assist in the day to day 'traumas' of the application process, exams or everyday life at college and work.

None of the women planned a traditional 'gap year', commonly spent working in an overseas voluntary placement. These gap years represent:

...an important advantage that certain groups of young people are able to gain over others, not only at the point of university entrance, but also at the point of graduate labour market entry (Heath 2007: 93).

Most women I talked to applied to go to university straight after finishing their A levels (or equivalent). Considering the women had worked hard to gain the qualifications needed for university, it did not occur to them to take 'time out' of education. This was also not financially viable. According to Simpson (2004: 63), the cost of overseas gap years is currently between £1500 and £4000 (though depending on the region, activity involved and length, the cost may be much higher). State school students 'appear to be given far less direct institutional encouragement to pursue a gap year – possibly in recognition of the barriers that may stand in the way of their achieving such a goal' (Heath 2007: 98). Bethany told me of her astonishment at meeting many people who have taken expensive gap years: *'Like some people, quite a few of them take a year out, and I didn't know that many people took years out, but – and they've got a bit of money saved up and stuff'*. Three non-Muslim women had time 'out' of education, though this was not a 'gap year' in the middle-class sense. Gayle and Bryony completed additional qualifications at the FEC for another year and mature student Lisa had worked for several years before returning to education. Lisa and Gayle, aware that 'not all gap-year experiences meet on equal terms' (Heath 2007: 94), saw this time as wasted and were regretful of their time 'out'. They were aware that this type of work experience would not be highly valued by employers in the future.

Subject Choice

There were important differences in degree subjects chosen. Generally, the Muslim women enrolled on applied/pure sciences (11) or law/business degrees (5). Only one Muslim woman chose a humanities subject and one a social science degree. On the other hand, only one non-Muslim woman applied for an applied/pure science degree, and only two for a law/business subject. The others accepted places to study humanities (4) or social science subjects (4). The Muslim women and their families generally chose vocational subjects to guarantee employment after graduation, whereas the non-Muslim women's preferences were based on their previous success and enjoyment of the subject.

Muslim Women

Abbas (2004) indicates that the involvement of South Asian parents in their children's education may vary by class and school that their child attends. Compared to parents with children at independent schools, who were more likely to trust the teachers' guidance and leave decisions up to the professionals, '[w]orking-class South Asian parents tended to exert as great an influence as possible on subject selection' (Abbas 2004: 67). The women I spoke to also indicated that their parents guided their subject selections. Like the decisions made about A level subjects, many were encouraged to study science subjects or vocational degrees at university:

Kaleemah: I said 'dad, can I take up art at college?' 'No you aint! If you want to take up anything you do proper subjects'. So I think the interest in sciences came from home really. I were academically okay. And I wouldn't say I didn't enjoy the subjects, I did enjoy them. But I didn't enjoy them as much as my arts subjects, because I was more pushed into that side.

Though Kaleemah at the time '*would have chosen something completely different*', she followed her father's demands in order to get on the path to university. The preferences of minority ethnic groups towards the sciences, vocational degrees and other prestigious subjects like law have been found in previous research (Din 2006; Abbas 2004). The women I spoke to offered various reasons for this preference. The careers considered appropriate for women correspond with Islamic teaching; Jasminah notes that '*the two professions in Islam that you do follow are medicine and teaching. Teaching is powerful because if you're a teacher you're giving people education*'. Some women thought working-class South Asians recommended vocational degrees in order to guarantee employment in the face of ethnic/religious prejudice:

Jasminah: A lot of Asian parents always say that they want their children to be doctors or accountants.

JM: Quite vocational. Do you know why that might be?

Jasminah: That's because they tend to be from...- they tend to be working class, from that kind of environment, and they know that the only way their children can succeed is by having an education which pushes them straight into a job. And where they will definitely be guaranteed a job. And so they tend not to encourage arts, and they tend not to encourage subjects like that because they know it's not a guaranteed job.

It was not only the elders who encouraged status subjects. Many women themselves also saw the advantages of studying a vocational degree in a 'traditional' subject because, as Gazala notes, *'you know where you're going in life, and you've got that, rather than getting out of uni and thinking "oooh, what am I doing"'*. With a vocational degree, students *'can just walk into a job straight away'* after graduation.

Another reason for this may be that, as Walkerdine et al. argue, vocational degrees can *'be taken anywhere in the world and ... marketed at short notice – both of which are essential to the migrant's survival'* (Walkerdine et al. 2001: 171). However, while the pressure exerted by parents for their children to study certain subjects could be understood purely as a guaranteed route into employment, Kaleemah indicated that certain professions were 'blacklisted' while others carried status: *'teaching's not so bad, but it's not as good as a doctor kind of thing. You don't do nursing - that's a low profile one, for some reason. Midwifery, you don't go into that.'* It was possible that the older generation's preferences may have been indirectly influenced by caste or class hierarchies in the home country. For instance, because of its status as an unclean profession, midwifery is a job reserved for Dalits – the former 'untouchables' – in the Indian subcontinent (Shah et al. 2005).

Non-Muslim Women

In contrast to the Muslim parents, who placed a heavy importance on subject choice, the majority of non-Muslim women chose their subject individually, based on previous enjoyment of the subject and past examination success. The women noted that their parents supported whatever route they chose. This was with the exception of Bethany's father, who encouraged her to study what he considered an 'academic' degree – history – rather than a 'mickey mouse' subject such as theatre studies, film studies or media

studies. In contrast to the Muslim families who were wary of abstract subjects, Bethany's father considered history, as an abstract and theoretical degree, the most prestigious option:

Bethany: My mum was really pushing me down the line of going to theatre school, but my dad was like oh... – do you know about it not being, what do you call it. It's not very secure, is it.

JM: Oh yeah.

Bethany: The job and stuff, so. And he said 'mmm, it's up to you'. Well it was my decision, and I know he would have still supported me, but not as much as my mum would have done, if I'd have gone to theatre school.

Previous research has indicated that many disciplines are gender/class/ethnically segregated (Morley and Walsh 1996; Dibben 2006; Modood et al. 1997). Languages, music and medicine have been highlighted as particularly exclusionary subjects for working class students to study at university because of the heavy financial investment required. Language is viewed as something to be 'picked up' abroad whilst on holiday or during an intensive language course. Such degrees – especially at elite HEIs – are dependent on having access to large amounts of free time to study the language before starting the degree. For students aiming to study Italian *from scratch* at Oxford University, the university states that it is 'quite possible for an interested student, with some experience of language-learning, to come close to A-level standard in Italian before starting the course here' (Oxford University 2007). Such a degree course is designed for a middle-class student who has four months 'off' before starting university, rather than students needing to work full-time in order to finance the upcoming year. Another subject that requires heavy financial investment is music. For instance, an A-C grade for A level music requires Grade V1-V111 on one or two instruments. This invariably means having (private) instrumental lessons and purchasing the instrument(s). Large instruments such as a double bass or tuba start from £1,000, but smaller instruments such as a flute or violin are also very expensive, priced from £250 upwards. This subject requires spending extended periods of time practicing (individually as well as in orchestras or ensembles) which limits time available for paid

work and family commitments. To apply for a music degree, students would be expected to have passed music board examinations.¹²

Problems are not limited to economic resources; the exclusivity of the subject, particularly at elite universities, is reinforced by a Western, middle-class based curriculum. The kind of student who is welcomed to a music degree is someone who is white and middle-class. Dibben argues that music degrees at elite British universities 'tend to have curriculums focused on Western art music, thereby reinforcing the association of art music with middle class culture, and maintaining existing social divisions' (Dibben 2006: 112).

This goes some way to explaining why some subjects, such as music and languages, are viewed as 'the preserve of a talented elite, and as irrelevant to everyday life' (Dibben 2006: 93). Although some institutions offer more palatable degrees, such as Popular Music Studies, these courses are concentrated in post-92 universities, which have higher numbers of working-class, mature and minority students (Dibben 2006), which reinforces the classed hierarchies of HEIs further.

Choice of Residence

There were differences between the women's choices concerning residential status. Only one of the non-Muslim women planned to commute from home, compared to 8 Muslim women. For most non-Muslim women, the full 'university experience' involved living away from home and residential status was almost a 'non-choice'. The Muslim women's choices, on the other hand, were influenced by considerations such as their ongoing commitments to family, maintaining a part-time job during university (especially if they did not take out a loan), and decisions about whether the 'university life' would be appropriate for young unmarried women.

Muslim Women

¹² In 2007, the exam for Grade V111 of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music is £64.50, in addition to the cost of a piano accompanist and travel to the venue.

Class and faith combined to exclude many of the women from university accommodation. Because the women could only afford to live away from home by taking advantage of the cheapest option available, this ruled out any opportunity for choice. For the students interviewed by Christie et al. (2005), remaining at home 'was not regarded as a second-best option, or a constrained choice, as is often presumed in policy debates' but it was a rational choice made in the circumstances available (2005: 11). This was the situation for Aisha:

JM: Was the financial aspect the main reason why you came here?

Aaisha: It was to a certain degree, but then I looked at other factors like commuting, it looked at living expenses, it looked at like, who would cook, and, how can I cook, and you're there on your own, and not finding suitable accommodation with suitable Muslims. So, you know. If you're put in accommodation where there's white and black, different people and different origins, that they go clubbing, they do drinking, sex outside marriage... - but Islam doesn't permit that at all. So it is really hard for me to do that. So that is why I decided it's best to stay here, this institute is one of the best ones, it's highly recognised. So I thought, why not just stay here.

Christie et al's research indicates that students commuting from home can 'continue with the same work patterns, family responsibilities, leisure activities and social networks that they enjoyed while at school or college' (Christie et al. 2005: 5). Some women I spoke to wanted to commute from home to maintain a current job as well as family responsibilities. Indeed, the expectation that Bilqis would be commuting to university and studying at home was one of the reasons why her family agreed to university, as she could continue to care for her nephew.

However, contrary to the recent concerns in the media that a growing number of working-class students will have to commute to university from home due to the growing cost of HE, financial worries were not the main reason why the Muslim women I spoke to decided to commute to university. A serious consideration for some families – most commonly those who had previously not had a daughter study away at university – was *izzat*. For many it was inconceivable to allow an unmarried young woman to live

away from home. As Yafiah noted, *'Parents always seem to worry about girls more than what they do with the boys'* because it is:

just the general consensus that men can go and handle themselves, and the girls will go and get themselves in trouble, 'she's going to get pregnant, she's going to get raped' and things like that. (Yafiah)

As 'cultural carriers', women represent the honour and respectability of the family. Not only do women reproduce the community biologically, they pass on language, religion, tradition and other aspects of culture to the family, 'because of their dominant day-to-day role in domestic and familial life and in child rearing' (Anthias 2000: 34).

Encouraged by normative discourses around 'student life', families were susceptible to widespread gossip about (real or fictitious) women who had shamed the family whilst at university, contributing to the rising anxieties of families:

Gazala: they have this image of girls, Asian girls, going to uni, and turning out like [...] Start rebelling and drinking, it's a huge factor like in our religion. They think you will start drinking and this and that.

The parents of the women I talked to were concerned that if women were to live away from home their daughters might lose their culture or religion. In fact, whatever the women's behaviour at university, the risk of gossip was a very real one which could ruin the reputation of a family and the marriage prospects of offspring in that family. Nevertheless, some women were comforted that they might escape 'the gossip circles', especially if they attended large universities in predominantly white cities (Bradby 2007).

Some women who wanted to move away from home to live at university bought into normative ideals about 'student life' based on middle-class white norms. They wanted to live at university in order to gain a greater degree of independence; staying at university was an opportunity for three years 'time out' of their usual responsibilities before returning to home life where marriage would follow soon after. Using university as a way to 'find' themselves was common:

Rashida: The whole point of going away to university was that I wanted to totally move, go away, and start afresh, find myself, basically. And not commute; just experience it, the whole experience.

Likewise, Cantara said *'I was just determined to go because I'm sick of being babied, I'm sick of this and I wanted to go away and find myself'*. And for Gazala:

I think a lot of my reasons for coming to uni, it sounds stupid now, but I remember saying to someone 'I really want to find out who I am', and they're like 'what do you mean?' And I was like, 'it's just I felt so claustrophobic and constrained at home, and sometimes you feel as though you can...- you can never be you, and you're just someone who your parents want you to be'. (Gazala)

For some women, moving away to university was a legitimate reason for leaving the household and getting some respite from family obligations. Cantara, who was the eldest daughter, tells me that *'I always had a lot of responsibilities with my other brother and sister whilst my parents were working, and I just wanted to get away'*. Mothers – who often had particularly heavy caring responsibilities for elderly relatives and grandchildren – accepted that they would have to manage without the help of their daughters while they attended university. They looked forward to the time when their daughters would resume familial duties, for instance, Basheera's mother *'just wants me finished to come home and baby sit'*.

Many families considered it inappropriate for daughters to share accommodation blocks with non-Muslims and men. Munazzah's father *'made it clear that I weren't allowed to stay there, with our religion you're not allowed. Females and males are not allowed to mix and you know, stay together and stuff like that'*. However, against such a view, some women utilised their textually based interpretation of Islam in order to support their right to live away from home whilst studying:

Yafiah: Islam promotes the fact that you should go away and you should be a strong woman, you should learn knowledge and you should go to the

limits to learn this knowledge. Don't go out and do wrong things, but you know, Islam supports you to go away.

Gazala told me that in Islam, *'there's nothing to say girls can't go away to study'*. If the women's families were concerned about their daughters living away from home, it was the women's responsibility to convince their parents that it would be worthwhile for them to live at university and that they would be appropriately behaved. This was a relationship of trust built up over many years, and demonstrated by studying hard, gaining good grades and behaving appropriately.

All the women who chose to move away to university decided to attend nearby universities.¹³ Not only was this for practical purposes of saving time and money when travelling home. That the women were already familiar with the city dispelled many fears, as Yafiah indicates: *'I already knew the city because my brothers went there, and we visited the city itself'*.

Non-Muslim Women

In contrast to the in-depth negotiations between the Muslim women and their families, for the non-Muslim women to whom I spoke, choices about residence were almost a non-decision. They sought the 'full experience' of university, and moving away from home was considered a fundamental part of this:

Emily: I wanted it quite a distance from home. Only because...- I didn't think I'd have the full experience and the full feeling of the, being out in the world on my own, if I didn't go a fair distance away from my home.

Christie et al. (2005) indicate that in the numerous representations of students:

...a middle-class way of being a student is given prominence, where leaving home to attend university is the norm, debt is an accepted part of life, and

¹³ Most women attended universities in the same, or neighbouring, county. Two women went slightly further a field, but even still, could return home from university on the train within around three hours.

new friendships and networks built within university are crucial to success (Christie et al. 2005: 5).

This was also related to the non-Muslim women's concepts of higher education, seen as a 'rite of passage' into adulthood, and characterised by the first step to financial and emotional independency. Like the Muslim women, the non-Muslim women wanted to remain within the local vicinity to save on the very little time and money they had. And again, it was reassuring for the women to live in a city with which they were familiar. Whilst most of the women did not have the family commitments of the Muslim women, if any emergency arose, they could quickly return home.

Only one woman, Gayle, decided to commute from home, in order to retain her current job, without which she would have had several weeks, or months, of unemployment until she found another job. Gayle also described staying with parents as '*safe, living at home*', especially as at first '*it is quite a big jump, almost*'. The working-class students Reay (2005) talked to also exhibited anxiety about 'over-reaching and failing', not only academically but also 'holistically' because of concerns that they were not 'the right person for traditional universities even when their level of achievement qualified them to apply' (Reay 2005: 923).

Again, in contrast to the Muslim families, whose decisions surrounding residential status were based in large part on the fear of gossip within the community, the non-Muslim women had no *izzat* to uphold. Heavy drinking, partying with friends and finding a partner at university were expected – encouraged even – by families, who hoped their daughters would fit in and enjoy themselves at university. Whereas for the Muslim women, the status of their family would benefit if they got a 'quality' degree, and would diminish if they dishonoured their family, the non-Muslim women – who were not seen as representative of their family in quite the same way – were not disturbed by such concerns.

Choice of Institution

6 non-Muslim women chose to study at post-92 HEIs and the 5 others at pre-92 universities. 7 Muslim women accepted places at post-92 universities, and 11 chose pre-

92 universities. A number of complex and competing factors influenced the choice of HEI, and not only the women's predicted A level grades. The match between the women's habitus and the 'institutional habitus' of the university was important to notions of belonging. Practical issues were central for women planning to commute, as the location of their parents' house and local transport links had a strong influence on the type of institutions they could feasibly attend.

Non-Muslim Women

Parents did not play a central role in the choice of HEI. As long as daughters were happy, parents supported their daughter's choice of HEI. Most women demonstrated some knowledge of HEI hierarchies, but did not usually base their choices on these ranks and thus corresponded to Ball et al's (2002) 'ranking aware' category of students. Partly this was because some women did not expect to be in a career where a degree from a post-92 university would be a disadvantage (as I discuss in chapter 7).

The majority of the women applied to universities in cities reasonably close to their home town.¹⁴ As Wendy told me, *'I applied to those that were close enough so that I could come home, but far enough so that I would have to move out'*. Like the findings of Christie et al. (2005), economic resources were a prominent concern for the women I spoke to; living nearby would save money when coming home for the weekend or at the end of term, especially for those who wanted to see friends or their partner frequently. Choices of HEI involved much more than economic decisions alone, however. Of those whose choice was not limited by predicted grades or a specialist course at a particular university, most preferred an institution where they would 'belong'. For Bourdieu, taste is 'a sense of one's place' (1984: 467), and class exclusion works through mechanisms of preference based on working-class people choosing environments in which they are 'at home'. For the women I talked to, attending university open days in different regions was the first time they recognised the 'stigma' of their accent and hometown (c.f. Howarth 2002; Hey 1997). After these events, many simply did not entertain the idea of

¹⁴ The women had different ideas about what constitutes 'close'. All the women attended universities in the same or next county, apart from Emily, who accepted a place at a university in the Midlands, and Lisa, who chose a Scottish university.

attending a university in which they did not feel welcome. For instance, Dawn decided not to apply to Oxford University after an unpleasant open day:

Dawn: Oxford was awful. It was horrible. I went down with my friend who was also from [home town] and we just... – we really did get treated badly. And I think a lot of it was to do with our accent. Because everyone was interested to know, but when you opened your mouth, they were like ‘okay...’. And they ignored you after that.

JM: Why do you think that is?

Dawn: Because I sound common. And I thought at first that I was just over-reacting, but it really was that people treated you differently because of your accent.

Bourdieu’s analysis of class taste has been accused of downplaying the responsibilities of elites for exclusionary practices (Reay 2003), but Christie et al’s (2005) recent research emphasises how working class students are excluded by others as much as they exclude themselves. Reay (2003) indicates how students from working-class backgrounds exclude themselves from elite universities which are ‘rooted in elitism and exclusivity’ (Reay 2003: 310). Practices of social closure by middle-class students and staff at university excluded some women, who considered their class background a ‘spoilt identity’ (Goffman 1963).¹⁵ This exclusion was necessarily bound up with the women’s own practices of ‘self exclusion’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), experiencing ‘a sense of discomfort, of moving outside of the natural limits of a social network’ of a type of person they had previously not encountered (Ball 2003: 92). Ball’s research indicates that middle class students had a

...proactive confidence and direct engagement with higher education lecturers [which] was totally absent from the working-class interviews. Indeed it is difficult to convey the sense of how alien this sounds in relation

¹⁵ Social closure ‘is a form of collective social action which, intentionally or otherwise, gives rise to a social category of ineligibles or outsiders’ (Parkin 1979, cited in Ball 2003: 168).

to the working-class students whose view of higher education was a distant and hazy one. They had little sense of what it would involve. They had yet to acquire the skills needed to decode its mysteries. (Ball 2003: 88)

Other women to whom I spoke enjoyed meeting and becoming friends with middle-class people because this signalled exactly *where* they belonged. Feelings of belonging and non-belonging were not only embodied, but were also related to cultural capital in an institutionalised form (Bourdieu 1988), such as educational credentials. For instance, Marsha feared her non-traditional qualifications were considered inferior, despite being equivalent to 3 good A level grades:

Marsha: I only got accepted into [two universities]

JM: Why do you think that is?

Marsha: The snob value to A levels.

JM: It's discrimination, or?

Marsha: Yeah, definitely. [...] I think there is a snob value to A levels and even after all the problems that they've had with papers getting out and things, I think there is still is a bit of snob value.

In the main, the first impressions of exclusion and belonging related to the women's class positions and identities. Perhaps unsurprisingly, positions of whiteness or secularism at universities were rarely mentioned. As members of religio-ethnic majorities, the white British, secular university culture was not antithetical to the women's own. However, some commented that the racial mix at certain universities was unsettling. For the women who had all grown up in multicultural environments, the absence of minorities and other non-traditional students on a campus was noticeable and reified the exclusivity of the institution. As Olivia notes, '*as soon as I arrived, I think I turned around and said "they're all white?" I just wasn't... – obviously in [home town] we're not all white*'.

Muslim Women

In comparison to the other aspects of university decisions, in which family members were involved in a great deal, the choices of institution were left almost solely to the women themselves. The only requirement of the families was that their daughters stay local. It was not that parents had no interest in HEI choice, but according to the women I spoke with, their parents were confused about the system of university hierarchies, especially considering that there were several universities in one city which carried a similar name. Moreover, most parents had not accompanied their daughters on HEI visits, perhaps because many families had limited access to a car or it was difficult for a parent to arrange a day off work. Instead, the women relied on organised trips by their FEC to university 'open days'.

Unlike the Muslim women interviewed by Ahmad, who were very aware of university hierarchies 'and the implications their choices could have for their own "positioning" within their parents' social circles' (Ahmad 2001: 148), none of the women I spoke to mentioned the 'gossip circles' in relation to institution attended.¹⁶ However, all the women who applied to pre-92 universities, in common with Ball et al's findings, 'were most likely to nominate a career motive as the basis for their choice' (Ball et al. 2002: 60). Some were encouraged to work hard at their A levels precisely to avoid losing their place at an elite university, which they thought offered a 'better' quality degree:

Yafiah: I don't think employers care that much, but if they've got CVs from exactly the same people but someone's from main university rather than Man Met, I think they would take the person from there. Because of the reputation. Purely the reputation.¹⁷

Many planning on studying at a pre-92 university had expected not to be wholly included. They seemed to accept that if they were to attend a prestigious university, which are predominantly white middle-class institutions (Modood et al. 1997), they

¹⁶ Amatullah found that her application to an elite institution carried a certain 'bargaining' power within the family. She was able to convince her parents that living away at a university three hours away (by car) from home would be worth it, '*Probably because everybody said it [the institution] was so prestigious and stuff*'.

¹⁷ The University of Manchester was often referred to as 'main university', to distinguish it from Manchester Metropolitan University.

would have to cope with some exclusion. And many women expressed feelings about fitting into elite institutions. Amatullah accepted a place at an elite university because *‘It just seemed really nice. It was a summer’s day so it looked really pretty on a summer’s day, and I was like “yeah, yeah, definitely”’*.

Two women in this group (Yusra and Jasminah) were among a handful of students to be selected by their FEC to apply for Oxbridge. This is in direct contrast to the experiences of the middle-class (largely white) families spoken to by Ball (2003) and Devine (2004a), whose children were expected to apply to Oxbridge as a matter of course. Despite recent self-professed attempts to widen participation at the elite universities, Oxbridge *‘is still struggling with decades of in-built bias in favour of the private sector’* (Reay et al. 2001: 5.3), where, even by the high achieving pupils, Oxbridge was frequently seen as *‘not for the likes of us’* (Bourdieu 1988). Perhaps unsurprisingly, positions of race, faith and class combined to produce powerful exclusions at the interview which proved too much for both women. Yusra wondered whether she did not get a place because she wore a *hijab* to the interview, and Jasminah *‘stuck out like a sore thumb’*, wearing *‘Asian’* clothes when everyone else was dressed *‘smartly’*:

Jasminah: It was so... – it was very very very snobbish. And there was rarely an Asian person to be seen. [...] I wore Asian clothes, I mean I didn’t wear English clothes until I actually went to university, so for my open day I was wearing Asian clothes and I felt very sort of... – I suppose like an outcast. So I kind of thought, no, Cambridge and Oxford aren’t for me, really.

Jasminah decided not to proceed with the Oxbridge application, considering she did not have the desired extra-curricular activities, especially as her work in the family and community seemed not to be *‘part of the Cambridge-Oxford network’*. Like Ball et al. (2002), I found that those who applied to post-92 universities were more likely to be students:

...primarily motivated by a wish to go to an institution where there were people who shared their culture and ethnicity, and were inclined to refer to their family and home life as important (Ball et al. 2002: 60).

For instance, Sara – a recent convert to Islam – expected that attending a university with a high number of Muslim students would be sensitive to Islamic practices and to have prayer room facilities, as well as giving her ‘*an opportunity to practice more*’. The women I interviewed all evaluated the habitus of the university in terms of the student intake (c.f. Ball et al. 2002), and in addition to this, made reference to the importance of having the confidence, and access, to speak to staff members.

Many others applying for competitive, ‘traditional’ degrees chose post-92 universities because they did not have the very high grades required by elite institutions. However, it was not necessarily the case that the ‘choice of a “new” university is some kind of second best or result of lack of alternatives’ (Ball et al. 2002: 53). Practical issues relating to residential status impacted on institution chosen. The women whose parents lived in Greater Manchester were in close proximity to several universities, whereas those from Lancashire were an hour by train from the nearest university, or a two hour bus journey to universities in the next county. Using the train for this commute was not possible because of the unreliable and infrequent service, and the high cost. Though Munazzah was accepted into an elite university, she thought she would be unable to ‘hack the travelling’ on the bus every day, so chose to attend the closest university (a much less prestigious institution):

when I went once or twice, I was like, I can't do this for 3 years, non stop, no way. So I'd rather go somewhere where I can drive home and drive back, and still get the education I want. (Munazzah)

Like most of the non-Muslim women, the vast majority of the Muslim women accepted a place in a university in the same, or next, county. There have been concerns that a reduction in financial support ‘means that many young people from lower socio-economic groups, those with little or no family tradition of higher education, and mature students, may choose to live at home and study locally’ (Christie et al. 2005: 5), and cost was always an underlying factor in the women’s decisions.

Decisions about Financial Support

All the non-Muslim women decided to take out a student loan compared to about two thirds of Muslim women. The remaining Muslim women decided not to take out a loan, and relied on employment and financial assistance from family. Previous survey research has highlighted the reluctance of Muslim (especially Pakistani) students, those with family responsibilities and those from the lowest social classes, to borrow (Callender 2002). Most quantitative research has analysed who does and does not borrow, but there has been little attention to the reasons *why* students hold negative attitudes to debt. I explored the wide-ranging views on debt and student loans demonstrated by the group, comparing and contrasting the Muslim and non-Muslim women's choices.

Callender argues that:

...low-income students' debt is soon likely to equal the average gross annual earnings of full-time manual workers. Will low-income students be able to jump over the psychological barrier of having to borrow more money than their parents may earn in a year? (Callender 2002: 75)

However, the Muslim and non-Muslim women I spoke to did not encounter this 'psychological barrier'. All the women were exempt from paying tuition fees, and had access to the full student loan.¹⁸ Whilst none of the women I interviewed supported the changes to the student funding regimes, they were determined not to allow financial limitations to jeopardise their chance of a university place.¹⁹ Asked what they would do if universities charged higher rates, or upfront fees, they told me they would still find a way of attending university:

JM: To go back to the tuition fees debate [...] did it put you off going to university, or were you not that bothered really?

¹⁸ With the exception of Jasminah, Kaleemah and Cantara who started university before the changes in 1998. The majority of fieldwork took place between 2004-5, before the upfront fees were in place.

¹⁹ This is partly a methodological issue; I spoke to those already at university.

Olivia: No. It didn't affect me at all, because I knew that whatever it cost, in some way or other my parents would say 'we will afford it, it doesn't matter what we have to do: we'll re-mortgage the house'. So, it never really...

Likewise, for Aameena, the loans and fees *'didn't actually affect me in the sense of not going to university. I was always going to go to university and I wasn't going to let tuition fees stop me from doing that'*. In fact, it was only Dawn whose choice of HEI and course had been affected by the financial problems relating to student loans. Dawn, who had previously won a place at a prestigious theatre school, found that she did not qualify for a student loan for the course she was about to study. At a late stage, she had to change her plans to study a different course (at a less prestigious institution) in order to get access to financial support from the Student Loans Company.

The main concern of the Muslim women I interviewed was whether student loans are *halal*,²⁰ reiterating the Islamic belief that loaning money must not lead to financial profit. Parents, wider family networks and the community were consulted, but in comparison to the active role that parents played in other university decisions, they were often excluded from decisions due to the complexity of the information and application forms, especially for those who do not read English.²¹ Both groups of women I interviewed were confused about the complexity *'of the loans and fees system [...]* Systems of support keep changing, the regulations are hard to decipher, and there are no "joined up" support mechanisms' (Archer et al. 2002: 115), especially in relation to eligibility, repayments, interest and inflation. Those who did not have friends or siblings who had already graduated were most vulnerable to misinformation, whereas women who had networks of graduate contacts were much more confident about understanding the system. As Wendy tells me: *'A teacher at our school – she was quite young – she said the loan repayments weren't that bad, so I thought I'd get one out'*.

²⁰ *Halal* means permitted or lawful.

²¹ The non-Muslim women and their family did not seem to discuss student loans either, though this is likely to be because taking out a loan was essential and thus, there was nothing to discuss.

Some Muslim women consulted the opinions of Islamic scholars. The Federation of Student Islamic Societies in Britain (FOSIS)²² states that student loans that incur interest are permitted only if no other financial help is available, and on the condition that the loan is paid back immediately. However, the position of FOSIS towards loans was not always shared by the women I spoke to, or their siblings. Munazzah's brother *'was like, "oh you know, it's interest, and it doesn't matter how much it is, it's still interest, and we're not allowed to be taking it out"'*. For the Muslim women, loans were problematic because they incur interest, which for Sara, represents the UK government's *'western capitalist way of thinking - it's the accumulation of wealth'* which can tie borrowers *'to ridiculous burdens of huge rates of interest'*. Some women I spoke to consider the incurrance of interest *haraam*, regardless of a student's financial position:²³

Farzana: From the words of Allah, it [interest] is forbidden in minimal. I know that there's different interpretations of the Koran. But this is the law; this has been set from the time of the prophets. That cannot be changed. Neither can the laws that have been set, be changed, you know, throughout time.

Because of the political context in which changes to the student funding arrangements occurred, Farzana made links between the cuts in spending on HE and the war in Iraq, adding to the ethical and moral concerns of borrowing from the Student Loans Company:

Farzana: What does this country prioritise now? It's like not prioritising student education, but it's prioritising its MOD - Ministry of Defence. [...] so one year of funding for a jet fighter plane could have funded every single student in Britain with one grant, each of them having a £1000 each.

Although the women who decided to borrow were not content with borrowing such a large amount of cash, it was the only way they could fund their studies. The women

²² <http://www.fosis.org.uk/issues/studentloans.htm>

²³ *Haraam* is anything that is prohibited to a Muslim, according to the Koran.

who considered student loans unacceptable and who had decided not to take out a loan were all commuting from home and planned to work part-time throughout university:

Shoneen: I didn't take out a loan because I just thought... - I didn't have the need for it, interest and stuff, which I don't believe in. I thought I'm not going to take it out because it just, it would just hurt me every day that I'd taken it out, I wouldn't be satisfied that I'd taken it out. Because I work part-time, and by working part-time I do save enough money for myself

As this account demonstrates, one advantage of commuting to a nearby university was that a loan could be avoided, but a danger of this was that working-class students were opting 'for financial security at the expense of other benefits by enrolling in less advanced, vocationally orientated, short courses run at less prestigious institutions near their parental home' (Callender 2002: 84).

Women who avoided the loan, in addition to their part-time job, relied on the limited financial support offered by family and *biraderi*, although such support was contingent and unstable. As Bilqis suggested: '*my brother – the one who's got a degree – he's working, and so he said he might support me next year. So that might be all right, and I won't need to take a loan out!*' Din (2006) considers this close economic relationship practiced within the family and *biraderi* to arise from the 'poverty and financial hardship endured in Pakistan' (Din 2006: 111). However, in the particular context of the changing funding regimes in UK higher education, family support is one of the only options available for families who consider incurring interest *haram*. I would argue that the sharing of economic resources within family and *biraderi* is a rational action in this situation, rather than solely being a Pakistani cultural practice.

Others considered the student loan *makruh*, to be taken out only by those in the greatest financial need.²⁴ As Sara, a recent convert to Islam, did not '*come from a Muslim family or community I don't have that buffer on my back*', enjoyed by most Muslim students from Islamic families.²⁵ Because her '*parents are completely against Islam and argue*

²⁴ *Makruh* is something that the Koran discourages but does not forbid.

²⁵ Considering Sara's estimates, that '*a third of students at [this] university are Muslim, therefore they will be solely relying on their parents and their local community to fund them*', the participants in the

with me all the time’ and because her husband could not afford to support her, she did not ‘*have another way of living*’ without a loan:

there’s no way I could live without my student loan. I mean, there are halal banks and stuff, but I didn’t know that they could; now I don’t know if it’s possible to get student loans. [...] I own no property; I own a motorbike. If I sell that for £500 that’s going to get me a month’s rent. Right, we pay rent on our house, my husband doesn’t earn enough to fund, even himself, and what he’s paying for his family, to fund me. (Sara)

Other women considered the loan *halal*, arguing that it was inflation, rather than interest, which was added to the student loan. Others saw that as education is a requirement of Islam, this outweighs concerns about the payment of interest. FOSIS advises that paying back the loan after graduation is urgent, influencing the women’s plans after graduation in order to facilitate speedy repayments. Yusra told me that, ‘*When I finish I’ll be about 22, and if I go into teaching they pay a good wage, so I can live at home and pay off my loan.*’ Gazala also wanted to repay the loan so that she could soon attend *Hajj*.²⁶

We can’t go [to Hajj] when we’re in debt. I wanted to go whilst I was still young; it’s just one of those things that you want to do at certain times of your life. And like my aim is to get out of uni, get a job - I mean it doesn’t matter how much they pay you - and even if you’re in a job which pays £15,000 a year, you can put aside £4,000 a year and pay it off bit by bit, so. So I’m aiming to pay that off within the next four years, and go to Hajj. It wasn’t a huge issue because I had it all set in my mind how I was going to do it. (Gazala)

focus group discussion agreed that expanding *halal* banking would be better than making the Muslim community ‘*scrimp and save and make their parents pay*’.

²⁶ *Hajj* is the holy pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. All Muslims are required to go once in their lifetime.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored some of the complexities of individual and familial decision-making processes about university. As the daughters of manual workers, all the women (but one) were the 'first generation' in their families to attend university. For the women's parents, university was a respected, but largely unknown, entity. The way in which the women's (lack of) access to cultural, social and economic capitals influenced progression to university can be more fully appreciated by interrogating the broader context of educational practices of middle-class families (Devine 2004a; Ball 2003; Power et al. 2003), who utilise a range of capitals in education order to perpetuate class advantage. Nevertheless, the mothers, fathers and siblings of all the women I interviewed played an important direct and indirect role in motivating their daughters to prioritise education from an early age.

By focussing on the women's decision-making strategies around university, including subject choice, residential status, institution and decisions about financial support, I argued that the central difference between the Muslim and non-Muslim women concerned notions of the 'traditional' student experience. The non-Muslim women and their parents bought into these normative representations of university. As a 'rite of passage' into adulthood, university was regarded as a vehicle to independence from parents, and the women were encouraged to choose the paths that they wanted. On the other hand, representations of traditional student life involving alcohol and individualism were concerns for the Muslim women and their families, and parents wanted their daughters to retain their ties to religion and culture. Education was used as a family strategy of upward mobility. The women were supported by the family and in return for this assistance, the women were required to support the family, which was antithetical to normative notions of students as becoming independent.

The next chapter focuses on the opportunities and restrictions faced by the women at university. Were the women included into the university? What happened to kin networks when the women attended university? What importance did the women place on friendship groups, social networks and extra-curricular activities at university? What were the advantages and disadvantages of their residential status? The higher educational experiences and social mobility of minority groups entails 'crossing racial

as well as class barriers' (Higginbotham 2001: 216). The Muslim women's moves into middle-class space necessarily involved removing themselves from the safety of their own religio-ethnic community and entering a space in which they were 'other'. On the other hand, the non-Muslim women, whilst being class 'outsiders' at university, belonged to the majority ethnic group which, as I indicate in the next chapter, carried particular advantages for 'fitting in'.

Chapter Five:

Playing Hard or Praying Hard? ‘Fitting In’ at University

Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted how, as the ‘first generation’ to attend university, HE was a respected, but largely unknown, entity for all the women and their families. I explored the similarities and differences between the two groups of women in relation to choices concerning university. Whereas the non-Muslim women were individual choosers, embracing the idea of university as a root to independence, the Muslim women negotiated the details of their university application with their kin. Education was a strategy for upward mobility for the family as a whole, rather than representing an ‘escape’.

In this chapter, I focus on what happened at university. Analysing four important aspects of the university experience: ‘fitting in’ and social networks; family relationships; the course, and paid work, I compare and contrast the experiences of the two groups of women. Because information and support at university is often passed through networks, forming friendships is an important part of successfully completing a degree. I argue that night life and alcohol were central to ‘bonding’ at university. Though the non-Muslim women – as members of the majority ethnic/religious community – enjoyed the ‘bar’ scene, they could not socialise as much as middle-class students because of commitments to employment and due to their desire to limit expenditure. On the other hand, I suggest that the Muslim women were excluded from the ‘bar’ culture and had limited opportunities to make and maintain friendships. Most were not prepared to ‘dilute’ their faith nor place family relationships in jeopardy by participating. An inevitable part of attending university is that relationships with family members change, and the women’s pleasures and pains in relation to these ties are examined. I suggest that the non-Muslim women and their families expected that the women would gain increasing independence from their parents, though new friendships and partnerships were difficult to make and could not replace the unconditional support offered by parents. On the other hand, the Muslim women experienced ongoing close ties in the context of increasing trust and responsibility to maintain *izzat*. These women

as the 'first generation' in their families to attend university were often intimidated by the unequal power hierarchies at university and the unfamiliarity of the institution. The commuters, as 'day students', were particularly excluded from university activities and facilities. All the women, as part-time workers in financially precarious positions, expressed concerns that paid work affected their grades. The need to work depended on residential status and whether women had taken out a loan. Specific subjects carried 'hidden costs' which exacerbated financial insecurity. Employment – which was difficult to find – was often poorly paid and required flexibility. Because of job insecurity, the women were not in a position to demand better working conditions. In comparison to the work experiences of middle-class students (Ball 2003), the women's jobs could not be converted into cultural capital and benefit their future careers. Throughout the chapter, I indicate how attending university did not necessarily give automatic access to class privilege. The women's experiences and opportunities at university were entrenched within their working-class positions, and as such their educational experiences differed from middle-class students (Ball 2003).

'Fitting In' and Social Networks

Because information is passed through networks and students rely on the help of each other in order to manage their degree, 'new friendships and networks built within university are crucial to success' (Christie et al. 2005: 5). In their study of international students at British universities, McDowell and Montgomery point to the 'combination of psychological encouragement and practical, academic help' that international students give to each other, which is 'an important element of the social capital that students are gaining from their social network' (McDowell and Montgomery 2006: 7). However, non-traditional students are 'excluded from the social networks through which informal, but important, information circulated about academic work and courses, and support services and structures' (Christie et al. 2005: 19), because working-class students are more likely to work longer hours in paid work and have less time for non-academic activities (Cooke et al. 2004).

As the findings of Christie et al. (2005) and McDowell and Montgomery (2006) indicate, friends were an essential ingredient to managing the degree for all the women I interviewed. Friends provided important course information, gave support during group

work activities and sought shared accommodation. Friends borrowed laptops from each other, swapped library books and photocopies, collected hand-outs in case of illness, as well as offering help with academic or personal issues. As I go on to indicate, however, the two groups of women had varying access to social networks at university. In particular, there were sharp differences between the Muslim and non-Muslim women, which had implications for their experience of the course and university life in general.

Muslim Women

Most women had attended an FEC, giving them an opportunity to get a sense of what university would be like. However, they were shocked on arrival at university to discover the extent to which university culture was based around alcohol, a space where 'heavy drinking, socialising...and getting into debt' was sanctioned (Holdsworth 2006: 511). Though they had expected some promotion of drinking at university, they had underestimated the extent of the alcohol consumption.

In Islam, drinking, which is forbidden, 'could lead to one's prayers being rejected by God and disqualification from claiming to be a Muslim on earth and in the after-life' (Bradby 2007: 662). The Muslim women that Bradby interviewed

...avoided drink because of the dire and irreversible consequences for their own and their families' reputations. To be seen with a drink, even if it was only once and even if the woman was not intoxicated, would jeopardise a good match. (Bradby 2007: 662)

The vast majority of the Muslim women I interviewed stated they would never participate in alcohol-related activities and were determined that being successful in education and a career would not require 'diluting' their faith. However, as most social activities at university were based around alcohol consumption, including departmental evenings for new students, this withdrawal from university activities came at a price. Because most were not involved in alcohol-related activities, they were unable to meet many new people or form close friendships. Referring to what she considers as an anti-Muslim university environment of alcohol and promiscuity, Shoneen said that '*when I*

first came here, I was ready to cry, because I was shocked at what was happening and stuff. Freshers' fairs seemed particularly focused around alcohol consumption:¹

Sara: All the first years must go to the Friday night disco to get to know everybody, and you must do this, and go to do this sporting activity, and you must go to do this drinking activity, because 'that's what we've organised for you'.

Though students 'spent more evenings socializing in their first year compared with following years, probably because there is a need to meet people and a lower academic workload' (Cooke et al. 2004: 416), the women I interviewed – regardless of year group – noted that socialising in the evening was a central part of university life.

It was not only the prohibition of alcohol that prevented the Muslim women from getting involved. Residential status also influenced the opportunity and inclination to be included. About half the Muslim women I spoke to commuted, and as 'day students' (Christie et al. 2005), they had very little opportunity to integrate into a university system designed for traditional students. The commuting students interviewed by Christie et al. (2005) regarded 'university as a 9-to-5 activity, contained within the working week, rather than as an all-embracing experience which immersed them in a new student identity' (2005: 10). Many I interviewed faced long commutes, leaving little time for anything other than their job and degree:²

Bilqis: For the first few weeks I was really edgy. I came home and I was really stressed. I got ill in the first few weeks. [...] all I do is go upstairs to do my work, put my clothes out for the next day, and then I go to sleep. Sometimes I don't even see my brother who stays here.

These women counted themselves out of the university scene, and prioritised their family obligations whilst balancing the demands of employment, commuting and studying. University was for work: Aameena argued that university should be a place

¹ A freshers' fair is typically a week-long event primarily for new students and is designed to help them fit into university.

² Up to five hours commute a day for Bilqis and Aameena, two hours for Munazzah, and an hour for Aaisha and Nuzzat.

where, *'You work hard but then you play hard as well, but in your own time, not in university time'*. For Aameena, 'playing hard' was about spending time with family, rather than forming new networks in inappropriate environments. Despite their lack of networks at university, these women did not express feelings of exclusion. Instead, they had made a strategic decision not to invest in new ties at university in order to maintain existing relationships (c.f. Holdsworth 2006).

However, in comparison the women living away from home, far from their support networks, expressed feelings of seclusion and loneliness:

Gazala: Everyone always says 'oh, you have the best three years of your life' and this and that

JM: [laughs]

Gazala: Exactly! And I come here and these have turned out to be the worst three years of my life [laughs].

Most of the women who lived at university were housed with non-Muslims in their first year. The type of accommodation offered included halls of residence (self-catering or catered), self-contained flats with other women, and in one case, a small shared bedroom with another two students. Whilst having flatmates could ensure 'ready-made' friends, these arrangements were often challenging because the women were excluded from daily life in the flat.

In the women's shared accommodation, alcohol was often included as a normal part of dinner, and thus most women considered it inappropriate to eat in the kitchen with the others. However, because university canteens or catered halls of residence did not serve *halal* meat, the women were placed in a difficult position.³ The constant presence of boyfriends in their flat meant that the *mohajebah* had to remain covered. Seifert argues that an increasing number of Muslim women want to wear the *hijab* on campus, 'but do

³ For the women living in predominantly 'white' cities, *halal* meat was rarely sold. Basheera struggled to 'find a shop that sells that [halal meat]', especially as she could not afford the independent butchers' shops in the university city.

not do so because they regularly encounter Christian ignorance and discrimination against Muslim beliefs' (2007: 14). The Muslim women to whom I talked had experiences that corresponded to Seifert's findings. In this environment, the women were frequently required to defend their faith, and themselves, from criticism:

Nuzzat: I just don't like the idea of someone asking me a question about religion and saying 'oh I don't know'. And asking me, 'why do you believe that' and saying 'oh I don't know'. Of course, people are going to ridicule you if you have no idea why you believe what you believe.

Ahmad (2001) argues that many Muslim women she interviewed 'described occasions such as "Ramadan" and "Eid" as being times where religion could be shared in a supportive environment within university accommodation' (Ahmad 2001: 149). However the women I interviewed did not live with other Muslims, and practiced Islam alone. Yusra stated:

When you're home, mum gets you up at 4am and you pray, and everyone's getting up and you're half asleep. But you're doing it together. But there [university], it's got to be your own will and you do it yourself. (Yusra)

Although most women living away from home visited family at the weekend, the isolation was intense, having implications for the women's levels of esteem and well-being. As Cantara told me, '*there's only so much that you can do, if you don't pub or club*', and for Rashida, staying in her room alone was a habit that became difficult to alter as term progressed:

I could have made so many friends if I'd have gone out in freshers' week and the week after that. And I didn't, so it was harder for me to make friends because everyone else knew each other. And I was talking to my white friend, and she was like, 'I thought you were like a total recluse, you just used to stay in your room' and I was like 'there was nothing else for me to do, I didn't know anyone else'. (Rashida)

Considering the difficulties of living in halls with non-Muslims, the women preferred to organise accommodation with other Muslim women in subsequent years. However, having limited financial resources meant they had to accept the cheapest room available, which limited choice. For instance, Rashida wanted to live with her best friend, a middle-class Muslim woman, *'but she was living in this new student village and it's so expensive [laughs] and I was like "I really can't live with you now" and she wanted me to, but I can't'*.

The university organisers, as well as new housemates, put the women under considerable pressure to participate in the 'bar' culture. They were expected to continually justify to non-Muslims why they were not involved. For instance, Munazzah's friends are always *'like, "it's just one day to let your hair down, we just want to see you groove"'. But I'm like, "oh shut up, I'm not going to go"'*. Like the students interviewed by Holdsworth (2006: 512) who were 'pulled in two directions' when deciding whether to attend these events, some Muslim women I talked to were confused about their place at university:

Yusra: I had to say 'no' to my mates, you know, 'no, I'm not going to go', and I had to explain it. Yet I wasn't really aware of the conflicts behind it. I remember one time being really torn, pacing up and down in my room, thinking 'should I go, should I not, should I go, should I not?'

In the pervasive atmosphere of heavy drinking and socialising, some women who covered often noted that when turning down invitations, the *hijab* was an advantage. For instance, Yafiah's faith was understood as a legitimate reason why she could not attend, and her housemates were not offended. She noted that although her housemates were hostile to a white student who did not socialise with them, *'The reason they didn't pick on me is because they understood why I wouldn't go out'*. Yafiah considered her position an advantage because it also allowed her to save money, unlike her non-Muslim housemates.

Living in this environment, some women – at some points – faced the dilemma of having to choose to exclude themselves to the detriment of gaining friendship networks, or to attend these events and jeopardise the trust of their family and compromise their

faith. Basheera, Rashida and Yusra, under such pressure, decided to attend these events, developed friendships with men and women, and on occasions consumed intoxicating substances. By attending, they were able to participate in 'university life', extend their social networks, and try the activities they had become curious about. However, maintaining friendships that emerged from this environment required ongoing participation in the bar scene. If the women stopped attending they would lose their place in the group. The price of this inclusion, the women indicated, involved feelings of guilt surrounding their faith and family and concerns around extensive financial expenditure. For instance, to attend these events, Rashida not only had to pay for entrance fees and drinks, but had to purchase appropriate clothing: *'not having the clothes to wear and having to go out and buy them and making sure you're modestly covered and stuff'*. Regardless of whether the women consumed alcohol or not, attending these events was risky as gossip might reach home (c.f. Bradby 2007).

There were other limited activities available, organised by the university, that did not involve alcohol or bars, including, as Cantara said, *'bowling, the cinema, the horse riding, the gardens'* as well as the theatre, classical music concerts, sightseeing activities, sports events and eating out. These activities, however, were often just as exclusive as the events based around alcohol. Based primarily on the interests of (mainly wealthy) international students, these activities usually incurred a high cost and were not the women's idea of 'fun'.

The university Islamic society was important to the women I interviewed, particularly as the start of the autumn term coincided with Ramadan. The Islamic society offered a safe space, free of charge, where the women could meet other Muslims and share the celebrations. However, some women considered the university facilities for Muslims inadequate. Despite the fact that at the university Farzana attended, *'1 in 3 people enrolled is a Muslim'* the Islamic society *'has absolutely no help from the university'*. Sara noted that in the prayer room provided *'there's tiles falling off the ceiling, the carpet doesn't even touch the wall, and they [management] go, "this is in a really bad state of repair", "okay", "are you going to do something about it?", "no"'*. All the focus group participants noted the unfair policy of a university that – without arranging an alternative – had forbidden Muslims to use university bathrooms for their ablutions. As well as being marginalised, many women reported that university Islamic societies

were regarded as suspicious, and one woman expressed fears that group meetings were monitored by university officials. A recent government report published in September 2005 has stated that it is likely that universities are used to recruit Islamic extremists. This report emphasised the need for students and staff in British universities to work together to 'root out "extremists" on campus' (Ansari 2006: 79), and to report suspicious Muslim students. Universities remain based on the norms of 'traditional' university students despite government widening participation drives (Christie et al. 2005). Having an insufficient room in which to pray at the university and having Islamic activities sidelined prevents Muslim students from forming important friendships, ultimately reifying HE as an unwelcome space for them.

Non-Muslim Women

Consistent with the Muslim women's experiences, the non-Muslim women regarded involvement in the 'bar culture' as central to inclusion. However, whereas the Muslim women were disadvantaged by such a culture, as white and non-Muslim, this group of women benefited from this (Read et al. 2003). The alcohol 'culture' at university was a common feature of life at home with their friends or parents. All enjoyed the 'bar culture'; whenever alcohol was present, the atmosphere was informal and they became confident, which assisted them in meeting new people, making friends and dating men. Forming and maintaining friendships, networks and new partners revolved around the pub/club scene. These social bonds and camaraderie were created and sustained through drunkenness. As 'students', the women were expected to socialise frequently, but unlike the Muslim women, not having the time or money was not a convincing excuse not to go out. For instance, all the women were concerned that they did not participate in university life fully enough, and were missing out on the 'experience'. Inequalities in economic capital contribute to the exclusion of working class students. As Holdsworth (2006) notes, the working class students she interviewed:

...wanted to go out and do the 'student thing' but on the other were nervous about getting into debt and were somewhat envious of fellow students who appeared to be going out every night. (Holdsworth 2006: 512)

Though the non-Muslim women participated in the ‘bar’ culture and were surrounded by those of the same ethnicity, fitting in wasn’t guaranteed. As Read et al. (2003) argue, the ‘presence of students of similar age, class, gender or ethnicity is not necessarily sufficient to enable [students] to feel comfortable in the environment of the university, to make them feel like they “belong”’ (Read et al. 2003: 271). The non-Muslim women experienced class prejudice from other students relating to their hometown (c.f. Howarth 2002) or accent. When meeting new people for the first time, Wendy noted that the first question was always “*where are you from?*” Whilst Wendy always told people ‘*that I come from [home town], because I don’t think there’s anything wrong with coming from [home town] at all*’, others tried to avoid this question because of the negative attention their hometown has received. However, others considered that they would necessarily have to change themselves in order to ‘fit in’ at university. Unlike most of the Muslim women, who were not prepared to compromise their ‘roots’ and faith in order to be included, the one non-Muslim woman from a religious background – Marsha – became agnostic after starting university. She saw faith as antithetical to the university atmosphere; there was no place for religion in an institution based on the pursuit of ‘scientific knowledge’. Marsha also indicated that to be practicing Christian at university is a stigmatised position; her friend is ‘*really religious, born again Christian type, and he just gets ribbed for it, really ribbed for it.*’ It is possible that this stigma attached to Christianity on campus added to her movement away from religion.

The problem of the university ‘bar’ scene for working-class students is that it is costly. Some women expressed guilt for spending too much money socialising:

Emily: I know this sounds pathetic but there is a pressure to go out, you have to socialise; you’re not enjoying uni life if you don’t socialise. So, with the amount of going out and to keep up with the fashions, that keeps me in a lot of debt [laughs].

Cooke et al’s research indicates that ‘students from partly skilled backgrounds drank 28 units of alcohol per week, on average, in their first year’ (2004: 419). Recent media attention has focused on the increased number of young people suffering from liver damage. These media images have focused particularly on working-class teenagers but have failed to mention the institutional importance of alcohol at university. The media

has vilified young women for their ‘problematic’ drinking practices but, at least on campus, such an approach fails to examine the institutional drinking culture in which the students are obliged to engage, if they are to be included into mainstream university ‘life’. Though it was not cool to admit it, some women did not want to ‘buy into’ heavy consumption of drink and drugs because they had worked hard to get a place at university and wanted to succeed in their degree. Perhaps, for middle-class students, intoxicating substances were an important part of being away from home and becoming independent, but for some of the women I interviewed, this substance dependency was just what they had come to university to avoid.

Whilst recognising the importance of forming friendships during evenings ‘in’ and ‘out’, most of the women expressed feelings of guilt for not working (what they deemed) ‘hard enough’:

Helen: I’ve got to like, stop going out, because it’s a fine balance. I’ve really got to do some work. It was like last week, when I started to get proper work [laughs]. I find myself like – I don’t know. I like going out, and I say ‘I’ll do that tomorrow’, and it never gets done. I’d better start doing it!

As Lucey et al. (2003) argue, feelings of guilt for women students are a classed phenomenon. Lucey et al.’s working-class women respondents saw hard work and play in opposition, but the middle-class women they spoke to did not see this as a strong because:

...going to university is often a rite of passage that most family members have undertaken. For them, there is an expectation that student life should be both a time of serious study and a youthful sabbatical in which to experience and experiment with the new. (Lucey et al. 2003: 291)

Winn (2002) identifies three ideal types of student, including one that has ‘few responsibilities, little academic work’. This is the type of student who regularly misses classes and only completes directly assessed work; because tutors do not assess private study, these students ‘chose to spend their time socialising rather than doing academic work’ (2002: 453). However, placing the women I spoke to who expressed guilt for not

doing enough work in this group would not be accurate because the women regarded developing and maintaining friendship as a necessary part of coping at university. All the women, at some stage, experienced loneliness. Unlike the Muslim women, however, they could not always turn to kin networks for help, because the women relied on friends and partners for emotional support, rather than family. Isolation was most intense for women who were single and for those who did not have close friends at university.

Shortly after starting university, Gayle – the only non-Muslim woman who had decided to commute to university – had a change of plan. In order to become more involved in ‘university life’ she moved away from home and found a room near the university. However, she was surprised to find that she *‘just felt so lonely’* living at university, and after the first year decided to move back to her parents’. Developing friendships was difficult because other students had long-standing social lives at home, and had neither the time nor the inclination to invest in new friendship groups (c.f. Christie et al. 2005). Gayle was also unable to develop friendships because she spent many hours in paid work, she lived far from the student enclave and her course had a high drop-out rate:

All my friends started moving home. They decided they didn't like it, so they moved home, and one moved home [...] and she went to that uni instead, and started over. And another one, he decided to do his first year again, because he decided he didn't want to come anymore, so he did his first year all again. (Gayle)

Family Relationships

The women’s relationships with family members were related to the context of HE, in particular, the extent to which they wanted to be included – or not – in the culture of the university. The non-Muslim women saw university as an opportunity to become independent; they invested in new relationships at university in order to ‘compensate’ for becoming more detached – emotionally, as well as financially and physically – from family. However, the Muslim women did not have the same inclination, time or energy to develop relationships at university because they aimed to maintain strong ties to kin.

Moreover, because of the prevalence of nightlife, the Muslim women were particularly isolated.

Muslim Women

The women who commuted did not see as much of their family as expected because of the demands of studying, paid work and travelling to and from university. Considering that some families preferred their daughters to continue living at home in order to ensure their well-being whilst at university, the women reported that the long hours they were out of the house came as a shock to their parents. For instance, Bilqis' mother told her, “*what's the point of you coming home if you're going to go at 5.30 in the morning and come home at 8.30pm and we don't even see you during the day?*”

Though the women communicated with, or saw, their families frequently (if only very briefly), they worked hard to reassure them that, as Farzana said, ‘*we've still got that relationship*’. This was particularly important for women who had family abroad, and who relied on technological advances to maintain these networks (c.f. Wilding 2006). For instance Farzana told me that:

If I had time I would ring them [grandparents in Pakistan]. I wouldn't say, 'oh forget it, it's £5, why should I waste my time, I could spend £5 on something else'. I would make sure I'll ring them, because I feel that, just to show them I'm still here. (Farzana)

‘The visit’ (Mason 2004) was also a significant way in which women kept in touch with family networks across generations. The visit was planned much in advance, and was ‘not only experienced but also remembered and anticipated’ (Mason 2004: 425). This enabled the sustenance of kin biographies through the generations. According to Finch (2007), for individuals who have non-traditional family relationships which fall outside the 2.4 family life, ‘displaying’ being a family is a central way to demonstrate to kin that they are part of the family unit. This framework helps to understand the importance Farzana attributes to regular contact with her grandparents abroad.

The women who lived away from home struck a balance between their role as a student and part-time worker, and their duties to their kin. Those living at university found it much more difficult to find a balance between the many competing demands in their lives because these duties involved physically being at home. Cantara and her family struggled with the distance: *'when I went away to uni, she [younger sister] just couldn't sleep without me'*. Despite their university studies, the women tried to visit elderly family members frequently, to 'be there' for younger siblings, and to participate in *biraderi* celebrations when they could manage these commitments. Fulfilling these obligations was important for the women, especially as many held a strong sense of gratitude towards their family. For instance, Cantara told me, *'my family are everything to me and without them really I'm nothing'*. As already noted, maintaining close ties was also a central part of the women's survival strategies whilst at university. Many welcomed the 'return to normality' when they visited home for the weekend. Sometimes, however, women enjoyed the distance from their families, which relieved them of demanding obligations for a short time.

Ahmad indicates that the women she interviewed who live away from home want 'to experience "student life" and gain some level of independence during term-time at least, away from the parental gaze' (2001: 149), which was also a finding of this research project. Some of the women I talked to (Yusra, Basheera, Zahida and Rashida) were relieved to 'escape' the gossip ridden circles of their community. At university they did not need to monitor their behaviour in case they gained a 'bad' reputation. Although moving to university and undertaking a job 'were legitimate ways of getting beyond parental supervision', the threat or actuality of 'Auntie-jis' surveillance network' was always present (Bradby 2007: 665). Concerned about *izzat*, the parents of the women I spoke to wanted to keep a watchful eye on their daughters whilst at university and requested that they visit home frequently. Some women who commuted also reported that their parents were afraid of damaging gossip. The women Ahmad interviewed 'were well aware that their parents were anxious of *how* they could change and of the possible "Anglicising" effects university life may have on them' (Ahmad 2001: 146). Likewise, the women I spoke to recognised that their families were anxious about them living at university, and worked hard to reassure family that their living arrangements and studies were going well. Despite the women's attempts, parents were often shocked when they visited the university and saw their daughter's campus and accommodation.

For instance, Rashida's parents were concerned that her bedroom was opposite a night club, and Yafiah's father:

...came round to the flat one time and he went into the kitchen and on top of all the cupboards there was just alcohol bottles all the way around. And he was like 'are you okay here?' [laughs]. And so he, the first time he saw my flat, I think he was worried, like 'are you okay here' because the girls bring guys up and stuff, and all these sorts of things. (Yafiah)

The women who lived away at university noted that it was difficult for parents to accept their daughter's increasing independence when they returned for long vacations:

Cantara: Being away from home, you do what you want, when you want, how you want, at any time you want. Being back home, your parents still think of you as the same girl that went, and they haven't seen you've changed, but you know you've changed. But to them you're still the same person.

For the women who had become involved in the university 'bar' scene, from time to time, or had let certain Islamic practices lapse, it was difficult to get back to the practice of Islam at home when returning for the long summer vacation. Some women had to contend with their guilt, and others were concerned that their families, friends or the community would think they had changed. The discourse of women 'changing' at university was so prevalent that even the women who prayed five times a day worried about being accused of wrong-doings. For instance, Zahida told me that the community will ask "What you lying for? We know you do [drink alcohol]. Everyone does it", but not everyone does, believe it or not'.

Non-Muslim Women

Whilst the Muslim women and their families monitored and supported each other closely, there was no similar arrangement for the non-Muslim families. No non-Muslim woman mentioned contributing to their family practically or emotionally, either during university or beyond. Unlike the Muslim women, none of the non-Muslim women had

extensive family responsibilities. The women were encouraged by their parents to prioritise the building of new relationships at university, which involved the inevitable distance from family, 'old' friends and (ex) partners at home. University was a stepping-stone to adulthood, leading to individual social mobility and independence. As Helen told me, the advantage of attending university was that *'you get to move away from home, because in a sense it's setting you up for when you do actually leave university and you do have to get your own house'*. There is very little research on upward mobility and guilt within intergenerational relationships, although Lucey et al. indicate that in working-class parents with upwardly mobile children, 'envy is sometimes aroused, an emotion with such negative connotations that few will give voice to it' (Lucey et al. 2003: 291).

Despite the attempts of some of the women and their parents (usually mothers) to maintain frequent contact, it was considered an inevitable part of university that ties would loosen. Lisa went for long periods without seeing her mother, and although her mother knew that *'it had to happen at some point'*, *'it was still quite a shock when you do actually go'*. This was also true for Gayle, the only woman in this group who commuted to university. Though the women usually characterised their relationships with their parents as in transition since they moved to university, there was nevertheless a supportive 'base' to return to if the women needed this. For instance, Lisa told me that:

Usually I'll go home if I'm feeling quite run down and I need to recharge if things are getting to me like money wise, because I have had quite a few times where I've been in my room in floods of tears because I don't know how I'll cope, so I'll arrange to have a few days at home, just to kind of get myself recharged and just get some hugs from my mum [laughs]. (Lisa)

Due to the pressures of academic and paid work, the women could not visit home frequently; unlike the Muslim women, none of these women had part-time jobs in their home town. Parents were surprised at the long hours their daughters worked, especially as university has a reputation of being 'cushy', and were sometimes hurt when daughters did not return for long periods. The women – who often told me that their parents did not understand their situation – relied mainly on their friends and partner at

university for emotional support. Although all the women, at some stage, experienced loneliness, unlike the Muslim women, they did not usually turn to their family for help. Becoming independent from parents was emotionally tough on the women to whom I spoke, especially as making new friendships at university was often difficult:

Hannah: Just living on my own is a bit... [...] Everyday, waking up and being here, rather than waking up at home, and like knowing that your mum and dad and your sister are going to be there, and they obviously all really love you and everything. [...] Whereas here, everyone's quite... – I think my generation, everyone's just into themselves.

As I discuss in greater depth in chapter seven, the way non-Muslim women often expressed their own class 'movement' was by demonstrating that their opinions – particularly on race, Islam, and multiculturalism – had diverged from those of their parents (as well as 'old' friends and community). These disagreements – which were often viewed as an inevitable part of being a university student – caused conflicts within the household. Helen pointed out:

Helen: My mum said, 'yeah, you have changed'.

JM: Why does she think you've changed?

Helen: I think... I don't know. She actually called me pretentious at one point. [laughs]

Research on middle-class family practices demonstrates the centrality of familial social networks for educational success (Ball 2003; Devine 2004a; Power et al. 2004). Both groups of women I talked to had little or no access to such resources, and often experienced the pressures highlighted by Callender (2002) and Winn (2002), and the women's progression throughout their degree can be understood in this context. The pressures from paid work or family may also prevent non-traditional students from coping at university (Callender 2002; Winn 2002).

The Course

It has been suggested that students from working-class backgrounds struggle to manage academic work (Callender 2002; Winn 2002). Haggis and Pouget argue that many of the students they interviewed 'reported that they were shocked initially by the reality of university structures and expectations' (Haggis and Pouget 2002: 329). As non-traditional students are unfamiliar with the university system, 'the effect of the unequal power relation between lecturer and student, can work to increase students' conceptions of isolation and alienation' (Read et al. 2003: 271). Likewise, many of the women I spoke to suffered from a lack of information about, and were unfamiliar with, university practices. Some women – the Muslims in particular – had access to social networks that could assist when problems arose. However, information about university was gained from 'hearsay' or from the women's networks, which consisted of friends and community members who had only limited experience of university themselves. Granovetter (1973) emphasises the importance of weak ties, which he suggests are more helpful than strong ties, because they are able to reach a wider network. However, whether the women I talked to utilised strong or weak ties, their access to social resources cannot be compared to the social capital of middle-class families (Ball 2003).

A common worry expressed was that the women would be ill-prepared for exams and coursework. Some women struggled to reconcile having only 6 hours a week in lectures with the high standards required to get a 'decent' mark. They had little idea of how many hours they were expected to study a week, or how to make effective use of their private study time. Some women were shocked at receiving low grades and Lisa told me that, *'I thought it would be a lot more lecture time and assignments and things, but [laughs] we have like two lectures a day, it's like, this is such a skive'*. Nevertheless, Lisa found it hard to reconcile the few taught hours a week with the need to study long hours alone, undirected: *'they're quite tough with the assignments, and things; you really need to research it'*.

As the women who commuted had only a few hours at university, they had little time or opportunity for socialising or to become involved in the non-assessed academic-related activities of the department. The cut-backs in British HEIs have received much attention, and the women who commuted were particularly affected by the lack of

support mechanisms, the emphasis on individual learning and the isolation of being just a number on the degree programme:

Bilqis: You don't really get to know the teachers, except for the tutor, and even him. Like I said 'hi' to him and it was like looking at a brick wall, you know? They just forget. There are like 320 students on my course; they told us at the start of the course it was about 320 or 330. And they just think that they just need to give a lecture and that they don't need to get to know the students. So it's really hard for the teachers, and I don't even know half their names. They're just there, and they give a lecture, and walk back out, and you don't see them until the next one.

The commuting students – as they had less access to university facilities – tried to be resourceful with their time at university on the days they were there, in order to limit the costs of photocopying and printing. Those without their own computer struggled with limited access to library, internet and computing resources, regardless of their organisational skills. The results of a survey conducted at a new university with a 'widened' community of students indicate that 71 percent of students were dissatisfied with the availability of learning resources (Rhodes and Neville 2004: 186). As Gayle noted, '*the books were never there*' in the university library, which was a problem because the cost of textbooks was particularly high in the subject in which she is enrolled:

Finding the money for the books is fun; I had to sell all my second- and first-year books to try to buy the third-year books, which is why I've only got a couple there. I only bought the two main ones for the third year. Because I couldn't afford the other ones. And what I did as well, I bought one and took it back to the shop the week after, I think I made notes from it and took it back the week after [laughs]. (Gayle)

Lisa, who had similar experiences during another degree she had been studying, explained that the lack of access to resources was a major contributing factor in her dropping out of the course: '*it was an issue of being able to get the research materials and even though you got a bit of extra time you were always rushing right at the end to*

get everything organised to get it in on time'. The women who travelled long distances from home to get to university suffered when lectures, seminars or other meetings were cancelled or rescheduled at the last minute. Public transport was considered unreliable; Gayle noted that if using the train, *'You've got to go an hour early just in case it stops!'* A particular concern of Bilqis' related to the exam timetable. She faced *'pressure, thinking "oh God, what happens if I've got an exam at 9 in the morning and I miss the bus or something?"'*

Research has explored how socio-cultural factors influence achievement at university. Spurling (1990, cited in Lemman 1999) notes that the male-oriented culture of elite HEIs, especially within the former all-male colleges, can negatively influence women's self-esteem and degree performance. In a similar way, I would argue that non-traditional students whose ethnicity, class or faith is 'other' to the university culture, may also suffer from the subtle influences of being an 'impostor' in the institution. Whereas the non-Muslim women were assisted in their studies by their friendship networks, a sentiment widely expressed by the Muslim women was that they were excluded – directly or otherwise – from group work. 'Bonding' with the other students and participating in group meetings was difficult when these occurred in the bar:

Gazala: With my course mates they are very nice people, but I'm finding it very difficult to like get to work with them on like a social level because I can't drink and stuff like that, and I don't go clubbing either.

However, other Muslim women were surprised about the kindness that other students showed. Yafiah was one of the only minority students on her course, and expected the other students to be suspicious of a *mohajebeh*: *'I had no friends, and I was like, you know... kind of sat on my own, kind of thing. And they like, call you over, "do you want to work with us?"'* As well as being (one of) the only minority ethnic/religious students on their course, none of the women encountered staff of Pakistani origin at university.

The courses and careers in which networks are essential for gaining employment are the most cliquey, and the performing arts disciplines seem particularly reliant on networks in order to get a foot in the door. In an analysis of belonging for a group of undergraduate music students, Dibben argues that "being known" within the

department led to more opportunities and greater involvement' (Dibben 2006: 110). Some women studying degrees in the performing arts that I interviewed had some awareness of the pressure to form networks (c.f. Devine 2004a). For Bryony, this pressure was intense and she eventually 'counted herself out' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), of the career, and changed degree subject altogether: '*it got difficult you know, because it's so competitive as well; I wouldn't have got anything out of it*'. In an uncertain career path, it was not *what* you knew but *who* you knew, and getting 'in' with the 'right' people could open opportunities for employment or enterprise. Other women, perhaps those without middle-class cultural capital, did not recognise the extent to which social networks created educational and employment opportunities. Direct and reflexive 'networking' was not mentioned by the Muslim women, perhaps because cliques were most helpful in the degree subjects the non-Muslim women had opted to read.

It has already been suggested that many disciplines are gender/class/ethnicity segregated (Morley and Walsh 1996; Dibben 2006; Modood et al. 1997). Using the example of the music degree, Dibben highlights the tendency for elite universities to focus curricula on the broad interests of traditional students. In elite universities, degrees are 'focused on Western art music, thereby reinforcing the association of art music with middle class culture, and maintaining existing social divisions' (Dibben 2006: 112). Because of the heavy financial investment required to study certain degrees, subjects such as languages, music and medicine have been highlighted as particularly exclusionary subjects for working-class students. Some women I spoke to realised they were enrolled on degrees which required payment for 'hidden costs'. For instance, Lisa discovered that the course which she was studying included a compulsory, two-week fieldwork trip during the summer. Not only did this involve payment but in order to participate, Lisa would need time off from work, which was impossible because she needed to pay her rent:

Lisa: Each year you have to do a certain amount of field work, which I haven't been able to do this year, because I haven't been able to take time off work to afford it, and plus you have to pay to go on it.

JM: Oh, do you have to do that?

Lisa: Yeah, it's actually part of the course, especially in the first year, you have to do two weeks of field work, which I haven't been able to do [...] Because the one I got approved was £500 to go on it, and that wasn't including, like, accommodation costs and everything.

Lisa was uncertain about what would happen further on in her degree if she could not afford to attend the trip later in the year. The 'hidden extras' problem was also highlighted by Jasminah, who noted that in order to complete her course it was necessary to have access to a car. Placements were situated in a different city from the university and because she worked unsociable hours, public transport was not available:

Jasminah: They will throw you anywhere [...] you are literally told 'this is the hospital you're at for the next four months, and it's your job to start at 8am in the morning and to leave at 5pm' or whenever, and sometimes you'd be on call and not leave until midnight.

Jasminah considered herself lucky that her family were willing to provide a car – which she explained as a cultural and religious norm of pooling resources – making travel to the placement possible. Dawn, however, could not afford the 'hidden extras' associated with her degree. Though other students '*have had dance training their whole life because they can afford it, and those who have all the kind of equipment and have been to all the, to see loads of shows, whereas I haven't had any of that*'.

Much media attention has emphasised the impact of financial struggles on retainment, though Christie et al. (2005) suggest that, based on survey data, there are a range of reasons other than socio-economic factors which explain why students leave university, including 'poor choice of course; limited social support networks; and lack of "fit" between student and institution' (2005: 617). Read et al's findings also point to the links between 'fitting in' and retention: 'Almost half of the non-continuing students said they found it difficult to get involved in student activities or felt alienated by the university atmosphere' (Read et al. 2003: 271). For non-traditional students, 'it is often difficult to negotiate their way through a very complicated body of information', and due to this, these students 'may make what turn out to be poor choices about courses or places of

study and consequently be poorly motivated to complete' (Christie et al. 2005: 624). Some women to whom I spoke had experienced these problems, particularly the non-Muslim women who were studying diverse and non-traditional subjects, who realised they had chosen the wrong course for their desired profession. For instance, Helen *'found out like a week before I came here that I'm actually doing the wrong degree'*, to enter her desired profession. Nevertheless, the women were reluctant to drop out and to start again, particularly as they may not be eligible for an additional student loan for the repeated year(s). On the other hand, Lisa, now on a different degree and living away from home, again faced the prospect of having to leave university. This time, the problem was financial; she might have to *'go back into working full time for a year or something, just to build up some capital, before I can go back'*.

Many women noted how their degree had suffered as a result of financial constraints; managing on a low income limited the women's ability to fully participate at university in a number of ways. Gayle reported that she was distracted when studying because of concerns about money, telling me that *'you don't need that stress when you're trying to revise for something'*. And for Gayle, as well as others, strategies adopted to limit expenditure had a negative impact on their studies. Gayle, for instance, *'was skipping lectures and just going to seminars just because I couldn't afford'* and others went without essential course materials. As research has suggested, working excessive hours in employment is detrimental to academic study (Callender 2002; Winn 2002; Manthei and Gilmore 2005). For instance, Yafiah believed that *'if I hadn't have worked, I think I could have probably got better grades'*.

Paid Work

There is a large amount of literature on the increase of paid employment among students, particularly after changes to the student funding regimes in the UK, Australia and New Zealand (Manthei and Gilmore 2005; Callender 2002). Due to the changes to student funding regimes, *'more students from disadvantaged backgrounds undertake paid employment compared with students from advantaged backgrounds'* (Cooke et al. 2004: 418). Pennell and West note that *'students who were poor before they entered university [are] leaving university with the largest debts'* (2005: 127). Metcalfe (2003) found that those who work benefit less from university, and among those most likely to

work during term-time were women from minority ethnic groups and those whose father did not have a degree. However, most of the research on students' working patterns has been survey data (Manthei and Gilmore 2005; Metcalf 2003), and 'overall, students' accounts have received little attention' (Moreau and Leathwood 2006: 25).

Consistent with the earlier work (Moreau and Leathwood 2006; Manthei and Gilmore 2005; Pennell and West 2005), many of the women I interviewed were in financially precarious positions, managing on a low income and balancing debts, credit cards and overdrafts. Taking on paid work was the way they managed the increasing financial pressures. However, unlike the middle-class students explored in Ball (2003) and Devine (2004a), who – through social networks – gained prestigious internships, paid work related to their degree and future career, the women I spoke to worked in low-skilled jobs that paid the minimum wage, or were temporary workers in jobs that 'are likely to be quite different from those they aspire to upon completion of their degree' (Cooke et al. 2004: 418). The type of employment in which the women were typically engaged included call centre, factory, shop or care work, and some non-Muslim women also worked in bars, clubs and restaurants. These jobs served to detract from, rather than contribute to, their degree or CV.

All worked during the summer vacation; this three or four months' break was essential to build up funds for the upcoming year. Full-time work in the summer holiday generally fitted in effectively with course demands. However, for many without pre-existing jobs, finding work in the summer could be difficult. At a time when many students were seeking summer work in towns with high unemployment, employers wanted permanent staff only. It was not uncommon for the women to search for half the summer, or longer, until they found a job. For Zahida it was a case of staying unemployed, or lying about her student status:

Zahida: I started applying for jobs in July, and no one would take me on because I was a student. Like, August, and my rent needed paying and I had no money. It just got to that stage where I had to lie and say 'I'm not a student anymore, I'm taking a year out'.

JM: And they believed it?

Zahida: Yeah, and when I handed my notice in I couldn't tell them I was going back to uni so I was like, 'well, I've been offered another job'.

Other women also 'hid' their student status to get a job, indicating this was not an isolated practice. Because Zahida was dishonest about her student status, she was not able to return there again in subsequent years or to use this employer as a work reference. Though the women who found employment benefited, one wonders what impact this would have on the employability of young people in these localities, especially students, if employers eventually were to become aware of this practice.

Manthei and Gilmore argue that for students with jobs, the 'money earned was typically spent on essential living expenses' (2005: 202). This was also true of the women I talked to. In particular, those women who did not take out a loan were dependent on their jobs to cover the entirety of their financial expenditure. Many women who had taken out a loan also relied on paid work to pay for essential items such as food and travel. For instance, Yafiah told me that, '*my student loan went on my accommodation, and the rest, what I had left, is what I spent. And it wasn't enough, so I went out and got a job*'. Some reported that parents offered financial help, which they could ill afford; Yafiah said her parents would '*give me the clothes off their backs if they had to*'. However, unless the women were in a financially very precarious position, they refused such assistance:

Zahida: When I bought my laptop, they [parents] were like 'take the money' but I had more than enough. I didn't need the money from them. And my dad was like, insisting that I take it and I was like 'you've got six kids to think about, and you can't be buying a laptop for each one of us'. It just doesn't work out right, does it?

For some, having a guaranteed income each week was essential, and keeping their part-time job in their hometown was part of the reason why some chose to remain living with their family. The amount of hours the women had to spend in paid employment was related to the price of living within the university location (Moreau and Leathwood 2006; Metcalf 2003; Manthei and Gilmore 2005). According to the cost of living index

compiled by Push.co.uk (2007), student expenditure differs markedly by region. For instance, students studying at Bradford University pay a weekly average of £40.51 for rent compared to three times this in London. Despite these differences, all the women I interviewed who lived away from their parental home received the same loan, regardless of the region in which they lived. This had a strong influence on the hours the women had to work in order to manage financially.

Many of the women struggled to find a job when they moved to university. University 'job shops' were not useful when many students, along with local people, were applying for the same job. Lisa noted that some jobs required a car for early morning starts, and although she owned a car, this later became too expensive to run, but she could not sell it because she needed it to get to work. There were reports that employers may be reluctant to employ (those they see as) middle-class students over local workers, especially in small university cities. Employers often required workers to be available during the Christmas period, but most non-Muslim women wanted to be with their family for (at least some of) the holiday. For instance, Lisa *'tried to find a job before Christmas but because I was going home for Christmas nobody wanted to know'*. For the women who managed to find a job in their university town, there were often practical difficulties, associated with living in halls of residence. This type of accommodation is often not designed for working students. Not only have courses not adapted to students in paid work (Moreau and Leathwood 2006), but student accommodation has not either. In the first year, some women shared a bedroom with another student, which impacted on the hours the women could work and the type of job open to them. For instance, a common job for the non-Muslim women was bar/nightclub work, entailing early-morning finishes, which was considered incompatible with room sharing. Moreover, some halls provided three meals a day (from which the women were not permitted to opt out), and those with a job missed meals already paid for. These halls contain only very basic kitchens (e.g. with only a small fridge, microwave and kettle to be shared by the corridor of 20 or 30 students), which limited the viability of self-catering on a regular basis.

Options for paid work depended on degree courses studied. For instance, some students with flexible timetables were able to fit their private study around their job. However,

those who were enrolled on laboratory based degrees which required attendance from 9am to 5pm, five days a week, did not have much scope for flexibility:

Yafiah: I used to sit there and wish that every Tuesday I wouldn't be going into the call centre to do a six-hour shift. Because I had to hand in my course work. Biology is quite hard; you have to hand in course work and the labs and you can't miss anything like that.

Term-time work was limited if at all possible in the final year, as it was considered detrimental to studying. Gayle noted that *'I was quite disappointed in the second year when my grades went back down again to 2.2s. But that was because I was working 21 hours a week at the time'* and in her final year she cut down her hours, even though this meant struggling financially. Most women also associated term time work with greater isolation from the university, the course and their friends at university. However, Dawn indicated the advantages of her part-time work, because her job in a bar broadened her friendship network. Not only has she made friends with the other workers, *'it also means that when people from uni go out, I'm serving them behind the bar, so they recognise me from that, and I think, talk to me more, because they know who I am'*.

Frequently, the women were troubled by the pressures of a job which distracted them from other parts of their lives. Paid work – in particular, the work that the non-Muslim women engaged in – demanded 'aesthetic labour'; some jobs held certain expectations about the service offered to customers and the appearance of the women staff. Though this part of the job was stressful it was not rewarded monetarily because these skills were considered a 'natural' part of being a woman (Hochschild 1983). Gayle was expected to 'care' for the welfare of the male manager, and she was criticised when he *'eventually had a nervous breakdown and a heart attack. And someone said, apparently, [it was] because I took the shop key home by accident'*. After this, Gayle was refused holiday/sick pay and her wage was paid late:

I went in once for my wage, we always got it on Thursday, and I'd spent up and needed some more money for Friday morning to get onto [university]. And I said, 'have you got the wage?' and he says 'they're ready on a Friday'. I went 'no, we always get it on a Thursday', and he says, 'no, no,

pay day is on a Friday'. I went, 'you could have told me if you were changing it' and he says, 'it's always been a Friday'. (Gayle)

Moreau and Leathwood (2006) have indicated the disadvantages to flexible employment, but the women I spoke to saw a flexible job as an advantage rather than a complaint. Flexibility allowed them to arrange working hours to suit the varying demands of their course and family responsibilities. For instance, organising time off in a large, impersonal call centre was much easier to do than for those students who worked in a small business.

Many Muslim women also noted that they applied for countless jobs before being successful, wondering whether ethnic/religious prejudice played a role. Their suspicions correspond to the research findings of Jenkins (1986, cited in Mason 2000), which has indicated that some employers make staff selection decisions based on the expectation that the candidate will fit into the working environment, and many decisions of this kind are based on racial stereotypes. In a renowned study of ethnic discrimination, Brown and Gay (1985) sent out almost identical job applications, but with varying ethnic origin of the candidates. They found that only 63 percent of Asian and African-Caribbean applications were successful, compared to 90 percent of white candidates. Although some employers treated all ethnicities the same, an equal number of businesses discriminated against minorities. Some Muslim women – particularly those in customer service work – were expected to perform extra duties as part of the job, from which the white, non-Muslim workers were exempt. In a similar way to the 'emotional labour' expected of women in the workplace (Adkins 1995; Hochschild 1983), these duties that the Muslim women carried out – which included oral and written translation for the Pakistani community – were considered 'natural' and as such, not rewarded in their wage packet.

Despite their 'extra' work, many Muslim women reported suspicions around, or actual experiences of, religio-ethnic prejudice at their workplace. Because the women occupied the lowest rung of the hierarchy, they were not in a position to make a complaint, and considering that finding a job was difficult and time consuming, they were not prepared to lose their job by speaking out. Some noted the institutionalised nature of racism, where racist jokes were frequently told. As Zahida said to me, '*People*

think you wear a headscarf because you have got no hair underneath, we've heard that one before'. Some also saw how white workers received preferential treatment, were given the 'first pick' of extra shifts, easier work and were invited on social events with the other workers.

The Muslim women were wary of call centre work, as this was notorious for particularly high levels of racist abuse from customers, perhaps linked to recent media attention about the relocation of British call centres to South Asia. Accents with an 'Asian twang' were misread as a sign of foreign-ness and incompetence. Yafiah reported that most managers tolerated the abuse of their workers, turning a blind eye or not caring when it happened. In a similar way to the respondents Bradby (2002) interviewed, who used a Scottish regional accent to limit racial abuse, Yafiah, who had a slight Lancashire accent without sounding Asian, escaped prejudice. However, her friends were not so lucky:

I know certain Asian people who worked there [call centre], and if they had like a bit of an Asian twang in their accent, I know they got a lot more, sort of...- not abuse, but when they were on the phone and they didn't understand something, the first line from the customer would be 'let me speak to your manager'. Whereas if I spoke to them, I'd get away with it because sometimes on the phone people can't tell I'm Asian on the phone.
(Yafiah)

Other women experienced indirect discrimination in the form of dress codes or having requests for time off for prayer refused (even when workers who smoked could take frequent 'fag breaks'). A fully paid staff night-out was organised at Zahida's place of work, instead of a Christmas cash 'bonus'. When Zahida informed them that she could not attend, the other workers ridiculed her:

Zahida: They [white workers] were like 'is it because your parents won't let you go, is it because you've got a curfew?' And 'it's got nothing to do with a curfew, we can speak for ourselves'.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the complex and ambiguous ways in which inequalities of class, faith and ethnicity are made and re-made, in the middle-class space of university. The aim of the government has been to get 50 percent of young people aged 18-30 into tertiary education. However, in order to promote equality, attempts should not only aim to get students into HE, but need also to allow equal access to academic life. The experiences of the women I interviewed suggest that these changing patterns of participation at university are not succeeding for non-traditional groups. Not only do HEIs need to adapt to incorporate 'new' students, there is also a 'need for educational and lifestyle discourses to capture more adequately the reality of the experiences of the new students' (Christie et al. 2005: 20).

By exploring the four intersecting themes of social networks; family relationships; the course and paid work, this chapter has indicated how the daily routines and practices at universities exclude Muslim and non-Muslim women in similar and diverse ways. All the women occupied a borderline position within the university, though the Muslim women were affected to a greater extent by these exclusions. Without social networks of support, as the 'first generation' in their families to attend university, the women were often intimidated by the unequal power hierarchies at university and the unfamiliarity of the institution. Though the support offered by family was constant and unconditional, all the women experienced changing kin relationships, which were both painful and welcomed. Balancing their degree and paid work was a daily routine for all the women, but the amount of hours the women had to work depended on residential status, whether the women had taken out a loan, and importantly, whether the women could find work in the university city. For many women it was difficult to find a job in their university city, and because of this job insecurity, the women were not in a position to demand better working conditions.

I have highlighted how simply attending university does not necessarily give access to class privilege. The women's experiences and opportunities at university were entrenched within their working-class positions, and as such their educational experiences differed from middle-class students (Ball 2003). No matter whether they recognise this or not, a non-traditional degree from a post-92 HEI does not carry the

same prestige as a 'traditional' one from an elite university, representing 'a big head start in the rat race' (Larew 2003: 138). Having explored the women's educational progression, evolving relationships with family, and experiences of paid employment whilst at university, I now expand these themes by analysing the women's plans for after graduation, paying attention to anticipated careers and kin/personal relationships.

Chapter Six:

‘Why should I settle for something less than what I think I deserve?’ Career, Further Study, Partnership and Children

Introduction

In the previous chapter I focused on what happened at university. Analysing four important aspects of the university experience: ‘fitting in’ and social networks; family relationships; the course; and paid work, I compared and contrasted the experiences of the two groups of women. In this chapter, I continue to explore the themes of class mobility and family relationships by exploring the women’s plans for the future. Concentrating on residential status, career, family ties, partnership and children, I compare and contrast the expectations and hopes of the women I interviewed. For the non-Muslims, university was a step to adulthood, independent living away from parents in a supportive environment. Finishing university and continuing to live away from home, with friends, a partner or house mates, was considered an inevitable further move towards independence. In contrast, the majority of Muslim women considered the end of university to signal a *return* to family responsibilities.

Muslim Women

Staying close to kin was a central part of the Muslim women’s plans for after graduation. Where they lived influenced jobs available to them, though the community and family would help with the search for employment. Though there were disadvantages to settling in their hometown, such as a lack of employment prospects, the women were excited about ‘slotting back’ into their family role. They expected to marry about two years after graduation and hoped to marry someone from the local community so they could bring up their children amongst kin. I explore the family negotiations around the marriage match, including the classed preferences of parents and the women themselves. Finally, I shall discuss the women’s desires to continue working after they have children.

Locality

Rashida, Ameena and Shoneen – all from families that lived in predominantly white communities – had talked with their parents about the possibility of moving south with the rest of the family:

Ameena: I think I wouldn't like to come back. In fact me and my sister were discussing the fact that [laughs] we can't wait to get out of here! You know, it's a big thing that we look up to, which one day might happen, you never know. We might get a job in a very...city area. [...]

JM: And your sisters are thinking of also moving down there?

Ameena: Moving away from here – taking our mum and dad with us.

The only Muslim woman to categorically choose not to live near to her parents was Sara – a recent convert to Islam – who planned to move to a Muslim country to be with her husband and his family.¹ Some remained undecided about where they would eventually settle. Amatullah – studying an elite degree at a prestigious university – accepted that she would not find a ‘good’ job in her hometown but she also wanted to live amongst her family: *‘I am really close to my nieces and nephew and I wouldn't want them to forget me, but also I do want to get out’*. This decision about her career and residential arrangements was something that Amatullah and her family would reach as a group, with time.

However, these women were the exceptions; most planned to settle in their hometown after graduation. It was comforting once again to live in a place in which they were not a minority. Those who had lived away from home were excited to return to their families again, and to have access to conveniences such as the *halal* butchers and local mosque. For instance, in Yafiah's hometown there is *‘quite a big Asian community so you can get your halal food, you can get everything like that, Asian clothes, in*

¹ Sara's chosen career is engineering. In the UK she noted that engineering is a male-dominated industry, but if she were able to get work in a Muslim country, the workplace would largely be segregated.

abundance'. The women had an obligation to return to their caring responsibilities (for grandparents or parents, or for their nieces and nephews). Though returning for Farzana came at a price, she told me that as a Muslim, being close to her kin was central to her well-being:

I would sacrifice my career just to stay amongst kin. But that wouldn't be the be all or the end all for me because my direction and my way of life is to worship my creator, so I don't have to do that, you know, moving all the way to America to get a good job, because that wouldn't be beneficial to me and my lifestyle. (Farzana)

The literature suggests that minority enclaves do not suffer from the kind of class segregation that separates white communities (Adelman 2004; Zhou 2005). Adelman (2004) assesses the changes in the levels of residential segregation between black and white middle-class communities in 50 U.S. metropolitan areas between 1970 and 1990. He argues that 'middle-class blacks lived in neighborhoods, on average, with considerably more poverty, more boarded-up homes, more female-headed households, and fewer college graduates than neighborhoods inhabited by middle-class whites' (Adelman 2004: 43). My findings support Adelman's conclusions. The Muslim women to whom I talked suggested that it was unusual for educated, upwardly mobile young people to move out of the area:

Farzana: Amongst a lot of the Muslim community, and predominantly Asian community, which might be run down, you do get a lot of professionals. [...] I wouldn't want to move out of my area, just because I feel that's my home. And I wouldn't want to feel the need to prove to anyone that just because I'm a professional I need to move to another area, more sophisticated, more better area.

Sometimes the women criticised the localities in which they were brought up as being provincial, traditional and 'backward' in comparison to large, cosmopolitan cities. Several women told me they were ashamed of where they came from, especially when meeting new people at university. Implicit in these accounts were class distinctions:

Ameena: I know it's a bit of an offence, but sometimes I feel quite ashamed to have been brought up in [hometown]. Because knowing people in [university city], they are just so open minded and broad minded... – they've moved on. Like I don't think there's been much change in people's attitudes in [hometown] since I was a kid. [...] Being brought up in [hometown], there's a very... there wasn't much of an ambitious thing, there wasn't much going on.

However, despite these representations of their local communities, most Muslim women were committed to staying. By settling in the area, they wanted to use their skills as Muslim women graduates to help contribute to the *ummah* and their kin networks. For instance, Yusra wanted to keep her skills within the community and to work with local young 'pious' Muslims after graduation: *'you're going to go out and do bigger, better things. But I want to do those bigger better things here [...] Because then I think it makes more of a difference'*. Others discussed their central position within the community as women graduates. They hoped that they could act as role models for working-class Muslim/Asian girls and their families, who might be suspicious of higher education.

Career

As Savage (1996) argues, space is significant in opening or closing opportunities for class mobility. All the women were concerned about the lack of 'good' employment opportunities locally, especially as many had siblings and friends with a degree who remained unemployed. Many women had older siblings who had effectively taken a 'pay cut' in order to live close to kin. For instance, Yafiah's brother *'got quite a few good job offers down in London, but he didn't want to move down there. He knew he'd get more money, but he just...because we're a very close family, and he wanted to stay up north'*. Because of the women's plans to stay 'local', many chose their career paths strategically. Careers such as teaching and law were considered advantageous because work could be found locally. Though most were studying vocational degrees – which perhaps limited choice in a declining local economy – many were planning to study for

an LPC² or PGCE³ after graduating, which would make them more marketable within the area.

Nuzzat and Aaisha were enrolled on the LPC, due to start the following September. As the cost was around £6,500, the only option was to get a loan. Both women had secured Career Development Loans and planned to commute to university from their parents' home which was very close to the university. Ameena also wanted to study for the LPC, but as the bus journey to university was about a four hour journey from her parents' house, commuting was less tenable. Instead she was prepared to work for a couple of years to finance the course and to buy a car. Four women (Munazzah, Yusra, Zahida and Gazala) had applied – or were considering applying – for a PGCE. As the PGCE is a funded course, these women were under much less financial pressure, were able to live away from home and had a wider choice of HEIs than those hoping to study for the LPC, who would have to choose the nearest institution. Some women – particularly those who had commuted from home for their undergraduate course – wanted to study and live at another university in order to get the 'university experience', and hoped that their parents would allow them to do this.

After completing their undergraduate degrees, three Muslim women (Yusra, Kaleemah and Cantara) had managed to secure graduate level employment in their hometowns, despite the fact that '*there's no job opportunities here*' as Kaleemah pointed out. Whilst Kaleemah had worked in graduate level posts, these jobs were a series of short-term contracts:

it's a nightmare really, getting yourself a permanent job [...] I have got a permanent one here, but the salary is less than what I have been on before, so I'm struggling that way. If I was to increase my salary, I wouldn't be on a permanent contract, and if I was to go on a permanent contract I'm on a lower salary. I can't really win in the situation. (Kaleemah)

All the women hoped to receive assistance from family in their search for employment when they graduated. Friends, family and *biraderi* would 'keep an eye out' for

² Legal Practice Course, a one-year training programme to be a solicitor.

³ Postgraduate Certificate in Education, a 9-month course to be a teacher.

opportunities. As Mason (2000) notes, job search methods used by minorities rely heavily on friendship and kin networks. Though this may lead to employment, it could perpetuate inequalities by reinforcing ‘patterns of ethnic segregation in the labour market by ensuring that people are employed largely where they already have friends and relatives’ (Mason 2000: 56). Women who were studying law and business hoped to be employed by local firms, many of whom employed members of the community who could put in ‘a good word’ for them. Companies already employing Muslim women, especially *mohajebah*, were considered particularly liberal and ‘safe’ firms in which to work. Aaisha had found employment in a local law firm:

I applied to the high street ones [firms] and I was lucky enough to get this one because a Muslim female works there herself, but she doesn't wear the headscarf, so that wasn't an issue for them, because they've got a lot of clients who are Muslim and they specialise in different fields. (Aaisha)

An opinion commonly expressed was that – despite the rise of BNP politics in the area – getting a job locally would minimise the risk of anti-Islamic prejudice in the work place. Staying local also meant that the women would no longer have to deal with the prejudices of others directed towards their hometowns (c.f. Howarth 2002).

‘Southerners’ in particular constructed their community as ‘backward’ and deprived, which impacted on people’s perceptions of them and subtly closed down options of inclusion. As Shoneen said, ‘*as soon as you told you were from [hometown], everyone was like “oh, you're from [hometown]?” And it was just that sense of surprise, “oh you're from [hometown] and you've still got this far” and stuff*’. Likewise, Yafiah told me that:

there's such a perception outside... – it's like you go to [university city] and you tell them where you're from, and they're like, they roll their eyes at you, because they think you're... – they've got a certain. [...] People don't want to talk to you. It's got such a bad reputation outside (Yafiah).

Importantly, these negative representations did not encourage the women to move away from home; in fact the reverse was true. The women were tired of having to constantly defend their community at university, fending off questions about Islamic extremism

and the disturbances of 2001. In 2003, when I spoke to Yusra, she was optimistic because she had been offered accommodation in London if she was unable to find a job locally: *'I've got a sister in London who's prepared to put me up for a year'*. However, the women I spoke to after the London bombings in 2005 thought that working in London would be difficult, especially for *mohajebeh*. Because, as Sara suggested, her *hijab* is *'an open symbol which they [employers] could easily take whichever way they want'*, she was concerned that *'after these terrorist bombs, I can't imagine going for a job in London like this week, you'd be on a flight to nothing'*. Shoneen had always aimed for a high-flying career as an engineer in London, but like Sara, she noted that after the London bombs, *'it just made me think, you know, I'm not going to make it, you know, it's just that feeling'*.

The majority of women I interviewed hoped to work for a couple of years after graduation, in order to get established and save money, before getting married. In Kaleemah's community *'most [women] get married at the age of 22, 23'*, and three women I interviewed, Cantara, Sara and Jasminah, were already married. All women were certain they would get married and have children, but for Ameena and Zahida, marriage seemed so far away that it did not seem important or worthy of discussion at this time. Instead, they wanted to focus on their studies – and later, career – and marriage would be a decision becoming relevant after they had achieved these objectives. Most hoped that they would find a partner from the local community so that they would be able to stay in the area.

The Rishta:⁴ Family Negotiations

Modood notes that in the national survey, more than 50 percent of 'married 16-34 year-old Pakistanis and Bangladeshis had had their spouse chosen by their parents' (Modood 2003: 81). All the women expected that the *rishta* would be a family decision, based on the best interests of the family as a whole. For the women I interviewed, the *rishta* was an 'assisted' marriage – involving extended discussion between family members – rather than a traditional 'arranged' marriage. For instance, Yafiah's mother told her that, *"if you find someone to marry, then go ahead, tell me, I'll let you marry him"*.

⁴ The *rishta* is a marriage 'match'.

Yafiah explained the decision-making process of her family surrounding the upcoming marriage of her brother, which she expected her marriage would mirror:

They [family] were like 'I know this person down in [city] and their daughter's looking to get married'. Now it was whole-heartedly my brother's choice whether he wanted to marry her or not and that's how it's been. And they're getting married now, and like they met up, they got to know each other before they both said yes, and so they really want to get married to each other. (Yafiah)

Marriage offered an opportunity for family reunion, to strengthen *baraderi* networks (c.f. Mason 2004), or to raise the status of family (c.f. Werbner 1990). Some women emphasised the importance their parents, the *biraderi* and the wider community placed on religious and caste endogamy, whereas others claimed their parents did not practice caste. The characteristics that the women considered important in a marriage partner were not always the same as the priorities of their parents (c.f. Werbner 1990). As I argue in chapter seven, all the women – on Islamic grounds – disagreed with caste inequalities. Though Hussain argues that ‘caste does not figure prominently within the self-identifying concerns of diasporic womanhood’ (Hussain 2005: 15), the data I collected indicates caste is significant for the older generation, and as such it influences the lives of the subsequent generation.

The families of Jasminah and Rashida – both from high castes – expected them to marry within (or above) their castes. Rashida imagined that when her family organised the *rishta*, the caste position of her future husband ‘*would be the deciding factor. But if he's the same caste as us, then he is more open to have my parents' respect than someone who isn't*’. Though Rashida considered caste unimportant, ‘backward’ and archaic in contemporary Britain, she was also keen to meet the hopes of her parents. Jasminah’s marriage to a man of a lower caste without the consent of her parents resulted in the breakdown of the relationship with her family.

The women spoke against the practice of pressurised or forced marriages using a text-based understanding of Islam to challenge the power of men in the community who

sought to limit women's rights by using selective discourses of culture and traditions (see also Afshar et al. 2005, Jacobson 1997, Ballard 1990):

Zahida: Like arranged marriages, you know. It's like, that's not religion, that's culture. They [older generation] believe, 'your religion says...' but our religion doesn't say that. Our religion says that if you find someone and you like him then you go and marry him.

Normative discourses position South Asian women's attendance at university as signalling a desire to depart from traditions, cultures and the religion of their community, a view which is supported by Bhopal (1997). Contrary to this, however, as I discussed in the previous chapter, the women remained highly committed to their faith, and certain cultural practices of their elders. There was no evidence to suggest that getting a degree encouraged the women to reject or alter plans for marriage (*pace* Bhopal 1999). Some recent research indicates that Muslim women engage in higher education in order to delay marriage (Ahmad 2001). For the women I spoke to, getting an education was not primarily about postponing marriage, although many considered this an advantage of attending university. Instead, being educated was seen as providing a safety net, in Kaleemah's words, '*to have something behind me*' for financial security within marriage. However, of particular concern for the women who were planning extended postgraduate education was that delaying marriage after the age of about 25 would make it very difficult to find a 'good' *rishta*. At this age, the women feared that all the 'good' men would already be married, and particularly high qualifications may act as a barrier to finding a partner. Kaleemah – an unmarried postgraduate student aged 27 – was experiencing pressure to conform and get married: '*I get a lot of people saying to me from the community, "don't you think you should get married, shouldn't you have a few kids now?"*' Though she would like to marry and be a mother, she was anxious that she had 'missed her chance':

I think the more you're educated, the more difficult it starts getting to start thinking to actually settle down. You know I'm finding it quite difficult now, especially growing older. [...] I'm 27 and I wouldn't mind having my own place, have a child or you know, that kind of a life. And I just find it really hard to get there. (Kaleemah)

Though the Muslim women planned to postpone marriage for a couple of years after graduation, the advantage of being married was that it might make relationships with parents simpler, and would free up the possibility of travel and gaining independence. Bilqis explained to me that marriage was likely to help the conflicts between herself and her parents, because when *'I'm married, then they [parents] just leave the daughters alone'*. Marriage could also ease the worry of parents, as the participants in the focus group indicated:

Shoneen: If I do go away, and stuff, my parents would be slightly worried for me. They would have this worry 'oh, she's on her own' and if I'm married then they would be fine, because they'd know I am settled, I am with someone.

Sara: it's that protection.

The Women's Partnership Preferences

Intimate relationships – which give a strong indication of the women's present identity and the kind of future they imagine for themselves – were sites in which class hierarchies and religio-ethnic distinctions were produced and re-produced.

Using the conceptual framework of Bourdieu, Johnson and Lawler argue that 'habitus compatibility' allows people to be "comfortable" and "at home with" certain people', who are located in a 'similar social space' and have a common 'feel for the game' (Johnson and Lawler 2005: 3.4). This piece of research focussed primarily on the intimate relationships of white British people, and it has been argued that there is a danger that the sociology of emotions produces a 'monochrome' picture – seen in the work of Giddens, Beck and Beck-Gurnsheim – which leaves the experiences of 'others' untheorised (Smart and Shipman 2004; Mason 2004). Recent qualitative work has highlighted the unheard experiences of diaspora communities in the UK in relation to transnational kin relationships, kinship networks and marriage choices (Mason 2004; Smart and Shipman 2004; Peach 2005). This literature has emphasised the contrast between Western individualised partnership, based on self-actualisation and falling in

love, and non-Western practices where family arrangement characterises marriage. White British patterns of partnership differ from those of minority groups. For instance, for South Asians in the UK:

...concepts of control, family honor, and status dominate. Children's marriage partners (cohabitation does not exist as a choice) are determined by parental decision and marriages are not simply the union of couples, but the alliances of families [...] Marriage patterns are strongly endogamous. Indeed, arranged marriages are prevalent and among the Pakistanis, cousin marriages predominate. (Peach 2005: 198)

In line with this, the women's preferences were informed by a 'reading' of the cultural capital of potential suitors. Apart from Munazzah – whose preferences for a particular class of partner were unclear – all the women wanted a university-educated partner. Cultural capital, in particular educational and embodied credentials, were central to the women's preferences. To ensure a good 'fit' between themselves and their partner, and to guarantee that they are on the same 'wavelength', the women emphasised the importance of education and language. The women I talked to 'read' an implied class position of men from the embodied signifier of language. When choosing a partner, they saw a man's vocabulary, articulation and eloquence as particularly important factors:

JM: Would you be looking for someone who's similar to you, who's different to you?

Rashida: Just someone who could make me laugh, and good personality, good background – not as like, in class terms or things, but they're educated, so that they've got good language. You see some of these Asian lads around with very poor vocabulary and I'm just like, 'there's no chance, so just carry on walking' [laughs]. (my emphasis)

Indicators of a 'good' or 'bad' match were implicit and were seen in terms of compatibility. In this account, accent and vocabulary were euphemisms for class; the inarticulate speech of working-class men, in Rashida's words, was a '*total put off*'.

Rashida associated men with '*poor vocabulary*' as not having a '*good personality*' and '*good background*'.

Many women envisaged that a woman could marry 'up' the class hierarchy, but Cantara worried that '*if you marry an educated woman to an uneducated man it would be very unlikely that a marriage like that would work*' because of a clash with traditional gender relations. The vast majority did not want a relationship with a working-class man because this may give rise to resentments on his part. In particular it was considered an assault on the husband's role as family provider if a woman earned much more than he did, which was part of the fear of marrying an uneducated man from Pakistan. The women were not prepared to enter a battleground in the domestic sphere. In the past, Zahida and Nuzzat had both been accused by members of the working-class Pakistani community of losing their 'roots' and ethnic identity because they had become 'posh' (c.f. Ramji 2005). As future professional workers, they sought a partner who would respect their ethnic and religious identity even if they had been class mobile.

To ensure a good 'fit' between themselves and their partner, all the women, with the exception of Munazzah, hoped to marry a British man with a university degree. Aaisha '*would look for someone that had been to university and is educated, because I am educated, which is, you know, an achievement within itself*'. In the women's practices of class distinction, positions of faith and ethnicity intersected with class, influencing the construction of religio-ethnic class boundaries. For instance, Gazala constructed middle-class Muslim men as 'reading the Koran' in contrast to Muslim men as 'nasty' 'drug takers', implicitly questioning the religiosity of working-class men:

Education is really important. And I'm not being snobby. It doesn't matter; as long as he's gone to uni, it doesn't matter what degree he's done. It doesn't matter. He'll be educated enough to you know, like, know certain things. I don't think I could ever marry a man who dropped out at GCSE level [laughs] or something, do you know what I mean. I think education is really important because he'll understand you more, and you've been on a level footing, and, whereas I think people... – you know when you see people who drop out at GCSE, they don't have a positive image of them, and you see these people hanging around parks and taking drugs and

generally being nasty to people and getting into fights, so I don't really have a positive image of them. Whereas when I see people coming to university and quite educated and reading the Koran, I do have a positive image of them. (Gazala)

This challenge to the religiosity of working-class Muslim men was also made by Yusra, who hoped to marry a man outside of her locality because in her hometown, *'there's not many [young men] who are practicing. They tend to hold more onto the culture'*. Just as the ethnicity of Nuzzat and Zahida was questioned by the working-class Pakistani community, some of the women challenged the religiosity of working-class men in their community. This 'battle' around claims to religious or ethnic authenticity varied by class position, and influenced the class of partner sought by the women (c.f. Ramji 2005). If access to the Islamic revivalism in the UK rests on how young Muslims engage with British education and *'the demands it makes of them to have enquiring minds'* (Afshar et al. 2005: 268), there may be an important class dimension to the turn to Islam.

Potential partners from Pakistan were not considered good matches because of their (assumed) lack of education. The women emphasised the incompatibility of themselves and the Pakistani men, based on differences of nationality, language and class. It was assumed men from Pakistan would not be able to read English, and as such, would face unemployment or low grade work in the UK. Using pseudo-racist discourses, they constructed husbands from Pakistan as illiterate, uneducated and 'backward'. For instance, Cantara told me that *'there's no reason that I would want some backward person from here or from there. You want someone educated to your own level, with similar ideals and similar future goals'*. In Yafiah's words, *'our whole personalities would just clash'*. However, the exception to this was Munazzah, who saw it as an advantage to marry a Pakistani man. By having a Pakistani father, her children would have a closer link to Pakistan. Munazzah's account was the only one not to conflate formal qualifications with intelligence:

Munazzah: He's got to be funny. Charming, he's got to be the same wavelength to me, get me thinking.

JM: You mean education, would he have to have a degree? British, or would you not mind marrying someone from Pakistan?

Munazzah: I wouldn't mind actually. Yeah, because, I don't know... - say if we had kids and things, he'd probably provide most of the cultural upbringing kind of thing, so I wouldn't mind at all. If he's got personality and stuff, but education I don't give a toss about. [...] A lot of girls do say, 'oh, it's such a waste of time, we've spent god knows how many years getting this degree and then when we've finished, they pack us off to Pakistan to get married to a boy who doesn't even speak English yet' and I was like, 'yeah, so, what's wrong with that?' And they're like, 'god, I can't believe you can say that'. But I don't know, I really don't mind it at all.

None of the women expressed fear that in seeking a middle-class man, they would experience class antagonisms within the relationship. However, Kaleemah – who is from a lower caste background but has a professional job and is a postgraduate student – had previously been in a problematic relationship with someone from a higher caste (but from a similar working-class background). She was relieved when the relationship ended and that she had not married him. Kaleemah was treated as inadequate because of her caste: *'I couldn't think of being in that family. Because they'd all throw garbage my way really. You know, "she's from the lower caste" kind of thing'*. Though Kaleemah used her networks and cultural capital to help her ex-boyfriend gain employment and several promotions, her educational achievement, class mobility and class position were irrelevant to her ex-boyfriend and his family:

he [ex-boyfriend] went to college, and he's worked himself up really. You know, doing call centre work, managerial, and I helped him with CVs and job applying and all the rest of it. And I managed to get him a good job in [company], and he's worked himself up. And you know when we see the caste system coming, I think 'I remember when I met you' [laughs] 'and I got you where you are, so don't you turn round and say...'. (Kaleemah)

The women aimed to be established in their career before giving birth, in order to *'have something behind me'*, as Kaleemah hoped. The women and their parents wanted to find

a *rishta* who would support their desire to continue working after childbirth. It was also considered important that the husband's family would accept their decision to work. For instance, Basheera's '*main criteria I would say is the person I marry has to understand that I will be working*'.

Motherhood and Employment

As I have already noted, all the Muslim women had a strong desire to work alongside motherhood and marriage. This wish to continue working was so strong that it was one of the reasons many women had decided to pursue a university education in the first place. Being highly educated gave them a strong basis on which to argue for the right to work after childbirth because they had invested time and money in their degree and possessed a high earning potential. In order to facilitate this 'balance', some of the women had chosen a career path that would specifically allow them to manage as a mother, wife and employee. Munazzah wanted '*to make a go of my marriage, and make a go at my career as well, I want to strike up a balance, something that I could do a bit of both of. That's why I chose teaching*'. Having an income of their own would protect the women and their children in case their husband became unemployed or if the marriage broke down. And in the current economic climate Basheera thought that '*both husband and wife have to be working to be honest*'. Like Lloyd Evans and Bowlby's (2000) respondents, all the Muslim women I spoke to wanted to engage in paid work for the non-economic benefits of work, such as doing something other than housework, having friends and enjoying the work. As Rashida told me, '*I just don't want to sit at home and be a housewife. I don't think I could bear that*'.

The women all planned to work part-time during the early years of their children, receiving help with childcare from family. As the women planned to live near family, they expected that kin – from both sides – would play an important role in the life of their children, especially if members of the extended family lived with them. The women saw many advantages of bringing up their children in their hometown. There, the children would be near family and become part of the religio-ethnic enclave. If they moved to a 'nicer area' this might guarantee high-performing schools and better-quality housing, but would inevitably mean living in an all-white, non-Muslim area, which was not appealing for the majority, whatever the advantages. The women seemed sceptical

about the use of paid childcare. For instance, Gazala would *'feel really guilty if you bring your kid up in some crèche'*. Whether this was down to concerns of, for instance, the lack of provision for Muslim children, ethnic/religious prejudice on the part of staff, or simply the high cost of childcare was not clear.

Some women noted that their children would be born into a middle-class family, different from the family in which they themselves had grown up. They all seemed to suggest that they would raise their children as middle class. If the money was available, Jasminah and Cantara wanted to send their children to a secular independent school. Some women considered paying to send their daughters to an Islamic school. The women discussed the importance of giving their children, in Cantara's words, *'the best start in life, and let them achieve whatever it is they can achieve. And if I've given them a good background, at least I'll know they've grown up to be good people'*. Giving their children the best involved in essence ensuring their children succeed in the education market by gaining the appropriate cultural capitals (c.f. Ball 2003). In contrast to what most of the women hoped for themselves, after childbirth Jasminah had decided not to return to work in order to oversee the 'project' of her child's development and education:

The only thing you think of now is how do you make sure that your kids have the same opportunities as you did, how they don't pass things up, they take up full advantage, and how do you make sure they get that grounding at an early start. That's the only thing I think of really. And it's also made me definitely believe that I'm not really keen on going back [to work] for a while, I'm happy being here for the time being. (Jasminah)

Non-Muslim Women

Most Muslim women aimed to live, work and bring their children up within the Pakistani diaspora community, and their career plans were dictated by what the local employment market could offer. However, the non-Muslim women's plans involved a strong desire to move away from the area, to settle somewhere where they could find a permanent job. Getting a graduate job 'down south' was expected and even encouraged; this would widen employment options, and parents actively encouraged their daughter's

chance to get away and ‘improve’. Continuing the patterns of family practices of their time at university, they planned to maintain their kin relationships at a distance and to visit occasionally after they graduated.

Locality

Only Wendy in this group expressed ambivalent feelings about where she would live in the future. Since attending university she had become ‘*fonder of [hometown]. I think it’s because I stick up for it quite a lot, I feel like I have to stick up for it, because it’s slated so much*’:

At the moment, I’m thinking that I’ll stay in [university city]. But I wouldn’t mind going back home – it’s definitely a possibility that I’ll go home, and like, move into a house. I don’t know if I’d want to go home, as in where my parents live. But I suppose it depends on money and stuff, and if I get a job and all this kind of thing. (Wendy)

However, the majority of non-Muslim women had decided that they did not want to return ‘home’ after graduation. Emily told me, ‘*I’ll never permanently set up home here or anything*’ and likewise, Helen said: ‘*Definitely, I don’t want to go back to [hometown], definitely*’. Like the Muslim women, the non-Muslim women also expressed embarrassment and disgust about being associated with their hometown. This shame was so strong that Dawn struggled to articulate why she wanted to move: ‘*I’m just utterly ashamed. Just because... – I don’t even know why. Just because I’m ashamed of being in [hometown]*’. In comparison to the Muslim women, who wanted to stay in their hometown to contribute precisely because it was so ‘run-down’, for the non-Muslim women the general ‘decay’ of the local community, including the growing unemployment, urban decline, and failing schools and public services, was the reason they wanted to move. Accounts of local decline centred implicitly on class:

Helen: Well I mean, I’ve seen a new, a new way of life here [at university]. [...] these people [at ‘home’] are stuck in a dead end, and they don’t realise it. Whereas I think, well I want to do things with my life, I don’t know... – I want to see things, I don’t want to be stuck in a dingy little town all my life.

Olivia: I think it's just sort of disappointment, that every time I go back someone else is pregnant. 'So you've not made anything of your life then?' [laughs] and I don't know. I suppose in a way that if I stay there and if I make my family there, there's that fear that my children will go into that state, and I don't know. I think it's more disappointment, it seems to go down hill [...] just to think that all them riots were happening there. I mean we've even got prostitutes on the street now because they've closed the brothel.

Drawing on discourses of the gradual deterioration of their hometown, there was almost a fear that returning would mean coming back to a class location they wanted to 'escape' from. As Power et al. (2003) suggest, the north/south English distinction refers not only to 'employment prospects alone – it is also about "moving on" to different social worlds' (2003: 142). The women's class mobility enabled them to leave, and when they returned it would only be to visit family. For instance, Emily told me that *'if my family weren't here I'd never feel the need to visit again'*. As Power et al. (2003) note, for the students in their research, 'social and geographical mobility were interrelated, taking some informants not only away from their place of origin but perhaps towards more "cosmopolitan" attitudes' (2003: 140). Despite the fact that most of the women I interviewed did not want to return, they expected to have immediate debts to settle on graduation, and thus would have to return 'home' temporarily for financial reasons. For instance, Emily would *'probably have to come here for the first few months before I find a job or anything'*. Likewise, Dawn *'won't have any money and I will have to pay off all the loan and stuff'*.

In a similar way to some Muslim women, the non-Muslim women noted how they were judged by 'outsiders' because of where they came from. Emily remembered *'when the riots were going on, and there was also a documentary on national television about the really poor areas in [hometown], and I sat there cringing'*. Likewise, Gayle was at first surprised by the reactions of 'outsiders' she met at university when she told them where she came from. Perhaps because of the extreme media reporting of the disturbances of 2001, Gayle's friends were more anxious for her safety than Gayle:

We all had to leave [work] because the riots were coming further up. And then my friend rang me up, she'd seen it on the news. And she thought, Gayle lives near there. And she goes, 'you can come and stay with me if you want to, if you're scared' and I was like, 'no, it's all right, it's miles away from where I live'. (Gayle)

However, for the non-Muslim women, being from their hometown was related to a different kind of 'stigma' than was experienced by the Muslim women. Corresponding to Haylett's (2001) discussion, the non-Muslim women told me that the media had portrayed the white community as narrow-minded and racist, and associated with the BNP, which had influenced the views of 'outsiders'. In contrast to many Muslim women, who saw London as a place to avoid, the women considered the south east in particular as presenting the brightest opportunities. However, some were intimidated by the thought of living and working in London and deliberately avoided careers that were focussed on this location. There was a sense that London life – with its snobbery, expense and careerism – was not 'for the likes' of them (c.f. Howarth 2002; Bourdieu 1988). Not wanting to live in London was part of the reason why Gayle decided to change career direction:

I don't think I could live in London though. I've never been to London, fair enough. That's what they say, if you want to be a barrister and earn all the money you've got to live down in London. But I just didn't want to. (Gayle)

Gayle's apprehensions about London were shared by the other women, but in contrast, they were not 'put off' working in the south even though they might be 'othered'. Power et al. (2003) note that 'there is a sense in which those who move on see themselves as more sophisticated than those they left behind – cosmopolitan rather than provincial or parochial' (Power et al. 2003: 143), which may have been part of the desire of the women I interviewed to move away. Often the non-Muslim women wanted to start their career by working in a city, and then relocating to the countryside (e.g. the Lake District or the Yorkshire Dales) to have a family. Apart from the classed connotations, these preferences for village life implied preference for a white ethnic community, which is perhaps why none of the Muslim women stated that they wanted to live in the country.

Career

Whereas most Muslim women were on a vocational track, most non-Muslim women studied more non-vocational subjects which did not lead to a particular career. The middle-class parents interviewed by Ball (2003) and Devine (2004a) held a structured idea of career path suitable for their children at school and at university, and used their social and cultural resources to provide opportunities for their children to gain valuable work experience relevant to their chosen career. In contrast to this, many women I spoke to had only a vague idea about possible career paths, even some of those in their final year of study. Because of the demanding balance between paid work and their degree course, time for making use of the careers service was limited. None of the women had had the opportunity of valuable work experience and without the knowledge of various professional careers, courses and opportunities, possible career paths remained hazy:

Bethany: I only thought about so far as university, and now I'm there people say, 'what are you going to do after university?' and I say, 'I don't know'. And everyone's going 'it's 3 years' so I really don't know what I'm going to do after graduation.

Some of the women doubted whether they would manage to get a graduate job without additional training after graduation. An extra qualification was regarded as beneficial; this would place them above the majority of graduates without such qualification. However, there were a number of constraints that prevented the women from studying further. Many were excluded from the networks in which information about funding and loans circulated. For instance, of those who had researched funding sources, none mentioned funding applications deadlines and many 'counted themselves out' of applying because they were told, or had gathered, that funding was too competitive and they would be wasting their time. For instance, Lisa wanted to study for a PhD but was pessimistic about getting financial support:

you need to get a first [...] because you'd have to get hired by the universities. You need to be able to prove that you've got an outstanding background in order to go into that. (Lisa)

Unlike the strategies of middle-class students in higher education (Ball 2003; Devine 2004a), the women I interviewed lacked the necessary cultural capital or ‘hot knowledge’ (Ball 2003) of what was needed to gain funding or to get a place on a course, impeding their path further. Not only was further study costly, courses often demanded that students have certain skills or experience. As there is no postgraduate equivalent to the student loan, cost was a significant burden and a constraint on enrolling on postgraduate education. On graduation, most women expected to have bank and credit card debts to pay off immediately, meaning that progressing on to further study straight away was impossible. The women would have to pay fees, living expenses and the ‘hidden costs’ of the postgraduate course (such as access to a car in order to reach placements):

Marsha: It's so expensive. I think I'd have to get a grant. I think the only way I could do it would be if I got a scholarship from the university and you can only get that if you get a 2.1 I think. So I mean, I would do, but only if I could afford to pay, because tuition is so expensive.

The women were wary of putting themselves – again – in a position of financial insecurity, studying for a course whilst worrying about money, and without a guaranteed job at the end of the course. Gayle – who lived an hour by car from the university – discussed the financial issues involved in enrolling on the LPC:

I just don't want to do it for another three years. That's if you get a place at a solicitors'. You've got to apply and get interviews and things, and you might not get one, and if you don't, you're not a solicitor, even though you've paid the £6,000 for the course. And you've passed it, which apparently is harder than the law degree to start off with. Which is... I won't be able to work. And how am I supposed to get that money and pay for living costs, getting there and things? I don't know how I'd do it, I really don't, which is why I'm thinking of not doing it at all. Because you can do it in later life can't you, or deferring it for a year. If I defer it for a year, I've got a feeling I probably won't do it anyway. Just because I don't want to go back to what it was. (Gayle)

Family Ties

In stark contrast to the Muslim women, the non-Muslim women did not consider that moving away from their family was a ‘break down’ of this relationship. They planned to visit home occasionally; as Olivia noted, London is *‘not that far. Not really; it’s train travel. Only four hours; four and a half, maybe’*. Olivia and Marsha were the only women to express guilt at the thought of moving far from parents. For Olivia this was in relation to the financial help she had received from her parents during university, indicating that financial assistance carried an expectation of reciprocity – at least on the part of her parents – which she did not want to be tied:

Olivia: Well, I need to talk to my parents about moving near London. I don’t want to break it to them, because they have sort of paid for my university degree, and then to say, ‘oh sorry I’m leaving’. Seems a bit unfair! [laughs]

JM: How do you think they’ll react to it?

Olivia: I think my mum would be upset. But I’m not sure.

In a similar vein, Marsha told me that *‘I just want to see more of the country and I’m not as tied as I used to be... - I tend to be more...- my mum’s always like “when am I going to see you?”’*

For the working-class women interviewed by Higginbotham, ‘social mobility meant distance from family as well as confronting the many challenges of survival in a new middle-class social environment’ (Higginbotham 2001: 219). Likewise, the women I interviewed had to continually negotiate the growing distance from family as an ongoing process throughout their education and working lives, rather than something that happened once and for all when they left for university. Giddens (1994) and Beck (1992) have emphasised individualism within the contemporary world, but I am sceptical about how their arguments can be generalised to all groups. In comparison to the Muslim women, the non-Muslim women could be considered ‘individualistic’, but this is not to suggest they are selfish or are not close to their parents. It is also not to say

the women would rarely see their family when moving south for a job. They did not simply plan their career without a thought for friends or their partner. Instead, they expected to visit their family occasionally, and were attracted to jobs in areas where they had a partner or friends. Although settling down with a partner was not something on the non-Muslim women's minds at the present moment, their preferences for the area in which to settle were strongly influenced by where their partner would settle and where they would like to bring up their children.

Partnership and Children

As opposed to the careful planning of the Muslim women and their families, non-Muslim women's experiences were characterised by the Western model of partnership/marriage as the 'meeting of souls'. This would involve, they imagined, dating over a period of time, then co-habitation and if desired, marriage. They expected that their family would play little part in the relationship. They planned to 'settle down' much later than the Muslim women. Marsha told me: *'I think I want to get a career and pay off my debts, so I'll probably have my kids at 40 or something'*. Western conceptions of love formed the basis of their partnership choices, and thus they were waiting to find 'the one', which could take some time. Bilqis compared the different ages at which Asian and white women marry: *'White girls get married when they're about 30 or something, but Asian girls get married about 23'*. The non-Muslim women were less ambivalent than the Muslim women about having children outside marriage. For instance, Hannah wanted children but did not *'want the commitment of having a husband'*, and others saw marriage as largely unimportant. Others, however, still preferred to follow the traditional route of marriage and children.

For some working-class respondents interviewed by Higginbotham (2001), 'remaining single came to be part of a successful mobility strategy, since early marriage and childbearing could jeopardize the educational futures of women with few economic resources' (2001: 214). This was similar to the mobility strategy employed by the non-Muslim women, for whom marriage was a possibility rather than a necessity. Instead, partnership, co-habitation or boyfriends were a more probable expectation or present reality. All the women hoped for some form of love relationship in the future, though for many their studies, future career and having fun were at the forefront of their mind.

For instance, Helen did not *'really look too far in the future, because you never know what's going to happen'* and she did not *'even want a boyfriend at the moment. I just want to basically have fun [laughs]'*. Likewise, in response to my question on partnership, Bryony told me:

Bryony: I'm not really bothered. I mean I would like to get married eventually but it's not something I'm looking for yet really [laughs].

JM: Yeah. Had you ever considered children and settling down and things like that? Or?

Bryony: Yeah eventually. Not for a while, not until, you know, I've got a job [laughs], a proper job, not until I've done everything I've set out to do really.

Intimate relationships were about 'trading up', a way into a lifestyle that they desired, and a way out of their parents' lifestyle. Though this was stated overtly in the Muslim women's accounts, who viewed partnerships as explicitly an economic and emotional arrangement rather than simply a case of 'falling' in love, this was also a feature of the non-Muslim women's accounts. The point was that the non-Muslim women did not just fall in love with anyone. Apart from Hannah – whose desires for a particular class of partner remained unclear – all the women wanted a partner of middle-class position. To settle down with a man who was working-class was considered a waste of their qualifications and hard work. Lisa's words, which form the title of this chapter, were: *'why should I settle for anything less than what I think I deserve?'*

Two women emphasised the importance of a partner's economic capital. Gayle considered what kind of income her future partner should earn for them to have a high standard of living:

Because you want to be earning at least £30,000 a year, don't you. [...] So, I'm thinking well, if I find someone like [boyfriend] who wants to join the police and he's going to be on that wage as well, we might be middle-class by then, you never know! [laughs] (Gayle)

Likewise, Bryony emphasised the centrality of economic capital in an intimate relationship, an embarrassing issue which only emerged after a long drawn-out discussion on the theme:

JM: Would you ever go for someone who was working-class? Or?

Bryony: Depends. They'd have to be really nice [laughs], and they'd have to be doing pretty well in their job. I don't know, it's a bit stuck up really. I wouldn't really want someone who's in a dead-end job. I know that's really horrible, but it would just put me off.

JM: In what way?

Bryony: Because I want to escape that working-class lifestyle, kind of thing, and that might hold me back a little bit.

JM: In what ways do you want to escape it?

*Bryony: I don't know, it just seems a bit difficult having no money and I'd just like to live on a really nice estate, and well paid jobs, I don't know.
(my emphasis)*

As Johnson and Lawler suggest, despite mainstream discourses that situate romantic compatibility as being

...achieved at a 'deep' level, through getting to know (and getting on with) a 'soul mate', decisions about acceptable/unacceptable love partners are often made [...] on the basis of a limited repertoire of 'surface' signifiers, such as clothing, hairstyle, ways of eating and drinking, and ways of taking up physical space. Yet the most salient aspect of such signifiers is that they are understood as indicators of 'inner' personhood so that supposed 'deep' subjectivities and psychologies are read off from the body. (Johnson and Lawler 2005: 1.7)

Johnson and Lawler (2005) argue that cultural capitals (including cultural goods; educational credentials and embodied forms) were the most important base on which to build a love relationship for the people they interviewed. Likewise, the vast majority of non-Muslim women prioritised cultural resources such as educational qualifications in their accounts of whom they could love. In a similar way to the Muslim women, the non-Muslim women considered a partner with a university degree as suitable. This would ensure a good 'fit' between themselves and their partner, guaranteeing that they were on the same 'wavelength'. Men who had attended university were seen as intelligent and as possessing a strong morality. Lisa said:

I have to like them as a person. I'm not too bothered looks wise, but as long as they're a nice person and they make me laugh, and I feel comfortable with them then that's the main thing for me. I mean, I suppose I am a bit of a snob because of the fact that I wouldn't go out with anyone who's like a dustbin man or someone who was quite happy with working at Asda full-time, but you know, I would prefer a guy that had some ambition and wanted to do something with his life (Lisa).

Likewise, Marsha considered education as central to how she would 'get on' with a partner:

My first boyfriend that I had, when I was 15 or 16, and I was with him a couple of years, and he was just, I don't know, he was just hard work, I couldn't have a proper conversation with him, because like 'this was this', he couldn't see the broader picture. But I liked that with the last boyfriend, and the boyfriend that I've got at the moment, you can have a good old conversation and debating, it's not an argument, just having an intelligent conversation with [laughs]. I suppose you could get that with someone who hasn't been educated at university as long as they've been educated at A levels or secondary, but I find that the people at uni, you tend to be a bit more critical and a lot more, can see both sides of the argument more than you can with people who haven't. (Marsha)

The preference for a partner with a university education was rationalised through the argument that university education allowed individuals to be open minded. However, these accounts work to detach educational credentials from the language of class divisions. In this way, ‘capitals are not generally recognised as something that one simply *has* but something that expresses what one *is*.’ (Johnson and Lawler, 2005: 4.1, emphasis in original) A degree is regarded as an indication of moral worth and intelligence rather than a result of class inequality.

Some women also indicated a partner with whom to bring up children should be someone of a similar class. As I go on to indicate, it was important to the women that their children were exposed to valuable cultural capital.

Motherhood and Employment

The women hoped to be in a financially secure position before having children, as they expected their careers to be (at least partly) structured around their caring responsibilities for a time. They planned to postpone settling down and childbirth for much longer and had fewer clear ideas about the route they would take in comparison to the Muslim women. Their decision to settle down in their 30s was based on the fact that women with children face institutional barriers in paid employment. From her experience of office work, Lisa noted:

If I get myself pregnant, then I'm kind of screwed job wise, because I've got to wait until they're old enough to go to school and then I'll need to find a job that will fit in with their schedule at school. And then a lot of employers don't like the fact that you need to go out if your children are sick, and you've got the whole annoying employers being funny about that. (Lisa)

Decisions about the division of labour in the household and whether they – or their partner – would give up work were difficult and the women did not have any concrete plans. As Bryony told me, ‘*I always avoid thinking about it because it's so hard. If I have this really great job, I wouldn't want to leave it to look after a kid so [laughs] I try to avoid thinking about it. I don't know what I'd do*’.

A key difference between the Muslim and non-Muslim women in relation to childrearing centred on the location in which to bring up their children, which was related to the type of class and religio-ethnic community in which the women wanted their children to be part of, and the importance placed on being near family. Many non-Muslim women hoped to relocate to the countryside to raise their family. Marsha would like to live *'in a nice area, not on a main road [...] the Lake District is quite nice, just in the rural area where you can have your family and you can relax when you've finished work'*. And likewise, when Bethany has children she expected to *'move to a nice house in the country [...] somewhere like a village'*. Whereas the Muslim women planned to rely on family for childcare, due to geographical mobility, however, the non-Muslim women planned to pay for childcare or do most of the childcare themselves.

In discussing childcare practices, the women wanted to prioritise the acquisition of their children's cultural capitals. For instance, Dawn placed particular emphasis on the accent her children would have; she did not want her children to speak with a stigmatised regional accent and one reason she considered moving south was because Dawn wanted to raise her children:

in an area where they have a nice accent [...] I just kind of decided that I would want them to have a nice accent, because it's important. Because you get judged by it, and I think it's unfair but that is the world. (Dawn)

Like Jasminah and Cantara, Olivia hoped to send her children to an independent school. With memories of her own marginal education, Olivia considered it important to provide her children with a robust education: *'I would like to do better, for my children, if I could. I'd like private school'*. Some women noted that their children would be born into a middle-class family, different from the family in which they themselves had grown up. Ultimately, the women would raise their children as middle-class. A minority of the middle-class parents interviewed by Ball (2003) and Devine (2004a) chose to support the state system for political and ethical reasons. However, only one woman I talked to – Lisa – shared this kind of moral stance towards the role of education in class hierarchies, which surprised me considering the women's class backgrounds:

I wouldn't bring my children up to expect to get everything that they want, I would raise them how my mum raised me, that you have to earn what you want [...] to respect money and to be really careful about money, because you never know when you're not going to have any. (Lisa)

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed themes of class mobility and family relationships by exploring the women's plans for the future. Concentrating on residential status, career, family ties, partnership and children, I compared and contrasted the hopes of the women. I argued that for the Muslim women, staying close to kin was a central part of their plans for after graduation. Where they would settle influenced jobs available to them, and though the community and family would help with the search for employment, they all expected to suffer to some extent from the depleting job market. On the other hand, the non-Muslim women's plans involved a strong desire to move away from the area, to settle somewhere where they could find a permanent job. Getting a graduate job 'down south' was expected and even encouraged; this would widen their chances of a job, and parents actively encouraged their daughter's chance to get away and 'improve'. Like the women's family practices during university, they planned to maintain their kin relationships at a distance and to visit occasionally when they graduated and got a job.

The Muslim women expected to marry about two years after graduation and hoped to find a marriage match from the local community so they could bring up their children amongst kin. It was anticipated that family would help to bring the children up, and the women hoped they could return to work after having children. Because of geographic mobility, the non-Muslim women – who hoped to settle down and have children in their 30s – expected to be working mothers and to bring their children up themselves, with the help of paid carers. Exploring partnership preferences, I argued that intimate relationships were about 'trading up', a way into a lifestyle that they desired, and a way out of their parents' lifestyle. I suggested that both groups of women were influenced by notions of compatibility that were classed, noting that the women – with the exception of a couple – wanted an educated, articulate partner with a degree.

The literature suggests that minority enclaves do not suffer from the kind of class segregation that separates white communities (Adelman 2004; Zhou 2005) and this was supported by the findings of my research. Despite negative representations of their local communities, most Muslim women were committed to staying. By settling in the area, they wanted to use their skills as Muslim women graduates to help contribute to the *umma* and their kin networks. The Muslim women – along with other Muslim graduates who were returning to the area – were changing the class make-up of the British-Pakistani community. Though the area would undoubtedly benefit from their presence in the form of social and economic capital, it is not guaranteed that the women would manage to gain the type of career they intended. On the other hand, the non-Muslim women did not want to return to their hometown, and planned to move down south where employment opportunities and public services were considered better. Compared to the Muslim community, it was possible that white working-class areas are suffered the consequences of ‘white flight’, where it is normal for non-Muslim graduates to move away. This has implications for the development of the community and the resources available for the remaining residents.

Chapter Seven: Women Without Class?

Journeys Along the Class Continuum

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the women's class definitions, current class identities and the future class positions to which they aspire. Previous class research (Ball 2003; Devine 2004a; Sayer 2005; Skeggs 1997) indicates that people in the UK are reluctant to assign themselves to a class category. Everingham et al. (2007) argue that people rarely 'identify with a particular social class, believing their life choices are based on their own individual achievements or failings – or just fate' (2007: 432). This admission is not to say, however, that class was absent from the interviews, or that the women I spoke to failed to place themselves in a class hierarchy. As I go on to indicate, class identities could clearly be traced within the accounts. However, the women's class identities were complex, often contradictory and there were differences within – as well as between – groups. I pay attention to how the Muslim and non-Muslim women's experiences of class mobility intersect with ethnicity and faith, in particular, the relationship between caste and class in Pakistan to class in the UK for the Muslim women. Then, taking the experiences of the group as a whole, I divide the women's experiences into three 'ideal types' of class mobility, discussing the *elites*, the *in-betweens*, and the *working-class* groups. Though the accounts of class mobility are diverse, these aspirations can be placed on a continuum rather than being seen as discrete categories.

Before this, however, I explore the women's class definitions in order to make clear (or as clear as possible) what is being referred to. As argued in chapter 3, previous class research indicates that the majority of people in the UK agree that Britain is a class-divided society, and frequently categorise others into distinct hierarchies (Johnson and Lawler 2005). However, most people are reluctant to reflect on how class affects their own lives (Savage et al. 2001; Devine 2004a). In a similar way, when I asked about the women's own class position, many said that in the current world, class divisions were redundant. For instance, Marsha argued that the '*working class and middle class are merging into one. I can't really see the difference between the concepts, the definitions*'.

Likewise, Bethany lacked the language of class, despite studying it as part of her degree:

JM: I don't know what you would say your class is now, or in the future?

Bethany: I don't... – do students have a class? I thought they were just students. Well, I don't know. I never really think about that but hopefully I will be able to... – I don't like thinking that class is important but it really is, isn't it?

Most women were reluctant to discuss class hierarchies abstractly, concerned that this reinforced these divisions further, or tied them into supporting these inequalities. The majority of women I spoke to struggled to define their class position on the questionnaire I provided, even those who studied class as part of their course. Despite the women's discomfort when discussing abstract class concepts, when I encouraged them to respond, all the women apart from 3 (Cantara, Bryony and Jasminah) categorised themselves as working-class. These findings sharply contrast with the class identity demonstrated in autobiographical works of feminists from working-class backgrounds (Mahony and Zmroczek 1997; Zmroczek and Mahony 1999; Skeggs 1997). These writers are all academics, who have inhabited a middle-class position for some time and who have had both the time and the academic space to reflect on their identity. The women I spoke to, on the other hand, rarely used 'class' as an identity category and many reported that they had never previously considered class concepts. This may explain why they were unsure of assigning themselves to a class position.

Class Mobility, Faith and Ethnicity

The women did not mean exactly the same thing when discussing class; I now pay attention to the differences between class definitions and experiences of the two groups of women and their families.

Muslim Women

As I have already indicated, most women were reluctant to discuss class hierarchies.

However, the Muslim women often articulated class divisions differently from that of the non-Muslim women. Many Muslim women told me that in Islam, class divisions are irrelevant, or at best, sit together uncomfortably. There have been claims, made by *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, that ‘Muslims belong to the single community of the *umma* that, according to the teachings of the Prophet, recognises no divisions by race, class or nationality’ (Afshar et al. 2005: 263). This interpretation was supported by many Muslim women to whom I spoke. As Yusra stated, ‘*in the eyes of the god, we are equal, regardless of appearance, so that’s why I think, a lot of the things don’t matter.*’ What people are given in life is ‘Allah’s will’ and struggling forward is part of being a good Muslim. For Aaisha, ‘*life is just a test, that’s what we believe, and that the hereafter is what we’re working for, and this life is just full of trials and tribulations*’.

In defining their class position, the women used a range of factors including their parents’ occupations, their socio-economic background, as well as their own current situation. They situated their own class position as inextricably bound to that of their parents, invariably using either their parents’ lives in Pakistan, or – much more frequently – their father’s arrival in the UK as a starting point from which to understand their own position on the class hierarchy. Often employing the pronoun ‘we’, the majority told a story of the gradual class mobility of the family as a whole since arriving in the UK:

Ameena: We’ve been moving up to more, pursuing more. Like my family for example, my mum and my dad, have pursued more. Moving into a country, like my mum, moving into a country where they weren’t familiar with things, it’s a hard thing.

JM: Of course.

Ameena: And now they’re more familiar with the country, and the law and the regulations and everything, they’ve been able to pursue more. And so I think we’ve definitely been moving up. It’s not been a stationary thing.

We’ve been moving up. But I think when I was a kid, I think we were more working-class than middle-class. I’m not saying now that we’re middle-class. I think we’re still in-between.

Bettie (2003) argues that in the current climate of ‘death of class’ discourses, minorities may understand racism and migration as being to ‘blame’ for their class position, rather than putting it down to an individual failing. Likewise, the Muslim women I spoke to put their parents’ working-class position down to migration, racism, early marriage or the pressure to send remittances. This was something of which to be proud, rather than being a stigmatised position.

For minorities, class position in the home country has an important role to play in class relations when they settle in the UK (Loury et al. 2005). Some approaches to the study of upward mobility in migration research have indicated that in order to get an accurate picture of classed processes within the family, it is important to look ‘back’ to previous generations, as cultural, social and economic resources work to distribute unequal opportunities for migrants (Loury et al. 2005). However, as I was not speaking to migrants themselves, I did not have access to this information, although literature indicates that the vast majority of Pakistanis who settled in the UK in the post-war era were from poor, uneducated families from rural backgrounds (see chapter two). There were differences between the women’s class identity and the way they represented the class identity of their parents. For the women, their parents were working-class, but some women indicated that the class identity of their parents did not necessarily correspond to their income or job in Britain, but was related much more to their (now, elevated) class position and status in Pakistan, and for some, their caste position.

In the accounts of the Muslim women, faith was emphasised as a highly important identity category, along with ethnicity, although the significance of these positions altered during the women’s life-course and were related to the varying spaces inhabited. When I asked about class divisions, many of the women told me they were more able to cope with being working-class at university because as British Pakistani and Muslim, they had always been the ‘odd one out’ at school. Cantara said, *‘I wasn’t really bothered anymore, because I was proud of being different’* and likewise Yafiah stated:

I was always the different one because I wore the headscarf, Asian mates, English mates, I was always the one who wore the headscarf. Or I spoke

with a bit of a different accent. I always knew that it's always going to be something. Just forget about it now and get on with your life. (Yafiah)

Ethnicity figured in the accounts of the Muslim women, who often reported accusations from the Pakistani community that in pursuing further and higher education they were losing their ethnicity and becoming 'white'. This conflation between an 'authentic' Pakistani ethnicity with a working-class identity was also found by Ramji (2005), who spoke to middle-class and working-class British Pakistani men. In a similar vein, Nuzzat told me that:

when I meet other Asians I've noticed, Asian guys and girls my age, who don't necessarily read, who don't necessarily speak the way I speak, you know they use a lot of slang and things, and when we're talking they think I'm being a snob. It's like 'why aren't you talking normally?' But for me this is normal. You know for me... - like the basic rule is if you use more than two syllables in a word you're a snob [laughs]. I'm like 'no that's just the way I speak'. But I think a lot of Asians don't know; I suppose ultimately feel quite, it's something quite different to what they're used to and they feel quite threatened by it, 'oh, here's this girl, she must think she's better than us because she's using all these big words, who does she think she is? She's not white she's Asian' and that is a common perception. (Nuzzat) (my emphasis)

Akom disagrees with the explanation that minority groups are discouraged from achieving academically 'as the result of a culture that discourages academic effort by branding it as "acting white"' (Akom 2003: 305). Based on an ethnographic study of female high school students who were in the Nation of Islam, Akom argues that 'through the religious tenets and practices of the Nation of Islam (NOI), young female members develop a black achievement ideology' (2003: 305). Like the Mexican-American girls interviewed by Bettie (2003), the women I spoke to did not take accusations of 'becoming white' seriously. As the Muslim women embraced revivalist Islam, based on a textual based interpretation of their faith, ethnic and 'cultural' understandings were often considered to be in contradiction with Islam 'proper' (c.f. Jacobson 1997). Islam 'proper' was seen to transcend ethnic and national boundaries,

and whether they were, or were not, becoming 'white' was not an important issue for them.

Although the women aimed to 'pay back' their families by sharing their resources and moving up the class hierarchy as a family group, this was not to say that their progression through HE was without family conflict. Though disadvantages of getting educated and being class mobile were rarely articulated, some women noted that family relationships had suffered as a result of engaging in higher education. Lawler emphasises 'the pain, the sense of displacement, and the shame' involved in class mobility (1999: 7). I have argued that the non-Muslim women became independent from family members, taking the 'road to middle-class status' alone (Lawler 1999: 7), whereas the Muslim women took their families along this road with them. However, though the Muslim women were working to ensure the economic survival of the whole family in the future, this was not to say that there were no class conflicts or familial disagreements, surrounding differences of opportunity and life chances. As Hatton (1999) argues:

I am frequently overwhelmed by guilt and unease about being so privileged. I find it impossible to provide any adequate justification for my access to these things when my family and others like them had, and continue to have, so little. (Hatton 1999: 218)

The women I spoke to expressed similar feelings of guilt as Hatton, because relatives in the UK and Pakistan were not likely to have the life chances, working conditions or education open to them. For the women who expressed feelings of indebtedness to their family for their educational success, these expressions of guilt were much starker. For instance, Amatullah considered her progression to university to be a result of her elder sister's help, because she took charge of Amatullah's primary education and insured the family's honour by agreeing to an early marriage:

Amatullah: Well apparently my mum said to my sister that she's planning on getting me married when I'm 25, so it's nice in a way that she's letting me wait so long. I think my sister feels a bit...

JM: Put out?

*Amatullah: She got married when she was 17, so I think she does feel a bit...
- Because I've had the opportunity to go to university, and I think in a way she does feel a bit like I've got everything that she never.*

The moral economy of kin makes the expression of guilt or envy difficult, and it was frequently acknowledged that they were 'lucky' to have had many more opportunities than other women in the community:

Bilqis: It's really hard for Asian girls to go to university and to be independent. Because people are always stopping them from being educated. Even at work, some girls can't even go to work because their parents think they shouldn't be allowed out of the house. Because I know girls – a lot of girls – around here who just sit around at home all day because their parents won't let them go out.

Yafiah: A lot of my friends and stuff, they're all like, they're working in some part-time job and something and they're not really enjoying themselves. They've got a husband or they've got a boyfriend, sort of thing, whereas I'm still young and I'm still enjoying my life. I'm so grateful that I've had this chance, so I feel it a lot more when I come home.

Many of the women struggled with the question of how they would – and could – repay their family. The women aimed to ensure the family's future financial, emotional and physical wellbeing, yet this did not seem nearly enough. As Cantara noted: '*my mum has supported me in everything that I do, so this is the least I can do. It's not even the least, it's only a small drop in the ocean really*'.

Some women regarded it as their Islamic obligation, as potentially wealthy Muslims, to make charitable contributions to poorer groups. For some of the women to whom I spoke, Islam is a way of life that is antithetical to Western materialism, and like Kibria's respondents, they regarded the Islamic faith as playing an important role against 'the moral laxity, commodification and spiritual vacuity in the surrounding culture' (Kibria

2008: 262). As a *fard*, many women, guided by the third pillar of Islam, intended to give to charity:¹

Sara: Obviously if you've got the money you've got to give to charity each year. In Eid which is the festival, if you slaughter a sheep, half of that is for your own family and half of that should be given to the poor, give it to other people, the less fortunate.

Nuzzat: You have to put a certain amount of your income every year, of your wealth you have to give a minimum percentage every year to charity. And that way, it's constantly on your mind, you have to think about it, you have to do it, you have to give to charity.

The type of charity donation was open to interpretation. For many Muslim women's families, sending remittances had been a reality of their lives since they were small, that in Amatullah's words, they had learnt '*not got to live beyond your means*', and not to spend spare cash. Nuzzat, Basheera and the members of the focus group all mentioned their plans to donate cash to Islamic charities in the future. As the women were currently living on a very low income, many gave their time – rather than cash – to help their communities, for instance with translation, advice on education or visiting the sick.

The women who had visited kin abroad were able to provide details of their family's current class status in Pakistan. The Muslim women's families in Pakistan were all very wealthy in comparison to other families in their village, and the accounts seem to indicate that this wealth was a result of remittances. The women's position in Pakistan was much more privileged than in the UK. Bilqis commented on the difference in wealth, stating that '*a lot of people like going to Pakistan and staying there, because they'll be treated like a queen*'. Whereas space was cramped in Bilqis' house in the UK, her family's mansion in Pakistan had '*got 4 floors, it's like a really big bungalow*' with '*a proper fountain, there's a stable for the cars, and we've actually got servants there!*' Unlike Cantara, whose caste position in Pakistan gave her a sense of entitlement in the UK, for all other Muslim women their privileged class position in Pakistan had no

¹ *Fard* is a religious duty.

lasting impact on their sense of self or class identity in the UK. They considered themselves British, unlike the migrant generation who retain strong links with Pakistan (Hussain and Bagguley 2005). Visits to Pakistan were too infrequent to leave any meaningful impact on the women. Whilst in Pakistan, they were regarded as upper class, and seeing poverty did make the women briefly reflect on their class privilege in relation to others in the developing world, for as Munazzah suggested: *'We take everything for granted. And it was just really such simple lives, and it's like "wow"'*. However, the women considered their situation in the UK as their 'real' position. Though to a certain extent, gossip circulated in the UK Pakistani diaspora about property development in Pakistan, these two class identities, born from entirely different contexts, exist separately, and did not influence the other:

JM: How do you feel in terms of your classed background, what would you describe it as?

Basheera: It's bizarre because here [in Britain] we'd describe it as working-class, but when you go over there [to Pakistan], you'd describe it as middle-class, only because you can afford to do what you can do out there. Because currency's very cheap, you have a cleaner; some people have drivers, to drive them about.

There were pains as well as pleasures associated with this wealth and status abroad, which has also been indicated by the findings of Potter and Phillips (2006). In their research on the post-colonial context of Barbados with second-generation Barbadians who return to the birthplace of their parents, these 'black English migrants occupy a liminal position of cultural, racial and economic privilege, based on their "symbolic" or "token" whiteness' (2006: 201). Despite the distinct advantages accrued by being a British person abroad, Potter and Phillips also suggest that in Barbados 'an English accent can be the basis for discrimination and thus, for feelings of alienation' (2006: 219). The women I spoke to also had experienced discrimination in Pakistan, for instance, being 'ripped off' in shops and restaurants because they were immediately understood as tourists. By relatives, the 'English generation' was viewed with suspicion. According to the women, relatives had an unrealistic perception of life in the UK, considering British life as 'cushy', a view which did not correspond with the

women's day-to-day realities. Basheera thought that relatives '*just think "oh, you're all rich, you're from England"*'. With the high status of the 'English' abroad came an expectation of continued financial support. The women's fathers were obliged to send remittances, though this continued to be a heavy sacrifice on their family in the UK. Bilqis explained that '*sometimes when you're really stressed out and you're feeling down, you think, oh why couldn't my dad just have kept that 40 grand over here, and let me use it?*'

Caste practices in Pakistan affected the women's experience of class/caste in the UK much more than Pakistani class hierarchies. The caste system, which is a heredity and closed social position based on notions of pollution and purity, has several sub-castes (Shah et al. 2005). As Shah et al. (2005) and Pattanaik (1999) suggest, the widespread assumption is that since modernisation and globalisation, caste and class hierarchies have dissolved, though these myths of a casteless society serve to perpetuate such inequalities further. As is the case for many other cultural norms, empirical research indicates that caste practices have survived within the South Asian diaspora in the UK (Werbner 1990; Bradby 2002). The women I talked to indicated that caste was practiced among subsequent generations as well as migrants. Nuzzat told me that caste is '*such a strong thing in Pakistan*' and argued that '*it's stronger than the class system*'. In much Western thinking, caste is associated only with Indians, Hindus, and the Indian diaspora. Though the caste system in the Indian subcontinent arose from Hinduism, it has become separated from its religious origins, becoming engrained in the *culture* of the Indian subcontinent, including Pakistan and Bangladesh as well as India (Werbner 1990). Caste is now recognised and practiced by other religions within the Indian subcontinent, such as Christians, Sikhs and Muslims (Shah et al. 2005).

Werbner found that most Pakistanis in Manchester '*condemn the *zat* system while practising it and assert the basic equality and brotherhood of all Muslims.*'² (Werbner 1990: 82) Though most I spoke to claimed that their families did not practice caste, the hierarchies of caste continue to influence their lives because caste exists 'out there' in the wider community. All the women I spoke to expressed a very strong distaste for caste distinctions, citing two main arguments against it. First, the caste system

² *Zat* is Urdu for caste.

according to Islam is fundamentally wrong. Kaleemah argued that caste ‘*came originally from the Hindu culture and it shouldn’t really exist in the Islamic culture, it’s against the religion, that. You’re not allowed to put people into groups*’. Secondly, caste hierarchies are seen by the women as irrelevant to life outside of the Indian subcontinent:

Nuzzat: A lot of people to this day say that they won't get married out of their caste. Which to me is a benign concept because there's two working-class families, Pakistani, they live here. What in Pakistan is relevant to your day to day lives here? I don't understand why it's played such a big role.

Though the concept and history of caste is ‘frequently intertwined with that of “race”’ (Reddy 2005: 543), Kaleemah challenges caste as a racially or culturally based hierarchy by claiming that in the UK capitalist system only external class markers such as income and house ownership are relevant. Class, however, was not considered the same as caste. Class is considered the lesser of the two ‘evils’ because movement – however difficult or unlikely – is possible, whereas caste is fixed:

Kaleemah: There is absolutely no movement there, there’s no movement there. You can achieve whatever you want to in life... – There is no movement. You’re born with that and you’re going to die with that, really.

As Nuzzat said, ‘*I suppose class is something I find much more acceptable in the sense that it's based on each individual person*’. As opposed to class, practices of caste hierarchies are confined to the community in which the women live. Because most migrated from similar regions in Pakistan, caste hierarchies are common knowledge – at least for the elders – and are also indicated in the surname (Bradby 2002), and thus caste can only be ‘left behind’ by leaving the British-Pakistani community.

Some women had known of their caste position throughout their lives – especially those who had been guests at marriage ceremonies – whilst most others only recognised their place in the caste hierarchy after visiting Pakistan. This lack of knowledge about caste hierarchies in the younger generation was also found by Borbas et al. (2006). Whilst the practice of caste primarily centres on the marriage market, explored in chapter six,

hierarchies also influence status more generally. The women who could identify their caste position came from a variety of points on the hierarchy. Notably Jasminah and Cantara were positioned at the higher end and Kaleemah was of a low position. In the Indian subcontinent, caste operates through occupational segregation, so in practice caste and class are mutually re-enforcing even if the terms cannot necessarily be used interchangeably. In the UK, however, caste and class do not necessarily correspond. For instance, some women noted that in Britain, working-class people of high caste practice caste hierarchies in order to reify their status in the community:

Kaleemah: I've got friends who are from the higher [caste], and they're married with kids and on benefits et cetera, and they'll be sat there: 'we're this caste' and I'll be like 'but not here though [laughs]. You're living in a council house, and it doesn't matter what caste you're from abroad' [...] I said 'at the end of the day, if we look in terms of what we earn, we're all working-class'. Do you know what I mean?

For those from a disadvantaged caste position, caste sometimes worked to limit class mobility in the UK by making it difficult for the women to be seen as anything other than their caste position, at least in their community. My research indicates no simple or straightforward relationship between class and caste hierarchies in Pakistan and the UK, making generalisations impossible. There are reports that poor migrants can improve, or escape, a disadvantaged caste position by migrating (Werbner 1990). Indeed, escaping a low caste could provide the impetus for migration in the first place. However, there were many other stories that told of the continuation of previous hierarchies abroad, and in Jasminah's case, her family's situation seemed the reverse of what it was in Pakistan; her family is of high caste, but she grew up in a working-class household in the UK.

Non-Muslim Women

Whilst the Muslim women told a story of the gradual upward mobility of their family, most of the non-Muslim women came from families which were 'fixed' in a working-class position. The literature indicates that (white) women who are class mobile experience an *individual* class move, one which 'leaves behind' family/partner (Lawler 1999; Walkerdine et al. 2001). The women's accounts of university and their hopes for

the future seemed to correspond to previous findings. Guilt also surrounded the non-Muslim women's progression to university. However, as the non-Muslim women understood their educational success as an individual accomplishment rather than arising from the sacrifices of family members, these women expressed less guilt than the Muslim women. Whereas the Muslim women dealt with this guilt through the ongoing obligation of assisting their family, the non-Muslim women had no similar sense of duty. Unlike the Muslim women, none of the non-Muslim women referred to redistributing their income in the future if they were in the position to do so. Perhaps the non-Muslim women did not mention charity donations because this was not a usual part of white, non-Muslim working-class culture. However, as I go on to indicate, many non-Muslim women were encouraged to enter certain caring professions through the desire to help working-class communities with their time and expertise.

The pathologisation of working-class families and women (Lawler 2002; Skeggs 1997; Steedman 1986) may be influenced by ethnicity (Bettie 2003). Whereas some Muslim women put the class of their parents down to racism or migration, only a minority of non-Muslim sought to explain the position of their parents, and those that did, drew on gender inequality, disability or poverty. This difference may be because, as Haylett (2001) notes, in the current climate of 'death of class' discourses, being white and working-class is represented as an individual failing.

The non-Muslim women emphasised the differences of class position and future mobility between themselves and their parents. Though the women did not identify as middle-class, they emphasised that they were also different from their parents' class position. This class difference was frequently expressed through differences of opinion, especially relating to racism. The white working-class population has been represented as perpetuating racist ideology (Haylett 2001; Scheepers et al. 2002), and in particular, as being to blame for the success of the BNP in the Northern communities from which I recruited. The women charted processes of class mobility through notions of becoming open minded, anti-racist and educated. Emily told me that '*Going to uni, I was slightly more racist than I am now, but my mind was opened by different people's opinions*'. Helen suggested that through education she had rid herself of racist views, and was now different from the white working-class people in her home town:

I come from [home town] and there's a lot of tensions with race. And like it is... – not hard, but it's a big issue, where I come from. I think because, like, your parents' values get thrown onto you. Like before I went to college I just would say what my mum said about people, and they were quite racist, and then like I'd support the BNP and stuff and went to college, and then everything changed. I met new people, I met Asian people and I got to like them, and I started to like disagree with my parents about the BNP and everyone deserves equality. As I grew up I broadened my horizons and my outlook on life. It was a change, going to college, because you just realise how diverse everything is. You become tolerant of a lot of people, whereas before it was just...racism basically! [laughs]. (Helen)

Through notions of racism, the women marked their hometowns as provincial, backwards and uneducated, and in reverse, middle-class areas, including the university town become cosmopolitan and multicultural. By fixing racism in the white working-class population, the women could situate themselves as different, by holding anti-racist views. For instance, in Olivia's account white working-class neighbours were marked out as racist:

I don't think I would have ever been racist though, because we're just not in our family, it's just... - I don't know why not, actually. I'm not sure. But my dad wants to sell the house to Asians apparently, to annoy the neighbours. Because the neighbours don't like. (Olivia)

As members of the majority secular/Christian-influenced majority, the non-Muslim women were not concerned about religio-ethnic issues in education or the work place. The only non-Muslim women who came from a religious background – Marsha – considered religion antithetical to higher education. Reflecting on the transition to university, Marsha told me, ‘*I wouldn't say I was religious anymore, just from different...- looking from a scientific point of view*’. This is opposed to the Muslim women, who were determined not to ‘dilute’ their faith in order to be successful in education or the workplace.

As whiteness is an unmarked category, in middle-class settings such as university, some women could often 'pass' as a 'traditional' university student, at least for those who spoke with a less-defined regional accent. For instance, Dawn commented that if she mastered the middle-class habitus, '*I could pretend I was upper class and no one would really know any different, if that's how you want to portray yourself to other people. It's all how you are*'. Other women, in a similar way to that discussed by Reay (2000), were 'marked' by their class habitus, regardless of their intension.

Three Types of Class Mobility

Though I have discussed the interrelationship between class mobility and religio-ethnic position which significantly influenced the classed experiences of the Muslim and non-Muslim women, there are also important similarities between the two groups of women. By exploring accounts of class mobility as experienced by the group as a whole, I suggest the women's accounts can be divided into three 'ideal types'. As a group, the women's class trajectories and identities varied. The vast majority of the women demonstrated an ambiguous class identity, and only three women (Cantara, Bryony and Hannah) had a strong sense of their class position. However, instead of occupying distinct experiences, these positions can be placed on a continuum divided into three groups:

1. *elites*: two women (Bryony and Cantara) rejected their working-class background completely and defined themselves as middle-class, in opposition to working-class people.
2. *in-betweens*: the majority occupy a middle ground, acknowledging the class positions they were born into whilst seeking to enter the middle class environment. This group is divided into women who sought careers positions within upper middle class and lower middle class occupations.
3. *working-class*: one woman (Hannah) rejected the middle-class world completely and took pride in her class background, indicating that she did not want to

change class position. Her class identity was based in opposition to middle-class people.³

I will start by exploring briefly the first and third categories because the women in these categories had an unambivalent notion of their class identities. Then, I analyse the class identities of the women occupying the second group, the *in-betweens*, in which most of the women are placed.

The Elites

The two women in this group, Cantara and Bryony, did not demonstrate any class ambivalence. They told me that they had always identified as middle class, despite coming from working-class family backgrounds. Growing up, both women did not fit with the children in their community. Cantara did not mix with white or Asian working-class children from the estate, and as she went to independent schools, only came into contact with white middle-class children. Likewise, Bryony also had only middle-class white friends at school, and although she grew up on a 'rough' estate, she never fitted in:

JM: To go back to your childhood again, would you say that you fit in, in that environment? Or...

Bryony: No, not at all.

JM: In what way?

Bryony: It's hard to think of an example really. I don't know, they were always really rough, and I were always really shy and I never used to want to do anything wrong.

Unlike the autobiographical works featured in the edited collection by Mahony and Zmroczek (1997), Zmroczek and Mahony (1999) and Skeggs (1997), which indicate

³ Although when this research was being piloted as part of my Master's degree dissertation, I interviewed another woman who would have also been apart of this final group.

that university is a context in which working-class women recognised their place in the class hierarchy for the first time, Cantara and Bryony had been a part of middle-class groups for some time before entering university. Despite coming from working class families, these two women experienced a 'disrupted habitus' when they were children at school, rather than at university. They were able to gain a middle-class habitus when they were school children because their friendship groups had, for a long time, been white and middle class.

The women's previous friendships influenced the characteristics the women valued in friends and their feelings of belonging at university. For instance, when I asked Bryony if her working-class background ever made her feel excluded at university, she replied, *'No it doesn't, because all my friends throughout school who were always like that, and I fit in better with them anyway. So I don't feel strange at all'*.

As a postgraduate with a professional career, Cantara had all the material possessions associated with a middle-class lifestyle, including a house, car and professional career. With only her memories of a working-class childhood remaining, she was rid of all the outward signs of her working-class background. Cantara is of high caste in Pakistan, a position highlighted to her by 'family stories' (Bettie 2003; Ramji 2006), as well as during a visit to Pakistan. Though caste is not practiced in her family as she is not part of the Pakistani community in the UK, being of 'good stock' has motivated her family's class mobility in the UK:

If you know you come from good stock, and good background, and a good education, you've a lot to live up here, and you don't...- you don't get the chance just to, I guess, just to be street kids. So I think in one way that saved us as well, because we could have gone the opposite way, all of us (Cantara).

Bryony, on the other hand, had none of these middle-class material possessions, which made it all the more difficult to sever her roots from her working-class background. In order to do this, Bryony identified herself in opposition to working-class people, expressing no affiliation to their backgrounds. She disassociated herself from working-class people and her hometown, made possible by her geographical mobility:

Bryony: There's another girl just down this corridor from [home town] as well. We're the only two. She's really proud. She wears her [home town football] top with pride. It's kind of embarrassing because I say Manchester, because it's like... – It is actually known as a dump really.

JM: How does that make you feel, that you come from a dump?

Bryony: [laughs] Honestly it doesn't bother me at all, I find it really funny. I'm not that bothered, because people like her will want to live there all the time, but I've got intensions of moving away anyway.

Bryony and Cantara did not fear that they would 'stick out' at university because they had for a long time been able to pass as middle-class. They settled into university with ease and entering higher education was like 'coming home'.

The Working Class

Hannah, who identifies unambivalently as working-class, occupied the other end of the continuum from Bryony and Cantara. In a similar way to the women interviewed by Maguire (2005), Hannah was proud of her working-class background and subscribed to a working-class politics. Unlike Bryony and Cantara, it was important to Hannah that she retained her working-class self in spite of her education. Like Skeggs (1997), Hannah first recognised class divisions and her place in the class hierarchy when she started university. Before entering higher education, Hannah '*was really ambitious and stuff, but like I just feel very differently about it now*'. Hannah's working class identity has become stronger and she rejected the material possessions associated with a middle-class lifestyle and middle-class respectability. Hannah now set her identity in opposition to the careerist mentality of the middle classes:

Hannah: I look more at all the conflicts in the world and I just think it's so sad and you look around and there's all these jobs, and everyone's so involved in their own work and they all go to work and come home and have their tea and go to bed and then just go back to work again... – I just think

it's so pointless, and it's all connected to money. Just... – everyone spends money on things that go back into the system; I just think it's a big waste of time. And people waste so much of their lives in jobs that they don't like, and I really don't want to be like that. I just see it as a waste of time.

Hannah did not report any exclusion from middle-class people. Instead, she experienced class exclusion from working-class 'local' students, who formed strong bonds, keeping out students who did not share their regional accent and commuting status:

Hannah: A lot are from [city] and they said... – what they've talked about in their like childhood and stuff, they've always made it out to be, like, it's really rough, [city].

It is possible that Hannah's strong identity as a working-class person was, in part, influenced by the classed exclusion by the working-class students she faced. As a university student, those 'back home' might regard her as privileged, an identity which she distances herself from. After finishing her course, she wanted to opt for a job which does not involve exploiting or judging working-class people:

Hannah: Whenever I think of myself as being in that position where people are going to look up to you, I don't even want them to. I hate that. So I can't ever imagine a job I'd ever go into, to be that well thought of anyway, because I wouldn't want to be in that job. But being a student, having a degree, you always expect, you always feel like you know more than people who don't have degrees.

The In-betweens

The 'in-betweens' – the vast majority in this sample – occupied a middle ground between the *elites* and the *working class*. Ambivalence was at the very heart of their class identity. On the one hand, the women in this group took pride in their working-class family culture, and at times acknowledged the unequal class position they were born into. And on the other hand, they were shamed and embarrassed by their class backgrounds. The women, who hoped to enter a middle-class environment, often

'bought into' discourses of meritocracy. Although these two arguments are contradictory, all the women's accounts demonstrated both sentiments.

Like Bryony and Cantara, the women in this category often did not fit in with their working-class community when growing up. As Jasminah told me, '*I was a spod. I was a bit of a spod. And in a sense I think, the girls around me weren't very similar*'.

Despite this, however, the *in-betweens* did not share the middle-class identity of the *elites*, even as students at university. The women in this group considered university as another step towards the long struggle of gaining qualifications and economic security.

Suspensions about university which were circulated within the community added to the women's fears of inevitable unemployment, and that by prioritising university, women would 'miss out' on partnership and family life. Simply attending university did not change the women's class identity, despite normative assumptions (shared by many of the community and friends from 'home') that all students at university are, by default, middle class. Rather than being classless, outside of class, the women's experiences of university indicated that class boundaries were part of university and that HE plays an important part in reifying these class locations. Of course, university also provided the mechanism to challenge existing boundaries, but this is not to say that university was a 'classless' space or that students do not have a class. On the contrary, many women recognised class for the first time on entering university. Unlike the *elites*, most women in this category had largely been unaware of the extent of class divisions before coming to university. Like the women Skeggs (1997) interviewed, Zahida recognised her place in the class hierarchy when she entered higher education: '*when you come to uni you realise there are... - there's more than one class*'. For Nuzzat, before coming to university, '*class is something I'd never thought of. Ever.*' Nevertheless, discourses positioning all students as middle-class, or classless, powerfully worked to silence the women's class experiences further.

Though all the women in this group at many points in their account identified as working-class, many also identified themselves in opposition to working-class people. Unlike Hannah, who held a strong working-class identity which she sought to keep, the *in-betweens* aimed to move into a middle-class position. As has been noted in other research (Lawler 1999; Skeggs 1997), women from working-class backgrounds who

move into middle-class space do not fit entirely into middle-class *or* working-class space. This was also a finding of this research. As university students, the women's friends and community often gave them a special status, which evoked pain as well as pleasure. Olivia told me that *'one of my friends, she's really proud of me, she's constantly... – she takes me out in [home town], and people actually say "where's your intelligent friend, where's your smart friend, where's that one at uni?"'* Other women were considered 'posh' or middle class by their home community and their friends, making friendships untenable. However this ascribed identity as 'posh' did not correspond to their own class identity. Yafiah told me that when she visited her home town, *'I don't feel different myself'* but:

I think people look at us differently, the whole university bunch. Because it seems to be that a lot of people from round here, they go to university and then they get good jobs and they move away. (Yafiah)

Some of the women interviewed by Lawler 'produced narratives of class mobility which inscribe class as a part of the self, rather than some external marker attaching to indicators such as employment or housing' (Lawler 1999: 19). However, the women I talked to used a range of economic and cultural factors to understand their class position and their anticipated (or actual) class movement. Kaleemah, for instance, defined a middle-class position as having access to material goods such as a house or car. Being a student on a degree course did not guarantee success, especially as the women were concerned that a degree was becoming more devalued. Some remained concerned about the challenges in higher education, including managing their financial problems and achieving a 'good' degree classification. Researchers working on middle-class families within education have argued that university expansion is encouraging a 'generalized downclassing' (Bourdieu 1988: 163) with concerns of credential inflation (Reay 2003), and within this context it is becoming ever more difficult for parents to guarantee the perpetuation of class privilege across generations (Ball 2003). Concerns about the expansion of education and credential inflation were also expressed by the women I spoke to, who were anxious that GCSEs, A levels and degrees are considered to be much easier, adding to the worry of finding a job after graduation in a competitive environment. As Kaleemah told me, *'I don't think you can get anywhere nowadays without any education behind you. It's very very difficult and it's really competitive out*

there as well'. Gayle was concerned that her degree would *'be a waste of time'* and that *'people look at me and say, "what you doing here with a law degree?"'* Many of the women feared that an increasing number of students were attending university, affecting the bench marks of inclusion. As Olivia noted, *'we can't all be middle class'*, and fearing downward mobility, the women worked harder. Basheera, *'having done the Masters, I still feel working class'* because of her ongoing financial concerns: *'probably because I've not gone out to work and not sort of. I think that matters on how much you sort of earn, and your income is on a certain job'*. And other women defined class position by the type of class situation in which they were able to fit, like many of the respondents interviewed by Lawler (1999). For instance, Jasminah had all the external markers of a middle-class life, but she did not identify completely as middle class because her class history was at odds with the environment she now occupies:

We have friends in [hometown] that have had the same upbringing. That to me is much more comfortable than... - but we have friends here, other doctors and stuff. But that slightly different way of talking, and that slightly different way of understanding, a slightly different sense of humour. Their upbringing's different. They don't understand the fact that you're different. And I probably find that [working-class setting] a bit more comfortable than in this environment. But that might change; maybe it's starting to change already, I don't know. (Jasminah)

Many women presented their 'real' self as working-class, but considering Lawler's (1999) findings, it may be the case that in the future, the women I have talked to may become much more ambivalent about their 'real' class self. It seems that the women were too 'close' to their working-class lives to see any noticeable difference in class position, and that they were still trying to work themselves upwards.

Some women indicated that they were proud to come from a working-class background. They admired their parents for coping with the daily strain of unemployment or manual work, or having brought up a family on a low income. Nuzzat gained a sense of satisfaction that unlike middle-class students, *'we've never had anything given to us'* and likewise, for Olivia, her place at an elite university *'feels like more of an achievement'* than for students from privileged backgrounds:

when someone tells me they've gone to like, a convent school and there was only 15 of them, and I went to like, just a normal school, and there were 40 of us, but I've still managed to get into the same place as them (Olivia).

The Muslim women were proud that their parents managed in a foreign, hostile country as young migrants:

Kaleemah: He [father] still does the odd markets here and there. And I don't find it embarrassing at all because I think, 'hang on, fair enough, no matter how he worked, he's achieved'. You know, he's done really well for himself. Not once do I sit down and think I would have done any better, my dad was a doctor, or my dad was a solicitor, or my dad were, something completely, you know.

Some women saw their working-class backgrounds as giving them certain advantages. Jasminah, a trainee doctor, saw her class background – associated with honesty, generosity and friendliness – as fundamental to meeting the needs of working-class patients. As Wendy told me, *'you're going to have different knowledge than someone from a middle-class background'* which could be useful in environments dominated by the middle classes, and *might* be useful in an interview. However, a working-class identity should not be equated solely with pride (c.f Maguire 2005). Many of the women I spoke to found their working-class identity also a source of shame and embarrassment. For instance, though Helen considered herself *'proud to be part of the working classes, very proud to be working class'*, she nevertheless expressed disgust at working-class culture:

Helen: In [home town] you've got this mindset where. Like before I said about the racism, it's all the mob mentality and stuff like that, and it gets me frustrated with that, and it seems like everyone's like that. What they do is go to work, go to the pub, go to work, go to the pub. They're not even decent – well, I say decent – like it's not even a good job; I mean working in a factory. You go in at 8am and go out at 5pm, and then you go to the pub.

And that's it, all day long, every day, and during the weekends you go to the pub because you don't go to work.

For Helen, as well as the others, there were various possible reasons why they did not wholly identify with being working-class. Helen's working-class identity was partly an ascribed identity, arising from middle-class students' perceptions (c.f. Howarth 2002; MacDonald et al. 2005). This 'label' was something she aimed to escape and she considered herself to bear no resemblance to the working-class people in her home town. Other women seemed not to identify with a working-class position because they wanted a different life from that they were born into. This required enormous determination and skill, not possible if the women were to 'buy into' a victim status, by identifying as working class. The women who were motivated to succeed in education in order to 'prove' others wrong emphasised their difference from the working-class majority. For instance, Helen was motivated through being labelled as 'thick' by middle-class teachers: *'I just thought I'm going to get out of this, and I'm going to fight the preconceptions that people have about me. And I'm going to make it. Which hopefully I will in the next few years'*.

Though essentially a middle-class position was what these women sought, like the respondents interviewed by Tett (2000) and Lawler (1999), the women in this group wanted to retain some sense of continuity with their working-class past. How much continuity they could/would keep depended on the type of career the women expected to enter. There were two types of class mobility within the *in-between* group, each category roughly split half Muslim, half non-Muslim. The first group were those women who aim to enter upper-middle-class professions, and the second group consisted of the women expecting to enter lower-middle-class jobs which were less well paid and not as prestigious. Not all women could be placed in one of these two groups because some (Amatullah, Olivia, Yusra and Shoneen) were not yet certain about the balance they wanted between career and family. These women negotiated with their families or partners, considering the advantages and disadvantages of various careers:

Amatullah: It's kind of all up in the air. Because when I was in high school, you know, 'I definitely want to get out of here' type thing, because me and

my friend, we were like 'oh, we want to go, we want to get out'. But then my nieces and my nephew came along, and it's like, I can't leave them now

The Upper-Middle-Class Professions

The women who aimed for upper-middle-class occupations (Nuzzat, Helen, Rashida, Emily, Yafiah, Marsha, Jasminah, Lisa, Ameena, and Sara) sought elite careers in areas such as law, science or business and were willing to change – or had already changed – aspects of their classed selves in order to gain such employment. The Muslim women in this group did not consider maintaining relationships with kin to be antithetical to having an elite career. In fact, as I discussed in chapter four, some interpreted their obligation to family as being to pursue the most successful career possible. Some parents of the women in this group encouraged their daughters to change their classed selves in order to stand a better chance. For instance, Emily's mother had *'been telling me I have to speak more clearly, because when I go for interviews and stuff, my accent may ...- hold me back, sort of thing. Because it's not really well spoken'*.

Though plans for children and partnership were important for the women planning to enter elite careers, they were not prepared to let the practicalities of motherhood influence their drive, and did not give these issues a lot of thought. They were uncertain and anxious about the competitive nature of their chosen career paths, but they were ready to compete for a job, and if necessary, to let their relationships suffer:

Ameena: I'd like to stay the same, but with the career that you go for... - I might change. I hope I don't, but then once you grow up, you know, everybody changes don't they. [...] Class wise, maybe to go upper class would be a good thing. Maybe to start in the middle class area would be a good thing, but again that's for the future to tell. I hope my personality doesn't change but obviously, the career I'm going into, changes are vital. I mean your accent has to change as well.

The Lower-Middle-Class Professions

The other women (Gayle, Bilqis, Basheera, Dawn, Gazala, Kaleemah, Wendy, Bethany, Zahida and Farzana) typically sought careers considered lower-middle-class occupations, especially teaching. They did not want to 'sell out' or to compromise important relationships. The women were also different from the first group in that they were not prepared to change themselves extensively in order to forge a successful career. Instead, they prioritised their future/current partner, family and friends and hoped to fit their career around these commitments.

Similar to Hannah of the *working-class* category, all the women in the lower-middle-class group had previously planned to enter elite professions. However, with time, they decided for a balance between career and a social/family life. When the women decided not to pursue a prestigious career, there were often objections and disappointments from family members:

Nuzzat: He [dad] was like 'oh, you always wanted to be a barrister'. I think I said it so much so that he got used to it, and he really did want me to be a barrister and I was like 'no dad, it's not going to happen'. You know, 'why don't you just see it, do it, try it?' And I was like 'it's not going to happen'. I think he's still hoping that one day I'll wake up and see the error of my ways [laughs]. I think with my dad it's because he's always been working class and I think he likes the idea of his daughter going into a really prestigious job.

However, aiming for a lower-middle-class position as opposed to seeking a more ambitious career was only partly related to the importance of family networks. Karen, the teacher interviewed by Maguire (2005), chose to work in a working-class school because she wanted to contribute to the lives of those from deprived backgrounds. Many women I spoke to also chose to enter lower-middle-class professions for these reasons. In addition, however, many Muslim women decided to enter lower middle-class professions in order to limit possible ethnic/religious prejudice or class exclusion within employment. Contrary to normative public opinion and findings of quantitative research that the higher 'up' the class hierarchy, the less ethnic prejudice there is

(Scheepers et al. 2002), several Muslim women preferred more modest careers than what they had previously aimed for, because of actual or feared discrimination. Aaisha tells me about her experiences as a working-class *mohajebeh*:

I've gone down there [careers event] with my suit on, and with my headscarf, and I've seen their reaction towards you. Like they don't look towards you, like they look at you, and just their body language says it all, their snobbiness, and...- It's kind of like put me off. The prime example is that I did apply for loads of commercial firms, and I did not hear from any of them. And I find that it is discrimination, being a Muslim, and wearing a headscarf as well. [...] You walk into like, these big firms in the city centre and you just like see the body language, you know. You're not good enough for them, I mean you have to have like a first class honours and you have to do this and you have to do that. (Aaisha)

Other Muslim women recognised that they would soon be married with children, and wanted to prioritise setting up a home. On the other hand, the non-Muslim women were not directly influenced by the prospect of motherhood but many cited their partner as being influential to this decision. Gayle told me that since meeting her present boyfriend, she decided to abandon the idea of becoming a barrister:

Gayle: I just want to be happy! [laughs] I don't care.

JM: About the money?

Gayle: About everything. Yeah. I'm not really that fussed, I think I want to just live my life, move out, get a house. You know, do the normal things; get older. You know? But I don't think I could be a barrister because I couldn't be a workaholic, I couldn't work that long hours, and, fair enough, you get paid loads, just for travelling and things like that. But I couldn't do it, because I want my life.

Though the women desired a certain amount of upward mobility, unlike those hoping to enter upper-middle-class professions, they hoped to retain some sense of continuity with

their working-class past. For instance, when I asked Wendy what her class would be in the future, she tells me: *'Probably still feel as though you're working-class, because you come from that environment and stuff, but probably in a middle-class kind of job'*. Rashida noted, *'In the end, you can change your class but you can't change who you are. I'll always be working-class at heart'*. And Basheera also doubted whether she would ever move completely from her working-class background:

*I would move up over that barrier to middle class, but again I don't think...
– my mentality will still be yeah, working class, maybe because my father,
my parents have worked, you've just worked all your life. And for me, I
don't think that would change, it would just mean that my education has
paid off. (Basheera)*

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the women's class definitions, current class identities and the future class positions to which they aspire. Like previous research (Savage et al. 2001; Devine 2004a), the findings of this study indicate that those to whom I spoke were usually reluctant to assign themselves to a class category. However, this did not mean that class was absent from the interviews, or that the women I spoke to failed to place themselves in the class hierarchy. As I have sought to indicate, class identities – though complex and often contradictory – could be traced in many ways within the accounts.

There were differences within – as well as between – groups in relation to the experiences of class mobility and imagined class trajectories. I paid attention to several important differences in how the Muslim and non-Muslim women's experiences of class mobility intersected with ethnicity and faith. Then, taking the experiences of the group as a whole, I divided the women's experiences into three 'ideal types' of class mobility, discussing the *elites*, the *in-betweens*, and the *working-class* groups. The experience of ongoing exclusion did not stop the women from wanting to enter the middle-class world and in some cases it made the women more determined to enter this environment. The women told me very harrowing stories of their class exclusion but still strove for inclusion into the middle-class world. To read a straightforward

relationship between class identity, experience and politics would miss the complex nature of class mobility.

The widespread normative assumption is that since modernisation and globalisation, caste and class hierarchies have dissolved (Shah et al. 2005; Pattanaik 1999).

Unfortunately I did not have the opportunity to engage with the sociological and anthropological literature on caste in this thesis (see Wilson 1984; Werbner 1990). As the literature on caste largely concerns first generation migrants, based on research in the 1970s and 1980s, its existence escaped my attention until very recently. Considering the relative silence around caste practices in the UK in the present period, this body of research would have provided a useful historical context, contributing to an understanding of how caste is sustained by the 'elders' despite resistance from (at least some of) the younger generation.

In line with findings of research on 'first generation' migrants, this thesis has indicated that caste and class hierarchies remain important for the Pakistani diaspora in the communities from which I recruited. Caste and class hierarchies were not collapsible categories; caste markers often cut across class positions, both within the UK and Pakistan, interlocking in ambiguous, complex and contradictory ways. Whilst migration provided an avenue of escape for those from subordinate caste positions, those from the dominant castes were reluctant to relinquish their privileged position. Caste was highly significant for the older generation when organising the *rishta*, and was often viewed as much more important than class background or current class position. Despite these practices, the Muslim women were reluctant to recognise and give name to caste inequalities, regardless of their position on the caste hierarchy, and accepted and identified with class hierarchies (in the UK rather than in Pakistan) much more readily. Because experiences of class were highly related to caste position, I would argue that much more consideration of and research on caste hierarchies are needed when conceptualising class for British South Asians.

Chapter Eight: Moving On

Introduction

Having reached the conclusion, I have arrived at a different destination from that I originally envisaged. I started this research with an interest in class identity for those experiencing class transitions and the role of ethnicity within this. Having set out to recruit women of Pakistani origin I discovered that faith was at least as important as ethnicity in relation to identity, if not more so. Perhaps influenced by events that took place during the course of this research, Islam – within the media and government rhetoric, within the Pakistani diaspora and for the women themselves – became central, whilst ethnicity took a ‘back seat’. This is not to say, however, that positions and identities of faith and ethnicity can, or should, be easily separated. Throughout the discussion I have paid attention to the intersections between faith and ethnicity, and on some occasions I have analysed ethnicity and faith separately. During the data collection, through the comparative nature of this research, I became much more aware of the differences between the two groups of women; how – as the title of the thesis indicates – the two groups inhabited ‘parallel’ lives, despite sharing the same communities, schools, universities and employment.

Key Concerns

This research has reached the conclusion, but it is not the end. This thesis has explored the women’s class journeys, yet it is only half a story. I have discussed where the women came from, and where they were in 2004/5. The women held ambitious expectations, but their future paths remained precarious and uncertain. They will – hopefully – complete the degree, continue their studies or find a job. It is possible that they will gain middle-class employment, surpassing the position of their parents. But many questions remain unanswered. Where and when will they arrive? What sacrifices will be made during this journey? And will they be happy in this place they are aiming for? How is this mobility to be theorised?

I have sought to highlight the barriers to mobility for working-class Muslim and non-Muslim women, the difficulties of entering a middle-class space and the pain – as well as the pleasure – involved in such a move. Though I only spoke to women from working-class backgrounds, because of the relational nature of class (and other inequalities) middle-class students have been present throughout the thesis. These findings challenge assumptions that middle-class space is devoid of ethnic/religious prejudice (Pearson 1976; Scheepers et al. 2002).

Ethnicity and faith, in most research on class identity, have been unacknowledged. Afshar and Maynard (2000) accuse Western feminists of ‘cultural imperialism’ and Wakeling (2007) suggests that British sociology is in danger of becoming a white discipline, ‘reproducing those very ethnic divisions it criticizes elsewhere’ (2007: 946). Class research and conceptions of class in the UK have mainly been based upon the experiences of white ‘indigenous’ people, without this privileged ethnicity being acknowledged. The failure to acknowledge how working-class people are differentially affected by class divisions renders the position of working-class people from majority groups as ‘normal’. In reverse, those who are not remain silenced and ‘other’. Though feminists and class scholars have a central role to play in the inclusion of ethnicity and faith, race researchers also have a responsibility to attend to the intersections between ethnicity, faith and class.

Taking a comparative approach analysing the experiences of the Muslim and non-Muslim women, I explored how opportunities for class mobility through educational and occupational advancement were available to the two groups of women. I argued that for the Muslim women – who encountered a ‘chilly climate’ in higher education and the work environment – channels of inclusion into the middle class world were very limited and largely dependent on a rejection of their culture and faith. The paths to class mobility taken by the non-Muslim women were also problematic, though this group of women occupied a privileged ethnic/faith status, allowing them to fit into the culture promoted by the university and paid work with much more ease.

This research has been a difficult ‘journey’ with a steep learning curve and many surprises. Undoubtedly, if I had known at the start of the project what I now know, I would have done several things differently. Regarding methods utilised, starting with

online recruitment would have saved a lot of time. Since I started recruitment in 2004, there has been a growth of new websites, including discussion boards and social networking sites, which would have been much more effective in advertising the research than posters/flyers. As a major result of this research has been the significance of the family, had I known this when I started, I would have also interviewed the women's family members. Though recruitment would have been much more difficult, and I probably would have had to use translators, I would have been able to compare and contrast the responses of the parents and siblings to those of the women themselves.

This work is not intended to offer a conclusive account of the intersections between class, faith and ethnicity. Instead, this research adds to academic debates on class mobility, providing an exploration of class identity and movement as experienced by 29 Muslim and non-Muslim women. This thesis, of course, has omissions, silences and gaps of its own. I have highlighted throughout this thesis the importance of a class analysis which pays attention to positions of gender, ethnicity and faith, yet I am conscious that some traditional class theorists may question the utility of comparisons between working-class groups which highlight fractions within the working-class, rather than unifying the working-class movement. The comparative element of the research, as I noted from the reactions to delegates I met at conferences, was contentious. Some researchers considered it problematic that at this particular time, I was comparing two 'opposing' groups, especially as I – the researcher – was a member of the dominant group. Others – particularly those I met in the US, Poland and Italy – had objections to the 'non-Muslim' classification utilised in the project, which perhaps had something to do with the different immigration patterns and levels of religiosity in these locations. Some may accuse the research of expressing moral judgements against the non-Muslim women, though it has not been my intention to imply that the women are selfish or to criticise the routes they have taken. Instead, I have aimed to critically explore *why* routes were chosen and what the alternatives were for the two groups of women. I have sought to answer such queries and to defend the positions I took at each stage in this thesis, especially in my discussion of religio-ethnic classifications in chapter one and positionality in chapter three.

University: How they Arrived

In chapter one I set the context of this research, introducing the localities of Burnley, Bradford and Oldham, the 2001 ‘race riots’, 9/11 and most recently, the London bombings. This project was written in reaction to the ‘death of class’ thesis, and highlighted why class research remains a pressing issue. I introduced the religio-ethnic labels utilised in this project, explaining the choices made and the advantages of these classifications.

Chapter two explored how the literature on class has – or has not – engaged with ethnicity and faith by highlighting the connections and gaps in these works. I argued that despite assumptions from various quarters, we have not seen the ‘death of class’ (Pakulski and Waters 1996), neither in the UK nor elsewhere. Focusing in particular on feminist engagement with Bourdieu’s work, especially concepts of classed capitals and habitus, I highlighted the utility of these discussions, but also the problems with this corpus when analysing class from a post-colonial context. I aimed to challenge the monolithic ‘working-class woman’ presented by some feminist class scholars by arguing that class intersects with both faith and ethnicity, yet these points of connection have largely been untheorised, both by class scholars and also within ethnicity studies. Similarly, as I discussed in chapter three, methods of researching class have concentrated (in the main) on the experiences of majority ethnic/religious communities. In describing the research process, I analysed the way in which data was generated through interviews and a focus group discussion. In exploring how the accounts produced were influenced by my positionality as a non-Muslim white woman from a working-class background, I challenged the binary positions of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’.

Chapters four to seven comprised the substantive sections in this thesis, and explored the empirical data, utilising concepts of family, community, and class capitals. The first of these chapters explored the women’s paths to university. Their experiences of tertiary education and their routes to university were characterised by a lack of economic, social and cultural resources, impacting on the opportunities available. There were central differences between the two groups of women involving the role of the family in decision-making strategies. This influenced how the women and their families saw the links between university and the transition into adulthood. The non-Muslim women

were 'individual choosers', viewing university as a 'passage into adulthood'. University – which was seen as an opportunity for the women to gain emotional and geographical independence from their parents – provided an 'escape' from the working-class lives inhabited by their families. On the other hand, the Muslim women and their families viewed education as a strategy for the mobility of the family as a whole. Education was not an 'escape'; instead, the women were supported to proceed to university but were expected to maintain close relationships with kin throughout university and beyond. The women decided, alongside family members, about their course of study and residential status, considering what was best for the family.

Chapter five offered an analysis of the women's experiences of university. Despite widening participation initiatives, institutional practices at universities continue to exclude non-traditional students. Central to this exclusion for the Muslim women was the 'bar culture' and the prevalence of alcohol, which had implications for inclusion. On the other hand, the non-Muslim women enjoyed the emphasis on socialising and alcohol, but because of cost were not as involved as they wanted to be. All the women experienced changing kin relationships, which were painful as well as positive. Balancing their degree, family duties and paid work was a daily routine for all the women. Though the amount of hours in employment depended on residential status, whether women had taken out a loan and could find work, all the women had concerns about their academic work and succeeding in their degree.

Chapter six explored the women's future plans and aspirations. The Muslim women aimed to return to their families. It was important for them contribute to their localities by living and working in the community, as other educated Muslims had done. Though this limited employment prospects, the community provided protection from religious and ethnic prejudice. They hoped to marry and have children relatively soon after graduation, and wanted to bring up their children in the community. Employment would be fitted around family responsibilities and kin would contribute to childcare. On the other hand, the non-Muslim women did not expect to settle in their hometown. The norm was that non-Muslim graduates moved out of the community in search of 'better' employment. Returning 'home' was considered by the women and their parents as going 'backwards', as a sign of failure. The women planned to fit relationships with

parents and partners around their career, and would settle in the city in which they were offered work. Most non-Muslim women planned to have children in their 30s or later.

Chapter seven brought together the three preceding chapters by exploring the women's accounts of class identity and class mobility throughout their movement through school, university and anticipated locations in the future. I explored the similarities and differences between the Muslim and non-Muslim women, paying particular attention to the relationship between class and caste in the UK and Pakistan. Analysing the women's experiences as a whole, I placed the women into categories based on their class identity and hopes for future mobility. These categories consisted of '*working-class*', '*in-betweens*' and '*elites*'. The women who occupied the '*in-between*' category – most in the sample – were divided into 'upper-middle-class' and 'lower-middle-class'. These women had an ambivalent class identity, in comparison to the more stable class identity of the women in the '*elite*' or '*working-class*' groups.

Recommendations

This thesis has emphasised a number of problems, and whilst Roberts (2001: 223) challenges attempts of governments to equalise educational opportunities, arguing that 'the best way to change mobility flows is to change the structure of opportunities itself', I am of the opinion that because of 'the multidimensionality of class' (Ball 2003: 11), there is more than one way to tackle class inequalities. Therefore, I would like to offer a few practical suggests about how these inequalities could be approached by university institutions.

The women's accounts indicate how widening participation initiatives should not only open up access to HE, but be about the promotion of an equal playing field throughout university, pointing to the necessity for HEIs to change the ethos of university, particularly at elite universities, so that non-traditional students are no longer excluded. Researchers and academics should work to represent HE and student life in diverse ways. At the moment, the image of student life can be off-putting and exclusionary for many non-traditional students who do not necessarily want, or cannot have, that life-style. These monochrome representations may prevent Muslim women from attending if families are concerned about the corrupting effects of university.

Several changes to UK HE structures would benefit non-traditional students. If HEIs – particularly elite universities – acknowledged the diverse needs and requirements of non-traditional students, institutional barriers that exclude working-class and Muslim students could be effectively tackled. As Reay suggests, pre-92 universities could certainly ‘learn from some of the new universities in terms of making non-traditional students feel welcome’ (2003: 311). Manthei and Gilmore argue that in order to enable working students to balance their degree and employment, lecturers should ‘try to structure assignments and course requirements [...] including the scheduling of class times and the offering of study support services’ (2005: 202). Whilst this would certainly be helpful, the concerns and difficulties of the women I interviewed indicate the need for more significant changes, beyond a re-structuring of course timetables. From the women’s accounts I would like to raise three practical ways in which the needs of non-traditional students may be more effectively met by HEIs, including accommodation/meal provision, ‘bar culture’ and prayer facilities.

Most women who lived away from home had accommodation problem, which were related to the women’s positions as non-traditional students. One of the most difficult issues for the Muslim women was being housed with non-Muslims; they were excluded from socialising with the group, and alcohol and boyfriends were frequently present in the flat. Despite the fact that the women filled out a form for the accommodation office at their university, with details such as their religion, hobbies, all were placed with white, non-Muslim students. This suggests that whilst a student ‘matching’ system is in place, more could be done to allow Muslim women to live together where this is a requirement of their faith.

Though many from working-class backgrounds will have a job during term time, many women I interviewed considered that university accommodation offered to first year students (in particular) was not compatible with paid employment. Some women’s employment options were limited because they shared a room with another student, meaning that certain jobs such as pub/club work were not feasible because of late-night finishes. At some elite universities, three meals a day were included into the price of the accommodation and there was no opportunity to ‘opt out’. This system, which was designed for the needs of ‘traditional’ students, created extra expenditure for women

who missed meals frequently because they were at work, or had been fasting. The extension of kitchen facilities at these universities would enable students who have missed college meals to cook at a convenient time. As many of the Muslim women I spoke to had difficulty in finding venues selling *halal* meat, they often needed to cook for themselves, and the provision of better kitchen facilities would support this.

As I indicated in chapter four, the prevalent ‘bar culture’ at university excluded students who did not, or could not, participate in these events, impacting on their inclusion into the mainstream ‘life’ of the university and their ability to form friendships with students on their course. This was a particular problem during freshers’ week through the constant emphasis on late-night socialising. This was not only a problem for Muslim students or those on limited budgets; potentially many groups of non-traditional students are excluded from these activities, including mature students and those who commute. Freshers’ fair and events organised by the department would make non-traditional students more welcome by – at the very least – organising some activities outside of bars which do not involve alcohol. Muslim students would benefit a great deal if the university supported – practically and financially – the Islamic Society. Some I interviewed singled out inadequate prayer facilities as one of the most problematic aspects of HE. Many universities had no facility, others had only very limited space, and only a minority of institutions had adequate facilities. The women didn’t expect that the university – as a non-Muslim institution – would organise prayer facilities, but what the women wanted was for the university to be willing to engage in discussions about these issues.

Tett (2000), with reference to her research on working-class mature students, raises the possibility that higher education may allow working-class people not only to recognise the ‘importance of class position in shaping opportunity’ but that men may develop a self-knowledge of how they benefit from patriarchy, and how women lose out (Tett 2000: 192). It is likely that the women I spoke to will recognise more clearly their place in the class hierarchy after meeting people from privileged backgrounds at university. However, it is questionable whether the non-Muslim women will be led to acknowledge their advantaged position as a member of the majority ethnic/faith by receiving a university education. White/secular privilege is particularly difficult to see for members of the advantaged group. This thesis has argued that religio-ethnic inequalities

disadvantage Muslims. Inequalities are relational: as Larew argues, 'For every legacy that wins, someone – usually someone less privileged – loses' (2003: 138), and non-Muslims are advantaged by the differential opportunities for class mobility through educational and occupational advancement. One reason for the ongoing silence of secular privilege is that faith has received only limited sociological attention. An emphasis within the social sciences on religious prejudice may have a material effect on the reactions of subordinate and oppressed groups to this.

This chapter has drawn together the main findings of this project, emphasising the myriad ways in which faith and ethnicity intersect with class. Overall, my aim has been to draw attention to the hidden power relations which allow the perpetuation of – but also the challenge to – class boundaries in education and employment, enabling some students to achieve at the expense of other students' more limited life chances.

Appendices (A-J)

Appendix A: Research Timetable

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Appendix C: Email

Appendix D: Summary of recruitment methods

Appendix E: Interviewee biography

Appendix F: Locality; Type of HEI Attended; Year of Study

Appendix G: Consent Form

Appendix H: Interview and Focus Group Schedule

Appendix J: Where the Interviews were Conducted

Appendix A: Research Timetable

| Research Process | Date |
|--|-------------------|
| Pilot study (MA dissertation) | May 03 – Sept 03 |
| Literature review and methodology training | Oct 03 – Oct 04 |
| Devised questionnaires and distributed in FECs; received questionnaires | April 04 |
| Distributed flyers/posters; contacted various agencies; drafted interview schedule | April 04 – Nov 05 |
| Sent emails to individuals; snowballed | Jan 05 – Nov 05 |
| Interviews and focus group conducted | Nov 04 – Nov 05 |
| Transcribed and sent transcripts to respondents | Nov 04 – Jan 06 |
| Coding and preliminary analysis | Jan 06 – Jun 06 |
| ESRC Institutional visit | Jun 06 – Sept 06 |
| Analysed and wrote up | Sept 06 – Dec 07 |

Appendix B: Questionnaire

(each batch of questionnaires was based on a version of this one)

Student Questionnaire: Women in Education

Thanks for agreeing to take part in my research. I'm a PhD student at the University of York. My research is on working-class women in education.

With a small number of women I'm also hoping to conduct an interview of about an hour long - which will be confidential. The date and location of the interviews would be one of mutual convenience. Would you be willing to take part in the interview?

Yes _____

No _____

If yes, I would be very grateful if you could spare a few minutes to fill out this short questionnaire.

1. Name:

2. Address:

3. Email:

4. Telephone:

5. Age and date of birth:

6. Town/country of birth:

7. What is your mother's occupation?
8. What is your father's occupation?
9. Are you the first to have gone to university in your immediate family? (if not, please give details eg siblings)
10. Which social class position do you identify as being part of (ie working class, middle class)?
11. Which course/subject do you study?
12. Which university do you attend?
13. What year of study are you in?
14. Are you:
 - Muslim
 - Sikh
 - Hindu
 - Christian
 - Jewish
 - Other
 - Non-religious
15. What is your ethnic group:

British Asian or Asian

Indian

Pakistan

Bangladesh

Any other (please write in)

British White or White

UK white

Irish white

Any other (please write in)

British Black or Black

African

Afro-Caribbean

Black British

Any other (please write in)

Thanks for filling out this questionnaire. If you would like to participate in the interview, I will be in touch shortly to have a chat about further details.

If you would like to know more about the research, please get in touch:

jm232@york.ac.uk

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Appendix C: Email

Hi,

I am a student at the University of York, researching the experiences of class, gender and 'race' for my PhD thesis. I am interested in talking to working class 'Asian' and white women who are at university. Confidentiality will be ensured and the interview will last for about an hour, though you can end the interview whenever you like, and can decide to withdraw from the research at any time. If you are interested in being interviewed for this research, or know of someone who would like to participate, please email me: jm232@york.ac.uk or phone: 07710 421253. If you would like to request further information, please contact me.

Many thanks

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Appendix D: Summary of Recruitment Methods

| Pseudonym | Strategy Used |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Aaisha | Flyer |
| Amatullah | Friends Reunited message |
| Ameena | Questionnaire at FEC |
| Basheera | Snowballing |
| Bethany | Snowballing |
| Bilqis | Questionnaire at FEC |
| Bryony | Snowballing |
| Cantara | Poster |
| Dawn | Poster |
| Emily | Friends Reunited message |
| Farzana | university Islamic Society |
| Gayle | Friends Reunited message |
| Gazala | Snowballing |
| Hannah | Snowballing |
| Helen | Questionnaire at FEC |
| Jasminah | Friends Reunited message |
| Kaleemah | Friends Reunited message |
| Lisa | Snowballing |
| Marsha | Friends Reunited message |
| Munazzah | Snowballing |
| Nuzzat | Snowballing |
| Olivia | Snowballing |
| Rashida | Friends Reunited message |
| Sara | Snowballing |
| Shoneen | Snowballing |
| Wendy | Snowballing |
| Yafia | Friends Reunited message |
| Yusra | Friends Reunited message |
| Zahida | university Islamic Society |

Appendix E: Interviewee Biography

Aaisha: Muslim, aged 21. Her mother is a housewife and her father is retired public-sector worker. Her father is from India and mother is from Pakistan. She is from Greater Manchester. She studied A levels and her three siblings have previously attended university. She lives with her extended family and commutes to a post-92 university. She has just graduated with a 2.1 and will start a postgraduate degree to train as a solicitor.

Amatullah: Muslim, aged 19. Her mother is childminder and her father is factory worker. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from Lancashire. She studied A levels. To attend university she lives away from home temporarily, but during university holidays lives with parents and two siblings. She attends a pre-92 university and is in the first year of her undergraduate degree. She is the first to attend university in her family and hopes to become a barrister.

Ameena: Muslim, aged 19. Her mother is a housewife and her father works in retail. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from Lancashire. She studied for A levels, and lives with her parents and siblings and commutes to university. Two older siblings attended university before her. She attends a post-92 university and is in the first year of her undergraduate degree and hopes to continue into postgraduate education after her degree to train as a solicitor or barrister.

Basheera: Muslim, aged 25. Her mother is a housewife and her father is retired driver. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from Greater Manchester. After re-sitting some GCSEs, she studied for A levels. Four siblings attended university previously. She lives away from home to attend university, and only infrequently returns to the home of her extended family. She graduated two years ago with a 2.1 and is about to finish a part-time MSc. Both qualifications are from a post-92 university. She is considering several options including pursuing a PhD, looking for a marriage partner or getting a job.

Bilqis: Muslim, aged 18. Her mother is a housewife and her father is a retired driver. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from Lancashire. She studied for A levels and

two siblings attended university previously. She lives with her parents, and her sibling's family, and commutes to university. She attends a post-92 university and is in the first year of her undergraduate degree, and after graduation hopes to work for a couple of years before getting married.

Bethany: no religion, aged 19. Her father is a public sector worker and her mother is a housewife. Both parents are British. She is from Lancashire. Growing up, her parents separated and herself and her younger sibling lived with her dad. She studied for A levels and now lives at university and is in the first year of her undergraduate degree at a post-92 university. She is the first to attend university in her family and is considering a career in teaching.

Bryony: no religion, aged 18. Her father is a musician and her mother is a care assistant and is training to be a nurse. Both parents are British. She is from Lancashire. Growing up, her parents separated and herself and her younger sibling lived with her father. She took A levels and then studied for a year-long BTec. She lives at university and is in the first year of her undergraduate degree at a post-92 university. She is the first in her family to attend university and hopes to work in the media.

Cantara: Muslim, aged 27. Her parents are about to retire from running a small business. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from Greater Manchester. After taking A levels, she studied for another 3 A levels in a year. She is the first sibling to have attended university, though her grandfather was highly educated. She graduated four years ago with a 2.1 and has worked in a professional job for three years. She is married and lives with her husband close to her family. She is about to finish a part-time MSc, and both degrees are from pre-92 universities. She will continue with her job when she has completed, and is considering having children soon.

Dawn: no religion, aged 18. Her mother works as a secretary, and she is not aware of her father's occupation. Both parents are British. She is from Lancashire. Growing up, herself and her younger siblings lived with her mother, who was separated from her father. She took A levels and is the first to attend university in her family. She lives at university and is in the first year of her undergraduate degree at a post-92 university. She aims for a career in theatre.

Emily: no religion, aged 20. Her mother works as a secretary, and her father is unemployed. Both parents are British. She is from Lancashire. Growing up, herself and her siblings lived with her mother, who became separated from her father. She studied for a GNVQ and she is the first in her family to attend university. She lives at university and is in the second year of her undergraduate degree at a post-92 university. She hopes to work in marketing, and aims to travel after graduation.

Farzana: Muslim, aged 19, and took part in the focus group. Missing data on parental employment. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from West Yorkshire. She studied for A levels and lives with her extended family and commutes to university. She is in the first year of an undergraduate degree at a pre-92 university, but plans to change course and re-do the first year. After graduation, she plans to pursue a career in computing.

Gayle: no religion, aged 22. Her mother is a computer technician and her father is a skilled craftsman. Both parents are British. She is from Lancashire. She grew up with her parents and younger siblings. She studied A levels for two years, and then re-sat A levels for a further year. She is the first in her family to attend university and is in the third year of an undergraduate degree at a post-92 university. She lived at university three months into the first year, but moved home for the second and third year to commute. She is currently applying for various positions including the police service, and would like to train as a solicitor when she has the savings for further study.

Gazala: Muslim, aged 21. Her mother is a housewife and her father is self-employed. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from West Yorkshire. She studied for A levels. She grew up in her extended family and is the first in her family to attend HE. She lives away from home to attend university, and is in the third year of an undergraduate degree at a pre-92 university. After graduation, she plans to volunteer in a school for a year in order to gain experience, and then to complete a teacher training certificate.

Hannah: no religion, aged 19. Her mother owns a small business, and her father is a skilled worker. Both parents are British. She is from Lancashire. She grew up living with her parents and sibling. She studied A levels, and her sister started university a

year before her. She lives at university and is in the first year of her undergraduate degree at a post-92 university. She is undecided about what to do after graduation.

Helen: no religion, aged 19. Her mother is a factory worker and father is a driver. Both parents are British. She is from Lancashire. She grew up with her parents and younger sibling. Before studying A levels she worked for a year in Australia. She is the first in her family to attend university and is in the first year of an undergraduate degree at a pre-92 university. After graduation she is considering getting a job to fund further study, and would also like to travel.

Jasminah: Muslim, aged 26. Her mother is a housewife and her father is a retired driver. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from Lancashire. She grew up in her extended family. She studied for A levels and is the first generation to study in the UK. She lived away from home to attend university, and completed her undergraduate medical degree two years ago and gained a 2.1 at a pre-92 university. She has postponed the obligatory two-year training in order to get married and care for her baby. When her child is older she hopes to resume her career part-time.

Kaleemah: Muslim, aged 27. Her mother is a housewife and her father is self-employed. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from Lancashire. She grew up in her extended family. After finishing A levels she studied for an undergraduate degree part time, whilst commuting from home. She gained a 2.1 three years ago and she is now a part-time postgraduate student and works full-time as a public sector worker. Both qualifications were taken at post-92 universities. She lives with her mother and siblings. She is saving for her own home and would like soon to get married and start a family.

Lisa: no religion, aged 25. Her mother is a part-time care assistant and her father's occupation is unknown. Both parents are British. She is from Lancashire. Growing up, she lived with her younger siblings and mother, who was separated from her father. She studied for an NNEB, and started a degree but left after a year. For four years she worked as a sales manager whilst studying various modules on a distance learning programme. She is in her first year of her current degree at a pre-92 university and lives away from home. After graduating she would like to study for a PhD or to work in the civil service.

Marsha: from a Catholic family, now agnostic, aged 21. Her mother is a retired nurse and her father is an unskilled worker. Both parents are British. She is from Lancashire. Growing up, she lived with her parents and older sibling. She studied for an NNEB, though had a year break in-between this, when she worked full-time. She is the first in her family to attend university and is in the third year of her undergraduate degree at a pre-92 university. She lives away from home. After graduating she would like to work in policy or local government.

Munazzah: Muslim, aged 21. Her mother is a housewife and father is a retired driver. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from Lancashire. She lives with her extended family and commutes to university. She studied for A levels and is the first in her family to attend university. She is in the third year of her undergraduate degree at a post-92 university, and after graduation hopes to train as a teacher before getting married.

Nuzzat: Muslim, aged 21. Her mother is a teaching assistant, and her father is a driver. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from Greater Manchester. She lives with her extended family and commutes to university. She studied for A levels and her older sibling attended university previously. She has recently graduated with a 2.1 and after the summer will start a training course to become a solicitor. Both qualifications are from a post-92 university.

Olivia: no religion, aged 20. Her mother is a child minder and her father is a self-employed landscape gardener. Her parents are British. She is from Lancashire. She grew up with her parents and younger sibling. She studied A levels and her older sibling attended university previously. She lives away from home and is in the second year of her undergraduate degree at a pre-92 university. After graduation she would like to become a teacher.

Rashida: Muslim, aged 19. Her mother is a housewife and student, and her father is a self-employed mechanic. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from Lancashire. She grew up in her extended family. She studied for A levels and her elder siblings attended university previously. She lives away from home to attend university, and is in the first

year of her undergraduate degree at a pre-92 university. She hopes to pursue a career in science.

Sara: recent convert to Islam, though originally from a non-religious family, aged 19, and took part in the focus group. Missing data on parental employment. Both parents are British. She is from West Yorkshire. She studied for A levels and lives with her husband near the university. She is in the first year of an undergraduate degree at a pre-92 university. After graduation, she plans to work as an engineer.

Shoneen: Muslim, aged 19, and took part in the focus group. Missing data on parental employment. Both parents are from Pakistan. She studied for A levels and lives with her extended family and commutes to university. She is in the foundation year of an undergraduate degree at a pre-92 university. After graduation, she plans to work as an engineer.

Wendy: no religion, aged 19. Her mother is a housewife and her father is a skilled worker. Both parents are British. She is from West Yorkshire. She grew up with her parents and younger siblings. She studied A levels and her older sibling attended university previously. She lives away from home and is in the second year of her undergraduate degree at a pre-92 university. She is undecided about what she would like to do after graduation.

Yafiah: Muslim, aged 21. Her mother is a housewife, but previously worked as a nursery assistant, and her father is a factory worker. Her father is Indian, and her mother is Pakistani. She is from Lancashire. She grew up in her extended family. She studied for A levels and her elder siblings attended university previously. She lives away from home to attend university, and is in the fourth year of her undergraduate degree at a pre-92 university. She hopes to pursue a career in science.

Yusra: Muslim, aged 21. Her mother is a housewife and her father is a retired factory worker. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from Lancashire. She grew up in her extended family and many of her siblings attended university before her. She studied for A levels and lived away from home to attend university. She has recently finished her

undergraduate degree, achieving a 2.1, and graduated six months ago. She has a full-time job as a community worker and is considering training to be a teacher.

Zahida: Muslim, aged 19. Her mother is a housewife and her father is self-employed. Both parents are from Pakistan. She is from West Yorkshire. She studied for A levels. She grew up in her extended family and her older sibling studied at university previously. She lives away from home to attend university, and is in the second year of an undergraduate degree at a pre-92 university. After graduation, she plans to become a teacher.

Appendix F: Locality; Type of HEI Attended; Year of Study

| Pseudonym | Locality | HEI | Year of study |
|-----------|--------------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| Aaisha | Greater Manchester | Post-92 | Final year |
| Amatullah | Lancashire | Pre-92 | First year |
| Ameena | Lancashire | Post-92 | First year |
| Basheera | Greater Manchester | Post-92 | Postgraduate |
| Bethany | Lancashire | Post-92 | First year |
| Bilqis | Lancashire | Post-92 | First year |
| Bryony | Lancashire | Post-92 | First year |
| Cantara | Lancashire | Pre-92 | Postgraduate |
| Dawn | Lancashire | Post-92 | First year |
| Emily | Lancashire | Post-92 | Penultimate year |
| Farzana | Lancashire | Pre-92 | First year |
| Gayle | West Yorkshire | Post-92 | Final year |
| Gazala | Lancashire | Pre-92 | Final year |
| Hannah | West Yorkshire | Post-92 | First year |
| Helen | Lancashire | Pre-92 | First year |
| Jasminah | Lancashire | Pre-92 | On maternity leave |
| Kaleemah | Lancashire | Post-92 | Postgraduate |
| Lisa | Lancashire | Pre-92 | First year |
| Marsha | Lancashire | Pre-92 | Penultimate year |
| Munazzah | Lancashire | Post-92 | Penultimate year |
| Nuzzat | Lancashire | Post-92 | Final year |
| Olivia | Lancashire | Pre-92 | Penultimate year |
| Rashida | Lancashire | Pre-92 | First year |
| Sara | West Yorkshire | Pre-92 | First year |
| Shoneen | West Yorkshire | Pre-92 | First year |
| Wendy | West Yorkshire | Pre-92 | Penultimate year |
| Yafia | Lancashire | Pre-92 | Final year |
| Yusra | Lancashire | Pre-92 | Recently completed final year |
| Zahida | West Yorkshire | Pre-92 | Penultimate year |

Appendix G: Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Name of researcher: Jody Mellor

Institution: Centre for Women's Studies, University of York, Heslington, York

Tel: 07710 421253, 01904 433677

Email: jm232@york.ac.uk

Description of research project:

- a) The research will involve a questionnaire, taped interview, and a typed transcription of the interview.
- b) During analysis, the anonymised material will be stored in a secure, locked filing cabinet in my office.

I have been given information about the research project and the way in which my contribution to the project will be used.

I give my permission for use of the information in teaching.

- My contribution will be kept safely and securely with access only to those with permission from the researcher.
- I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time by contacting the researcher.
- I agree to take part in the above study.
- I hereby assign the copyright in my contribution to Jody Mellor.

Please tick:

- I give my permission for the information I am about to give/have given to be used for research purposes only (including research publications and reports) with strict preservation of anonymity

Signed Respondent.....

Date.....

Address.....

.....

Signed Researcher.....

Date.....

This information will be retained separately and securely from the information given.

Appendix H: Interview and Focus Group Schedule

Past

- Can you give me a sense of what your childhood and teenage years were like, in your family/community? Can you talk about what it was like growing up in your family? Can you give me a sense of the cultural atmosphere that you grew up in, your class background, or your family background?
- Can you talk about what you thought of education and school when you were at primary and secondary school and at college?
- Can you give a sense of what sort of person you were when you were younger? What was the most important aspect of your identity? And how did your identity correspond with how your friends/family/community/teachers thought of you/your abilities/your place in society?
- Can you talk about your feelings and thoughts on your community, and your home town, what's it like to come from the North? – with particular reference to the 'race riots' of 2001
- Motivations for attending HE; constraints that discouraged you and significant others and factors that encouraged you? How have the introduction of student loans and fees influenced your decisions?

Present

- How have you settled down into university? – themes of belonging, being excluded or included, ties to home
- Is university what you expected?
- Have you changed, within your self, since starting at university? Do people treat you differently or think of you differently since you started university (people at home and people at university)?
- Would you say a particular part of your identity is more important when you're at university (eg gender/race/faith/sexuality/class)?
- How would you describe your self now, since you've been at university? – themes of friends, living arrangements, clubs/societies, workloads/grades/seminars/lectures may be a way into exploring their identities and feelings of class.

- Question on their degree course – workload/seminars/lecturers – do they think some students are more privileged or have an easier time than other students? Are some students more advantaged than others?
- What aspects of being at university do you think are most important and have been most enjoyable?
- Thoughts and feelings about their home and community after going to university – particularly the ‘race riots’ of 2001, but also feelings about their faith/community/family and changes to views since being at university.
- How have the government changes to student funding (loans and fees) influenced your experience of university?
- Has it been worth it, going to university?

Future

- What are your aims and ambitions for the future – and what constraints or encouragements might there be which will influence you gaining these?
- Plans in terms of where you are going to live after university – marriage, careers/postgraduate courses
- How do you see your class position in the future?
- Do you think you will change in the future? In which ways?

Appendix J: Where the Research was Conducted

| Pseudonym | Venue |
|------------------|---|
| Aaisha | in a park |
| Amatullah | café |
| Ameena | respondent's home |
| Basheera | café |
| Bethany | respondent's home |
| Bilqis | respondent's home |
| Bryony | respondent's home |
| Cantara | respondent's home |
| Dawn | respondent's home |
| Emily | respondent's home |
| Farzana | University classroom |
| Gayle | respondent's home |
| Gazala | private room in library |
| Hannah | respondent's home |
| Helen | my office in the Centre for Women's Studies |
| Jasminah | respondent's home |
| Kaleemah | a house of my relative |
| Lisa | respondent's home |
| Marsha | respondent's home |
| Munazzah | respondent's home |
| Nuzzat | café |
| Olivia | private room in library |
| Rashida | café |
| Sara | University classroom |
| Shoneen | University classroom |
| Wendy | respondent's home |
| Yafia | my parent's home |
| Yusra | respondent's home |
| Zahida | My office in the Centre for Women's Studies |

Glossary

| | |
|------------------|---|
| <i>Biradari</i> | patrilineal kinship group |
| <i>Eid</i> | Muslim holiday, marking the end of Ramadan |
| <i>Fard</i> | religious duty |
| <i>Izzat</i> | honour, loyalty, status, obedience and respect (Din 2006: 31) |
| <i>Hadith</i> | practices of the early Muslims |
| <i>Halal</i> | permitted or lawful |
| <i>Haraam</i> | forbidden |
| <i>Hijab</i> | headscarf |
| <i>Koran</i> | the Islamic holy book |
| <i>Makruh</i> | discouraged, but not forbidden |
| <i>Mohajebeh</i> | women who cover |
| <i>Namaz</i> | the five daily prayers |
| <i>Purdah</i> | gender segregation; women confined within the home |
| <i>Ramadan</i> | Islamic holy month |
| <i>Rishta</i> | match or proposal |
| <i>Umma</i> | global Muslim community |
| <i>Zat</i> | caste |

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