

**Education As Capital: Educated
Bangladeshi Immigrant Women
in 21st Century Britain**

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Abstract

This thesis examines education within a transnational capital movement framework, investigating the experiences of first-generation educated Bangladeshi immigrant women arriving in Britain between 1999 and 2007. Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of education (1973, 1990 [1977]), his notions of forms of capital (1986), and a feminist perspective on these theories are utilized to explain the interplay of class and gender in educating middle-class Bangladeshi women, the economic and social value of these academic qualifications in migration, and the gendered dimension of social reproduction in their diaspora. In the discussion of Bangladeshi women in Britain, this thesis for the first time deals with educated women from that background (as opposed to the majority Sylheti community that has been the subject of much research). Its primary data are in-depth interviews with twenty-eight highly-educated Bangladeshi women across England. In my methodology chapter I discuss, *inter alia*, the problematic of researching social equals, and the possibilities and limitations of 'partial knowledge' within that context. My in-depth analysis of the narratives around the participants' family, upbringing, education and gender structure establishes the theoretical relevance of Bourdieu's concept of education as cultural capital in post-colonial, resource-poor Bangladeshi society. In discussing gender and the internationalization of higher education in this context, I revise Bourdieu's definition of 'academic capital', proposing three main categories that operate in my participants' lives: namely 'elite', 'standard' and 'general' academic capital. This thesis challenges the argument that human movement and capital movement are similar and equal by analysing the differentiated values of academic qualifications and academic capital in the advanced, neoliberal labour market of Britain where the host country's specific 'cultural capital' is at play. Finally, my thesis extends knowledge about immigrant women's involvement in the developing diasporic 'middle class' with an investigation of these educated Bangladeshi women's social lives and 'mother work' in the framework of social reproduction. This thesis develops an original and new dialogue between skilled migration, the Bangladeshi community in Britain, and the dynamic of gender and social class across borders, inviting further debates within and beyond feminist thoughts around educated middle-class women's migration and its far-reaching consequences in the contemporary transnational world.

Key Words: Education, Capital, Bangladeshi Women, Migration, Gender and Britain.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is an original contribution to the relevant knowledge. It has been carried out maintaining the regulations of the University of York. The secondary references used in the thesis have been fully cited. No part of the thesis is published anywhere else.

Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

Why do people move? What makes them uproot and leave everything they have known for a great unknown beyond the horizon? Why climb this Mount Everest of formalities that makes you feel like a beggar? Why enter this jungle of foreignness where everything is new, strange and difficult?

The answer is the same the world over: People move in the hope of a better life.
Martel, Yann *Life of Pi* (2009 [2001]: 55)

Drawing on twenty-eight in-depth interviews, this thesis investigates the experiences of Bangladeshi women who came to Britain between 1999-2007, with (or for the purposes of gaining) an education. Forming a dialogue between Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of education (Bourdieu 1973; Bourdieu and Passeron (1990 [1977])), his notion of capital (Bourdieu 1986) and my empirical data, this thesis seeks to answer the question: 'in what ways do educated Bangladeshi women mobilize their education in Britain?' Elaborated below, education and its more formal expression, academic qualifications, is a form of cultural capital, developed over time for an individual, transmittable in a different context and usable within and beyond the economy. In this thesis, I examine its usage in three main contexts, economic, social and familial within which my participants, first-generation Bangladeshi (im)migrant women in contemporary Britain, operate transnationally.

My research on educated Bangladeshi women who came to the UK between 1999 and 2007 was borne out of my own lived experience. When I came to the UK in 2007, I was 26 years old and newly married. I left behind one of the key 'problem' countries on the global map, Bangladesh, and became part of a key 'powerhouse' in the world: Britain. Until then, it was perhaps beyond my imagination that life could be led without power cuts, traffic jams, political chaos, poverty and seemingly random deaths. Comfort became second nature in the 'first world'. Only two things made me uncomfortable. First, the job issue. I wanted to contribute to my family's income, and planned to save money for my postgraduate degree. Like many immigrants in Britain, my job search began with applying to basic-level jobs everywhere: in retail, childcare and chain restaurants. I looked at my academic certificates from Bangladesh and felt sorry for them. I was never asked about my academic qualifications in any interview, a complete shift from how I had got jobs in Bangladesh. I was curious about what education meant in Britain and how it was different from its meaning in Bangladesh. This is how education became central to my research, as both a category and an analytical tool.

The second disjuncture was bigger than the first. It was how I was asked to identify myself as a Bangladeshi woman in Britain. Around me were Bangladeshi women with their ancestral roots in rural Sylhet. They had been living in the UK, in this case in Edinburgh, for several decades, spoke little English, did not have jobs and were proud, in their own ways, to be 'British'. Overwhelmed by the new situation and perhaps to keep my morale up, I was busy identifying and projecting my superior 'differences' from the women I encountered daily. It was easy to differentiate myself because I thought we were opposites. Over the years of my nomadic life since then (the majority of which I have invested in my academic self, eventually defining myself as a feminist) I have come to realize that our differences were relational and relative. As Bangladeshi women, we belonged to different strata within and outside of our native land. Transnational migration changed our main contextual frameworks, adding complexity to our mutual relations. I had the necessary privilege to invest in myself; they had none. I could move forward, leaving my Sylheti neighbours where they were. In dealing with a specific group of women in this PhD, I could also reflect on those who were not part of this group. On a personal level, this was an ethical enrichment and an original revelation to the self.

In this introduction, I mainly focus on my participants' 'Bangladeshi' and 'educated' identities, linking these to their ethnic and immigration status in Britain. I first engage with the existing literature on the Bangladeshi ethnic population and Bangladeshi women in the UK, as this is my participants' main ethno-gender identity in the diaspora¹. Having developed the historical view of the Bangladeshi community in Britain, I move to discuss the ways in which the community's population took a new look in the early 21st century. The rules and impacts of skilled migration into Britain will contextualize my participants' migration patterns. I also engage with the developing body of skilled migration literature relevant to Britain. In so doing, I develop the intellectual context for my work, establishing the original way that I bring my participants' 'ethnic' and 'skilled' identities together within a gender framework. I begin this chapter, however, by telling my own story to elucidate why

¹I use the term 'diaspora' as a decentralized multiplicity of geographical, social, economic, cultural and identity shifts across boundaries. My understanding of diaspora is informed by Brah's (1996) sharpening of the term, challenging the fixity of any communal identity. The growth of human mobility across the globe and the diversities of traditional multicultural and mixed societies in the new century increase the fluidity of the rather over-used term 'diaspora'. Vertovec (1997) discusses three main transformations of South Asian diasporas: as social form, as form of consciousness and as cultural production. For Anthias (2011: 244), diaspora is the shifting terrain of 'gender, class, ethnicity and nation' as well as being 'political and value systems' as long as any or all of these are dislodged from one mono-space and give birth to particular political struggle. Later on in the thesis, I use 'diaspora' in a gender specific way to analyse how a group of modern immigrant women in Britain find and build their own spaces of displaced continuation.

I wanted to do research on educated Bangladeshi women in Britain. I will end this chapter with a brief note on how I have organized my thesis.

I chose the extract from Yann Martel's fantasy adventure novel *Life of Pi* (2009 [2001]) that introduces this chapter because of my own experience of moving away from my known horizons. My new life began on April 23, 2007. On that day, I reached Edinburgh from Dhaka via Heathrow. I bade 'farewell' to a host of people, family members as well as friends. One single person in a wonderful, yet unknown airport in Edinburgh welcomed me: my husband, a Bangladeshi PhD student at a university in Britain. As I joined my husband to form a family, I hoped for a better life. Migration was hope, because it enabled me to make the journey from the so-called 'third world' to the 'first world', a part of the globe with a qualitatively better life than many countries offer, and definitely better than my own. Perhaps I fell into the category of middle-class people from a poor country where 'for men and women alike, migration has become a private solution to a public problem' (Hochschild 2003: 187). The problem was not so much being 'pushed' out of the country in the face of extreme necessities and repression. Rather, the 'problem' was being part of a transitional Bangladeshi urban social space in a decade when, even for many middle-class families, so-called distant countries such as Canada, England and Australia seemed to be only a relatively short journey and some hard-pressed investment away. The world around us was changing at an unprecedented pace. Higher education abroad turned into an option both for good and not-so-meritorious students. Overnight, we turned into a generation of IELTS², searching the internet for foreign universities, and seeing organizations such as the British Council as places of hope.

However, many culturally nurtured values in Bangladesh have been slow to change. Going abroad as a single woman is not a possibility for many, and definitely was not for me. The reasons are both cultural and strategic. My own world in Dhaka was the typical, restricted middle-class trio of home, academic institution and part-time earning. Anything beyond that was both unknown and unseen to me. My father believed in progressiveness within limits, and our material resources were limited. My marriage was a fair mixture of personal choice and family approval. When I arrived in the UK in 2007, I thought I would go back to Bangladesh within a year or two, once both of us had foreign degrees: my husband a PhD and I a Master's degree. Life brought possibilities as well as constraints, and Britain turned into one of my homes.

²IELTS is International English Language Testing.

Before arriving in Britain, I had heard that this country had a long historical and migratory connection with Sylhet, a major district in the northeast region of Bangladesh, although I did not know the reasons for this connection. Sylhet and Sylhetis are both typical for and unique in Bangladesh. Sylhet is one of seven divisional districts. This means adjacent districts, sub-districts and villages are brought together under the Sylhet district for administrative purposes. Sylhet has its own dialect, which is a mixture of Assamese and Bangla (Sylhet was part of Asam, India during colonial times). Its hilly areas most prominently bear the country's colonial history, with the tea plantations and indigenous ethnic communities working there. Because of its scenic beauty, Sylhet is a common holiday destination for many Bangladeshis. Sylhet has been modernized by the foreign remittance culture and direct investments of Sylheti migrants to Britain. Gardner (2008) analyses the ways in which the 'Londoni villages' in Sylhet such as Talakpur and Jalagon acquired a semi-urban appearance due to their highways, electricity and other economic developments. Each decade surpassed the grandeur of the last in terms of both material and cultural capital accumulation and consumption. In the 1990s, two or three storied buildings (Gardner 1998) were complemented by the modern amenities common to urban lives. Television and similar means of entertainment in the 2000s were widely consumed. The global technological revolution in the new century brought relatives even closer: the eras of infrequent letters and long-distance phone calls were replaced by cheap and handy mobile phone communication in the later years of the 2000s.

I am not from Sylhet, although some of my cousins are. I lived my life in Dhaka, untouched by the material progress of Sylhetis and Sylhet. While Dhaka has its 'mega-rich' communities, we were not part of them. Like any Bangladeshis, I was/am aware of the extreme contradiction of richness and poverty that Dhaka, like most metropolises, maintains quite efficiently. My direct connection with Sylhetis, and at times with Sylhet, happened after I migrated to Britain. I spent my early days and years after my migration within a Sylheti-majority community in Edinburgh, Scotland. Neither Scotland, nor Edinburgh in particular, contain the most typical of the Sylheti/Bangladeshi ethnic communities in Britain. Amongst the post-World War II unskilled migrants from the Indian sub-continent, Bangladeshis (Sylhetis) were geographically most concentrated in London, and in England generally. I will discuss the history of settlement in the main literature review section. However, almost all early-settler Sylhetis in Britain started their post-migratory foray, often in search of jobs and better luck, from the original centre: a specific part of the London borough of Tower Hamlets. This means that Sylhetis in Britain share certain homogeneity in terms of both their livelihood, material condition and the culture they follow as a Muslim minority in a western country. I talk about Sylhetis at length here because the British image

of Bangladeshis, and to some extent South Asians in general, is heavily (at least institutionally and academically) determined by the early arrivals in post-World War II Britain. One effect I shall go on to discuss is that this (over-)representation of the majority overshadows the subgroups or similar ethnic populations who may not have similar characteristics to Sylhetis. One such group is skilled migrants, in particular educated women.

In the migratory settlement and citizenship context, linear time, e.g. the time of residence in the host country, is institutionally significant. In the most basic way, it gives someone official citizenship status in the new country. The difference between a citizen immigrant and a temporary, unsettled immigrant is often decisive in a welfare state like Britain. Many longstanding Sylhetis have specific kinds of capital in Britain that other Bangladeshis do not have in equal measure. Three things are important here, a) British nationality and a British passport, b) housing (often council allocated) and restaurant ownership, and c) community membership connected with the local council and the state. All of these capitals can be used both positively and negatively. For example, as a student couple, we wanted affordable accommodation, and the property owner wanted some extra money and a decent tenant. This pattern is common for many newcomer Bangladeshis in Britain, Sylhetis and non-Sylhetis alike. Staying with a Sylheti family, I also realized that this arrangement could be a source of unequal power between longstanding immigrants and newcomers. Often, the newcomers and the immigrants with certain issues such as asylum seekers or illegal residents face exploitation because of their unsettled positions in the host society. In such a situation of unequal dependence, knowing the rules of getting along with Sylhetis was as important as (at that time even more than) knowing how to operate in the wider context of the new country. Although I was a privileged immigrant compared to many others, yet in Bangladesh, it is less probable that a person like me (highly educated, born and bred in our standard of middle-class privilege) would have to depend on Sylhetis or their forms of capital in the fundamental way I depended on them in Britain. I understood that Sylhetis in Britain had the benefit of being the early settlers of a particular social space outside Bangladesh. The ways in which Sylhetis strategized and developed their diasporic identities in Britain became the standard with which Bangladeshis in Britain are identified.

I also realized that Sylhetis in Britain are surprisingly uniform in reproducing what we think of as a particular rural lifestyle and way of doing things. I was confused as to whether I had moved forward to an extremely developed country or backward to a village in Bangladesh, though of course materially my environment was British, at least by my standards. Inside a Sylheti household, it seemed as though no time had passed. The hierarchy of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law ruled the interior as it does in extended and relatively less-educated

families in Bangladesh. Women cooked and cared for the children. Except for being customers of the British consumer system, be it in the local superstores or as subscribers to South Asian television channels, the Sylheti women around me had a very limited stake in the wider British world. These kinds of experiences startled me. I was brought up to be a modern and educated woman in our society. To me, coming to Britain was to be another step forward, adding more weight to that identity. I wanted to obtain a higher education; I took the challenge of earning the international tuition fee myself. I wanted to contribute to the family income, and most importantly, I was desperate to get back to my 'working young woman' identity. I applied for job after job. Jobs I had never heard of: kitchen porter in a school canteen, sales assistant in a deli, play worker in a summer school. My life was divided into two parts, each unrelated to the other. At home, it was little Sylhet, outside it was 'real' Britain. In both, I was struggling to find a place of my own.

There was another reality in between the contrast. It was about the increasing numbers of educated Bangladeshis in the local community. My husband shared stories with me of new Bangladeshi PhD students at his university. I knew of Bangladeshis switching their immigration category from student to highly skilled person upon finding a job. Others went back to Bangladesh or to a third country. New wives, educated and urbanized, with dreams of a 'better life' followed their husbands. Occasionally I came across brave Bangladeshi women; single, wage earners as well as students. I was living between the 'old' and the 'new' sets of Bangladeshis within a single diasporic community. At that time, I did not know much about the diverse and intersectional debates within and between feminisms around gender, class, migration and global politics. Still, I think my views had much in common with Brah and Phoenix (2004: 84) who ask: 'What do these lived experiences say to us – living as we do in this space called the west – about our own positionalities, responsibilities, politics, and ethics?' I wanted to tell new stories about Bangladeshi migrant women in the UK, and this personal interest was ultimately the driving force behind my PhD thesis.

What I gathered from my personal experience is just one of the ways that British immigration and the country's immigrant communities have changed in the recent past. In answering 'what is "new" about the new immigrants into Britain', Berkeley, Khan and Ambikaipaker (2006) present an analytical framework to interpret the ways in which immigrants and immigration in Britain have changed in the last thirty years, from the 1970s to the 2000s. The changes are not merely about a numerical proliferation of immigrants in Britain. Rather, the country's very conception of immigration has undergone massive and complex changes. In the 1970s, immigration from the Indian subcontinent meant the continuation of post-World War II unskilled migration. In contrast, in the 'New Britain' of

Tony Blair's 'New Labour' in 1997 the immigration system and approach was modernized and renovated (Somerville 2007). Responding to the rapidity of globalization, Britain moved to capitalise on the global higher education market. Emerging global economies such as China, Taiwan and Hong Kong turned out to be key markets in the internationalization of the British education system. The dominance of South Asian immigrants subsided in both general and specific ways (ONS³ 2011). For educated people and students seeking higher education, Britain turned into a new hub. At the same time, stricter rules were imposed on chain family migration. From the 1960s to 1990s, the majority of migration from Bangladesh to Britain consisted of economic and chain family migration. In the next section, I specifically focus on this historical development of the Bangladeshi ethnic minority community in Britain.

The Bangladeshi Community in Britain

Bangladeshis in Britain are one of its most significant non-white minority ethnic communities. In the 2001 census, Bangladeshis comprised 0.4 percent of the United Kingdom's population, and 14 percent of the total South Asian population in Britain (Peach 2006). In the latest British census of 2011, Bangladeshis were 0.8 percent of the 56.1 million in Britain (ONS 2011). The total Bangladeshi population is about 447, 201 which is lower than both the numbers of Indians and Pakistanis in Britain, and includes longstanding and settled British-Bangladeshis as well as temporary immigrants living in Britain at the time of the census (BBC News 2012). I will focus on two key issues here. Firstly, the migration histories of early migrants, and secondly, the socio-economic position that the community generally occupies in Britain.

Early Migration and Settlement Patterns

Bangladesh has a similar history to other New Commonwealth countries where male workers from the Indian sub-continent entered Britain. Low-skilled and semi-skilled workers filled economic labour gaps after the Second World War, as Britain headed toward a stronger economic position. Randall Hansen (2003) provides a picture of post-1940s Britain, when the country first experienced a massive inflow of 'non-white' immigrants resulting in a multi-ethnic Britain:

³Office for National Statistics in Britain, used in its official acronym ONS.

In 1948, for reasons unrelated to migration, the British government had adopted legislation that transformed all colonial British subjects into citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies, confirming their right to enter the UK and to enjoy all social, political and economic rights. From the early to mid-1950s, the British economy, though unstable, delivered full employment and labour shortages resulted. Following classic 'pull' incentives, first West Indians, then Indians and Pakistanis, began to migrate to the UK (2003: 26-27).

Many commentators, including Hansen, have described Britain's transition into a multicultural country as an undesired, unanticipated and unprecedented consequence of the 1950s open-door informal migration (Somerville, Srisikandarajah and Lotorre 2009). Public opinion was against overseas mass-immigration and this was accentuated by the race riots of 1959. At the same time, the 1950s Conservative government in power, and the opposition Labour party, were divided about the issue of non-white migration (Hansen 2003: 28). The period in question was altogether conflicting for the nation. The complex result of the Second World War for Britain, winning the war but losing the Empire (in particular the decolonization of the Indian subcontinent), formed the desire for a new sense of nationhood and identity in the global sphere. In some former colonies such as Jamaica and Trinidad, the physical departure of the British created sudden unemployment in the sugar plantations. West Indians arrived in the 'Mother country' to seek their fortune. The newly divided India and Pakistan experienced a frenzy of internal mass-migration, but only a small portion of the population arriving in Britain were linked by chain migration (Panayi 1999). Once the process of overseas migration started, it proliferated quickly. The introduction of the first immigration legislation in 1962 controlled this mass flow. It made a voucher system compulsory for the New Commonwealth countries, meaning that without a British passport, one needed to have documentation of job eligibility in specific semi-skilled areas (Panayi 1999: 48).

Hansen (2003) did not include Bangladeshis in his analysis, although the actual history of Bangladeshis in Britain is as ancient as that of South Asians more generally. In her studies of South Asian communities in Britain between 1700 -1947, Visram (1986) mentions a sizable presence of Sylheti seamen (lascars) in London in the early 1920s, who worked on the trading ships between India and England from the onset of colonialism. Although not permitted, a good number of lascars settled in the East End of London. 'East Bengal', the Bangladeshi part of the undivided Bengal under the British Raj, was a regular source for

recruiting lascars from key ports such as Chittagong (now in Bangladesh) and Calcutta (now in India) (Carey and Shukur 1985; Visram 1986). The presence of Sylhetis in Britain originated from these earliest Asian settlers. It created a homogeneous community and kinship tie, 'pulling' Sylheti men from villages when labour migration was called for from these regions into 1950s and 1960s' Britain. Despite this early presence, Bangladeshis were only belatedly recognized as a migrant group because Bangladesh itself is a relatively new nation. The country established its independence from Pakistan in December 1971. Until then, its population were known as 'East Pakistanis', and in a foreign land such as Britain, all Bangladeshis counted as Pakistanis until the 1981 British census (Peach 1990; Eade, Vamplew and Peach 1996).

The 1980s was arguably the decade when Bangladeshis emerged as a known subject in the British academic landscape. Carey and Sukur (1985) provide basic information and describe the overall pattern of the ways in which Bangladeshis became a part of England, first through the lascars, then through specific village kinship migration from Sylhet. Finally, large-scale family reunions started from the late 1970s and continued throughout the 1980s. These authors note that 'although Bengali (or at least its Sylheti variant) is the most widely spoken language after English in Inner London' (1985: 405), there was little knowledge about the community. Simultaneously, a report on 'Race-Relations and Immigration', focusing on Bangladeshis in Britain, was prepared by the Federation of Bangladeshi Associations in the UK (House of Commons Session 1985-1986, 1986). This report takes a broader as well as a general view of Bangladeshis across the country. It indicates that by the mid-1980s, Bangladeshis were mainly concentrated in the following areas: West Scotland, the North West, the North East, the West Midlands, Greater London and the South as well as once-industrial towns in England such as Oldham and Bradford (1986: 87). Bangladeshis, as noted and predicted, would be an inseparable part of how Britain appears today, through the Muslim community, and through their restaurant businesses.

Alam's (1988) pamphlet is a singular work that includes the main three categories of Bangladeshi immigrants in the 1980s: the professional elites, the educated, and the unskilled class. Carey and Sukur (1985) challenged the homogeneous description of the community, stressing the intergenerational differences between the first generation and the 1980s' second-generation Bangladeshi youth. The hybrid identity of second-generation Muslim youths became the most attended to topic of study, in particular in the early 2000s, due to the complex global and local politics. In contrast, relatively little attention was given to the kind of heterogeneity that Alam deals with in his qualitative study. The Bangladeshi community is internally differentiated not only because of generational differences, but also, and often

more so, because the community maintains a social parallelism between the educated and the uneducated. Post-1980s concerning Sylhetis and non-Sylhetis have mainly focused on the political struggle of ownership over Tower Hamlets between the Dhaka elites and the Sylhetis (Eade 1990; Choudhury 1993; Gardner 2002; Garbin 2005). In the 1980s, the struggle was similar to Bangladesh's own post-war conflict around national identity, Islam and secularism. The elite group in Britain wanted to establish a secular 'Bangladeshi identity', emphasizing the Bangla language, modern enlightenment and a middle-class ethos. In contrast, the Sylhetis prioritized their zonal and religious minority identity. Sylhetis were the original and the most extended inhabitants of Tower Hamlets. Therefore, the purpose of their community-based political voice was to find a way forward on the issues that affected them the most, such as the racialized distribution of housing, poverty, racism and social exclusion.

The dominance of Sylhetis in this political battle was crucial in many ways. Firstly, it magnified, as Eade and Garbin (2002) note, 'the difference between secularism and Islamism' (147) within the Bangladeshi community in Britain. Secondly, the pro-Islam politics dictated what kind of relation Bangladeshis could have with Pakistanis in Britain. Pakistan and Bangladesh had reconciled their bitter post-colonial history. The war of independence gave birth to a binary position on Pakistan and Pakistanis within Bangladesh. Any kind of alliance with Pakistan was and still is strongly associated with the Islamist fundamentalists and the groups of war criminals who directly allied with the Pakistani army in the war. In the 1980s, the prioritization of a Muslim identity over the secular in diaspora meant that Bangladeshis fell under the larger Muslim banner and built a stronger ethno-religious minority position in the UK. Many critics in more recent times trace these local religious/political dynamisms back to the complicated global context of the simultaneous rise of Islamization, Islamophobia and religious militancy in both western and non-western countries (Eade and Garbin 2002). This is mainly because many so-called Bangladeshi community leaders in Britain have utilized Islam as a tool to develop radical belief amongst the youth males of their communities for generations now, and at the same time invested to develop structural Islamization in their homeland in the forms of madrassas, mosques. Financial donations and Islamic preaching has become an even bigger form of power in a poor country when people living in rich and powerful countries have directly assisted these. In this way, directly and indirectly the many powerful male members of Bangladeshi community in Britain contributed in the globalization and localization of Islam as a religious-political power.

Socio-Economic Conditions

Amongst the main post-World-War II non-white immigrant communities in Britain, Bangladeshis occupy the lowest socio-economic position. The reasons are directly associated with British deindustrialization in the 1970s and 1980s. In his oral history of the early Sylheti settlers, Choudhury describes the economic struggle of many Sylhetis:

The Bangladeshis began to lose their jobs from heavy industries. Those who were young enough to learn tailoring went to the East End of London, those who were older tried half-heartedly to become kitchen porters in the Indian restaurants, all were on much lower wages. Others stayed in the industrial cities where they had been living and they accepted whatever job turned up, otherwise claimed un-employment benefits (1993: 155).

The 1991 census, using individual ethnic categories for the first time, gave a fuller picture of the short-term and long-term impact of the ways Bangladeshis encountered and lived with poverty in Britain. Poverty itself was identified as the sharpest difference between Bangladeshis and not only the white population, but also other South Asian minorities, namely Indians and Pakistanis. Eade, Vamplew and Peach (1996) identify some of the factors that contributed to the cycle of poverty and impoverishment typical of Bangladeshis:

This distinctiveness relates to the rapid and continuing growth of population, the very high proportion of young people, the large family size, the concentration of residents within greater London, and especially Tower Hamlets, the high degree of segregation, the low socio-economic status and the dependence on local authority housing (1996: 151).

The Fourth National Ethnic Minority Survey 1997 further emphasised the existence of structural limitations and the extent of poverty within the community. This work also highlighted that Bangladeshis were the least socially integrated and the most culturally 'conservative' minority in 1990s Britain (Modood, Berthoud, Lakey, Nazroo, *et al.* 1997). This finding was particularly revealing because it showed the 1980s and 1990s second-generation British Bangladeshis having a rather limited social world around them. Poverty and social seclusion became the main topics of academic discussion about Bangladeshis in Britain in the late 1990s and 2000s (see for example, Platt 2002, 2005).

Intergenerational change in the community was much discussed in the early 2000s. The high proportion of children in the community, as identified in the 1991 census, turned into the largest-ever British-born Bangladeshi cohort around the early 2000s. This youth cohort gradually demanded to be identified as British in their own right. The race riots in July 2001 in Muslim concentrated areas of the Northern towns of Bradford, Oldham and Burnley between Asian (Bangladeshi and Pakistani) and white British youth gangs articulated the long-term anger of the minority Muslim youths who revolted against their taken-for-granted minority position (Casciani 2001; Kundnani 2001; Eade and Garbin 2002). This particular outburst exposed the level of material, cultural and social segregation between white and non-white social groups at a crucial juncture of Britain's transition from the 1990s to the 2000s. Bangladeshis, being the poorest and the most highly segregated, became the topic of more intense political, media and public, as well as academic debate. As spatial as well as social segregation was identified as one of the key reasons for the clashes between white and South Asian youths, dialogues and cultural sharing at community levels were prescribed as the way forward. A number of pilot projects in places such as Birmingham and Oldham targeted Bangladeshis for better integration with the wider community. Britain adopted 'Community Cohesion' as its key strategy for managing diversity within its increasingly expansive multicultural society (Cantle 2005).

Today, in the second decade of the 21st century, the situation of Sylheti Bangladeshis in Britain is quite different from that of the early migrants and the generations of the 1980s. Sylheti Bangladeshis gradually attained the benefits of being part of an advanced welfare state. The community in general progressed in certain fundamental ways; namely in attaining education and in integrating with the wider society economically, politically, socially as well as culturally. The majority of the community's older generation did not have any formal education. This prevented their wider participation beyond certain routinized fields. In the context of intergenerational improvement, the role and position of Bangladeshi women in Britain is a key concern. I will proceed to discuss the ways in which Bangladeshi women appeared in British ethnic-minority and gender literature.

Bangladeshi Women in the UK

Large-scale female migration from Bangladesh to Britain took place against the backdrop of the previous 'sojourner' male migrants' decisions of settlement. Hence women from rural Sylhet became the 'mass' female migrants from Bangladesh more than thirty years ago. It

needs to be noted that it was not until the 1970s that Muslim migrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh (at that time East Pakistan), came to terms with the fact that their temporary plan of accumulating wealth in a foreign country was actually a life decision: they were unlikely to return to their countries of origin. Women from rural Sylhet started to come to Britain in the 1970s as dependents of their husbands and, to a lesser extent, of their fathers (Brah 1987). This process continued throughout the 1980s. Choudhury (1993) notes that in the 1960s, only highly educated and professional migrants from Dhaka travelled with their families. In 1971 a group of women formed the earliest Bangladeshi women's group, the 'Bangladeshi Women's Association', in London (Eade, Ullah Ahmed, Iqbal and Hey 2006). This association played a significant role across the UK in raising funds and awareness about the then on-going war of liberation in Bangladesh. Individual oral history projects within different local Bangladeshi communities suggest that many of the earliest female community builders were non-Sylheti, educated women (see, for example BBC Gloucestershire Local 2003).

The context of Sylheti women's transnational migration was a complex interplay of three factors: their condition of exit from their own country, the changes of British immigration laws, and the growth of South Asian communities in Britain. In his 2001 census analysis, Peach (2006) notes that it was only after the enactment of the first Commonwealth Immigration Act in 1962⁴, that South Asian men seriously thought about bringing their wives and families to the UK. This early thought turned into a necessity with the proclamation of the 1968 immigration law. Attempting to control the massive inflow of minority boys (mainly aged 14-15) from South Asia, this law proclaimed that a parent should accompany the child's entry (Commonwealth Immigrant Bill 1968; Choudhury 1993). Many Sylheti women had to follow the orders of their husbands and accompany their male children who were summoned by the adult male relatives to work in the then newly established Bangladeshi catering business in various parts of Britain. Building on the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act, a 1971 immigration law imposed a time limit on immigrants' movement outside the country. For many men, permanent settlement proved to be a more rational decision than being caught out by the continuous tightening of these laws (Choudhury 1993; Gardner and Shukur 1994). Many Sylheti mothers left behind their daughters and pre-adolescent sons in Bangladesh, only to find that patriarchal culture and

⁴As mentioned earlier, the first Commonwealth Act in 1962 introduced the 'work voucher' system for any immigrant who did not hold a British passport. In Britain's post World War II period, this act was the first truly regulatory step towards controlling immigrants. Many subsequent immigration acts in Britain, including the most recent ones around skilled migrants, were based on this 'work permit' principle.

racist immigration laws prohibited their return. Gardner (2002) narrates how ‘transnational motherhood’ was the only option for many first-generation Sylheti mothers. Even after several decades, many women in her study talked about the children they had to leave behind, whereas men did not.

The 1970s were also when Bangladesh as a nation passed through one of the most critical periods in its history. Post-independence havoc leading to a prolonged famine in 1974, forced rural, agriculture-based people to find alternative means of survival (Kabeer 2000). Many middle-aged Sylheti respondents in Philipson, Ahmed and Latimer’s (2003) work recollected these days of poverty, when leaving the country was the only option – for better or for worse. These conditions were complemented by the gradual change within the recipient country, which became more tolerant of minority cultures and religions. For Gardner (2002), it was the ‘increasing Islamization of British space over the 1970s and 1980s’ (109) that enabled Muslim community leaders to send a positive signal to male members that Muslim women (and children) could live in this foreign country. This last point needs to be understood within the context that by then, many Bangladeshi men in the UK were already aging.⁵ Families often had only male members of various age groups and generations; they came from the same village, lived in ‘multi-occupied housing – often as a *biraderi* (brotherhood or clan) group’ (Peach 2006: 136). Sylheti women were called on to take up caring duties for the already-settled male family members: fathers-in-law, husbands and sons.

Bangladeshi women arrived in the UK at a point of significant change in Britain. Identity politics, including anti-racist, gay, and lesbian movements, challenged the advanced society’s core values. Women’s movements and feminisms turned into contested political sites of differences. British academic feminisms (until then dominated by white women, often middle-class) heard the voices of the ‘others’, and changed forever (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983; Parmar and Amos 1984; Bhavnani and Coulson 1986). Brah’s (1987) first survey of South Asian women, that included the then newcomers from Bangladesh, was part of this project of reclaiming identity and challenging minority cultural stereotyping. Brah’s perspective offered an intersection between gender, race and religion. In her later works, Brah (1993, 1996) argued that in the 1980s and 1990s British South Asian and Muslim women were situated in multiple marginal positions, both within their communities and outside. From ‘South Asian’ women, Brah moved towards ‘Muslim’ women, partly because they were different from, for example, the Sikh women, both in terms of their

⁵The 1991 census reports that the Bangladeshi husbands and wives had an average age gap of at least ten years (Eade, Vamplew and Peach 1996).

migration history and the conditions of settlement and partly because Muslim women up until then were largely invisible in the host country's labour market. From then on, almost all research about Bangladeshi women focused on issues of economic, cultural and individual constraints, choices and progress, mainly within the intergenerational framework of Sylheti mothers and their British-born daughters. Education is the key intergenerational catalyst of difference for British-Bangladeshi women of Sylheti origin. Therefore, I shall now discuss the existing literature on Bangladeshi ethnic women in Britain in relation to three topics directly relevant to my research: education, employment and family.

Education

There is a common understanding that early migrant men and women from Bangladesh came to Britain with little or no literacy. Their rural background, their very limited competence in English, and the men's focus on unskilled work justified this rather generalized claim of the early generation's lack of education. Sylheti Bangladeshi women leaving Bangladesh in the early 1970s and 1980s did not grow up in the current phase of the country's rural literacy development. Thus, it is probable that many early migrants had never been to school, or left school before attaining any qualifications.

Literacy, however, is a complex matter. It is as much an individual skill as a cultural practice specific to context and tradition (Blackledge 2000: 3). When the factors of illiteracy and literacy interact with unequal power relations between natives and immigrants, 'illiteracy' might be a parameter created by the former simply because some immigrants are less competent at abiding by the host country's standards. Therefore although most first-generation Sylheti Bangladeshis came with relatively little education, there was a probability the issue was less about complete illiteracy and more about the absence of adequate academic qualifications and the ability to communicate in English. For example, in dealing with Bangladeshi children's reading habits in the home environment, Blackledge (2000) considers the mothers' (who came to Britain between 1978-1987) self-reported academic skills such as reading and writing in both Bangla and English. Only two out of ten women called themselves illiterate, because they had never been to school in Bangladesh. Most of the women reported their 'reading' and 'writing' skills in Bangla as 'good' or 'very good' with more than five years of schooling in Bangladesh, but none had confidence in English. This suggests that the established picture of illiteracy among Bangladeshis was more about the English language than its literal meaning: the inability to read or write.

After the mass-migration of the 1970s and 1980s, the initial investigations of young Bangladeshi women's education focussed on their school education in Britain. During the 1980s and 1990s, Muslim communities were examined because of their resistance to girls' education (Joly 1987; Dwyer 1993). Under the category 'Muslim', Pakistanis were the central focus of interest, and it was assumed that the case would be similar for Bangladeshis. For example, in an early work on Muslim women in West Yorkshire, Afshar (1989) shows how in ones and twos, British-born Muslim women were becoming the 'first' in their local communities to undertake education beyond school level. However, only Pakistani families were included in her qualitative research. Muslim girls' school education also became part of the debate about whether establishing 'single-sex' schools could regenerate gender as well as social segregation between and within the communities (Dwyer 1993; Modood 1997b: 323).

Not much is known about the second-generation Bangladeshis of the 1990s who had high levels of education. It is interesting that Eade (1994), in interrogating this hybrid generation's imagined social identity, called his twenty highly-educated second-generation Bangladeshi men and women of East London 'ordinary people'. Ten of his female respondents were born in Sylhet but brought up in London, and all had Bachelor degrees. Lack of research makes it difficult to discern to what extent such a high level of education was 'ordinary' within a community that was better known for its lack of education. Nonetheless, it indicated a clear change in the community's academic landscape. Studies in the late 1990s show that once the initial decades of disadvantages and cultural gaps had passed, South Asian men and women were more likely to stay in full-time education than their white counterparts upon finishing their school education (Modood 1997b: 76-80, Modood 1998). Modood (1998: 32) further noted that this investment in education was particularly important for the segment of the population who had little academic capital during the period of mass migration: Bangladeshis and Pakistanis.

Studies of Bangladeshi women's involvement in British post-compulsory higher education showed consistent strong performances of young women in the General Certificate School Examination (GCSE) (Kabeer 2000; Haque 2000; Platt 2002). Among the main South Asian groups in Britain, Bangladeshi women are the most recent to integrate widely into British higher education. This led to special interest in British-Bangladeshi women's level of education. There has been a shift in research on women's higher education in the post-2000s. In-depth qualitative interviews in various local communities served to help understand the interrelatedness of 'ethnicity, class, gender and, in this case, higher education' (Ahmad 2001: 142). Ahmad's (2001) own qualitative work on South Asian Muslim women (ten of Pakistani, three of Bangladeshi and two of Indian ethnic background) in two universities in

London is a point of departure from the previous emphasis on women's education in relation to employment (for example Brah 1987, 1993, 1996). In contrast to Ahmad's (2001) central metropolitan location, Dale, Shaheen, Karla and Fieldhouse (2002a) used the example of the de-industrialized, economically underprivileged town of Oldham to provide an insight into how Muslim women responded to the overall shifts in educational attainment among ethnic minorities. This project was related to employment (2002b); however, the theme of women's education was also interrogated in detail. These works confirmed Brah's argument that education could be a ladder of empowerment for Muslim, in this case Bangladeshi, women in Britain.

Their gendered position within a cultural and structural minority accentuated Bangladeshi women's commitment to education. In their study of South Asian women in the British higher education system, Bagguley and Hussain (2007) found that their Bangladeshi participants were quite dissimilar from their Indian counterparts in terms of their expectations surrounding higher education. Indian participants, in common with white British students, saw higher education as a 'natural progression', related to their individual career. In contrast, Bangladeshi women had more 'complex and overlapping' aspirations (Bagguley and Hussain 2007: 17) surrounding their education. Structurally, higher education was expected to enable them to compete in the job market and to minimize the influence of the 'ethnic penalty', or the more recent 'ethno-religious' penalty (Khattab, Johnston, Modood, and Sirkeci 2011). Education is strongly associated with the modernization of gender roles within the family after marriage. Many Bangladeshi second-generation women had to grow up living in households where their mothers had very limited life choices, without the possibility of education or employment.

Drawing on that background, one can argue that for Bangladeshi women, having an education equalled renegotiating their position in relation to the cultural patriarchy of their community. Therefore marriage, family roles and community cultures appear to be inseparable aspects of their educational investment and outcome. As such, Bhopal (2000) examined whether education gave South Asian women better 'choice' concerning their marriage. Bhopal herself is essentialist in how she categorizes her participants: 'traditional women' meant the ones who were less educated, consented to arranged (often forced) marriage and did not resist dowry practice. 'Independent women' were the opposite: highly educated, and resistant, not only to arranged marriage, but also occasionally to marriage altogether, preferring to adopt a western lifestyle of cohabitation with their male partners. In the 21st century, when young British Muslim women prefer to shape a modern identity based on the Muslim *ummah* (Begum 2008), one needs to ask whether educated Bangladeshi

women still seek to embrace a western lifestyle in the ways Bhopal imagines in her work. In their focus group discussion with young British-born Bangladeshi women, Phillipson, Ahmed and Latimer (2003) found that their respondents resisted the prospect of being coerced into the controversial 'forced' marriages allegedly prevalent in Muslim communities. At the same time, there was a certain commitment to live within the gendered norms of their cultural and religious boundaries. 'Islamic marriage', by which they meant a combination of parental preference and personal consent in marriage, was viewed as the most suited for Muslim-Bangladeshi ethnic women.

Bangladeshi women are entering and completing British higher education at a rate that was impossible to contemplate perhaps as little as two decades ago. Borne out of their marginalized positions, young women show a resolve to continue, and to do better than their predecessors in their education. In their study of young students and their higher education choices in London, Reay, Davis, David and Ball (2001) showed that while a Bangladeshi man's university experience is dominated by localism and material constraints, a young Bangladeshi woman belonging to a similar working-class background wanted to be 'better than the best', and to outstrip any form of multiple discrimination. Yet cultural barriers still rule over young girls' and women's individual choices and collective possibilities. Moreover, although British higher education has gone beyond the tokenized inclusion of diversity and is indeed now a 'mass education system', the system is still tied to its wider context of operation. The host country's middle-class background is almost a prerequisite to be part of the traditionally white-dominated elite institutions.

Many Bangladeshi second or even third generations are perhaps the first in the family as well as in the community to take their education up to university level. Without the support of background cultural capital and a very strong family economy, many Bangladeshi youths are making a reasonable compromise around their academic career. Since 2011, British higher education has been at the centre of debate from every quarter of society on the issue of the unprecedented fee hike for home students. There is discussion on whether this hike will widen or constrain the boundaries of British higher education (Shepard 2010; Williams and Vasagar 2010).⁶ Bangladeshi women, struggling with their working-class background and subordinate gender position, might have to face the old dilemma, marriage or higher education, in a much more acute way, given that both demand large amounts of family investment.

⁶The British higher education funding system saw huge changes after the 2010 general election. The coalition government of the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat parties agreed to increase the tuition fee to three times its prior level, resulting in a jump from £3,000 to £9,000 for undergraduate study in 2012/2013. For more see, for instance, Wyness (2011).

Employment

Bangladeshi women's economic history in Britain is one of dependence, on men or on the state, but mostly on both. In the 1991 and 2001 censuses, only 22 and 27 percent of Bangladeshi women respectively were contributing to the national economy, meaning that an overwhelming 70 percent of women were fully economically dependent (Blackwell and Guinea-Martin 2005; Bell and Jo 2008). Semi-skilled Bangladeshi women entered the British labour market in a decade when the country had its first massive shift from an industrial to a developing service economy. The rapid shut-down of heavy industry and the 'Thatcherite' makeover of the economy during the 1980s resulted in a prolonged recession with high levels of unemployment (Blackwell and Guinea-Martin 2005; Spence 2011: 1). This had a double negative impact on Bangladeshi women. Firstly, Bangladeshi women missed the opportunity for factory work that many less-skilled women in previous immigrant generations, such as Indians and Caribbeans, had accessed. Secondly, the end of the routinized industrial work era and the emergence of privatized advanced customer 'care and service' occupations meant jobs were skilled. Any job needed a minimum level of English-language communication skills to serve customers. The job market itself and the emphasis placed on certain skills symbolized the uselessness of Bangladeshi women, who with little education and more importantly with little English, internalized that the country and its system were too different and too advanced for them.

Within this unhelpful structure, the community's patriarchal culture found little opportunity or reason to be flexible for women. Kabeer (2000) notes that despite poverty, many Bangladeshi women in Tower Hamlets had to maintain the 'honour' symbol of homemaker, taking 'home-based' sewing work as the only option to deal with the situation. High levels of male unemployment ironically exacerbated female joblessness. Structurally, as Modood (1997c) argues, the British welfare security system provided better financial support to families with complete unemployment (i.e. with both adults out of the labour market). Many Bangladeshi women were denied the possibility of earning so that families did not fall out of this safety net. In a more general sense, culturally women had to have permission from their husbands to do anything, including getting to know the country and the skills necessary to work. Many Sylheti women's experiences were found in retrospect, once the oral narrative technique was widely used to record the stories of the community elderly. Various local projects within and outside London represented the ways in which many Sylheti women had to bear most of the cultural, structural burden imposed on them. As one woman told her story of what it meant to be a Bangladeshi woman in the 1980s in Britain:

[. . .] I became a member of the Surma Centre (BWA) . . . I used to learn English but my husband did not like it very much. After [a] few lessons my husband told me, ‘I did not bring you to this country to learn English’. [. . .] I do feel my husband’s preventing me to going out, meeting good people has prevented me from going forward. I wanted to meet people from other countries and cultures. I understand we are Bengali but I love learning new things, good things but my husband wanted me to stay at home, cook and clean. I can’t stay at home, it makes me depressed. I can make friends easily. But my husband never liked it . . . but now he regrets (Bengali Workers’ Association Oral History Project. Accessed 2 August 2013).

This, in a nutshell, is the story of first-generation Sylheti women. They were doubly disadvantaged due to the lack of support in both capital and culture. The majority did not have the capital to engage in economic activity. Rigid cultural patriarchy imprisoned them in the four walls of their houses. The fear of the wife going ‘western’ exacerbated this masculine domination. As the extract notes, like women, men also understood the consequences of the single family income only much later, when poverty turned into a second destiny. Bangladeshi households are now marked by the highest level of elderly poverty (*How Fair is Britain?* 2011). Older and widowed women, women with mental and physical vulnerability, and women in care, were the worst sufferers of these structural and cultural limitations that determined their life trajectories in Britain (see Barn 2005; Ahmed and Jones 2008).

In contrast to the majority, educated Bangladeshi women in the 1980s and 1990s tended to be employed. In the 1990s, when highly educated women only constituted a tiny proportion of Bangladeshi women living in Britain, the percentage of these women in employment was as high as 74 per cent (Modood 1997c: 88). In her reflexive piece on belonging to an ambivalent ‘middle class’, Maher Anjum (1999) writes about the atypicality of her family’s position in the 1980s Bangladeshi community in London. Both her parents were doctors, and Anjum notes that her mother had a better career than her father. In more recent decades, the large number of British-educated Bangladeshi women generated the expectation that the correlation between education and employment would be persistent. This issue gave birth to a wealth of literature about the historically least engaged ethnic minority women’s (i.e. Pakistani and Bangladeshi) paid work, plans and prospects in the 2000s.

Many studies in the early to mid-years of the last decade confirmed that if educated, Bangladeshi women wanted to take on jobs (Dale, Fieldhouse, Shaheen and Kalra 2002b; Bhavnani 2006; Aston, Hülya, Page and Willimson 2007; Buckner and Yeandle 2007). There are both general and ethnic patterns of Bangladeshi women's paid work. Without higher education or university degrees, Bangladeshi women, like all women in Britain, worked in wage-earning jobs mainly in 'feminine' areas such as retail and childcare. There is evidence that many young women still continue the tradition of informal earning within the community. Sewing and handicrafts have always been women's sources of income (see Wigfield 2007). Interestingly, higher education often accentuates this commitment to work for the community. Bagguley and Hussain (2007) found that Bangladeshi (and Pakistani) women prefer to study traditional professional disciplines such as medicine and law because these subjects are tied to careers most helpful for the communities. These authors note that even with these degrees, Bangladeshi women are less visible at the top levels of the professions. Structurally, Bangladeshi women still lack the 'middle-class' capital and connections (a good university, strong network, confidence based on having the best things) that are essential to move vertically in any job sector in the British labour market.

Employment was a crucial step for British-Bangladeshi women's autonomy. Paid work is a way to establish a socially recognized identity. A few of Dale, Fieldhouse, Shaheen and Kalra's (2002b) Bangladeshi unmarried respondents emphasized their sense of independence, both economically and socially, by becoming a 'working woman'. In contrast, married respondents explained paid jobs as being a way of achieving a better bargaining position in the family, to reduce the power gap in their private relationships. Studies also indicate that the centrality of the family and being a mother did not shift to a noticeable extent in Bangladeshi women's priorities after being married (Dale 2005). Therefore, women's paid work after marriage was a negotiated affair decided by cultural factors such as their husband's and extended family's consent, and also by structural factors such as the availability of affordable childcare (Aston, Hülya, Page and Willimson 2007).

In 2014, Bangladeshi ethnic women's employment structures present a complex scenario. This is partly because the community is diverse: between 2011 and 2013, Bangladeshi women's (between 16-64 years) employment decreased by 0.4 per cent; the second highest decrease after the 'other' category (Labour Market Status by Ethnic Group 2013). What is worrying for the future is that the community has 'older' as well as 'younger' women between 16-64 years who are not in the labour market (Simpson, Purdam, Tajar, Fieldhouse *et al.* 2006: 11). In their work on Somali and Bangladeshi women in Tower Hamlets, Kabeer and Ainsworth (2011) show that a significant number of the community's unemployed

women migrated recently as the brides of British-born Bangladeshi men. In addition, the latest economic recession, from 2008, caused a new worry for women's (and in particular, ethnic women's) positions in the labour market. It is argued that unlike the previous decades of recession, this new one is particularly damaging for women because of the increasing budget cuts in the welfare and public sectors, which still are the main employment sectors for women in general, and minority women in particular (Mcquid, Edgell and Hollywood 2010; Taylor 2011). For Bangladeshi women the disadvantage is double. Budget cuts in community sectors can hinder their access to applied skills and training such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). In a competitive and constricting job market with increasing numbers of qualified people, women without qualifications struggle to find jobs regardless of their choice to be economically active or otherwise.

Family

As noted earlier, Sylheti Bangladeshi women came to Britain to perform their house-wifely roles. By the time the majority of Sylheti women arrived in Britain, the communities there had fallen into a cycle of poor income and rising poverty. Managing a large family in the 'worst and older council properties' (Eade and Garbin 2002:139), Bangladeshi women's family roles perhaps bore more similarities to those in working-class Victorian Britain than their contemporary equivalents. Bangladeshi women's family lives have been explored within the multiple axes of cultural, structural and circumstantial difficulties within the British welfare system. Reasons associated with complex cultural and structural limitations, extreme forms of oppressions such as domestic violence was highly prevalent at the poverty-stricken Bangladeshi community, as Hazel Summerfield's (1993) one of the earliest works on Bangladeshi and Somali women in Tower Hamlets suggested. The Sylheti Bangladeshi women's positions within their families and beyond can fall within this on-going feminist debate about migration and the paradoxical gender outcomes for immigrant women (Pedraza 1991; Buijs 1993; Pessar 1999; Kofman, Phizacklea, Roghuram and Sales 2000).

Many migrant women from poor and collective societies evaluate the outcome of migration in terms of their children's, or their family's collective welfare, putting others' agendas before their own. For example, in a number of social policy and health-related works on Sylheti women in Tower Hamlets and elsewhere, Bangladeshi mothers expressed their dissatisfaction over a range of issues affecting their family lives (Qureshi, Berrige and Wenman 2000; Barn 2002; Jayaweera, D'Souza and Jo 2005; Dhar 2007; Dyson, Gorin,

Hooper and Cabral 2009). These issues ranged from insufficient family income, the cultural gap between parents and children and the increased cost of living, to the fear of children becoming 'western'. However, in almost all cases, Bangladeshi women usually preferred their lives in Britain to that in Bangladesh, often due to their children. Free treatment from the National Health Service (NHS), children living and being educated in a better country, or often the ability to seek external help such as that from social workers in cases of family violence were typically seen as the benefits of being in an advanced country. In a western country, these are basic 'human rights' and the foundation from which everybody should operate. For many non-western women, such as Bangladeshi women, these fundamental abstract differences between 'first' and 'third' world countries are often more significant than their individual gains such as financial autonomy or career success. These issues stressed the necessity to understand and evaluate immigrant women's agencies differently from that of a western perspective. There are recurrent references that despite living in poverty and without any obvious source of power, Sylheti-Bangladeshi women, in particular when they are mothers and elderly, develop instrumental agencies according to their family demands.

This last point about women's contextual as well as negotiated agency has achieved renewed academic attention. This is in response to the continuous political racialization of certain migratory categories, most notably migration related to transnational marriage where in communities such as the Bangladeshi one there is a long tradition of importing a bride or groom from their country of origin. Drawing on an on-going research project on 'Bengali diaspora', Claire Alexander (2013) revisits the complex circumstances under which first-generation Sylheti women arrived in the UK, and the ways in which this trend continued over the decades, increasingly mediated and restricted by the immigration system and state policy. Alexander challenges the stereotyped notion that ethnic minority women were/are the ahistorical bearers of ethnic 'community' and alien 'culture'. Rather, she considers transnational marriage within a global perspective, an individual and collective strategy within which women's position is significant and active. Previously, Gardner (2002) made similar kinds of argument in reference to the earliest generations of Sylheti women in the 1960s and 1970s, and the ways in which female migration was significant to deal with the circumstantial needs, whether to deal with the immigration restrictions, or to maximize the family economy. Despite the consistent interrogation of Bangladeshi women's family positions and myriad of problems, I would argue that this issue is still under-researched, particularly for the 21st century's British-Bangladeshi men and women, and their post-marital relationships. In his early work, Choudhury (1993) mentioned that many second-generation Bangladeshi women (educated in the British system) had to give up their paid work as soon

they were married. This was partly due to their position as family wives and partly because most of the husbands were involved in the catering business that involved work at anti-social hours. Consequently, women had to sacrifice their jobs. It is necessary to investigate how much these issues are still at play and to what extent they are changing for the current generations who are, undoubtedly, the most privileged ones of any generation of Bangladeshi women in Britain to date.

With regard to first-generation Bangladeshi women, the resurgence in reframing the past in a dynamic new framework allows giving a 'voice' to Bangladeshi women who are relatively newly arrived, whose histories are still evolving, and who embody the changing times within their country of origin. My research opens up the possibility of developing a new set of intersectional routes of inquiry: of gender, education, capital, class, diaspora and social agency that has never been used for Bangladeshi women. In the next section, I will discuss the issue of Britain's changing immigration climate, a topic that I have touched upon before. I will argue that acknowledging these changes in rules is fundamental to understanding the ways that settled ethnic minority communities such as Bangladeshis in Britain have experienced unprecedented diversity as the result of a rapid influx of educated migrants.

Skilled Migrants in the UK

Britain has always attracted various kinds of white and non-white immigrants from Europe, as well as from the rest of the world. However, unlike countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States, Britain did not have a separate and exclusive skilled migrant pathway until the global competition for skills and knowledge grew fiercer. Britain, like other key European economic powers such as Germany and the Netherlands, introduced a separate skilled migrant immigration system at the beginning of the 21st century. In two main stages, Britain brought massive changes in its post-World War II immigration system for the non-Europeans. First, in the late 1990s, Britain targeted international students for its higher education institutions. This step involved a certain relaxation of the previous rules around student migration. This included the withdrawal of the bond signature that obliged an international student to leave immediately after course completion.

The second step, introduced as part of the tier visa system in 2006, was a transit between the international student and the highly skilled category. The introduction of the post-study work visa enabled international students to stay in Britain for two years upon completing their tertiary level degrees. In this way international students for the first time achieved the

opportunity to seek jobs based on their qualifications in the UK. Any job earning £20,000 annually and requiring a work-permit could switch a student to a skilled or highly skilled immigrant. The highly skilled immigrant category, creating a massive change in Britain's immigration system, was introduced in 2002. The decision was based on three main purposes. Firstly, to increase the country's percentage of people with tertiary-level education, secondly, to fill the job gaps created by the expansion of primary welfare services such as the NHS and school education. Finally, the steps aimed at enhancing Britain's strength in the 21st century's global revolution of technology and communications (Dobson, Koser, McLauhlan and Salt 2001; Glover, Gott, Loizillon, Portes, Spencer and Srinivasan 2000; Hawthorn 2008; Dustmann and Glitz 2011). In its early years, Britain applied a rather broad and loose definition of skilled immigrants, already used by countries such as Australia and Canada. Skilled was measured against certain points based on someone's tertiary-level education, previous job experiences and the transferability of this basic human capital. A work-permit job before migration made someone a highly skilled professional, though in the early years this was not a mandatory criterion. Skilled visas were mainly allocated against accumulated points. In the Tables 1 and 2 below, I present the main immigration rules that Britain adopted and modified over the last decade (2000-2013) on skilled and student migration.

Table 1: UK Immigration Regulations for Highly Skilled Migrants 2002-2013.⁷

Primary Schemes and Major Revisions	Eligibilities/Key Criteria	Changes in Practice	Skilled Migrants Settlement/Citizenship
2002: Britain introduces Points-Based Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP)	Key Criteria: Applicant’s education, work experience, earnings, significant skills and ability, partner’s or spouse’s education and skills.	No prior work-permit or job offer required to apply for a visa.	Immigrants under HSMP can apply for indefinite leave to remain in Britain after spending four years within a skilled visa. A British passport is issued a year after permanent residency is granted.
2006: <i>Making Migration Work for Britain</i> (Parliamentary Bill to assess an integrated ‘Tier System’ for 18+ students and skilled migrants)	Tier 1: Highly Skilled Migrant: Highest point for a PhD holder, an income capacity of £45,000 per year, salaried or self-employed. No prior job offer is required for the visa.	Tier 2: Skilled Migrant: A professional with a work-permit job offer in the UK.	Tier 3: Limited number of low-skilled job visas, mainly for Eastern-European job seekers.
2008 Introduction of the Tier System			
2010: Major revisions of Tier 1 and Tier 2	New Tier 1: General route is closed. Business entrepreneurs and potential investors are prioritized. Persons with exceptional talent either in scientific knowledge or performing arts.	Tier 2: Job offer is mandatory to obtain a skilled immigrant visa.	Immigrants applying for settlement and citizenship through Tier 2 should have the minimum English level B1 (previously A1) and need to pass the ‘Life in the UK’ test.
2011-2013 Revised Tier Rules are Implemented			

⁷Not all migrants have to follow the same immigration regulations to receive British visas. What I have provided here is the basic structure applicable to many non-western countries such as Bangladesh.

Table 2: UK Immigration Regulations for International Students 2006-2013.

Primary Schemes and Major Revisions	Eligibilities/Key criteria	Changes in Practice	Skilled Migrants Settlement/Citizenship
2006: <i>Making Migration Work for Britain</i> Skilled and Student migration are brought into a single Tiered System	Tier 4: Post-Secondary Students. An international student needs a British university admission letter prior to visa application. The introduction of the post-study work visa for students with British tertiary level degrees.	Tier 5: Youth Mobility Scheme. Mainly for youths from specific advanced and advancing countries, either sponsored by the UK or by the country of origin.	Tier 4: Students can obtain post-study visas (1 year for England and 2 years for Scotland) or can switch to the Tier 2 category with a work-permit job.
2009 International Students in the academic year 2009 obtain their visas through the Tier 4 system, introduced in 2008.			
2012: Revision of the Tier 4 student visa	Cancellation of post-study visas for international students	Students can still change their visa status to Tier 2 on getting a work-permit based professional job.
2013: Major revisions of the existing Tier 4 student visa. The category was sub-divided and included children.	Tier 4 (General): The original Tier 4 Post-16 student visa for the UK higher education institutions.	Tier 4 (Student Visitor): Post-16 students coming to the UK for six to eleven months to take an English language course.	Tier 4 (Child): Someone between 4 -15 years of age can apply for a student visa to study at an independent fee-paying British school.
2013 reintroduced the previously annulled post-study visa. Only doctoral students can stay on for 12 months upon getting their degree.			

Sources: Adapted from *A Points-Based System: Making Migration Work for Britain* (2006); Home Office Report (2011); Home Office: UK Border Agency: 'Tier 1: Post Study Visa', 'Tier 2: General', 'Studying in the UK: New Tier 4 Guidance -- 4 March 2013', 'Changes to the Immigration Rules – April 2013'. Accessed 15 May 2013.

As mentioned earlier, the beginning of British skilled migration was a liberal 'open-gate' system. From 2002-2006, skilled groups included both families and individuals qualifying in terms of points. Though a 'work-permit' job was not mandatory to enter the UK with a skilled visa, in these years Britain was comparatively liberal in recruiting foreign staff for its labour market. In 2007, before the tier system was introduced, Britain issued 600,000 visas (both family and work-permit) against skilled applications (Migration Statistics Quarterly 2011). The integrated 'tier' system, the result of constant debate and detailed analysis of skilled migration and its effect on British society and the labour market, brought an end to the family migration through points. Skilled visas were granted to the individuals obtaining a 'work-permit' job prior the applications. Families were allowed against individual professionals. From 2008, for reasons directly related to the multiple economic recessions in the OECD countries, Britain narrowed down its job-based global skills search (see Cerna and Hynes 2009). For the same economic reasons, Britain targeted even larger international students bodies than ever before based on its reputation of delivering world-leading education. In 2013, Britain for the first time introduced child student visas to accommodate pre-secondary international students going to private schools.

All of my participants came to Britain before 2008. Their routes were mainly through skilled and student immigration channels. However, there are five subgroups within these routes: a) highly skilled families through points, b) being the spouse of an individual 'work-permit' job holder, c) spouse of a postgraduate student, d) student, and e) other categories. In the Table 3, I present my participants' immigration categories in each year between 1999 and 2007.

Table 3: Participants' Immigration Categories.

Year	Family Immigration	Spouse/Family of Skilled Migrant	Spouse of Student	Student	Other	Total
1999		1				1
2000			1		1 (FA)	2
2001			1	1	1 (BP)	3
2002			2			2
2003						0
2004	2	2			2 (BP and BW)	6
2005	1	1	1	2		5
2006	2	1	2	1		6
2007	1	1		1		3
						28

*Other: Family Asylum (FA); British Passport Holder (BP); British Citizen's Wife (BW).

Table 3 illustrates that of the twenty-eight participants, equal numbers (12 each) had either skilled migrant or student related (including dependent) visas. Five of my participants arrived as independent students. Though my participants included both doctors and engineers who later worked in their respective professions (discussed in Chapter 4) none came with a skilled 'work-permit' visa. Six women came with families through highly skilled family migration. In their interviews, they all told me that their husbands had very good jobs in Bangladesh, and their husbands' social networks were the instigators of the whole immigration process. The 2002 Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (Table 1) shows that the human capital calculation took account of spouses' education and work experiences. Not only did all six of the women have first degrees, but one woman also had a full-time job in Dhaka. Until I researched the immigration rules for my analysis, I did not realize that a spouse's education was also part of the skills calculation. There was no indication of this in the interviews, though I took detailed account of my participants' migration history (see Chapter 2). This might suggest that at least for family migration where men typically managed necessary formalities, women had less information about the actual process.

Despite the centrality of the 'dependent' category in their immigration, my participants indicated certain shifts through which large number of Bangladeshis, both men and women, arrived in the UK in recent years. Few of my participants arrived in the UK on their own, either to study at university or to get the most of their British citizenship status. Educated women are increasingly preferred to the tradition of transnational marriage. When the Bangladeshi community is marked by the growth of educated generations, it is perhaps less surprising that education is becoming a criterion for transnational relations. The sophisticated immigration system with rules around mandatory English language competence privileges the educated communities of the sending countries. Against the majority of student and skilled dependent spouses, I talked with only one woman who arrived in the UK as the bride of a British-born Bangladeshi man. In her interview Putul, the participant, told me both her husband and her in-laws were searching for an educated young woman belonging to a respected middle-class family. This example indicates that educated Bangladeshi women are arriving in Britain in many different ways, including the traditional route of marriage.

In situating my participants' immigration in various current immigration categories I have indicated some key ways in which people from countries like Bangladesh are choosing Britain as an accessible country to enter. The central focus of this research is not the immigration categorizations or for example the changes of rules impacting on this human movement. The points I have made so far is to introduce the educated communities within

this ethnic community with a high number of little-educated first-generation migrants. The common attribute of my participants was that they were educated. This is a new and arguably a 'bottom up' approach of studying the skilled population in the UK. As such, academic engagement with skilled immigrants, as I will discuss shortly, is only beginning to emerge and hence still limited in content and scope. Britain's policy shift towards attracting international students and skilled workers resulted in increased academic attention on these new migrants. In the early years of the 21st century, many commentators from Britain and other advanced countries argued that highly skilled human mobility would be the shaping feature of the contemporary world (Koser and Salt 1997; Findley 2001; Castles 2002). This general claim was further investigated within the rapidly expanding 'new economy' of corporate collaboration, where highly skilled professional workers took up job positions in corporate branches across Europe, North America and in the rising East Asian business districts (Hsu and Saxenian 2000; Mahroum 2000; Vertovec 2002, 2007; Yeo and Willes 2008).

A special issue of the *Journal of Migration and Ethnic Studies* (2005: 31[2]) on 'Transnational Urbanism' represented the multiple ways people's movement from one part of the world to another have accelerated in the new century. The editors noted that the purpose of this special issue was to shift away from the fantasy of 'trouble-free' mobility, and to throw light on the situatedness of transnationality (Conradson and Latham 2005a: 227). Nonetheless, the central focus was on privileged travellers: British holiday workers in Australia (Clare 2005), highly skilled Indian immigrants in relatively new 'white' destinations such as New Zealand (Frieson, Murphy and Kieran 2005), and youths from New Zealand in London (Conradson and Latham 2005b). The ideas of transnationality, the technological revolution and the increase of virtual and 'real' social networks, and the high value of global cultural capital (international educational qualifications, English language knowledge, personal motivation) were associated with highly skilled personnel and the opportunities they could obtain (Vertovec 2007). On paper, a skilled immigrant became a white, or at best raceless, figure with a passport saying free entry: a young male figure who with laptop in one hand and mobile phone in the other, could be in Tokyo one minute and New York the next, all while regulating a corporate business in London.

A counterbalancing image of a skilled (or educated) immigrant emerged through an analysis of the British labour market, with a diverse range of newcomer immigrants from European and non-European countries (Lindley and Lenton 2006; McGuinness 2006; Goos and Mannings 2007; Clark and Drinkwater 2008; Lindley 2009). Here, detailed emphasis was on the 'white' immigrants from other European countries. The influx of educated youths from

many less-affluent European countries such as Poland, Romania and Spain demanded a renewed attention to the gap between human and capital mobility within the European continent. Magdalena Nowicka (2010, 2013) and Pauline Trevena (2013) both used a qualitative approach to examine the real issues that many educated Europeans, in this case young Poles, face in Britain where their education is not fully valued and their cultural as well as linguistic knowledge of the country is limited. Both works contextualized Pierre Bourdieu's theories of capital conversion within the migratory framework, which I will discuss as a new theoretical paradigm for skilled migration studies. The qualitative works not only made statements about groups operating in the present context, but also traced the histories of why the majority of the Polish immigrants to Britain from the early 20th century faced deskilling, and became concentrated within certain 'ethnic niche' businesses.

Despite a growing variety, there is a lack of detailed academic attention to the diversity of skilled qualifications in an advanced labour market. This question is central to the blurred boundaries of skilled, de-skilled and re-skilled immigrants, who by definition of immigration are skilled and/or educated. My research intervenes within the ongoing debate on skilled migrants by both specifying and broadening its perspective. In choosing a very specific skilled migrant group on the basis of gender, nationality and immigration status, I will be addressing the question of skilled capital within and beyond the labour market by utilising Bourdieu's capital theory at the intersection of gender and migration. Earlier in this chapter I addressed gender and migration largely concerning early generations of Bangladeshi female migrants, who were often without education. In the following section, I continue this discussion through an examination of skilled migration. I will conclude this section with a more detailed discussion of Bourdieu in the skilled migration literature, emphasizing its centrality in my research.

Gender and Skilled Migration

There is a tendency in the migration literature to suffer from some form of male-centrism and belated gender incorporation. One positive aspect of the relatively delayed development of British skilled migration literature is the timely interrogation of gender within this global phenomenon. In providing global pictures and typologies of migrant professionals, Iredale (1999) points out that in almost every advanced country, skilled women with families face a greater share of deskilling than men in an otherwise equal situation. Women can be disadvantaged by cultural patriarchy and by the state-regulated immigration system, though mostly by both. Around the same time, Kofman (2000) presented a critique of the ways in

which the notion of the 'skilled immigrant' took a male-centric form, as described earlier. She further argues that one of the key features of 21st century migration in general, and skilled migration in particular, is the high number of females migrating for a range of reasons. Though the culture of understanding 'skilled' female migrants only in professional term continued and proliferated. Indian female doctors in the NHS and professional engineers serving the 'knowledge intensive services' (Walby 2011: 13) were studied side by side. Between these two groups, doctors had historically been the largest South Asian skilled communities in Britain. This trend was further strengthened with the introduction of the highly skilled migrant visas. As a main South Asian professional group, Indian female doctors received academic attention (Robinson and Carey 2000; Raghuram and Montiel 2003). Foreign engineers had a relatively fresh start in the late 1990s and early 2000s, directly associated with Britain's strategy to survive in the global competition around science and technology. Chinese and Indian engineers (both male and female, though to different degrees) were widely recognized as the driving forces of the competition between countries occupying the global elite zone, namely the US, UK, Australia and Canada (Burke and Mattis 2007). In the UK, like the field of medicine, Indian female engineers were qualitatively explored (Raghuram 2004a). Drawing on qualitative data about immigrant Indian doctors, Raghuram (2004b) argued that there were overlapping motivations for professional and personal decisions by women with careers. Skilled family careers were often based on 'whoever gets the first chance' rather than the traditional notion that women take the back seat, leaving the front seat for their husband. Raghuram's later study underscored the complex interplay of the state, the immigration system, profession and gendered experiences for skilled immigrant women in Britain.

The practice of qualitative research has been particularly helpful in building on new knowledge about professional female skilled migrants with diverse backgrounds in Britain. Though, one of the key limitations of the existing information about immigrant women and deskilling is that it does not separate cause from effect. Consequently, it is complex to pin point whether and to what extent gender itself is a limiting factor in capital mobility, and how (or whether) issues related to immigrant women's capital (i.e. academic qualifications, background) make further claim on their economic positions. This knowledge is important to understand the contexts within which gender norms for educated immigrant women get relaxed or restricted. This is one of the gaps where I suggest Bourdieu's ideas of capital can be used in much nuanced details than it has been used so far (discussed below) in relation to skilled migration, gender and the economic politics of capital travelling. Since part of my analytical interest is to examine how academic qualifications of various qualities of national context find their positions in an advanced labour market, I will provide new knowledge

about causative and consequential relations between gender, capital and the question of women's deskilling in migration.

In recent years, feminists have shifted their attention to the wide range of educated and/or skilled immigrant women without this clear professional designation. Kofman (2012) used the term 'invisible' to name the vast and increasing numbers of educated women arriving in advanced countries through a number of routes, not necessarily through student or skilled migration only. Making these unknown women visible is a key political agenda for feminists interested in a changing phenomenon such as global migration. Educated women's diverse positions in the host country's labour market can clarify the conditions through which women face a greater share of deskilling than men. In a similar way, this shift in focus can effectively challenge and revise the elitist term 'skilled', largely used for those successful in the transnational career. Finally, diverse knowledge about immigrant women can challenge any form of homogeneous ethnic categories that a host country maintains for its various immigrant groups (Kofman and Raghuram 2006; Kofman 2012).

This last point is particularly applicable for what it means to be a Bangladeshi woman in Britain. The first-generation Bangladeshi women's identity has had little revision from how it was conceived thirty years ago based on the rule of the majority in a minority community. If in the 1970s and 1980s educated and skilled Bangladeshi women were only a handful, therefore could be left as exception, in the second decade of 21st century this group is another norm, and will be so for the future. The established image of Bangladeshi women is inadequate as many Bangladeshi women now are educated, though many might fall short of the professional meaning of the 'skilled'. My study is not only about skilled female professionals, neither is it only about women facing several forms of deskilling. Rather, this thesis brings various kinds of educated Bangladeshi women within a single analytical framework. Their diverse experiences will unpack the complex ways in which some educated women can move forward and get included in the term 'skilled' while many others have to stay behind. From a feminist base, this research is the first substantial revision of the definition of Bangladeshi women in Britain. To produce this new knowledge, I employ a number of Pierre Bourdieu's key sociological arguments within the gender and migration framework. I mentioned earlier that Bourdieu's key ideas of capital and the conversions of capital have increasingly been used in relation to educated and/or skilled migrants. In the next part, I discuss the main ways Bourdieu's sociological theories are used by researchers interested in the complex dynamism of contemporary human mobility.

Skilled Migration and Pierre Bourdieu's Theories of 'Capital'

Skilled and unskilled immigrants are often contrasted on the basis of their unequal possession of Bourdieu's four main paradigms of capital: cultural, economic, social and symbolic. The idea that no single form of capital is self-dependent and that they work better when supported by others, is a key concept with which Pierre Bourdieu broke down the boundary between economics and sociology. In his essay 'Forms of Capital' (1986), Bourdieu organizes everything that has a recognized value in a routinized manner within these four main paradigms of capital. Each relates to and works with the others. This relationship is most significant for improving the conversion value of each capital. 'Capital' in the Bourdieusian sense is any form of 'accumulated labour' (241) mediated by key societal forces such as culture, class and material (in)equalities. 'Cultural capital' may refer to all forms of capital, knowledge, and disposition, when education is at their root. One may have economic capital without much education or cultural capital. Economic capital must be used in conjunction with cultural capital if one wants to refine one's identity from being a crude money maker to being a sophisticated social contributor. Social capital, group membership and networks, often of similar people, can feed both cultural and economic capital. Finally, symbolic capital is the unspoken circulator of values in relation to each of these other formative capitals. Symbolic capital is the sign: the so-called 'common sense' with which most, if not all, can at least perceive the position of self and other. From language to accent, from family surname to the name of the school, from 'disinterested' habits of who we meet and what we read - numerous symbols help us in our everyday life to make assumptions about people's social positions and their collective shares of these main forms of capital. All these forms of capital work in individual and interrelated social fields to reproduce social systems, primarily in a national context. Bourdieu defines 'field' as well as 'habitus' in relation to the enclosed context within which such capitals should be produced and used. 'A field can be defined as a network' where the network represents the complex interplay of the social structures and the social groups' struggle over capital as power' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97).

Skilled migrants generally cross the border with some transferable capital such as academic qualifications, financial means or high-quality social contacts as well as *embodied* forms of cultural capital within and beyond their own countries. Therefore many commentators in Britain who do not necessarily use Bourdieu's theoretical framework, emphasize the significance of strong social networking, or in Bourdieu's terms 'social capital' in skilled migration (see for example, Castles 2002; Vertovec 2002). Crucially, this capital interdependence points towards the complex power balance within which skilled immigrants

must operate in a new country. Two immigrants with similar 'cultural capital' (such as academic qualifications, language proficiency and immigration status) can still have dissimilar and unequal opportunities based on the strength of their social capital, i.e. who they know in the host country. The idea of 'field' is crucial here. Bourdieu broadly imagines and theorizes capitals playing out within their known fields, where these capitals are culturally transmitted and socially validated. The key principle of migration of any kind is the loss of that known field for which these capitals are best suited.

This argument concerning immigrants operating without a level playing field has been central to challenging the neoliberal advanced economy and the marginalization of qualified immigrants in key western countries when moving from less-developed countries. Bauder (2003, 2005) uses Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field and habitus to argue that there tend to be certain rules in the advanced economy's employment 'field' that render a non-western immigrant's education and foreign cultural capital somehow lacking, and a deviation from the standard when held in comparison. That which is of value to an immigrant can struggle to find value in a context of constant devaluation, judgment, economic mismatch and social misrecognition. Bauder thus argues that the historical concentration of particular ethnic minority people (mainly men) in specific professions such as Indian-Punjabis as taxi drivers in cities like Vancouver or London does not have any relation to their 'culture' or their skills. Rather transnational migration and its aftermath asks them to change their 'habitus' - the internalized disposition - to make the best use of what is offered to them.

Many studies in Canada where point-based skilled migration has long been established, and increasingly in Britain and other European countries, have contributed to unpacking the complex ways a skilled immigrant manoeuvres his/her 'capital' to enter and operate in a dissimilar labour market. Kelly and Lusic's (2006) work on Filipino women in the Canadian health services, Liversage (2009) on East European highly educated women in Denmark, and Akram and Syed (2010) on Palestinian skilled professionals in France stress that human capital movement is not an automatic or singular process. Rather, it is a strategic and negotiated process, and is almost always dependent on other forms of capital such as language capital, some usable knowledge about the host country's main cultural capital. Social capital is seen as prerequisite to even entering the field, and is of course vital to move up the ladder of any career, even in an advanced, meritocratic society.

Though these works successfully use Bourdieu's theories concerning the transnational movement of skills, the over-emphasis on capital only as a mode of *economic* power is problematic, given that Bourdieu's theory of capital is part of his actual interest in social

reproduction and the ways in which societies maintain its social class division. In particular, education, which is central to Bourdieu's 'cultural capital', can be used in different ways to meet immediate and long-term goals. In most studies I have mentioned so far, immigrants' education and academic qualifications are analysed in relation to their economic performances after migration. Umet Erel's (2010) appropriation of Bourdieu's 'cultural capital' in the study of transnational migration is a powerful point of departure from this trend. Studying Turkish educated women's social lives in Germany and Britain, Erel challenges the tradition of addressing 'ethnic minority' cultures as being distinct from the host country's wider social fields. Rather, she argues that what immigrant individuals, both men and women, do with their capital after migration is a response to the situation in which they find themselves. There cannot be a 'rucksack approach' (as she calls it) to understanding ethnic minorities, their capital mobility and the power relations within and beyond communities. Her respondents, Turkish women in Britain, found themselves well integrated in left-wing feminist, political and community networks around immigrant women of similar ethnicities. Yet one respondent felt more integrated with 'Britishness' and British people than the other. This difference was largely due to their unequal share of educational and cultural capital in their country of origin, and the differing ways in which the host country recognized it. This gap raises new questions about immigrant women's class position, sense of belonging and citizenship at a time when unified national identity, and an assimilation-based model of 'multiculturalism' (known as 'community cohesion') is the political priority in many key western countries, including Britain (see Worley 2005; Yuval-Davis, Anthias and Kofman 2005; Karla and Kapoor 2009; Modood 2007, 2010) .

This thesis addresses some of these new questions from a specific definition of cultural capital, centred on education. I interpret education as a particular kind of cultural capital in two main ways. Firstly, education is a universally accepted value. Secondly, education is perhaps the most durable, often secured, of all forms of capital. Both these ideas are borrowed from Bourdieu's notion of education and social reproduction. This theme will recur in each analysis chapter. Bourdieu's theories, in many ways, are the beginning points of my arguments, often requiring the use of his critiques. I rely on a feminist interpretation of Bourdieu to analyse my participants' gendered agency. Feminist sociologists and critical theorists have a long tradition of critically extending his key theories, namely social power, habitus and cultural capital, within the contested area of gender (Moi 1991; McCall 1992; Adkins and Skeggs 2004). Feminist sociologists, especially in Britain, have relied on Bourdieu's notion of class and capital in bringing back 'social class' to the wider map of sociology and the feminist intersection of gender and class (Skeggs 1997; Reay 1998a; Fowler 2003).

Following Bourdieu's theory and the feminist revisions of it, I will analyse my participants' retold 'experiences' as a 'relational entity', which according to Lois McNay (2004), is a potential way of understanding women's agency emerging out of context; as a way to survive, and to reclaim what needs to be reclaimed. Bourdieu is useful for me because I am interested in examining how the intersection of gender and social class of one context can reproduce similar pattern of class formation in a different context, when the fields are different. This thesis, in this sense, maintains a cyclical pattern that examines the production of the gendered and classed self in Bangladesh and how these particular gendered selves are invested to reproduce these selves in a different country. It is in this emphasis of social reproduction that Bourdieu and his emphasis on family, gender and future generations are important to my analysis. In the concluding part of this chapter, I will examine the concept of immigrant women's 'agency' from a particular perspective relevant to my analysis: mothers' involvement in children's education. As a key means to reproduce and improve social positions, children's education has always been the strongest part of the traditional idea of a 'better life' through migration. Beginning with Sylheti-Bangladeshi mothers' engagement with their children's education, Britain and moving towards the recent development of mothers as the makers of transnational cultural capital, I will address these changes in women's gender roles, while noting a significant gap in the wider literature.

(Im)migrant Mothers and Children's Education

From the late 1980s, soon after Bangladeshi children started attending local council schools in Tower Hamlets and performing poorly, the spotlight fell on Bangladeshi children, families, and upon their main carers: their mothers. The debate about 'Muslim and minority cultures' versus 'structural discrimination' and their impact on the children with families of little education continued throughout the 1990s (Troyna 1988; Tomlinson 1992). The shift towards small-scale qualitative studies in the late 1990s described, to an extent, the gap between what Bangladeshi mothers did with their primary school (or pre-school) going children and what they were expected to do according to the advanced academic system (Blackledge 2001; Brooker 2003). Blackledge (2001) and Brooker (2003) established that despite having big families and socio-economic and linguistic limitations, Bangladeshi mothers spent considerable study time with their children. However, as was the case with Bangladeshi women's economic reproduction, Bangladeshi mothers with little education and being encapsulated within the community struggled to cope with a school system altogether different from their perception and ways of engaging with children at home.

Despite concerns, Bangladeshi children, as discussed earlier, managed to perform well in the British academic system. However, the debate about certain ethnic minority families' incompetence in meeting the host country's school standards continued. The change in the school education system in the late 1990s fuelled the debate. From the mid-1990s, school education, like the British education system in general, entered into a market economy with high levels of individualization and with institutional strategies to maximize consumer satisfaction (Crozier 1997, 1998). Social tools such as parents' meetings and parents' active relationships with schools and teachers took a central role in measuring the effectiveness of this service provision. Bangladeshi and Pakistani mothers (and parents more broadly) fell short in responding to this change adequately. Qualitative studies in longstanding Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities showed that over the decades these communities developed their own mechanisms for dealing with children's education based on their cultural and capital limitations (Crozier and Davis 2006, 2007).

Women's community networks, as well the division of academic labour within the household, were two common ways with which mothers managed their caring roles with school-going children. The individualistic and one-to-one nature of the system put pressure on the communities in general and on mothers in particular. Children's education relied on other kinds of support network, including schools' additional care, elder siblings passing through the same system as well as the community academic high achievers. From the perspective of gender this gradual shift of maternal duty is an interesting one. Bangladeshi mothers overburdened with their caring role could distribute some responsibilities to others, including to the family men who - as the studies suggested - attended the school meetings. However, women's validation as mother was still best achieved through their children's achievements. For Bangladeshi mothers this expectation is as much a cultural commitment as a way to resist cultural stigmatization. Given the rise of educated mothers in the community - one group educated in the British system and another immigrated with education - this limiting trend was bound to change. While my own research focuses on the second group and their strategies, here I want to look at how the growth in recent decades of skilled family's transnational migration instigates a new perspective on what it means to be an active, participatory mother.

A number of studies (Chee 2003; Huang and Yeoh 2005; Walters 2005, 2006) have developed the argument that the new middle classes of the rising global economic giants such as China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, migrate to countries such as Singapore and the US and Canada to give their children the best educational opportunities. All these studies

provide the rationale that in the increasingly competitive global labour market, in which no amount of academic qualifications and cultural knowledge is enough to get into the local and global job markets, families need to make sure that they are investing their money, effort and current knowledge carefully to maximize their return. The trend of giving children an English education is rapidly gaining popularity in cultures that place a 'high' value on formal education. Walters (2005, 2006), for example, notes that the new 'middle-class' families in East Asian countries need to follow the new rules of urban social status and elite culture. Sending children abroad for education or making family arrangements aimed at maintaining children's competitive levels of cultural capital is part of the status pressure of these transitional societies.

This new (and often partial) family displacement gives birth to unique forms of family dynamism, symbolizing the differing relation between education and family. 'Satellite', 'helicopter' families, 'study mothers' these names are increasingly in use to identify these new forms of family where mothers can be, and often are, more mobile than fathers in this arrangement. Mothers accompany children to a different country and move between the families, in situations where fathers perform as the breadwinner necessary for such investments. Although current studies of this phenomenon do not delve deeply into the matter, each of the works comments on a new form of gender role reproduction being the backbone of the whole endeavour. The process, however, is much more dynamic and strategic than the traditional binary of man as decision-maker and woman as the sacrificing executor of a child's future. Huang and Yeoh (2005) and Huang, Yeoh and Lam (2005) disagree with their respondents, Chinese 'study mothers' in Singapore, who call themselves typical sacrificial Chinese mothers, stating that sacrifice is an outdated term for these new generations of women. Such modern mothers are highly educated, aspirant for both themselves and their children, aware of the consequences of their decisions, and able to robustly handle settlement and resettlement in different contexts. These authors propose the term 'strategy' to pin down the ways modern women both conform to and transgress the boundaries of gender norms.

In discussing two rather dissimilar groups of women's investments for their children's education in different contexts, I have so far highlighted the ways in which women's roles in social reproduction take different forms according to the time and context. Women's increasingly subtle, though more burdensome, commitments to family reproduction contribute to the ongoing feminist debates about the complex ways patriarchy operates in each society and culture, at a time when almost all urban societies are marked by women's increased autonomy and better access to public spaces. However, the studies I have engaged

with so far have positioned women within the 'family', prioritizing their family roles in the transnational context. There is no reference to whether or how women's own migratory (or post-migratory) experience can influence what they do as mothers. Addressing this issue is particularly crucial with the rise of the transnational migration of women with middle-class backgrounds in their country of origin. In contexts where the skilled migration literature has strong gender dimensions, such as in Canada, there has been some attempt to articulate the link between immigrant women's economic roles and their roles in social reproduction (McLaren and Dyck 2004). In their qualitative study of seventeen highly educated women of Asian origin in Canada, McLaren and Dyck (2004) found that the boundaries between skilled women's labour market capacities and maternal roles are blurry. Immigrant women's experiences of marginality and de-skilling in the labour market accentuate their commitment to prove themselves as successful mothers and thereby, more politically responsible immigrants.

These authors further stressed the necessity to examine how immigrant women with skills and ambitions invest themselves and their capacities to produce what can be called the 'neoliberal immigrant citizens' in advanced countries. Neoliberal citizens, the by-products of neoliberal ideologies of market economy, minimized control of state over individuals and organizations, are different from the typical, traditional Anglo-centric 'modern' and 'enlightened' individuals. These differences are marked by the assumed fluidity and boundarilessness of the neoliberal individuals who, ideally, are highly competent, multi-dimensional in terms of skills, knowledge and connections, and are brave enough to take full responsibilities of their 'choice' and actions (Thorsen and Lie 2006; Mitchell 2003; Wilkins 2012; Wright 2012). My research in addressing educated immigrant women's economic and social (re)production roles together introduces a new dimension in the study of gender and skilled migration in Britain, as well as in a broader context. At the same time, in examining immigrant women's social agency based on their individual and group capital, this research presents a group of Bangladeshi women in Britain who demand a more detailed examination than any mere statistical, ethnicized, or cultural generalization.

Conclusion and Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1, the Introduction, served two main purposes. Firstly, it outlined how my experiences as an educated Bangladeshi woman in Britain translated into an academic enquiry about educated Bangladeshi women coming to Britain between 1999 and 2007. Secondly, this chapter surveyed the core literature relevant to the research topic and

contextualized my work. I began with the historical background of the Bangladeshi population, subsequently known as the Bangladeshi ethnic minority, in Britain. Narrowing down my perspective, I dealt with ‘Bangladeshi women’, stressing how women from rural Sylhet formed the majority of the 1980s’ first influx of female migrants from Bangladesh to Britain. In conducting a survey of the existing literature about women of Bangladeshi ethnicity in Britain, I pointed out the obvious gap within it. From the 1980s to 2013, there is no work addressing Bangladeshi women without Sylheti heritage, or who came to Britain for purposes not related to chain migration. My research is therefore original in terms of its social subjects. I will focus on a completely different group: educated Bangladeshi women coming from different, mainly urban, parts of their country of origin and settling in diverse parts of the UK. I also highlighted that due to changes to the British immigration system, there is presently a growing number of educated Bangladeshi men and women in the UK. It is important to consider these hitherto unaddressed social groups.

I continued developing the originality of the social groups, situating my participants within their key immigration categories. This included a brief outline of the British highly skilled migration schemes. I approached this topic in a number of ways, beginning with the inception of skilled immigration and the key rules created between 2000 and 2013. I noted that most of my participants arrived in the UK during the relatively early phases of skilled and student migrations, before the introduction of the more rigid ‘Tier system’ in 2006. In the skilled migration literature, I highlighted the elitism and male-centrism of early work, when ‘skilled migrant’ mainly corresponded to corporate individuals and/or individuals in high-status professions. I further argued that though the gender lens in skilled migration challenged this male-centrism, the paradigm shift was largely restricted to professional female skilled immigrants, at least in the UK context. I illustrated the benefits of choosing the term ‘educated’ rather than ‘skilled’ for the overarching topic of my research, enabling me to include women with diverse ranges of educational qualifications.

Through the discussion of skilled immigrants, I introduced the main theoretical framework of my research: Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of education and his notions of capital. Bourdieu’s theory is central to answering the key questions about my participants’ education and its mobility within and beyond the economy. I argued that though Bourdieu’s work has become a powerful theoretical frame in the skilled migrant literature, the central focus is still restricted to immigrants’ capital mobility in the host country’s labour market. In contrast, my application of his theories in this empirical research takes account of women’s roles in social reproduction. In the last part of my review, I highlighted the persistent focus on the topic of immigrant women’s reproduction of cultural capital for future generations from the double

perspectives of immigrant women with and without education. In my research, instead of taking this issue in isolation, I interpret educated immigrant women's maternal work, as informed by their cultural and contextual experiences in the diaspora.

The structure of this thesis represents my participants' life experiences from childhood to adulthood, organized around big events such as education, migration and motherhood. Chapter 1, this Introduction, is followed by the Methodology (Chapter 2) where I explain the feminist dimension of this research. Chapter 3, 'Bangladeshi Women and Education as Capital', is about my participants' educational acquisition. Chapter 4, 'Academic Capital and Bangladeshi Women's Employment in Britain' examines my participants' employment both before and after migration. In Chapter 5, 'Social Skills, "Mother Work" and Children's Cultural Capital' I develop an argument around my participants' social lives centred on their educated identity and how this impacted on their mothering in diaspora. Chapter 6, the Conclusion, brings together the key arguments and suggests ways to develop the field from my research. From this overview, I now move on to the second chapter, in which I discuss my feminist self, the feminist methodological underpinning of this qualitative work, and the difference it made to the knowledge I produced.

Chapter Two: Methodology

In the Introduction, I discussed my interest and the background for my research on educated Bangladeshi immigrant women in Britain. In this chapter, I explain the research method and the position I took to generate and analyse my data. I locate my methodology within a feminist social research approach. Before I go any further, I want to address three key questions regarding the methodology: how my research fits within feminist social thought, the auto/biography of how I grew as a feminist researcher, and finally my style of reflexivity while writing the methodology. I am encouraged to appropriate the term ‘auto/biography’ here in the manner of British feminist social researchers Stanley (1993), and Cotterill and Letherby (1993) who crafted feminist narratives of ‘life writing’ where ‘the auto/biographical I’ (Stanley 1993: 3) actively construct knowledge, as much for other as for self.

Central to feminist social science is ‘women’ as a social category. Feminist social scientists, like other feminist thinkers, partly strove towards ‘unearthing subjugated knowledge’ giving women’s lives and experiences its central stage of knowledge (Hesse-Biber 2007: 3). In so doing, feminist methodology has been enormously efficient in developing gender-based knowledge differently at work in different societies as well as within a given society. Gender in this sense is an inclusive term for feminists, intertwined with the traditional and transforming forces effecting women's lives across generation, space and time. It is in this emphasis on ‘women's experiences’ and the centrality of gender within it that I see my research as feminist. Gender in this context is a working term, arising out of my keen intellectual awareness of the temporality and the flexibility of the term and the social group it encompasses. Much more specific is the category ‘women’ whom I give ‘voice’ here, and through whose experiences I examine gender. As a woman of a particular class, culture and generation, I wanted to work *with* a group of women who, like me, maintain their lives without unsettling the ‘women’ category as an embodied experience. By ‘women’ I mean a historically accumulated, culturally specific and socially certified identity played out on a material body named ‘female’. I consider gender to be the central pillar of *our* shared experiences and the ways in which I claim to be a ‘knower’. This research aims at developing feminist knowledge from women's mundane experience, ‘nothing but life stories of women like me’, as one of my interviewees put it.

I am writing this methodology in retrospect. By this I mean that most of the issues such as the feminist aspect of the research, the primary data and their meanings make much clearer sense at their finishing stages than before. I needed some time (and of course reading) to

develop the perception, for example, that feminist methodology is not a separate convention. For some time, I thought like qualitative and quantitative work, feminist methodology is another branch of doing social science research. It is only through much reading (and some conversations) that I realized that feminist methodology is not about a cluster of rules. It is about the use of the rules, the aim of which is to develop a non-hierarchical, close-to-life and most importantly, better knowledge about women. Its key features such as subjectivity, reflexivity, the concern about unequal power relation between the knowledge-maker and the knowledge-giver were not necessarily specific to feminist research, but each, mostly together, is central to feminist practices. The way feminist methodology became mine had another, slightly more affective, story than this. For me it is important to locate this research within my feminist self, on my own terms. It is through my specific feminist lens that I saw the lives of others, related and unrelated to this research.

In February 2011, when I started my PhD, I had no clear idea of how I would do the research. Prior to my PhD, I had taken courses in humanities that fuelled my interest in women's writing and certain feminist ideas. When I found myself interested in the mundane life of women like myself, I was skeptical whether such an interest would be a topic worth examining. I thought that in Bangla language, literature, music, high and popular culture, there is a repertoire of images of women talking that is compared to the tide of a river – eternal, natural, onomatopoeic and ceaseless. What we were never taught was to take women's words seriously. I was faced with the dilemma of whether or not a simple research question such as 'how do educated Bangladeshi experience their lives in the UK' ? - would be a sufficient focus to draw in-depth knowledge. I am indebted to feminist methodologists for giving me confidence that it is through examining women's taken-for-granted and everyday experiences that we can learn about the ways in which women's positions change according to the demand of time and circumstances. As Stanley and Wise point out: 'We need to reclaim, name and rename our experiences and our knowledge of the social world we live in and daily construct' (1993: 164).

I wanted to be a feminist 'knower'. I wanted to be what Donna Haraway (1988) called a 'partial', but not a biased, knower. I developed a clearer perception of the partial knower in the words of Kirsch and Ritchie (1995: 10), who redefined a 'good enough researcher' as someone producing approximate, rather than full, knowledge. Feminist knowledge is perfect in being partial, approximate and tentative. Feminist ethics for me was this balance between power and responsibility and accountability. Ann Oakley, among many others, helped me to understand the nexus of 'power/knowledge' most precisely. I became aware of the privileged position I would eventually have because I, unlike my participants, would be the 'knower',

the person to disseminate knowledge, and I would be 'powerful' because of this position, as Oakley argues:

The idea of a world to be known about implies a knower; the knower is the expert, and the known are the objects of someone else's knowledge, rather than their own. This is where power comes in (2000: 36).

I did *not* want to be that kind of 'objective' powerful knower that Oakley mentions only to critique this traditional, western male-centric knower. This idea of knower reminded me of our colonial past, and the ways in which our ancestors were the 'objects' of several kinds of ethnographic knowledge. I identified Sandra Harding's (1986, 1987, 1993) 'standpoint epistemology' and 'strong objectivity' as an exciting way of developing knowledge, much more challenging and engaging than being an 'empiricist' or 'objective' knower. I liked the way in which American feminists Mary Fonow and Judith Cook (1991: 2) made reflexivity a particularly feminist consciousness, highlighting its centrality for investigating women's gendered experience. Reflexivity to me was the key word of this jigsaw called feminist methodology. I understood that most of its central features are actually associated with the practice of self-reflexivity. For a feminist, reflexivity is a way of ensuring the objectivity of the knowledge, which should arise from a researcher's sense of being part of an entire process. In my own research, which I discuss below, I practised certain ground rules of reflexivity at various stages, often in a 'pre-hoc' way. The purpose was to be an unexploitative knower. I reflect on the implications of these decisions below. Reflexivity has a personal meaning for me. It is being reflexive about my situation, not as a researcher but as a person. This is where this methodology is auto/biographical. It would be incomplete and 'objective' if I did not tell my story one more time.

I wrote a first draft of this methodology in June 2012, after finishing the transcription of twenty-eight interviews. I tried to exercise critical self-reflection to present an accurate account of the research process, reading countless journal articles about individual researchers, both eminent and little known. They all used the feminist practice of reflexivity and added their arguments to the ongoing debate about feminist ethics and power relations, and the dilemmas of the researcher being both an insider and an outsider. I was petrified. I became aware of the gulf between my incoherent thoughts and my ability to express them in formal, academic English. I wanted to say something but I ended up writing something different. I felt guilty and vulnerable. Despite my enthusiasm and commitment, I did what

Lubna Nazir Chaudhry (1997) had done while writing her dissertation on women like her (Pakistani immigrants to the US). I 'gave up looking at the transcripts' (1997: 150). Rather than feeling liberated, as I felt earlier, I was dogged by the feminist ground rules. Reflexivity, the balance of tidiness, the constant self-questioning all added to my suffering. All seemed to me exercise without purpose. I was glad when I found that it was not only me, rather many feminists found the rules dogmatic. Daphne Patai, being herself a feminist social researcher, presented a scathing critique of feminist reflexivity:

The current fetish of questioning oneself and one's standpoint until they yield neatly to the categories of our theorizing cannot overcome the messiness of reality. We do not escape from the consequences of our positions by talking about them endlessly. [...] What it does do is to exhibit the strength, within intellectual life today, of the vocabulary wars and the enormous jockeying of status and approval that seems to motivate them (1994: 70).

I developed an interest in the emotional aspect of doing a qualitative research. This issue of emotional cost of doing qualitative research maintaining the feminist ground rules is a relatively less addressed debate in the literature. Though, as Helen Sampson, Michael Bloor and Ben Fincham (2008) rightly argue that the emotional or mental 'cost' of doing a qualitative research is widespread amongst researchers, and not all emotional cost can be 'assumed' or 'managed'. I tried to utilize my emotion to break the thin boundary between my academic and non-academic self. I was, perhaps, as Wanda Pillow (2003) terms 'living with the reflexivity of discomfort'. I was pushed to the edge of this discomfort because in order to describe what happened in the fieldwork, I was, in practice, writing the methodology ignoring my non-academic context, my other life. The truth was right after I completed my fieldwork, there were certain changes in my life which were big enough to affect my PhD self. It was at that time when my daughter, just a year old, left Britain with her daddy. Her daddy had a job in Malaysia. She left to give her mother an uninterrupted and solid two more years to finish the PhD, the degree, we are asked to believe, adds value to our CV as well as to our life.

In my initial methodology writing, I was trying to be the 'professional' and 'ideal' researcher. I did not want to write about the emptiness that engulfed my house because my daughter was not there. I did not want to tell how oppressive and unbearable it was to be consistently nice and polite with everyone at my university or while I served my customer as a checkout

operator. I did not want to write about the amount of anger I had, and still have, against the world that imposed its own rule of 'reasonable compromise' because one cannot have all, and asked me to live with that as if they all knew how it felt. I talked about it now, in 2013, when I wrote the methodology chapter for the fourth time. I am grateful to feminist methodology for giving me the chance to tell my own story first, before I talk about others. I understand that my 'intellectual, emotional, political baggage' (Ramazanoğlu, and Holland 2002: 148) impacted on what I added here, took out, edited and presented as an (in)complete academic piece of work.

Designing the Research

Life-narrative interviews were the main method on which I designed my research. Since I only relied on one, rather than mixed, methods of collecting data, I had to choose the method most suitable to find out about participants' experience. Topic-based, in-depth interviewing is a common social science research technique in many western academic systems. In-depth interviewing in the form of informal talking holds particular credence among western feminists. Women and talking were joined together to introduce women's lives into the academic landscape. Interviewing itself, however, is not the only method available to feminists. Rather, like other researchers, feminists have to think through all of the key methods of generating qualitative data. One of the purposes of my study was to get away from local-centric or community-centric ways of knowing about Bangladeshis in Britain. I wanted to add voices, drawn from various locations across Britain. This ruled out a community-based ethnographic method, where participant observation has a central role. Furthermore, this meant that repeat interviews would be less of an option because my research was bound by time and material constraints. I wanted to spend enough time – up to a day - with my participants to take them on their journeys into the past (how they became what they are), present (their current position) and future (where they wanted to go from here). I developed confidence that a loosely structured, in-depth, life-narrative interview would be the most suitable for my intended purpose. I agree with Jennifer Mason's (2002) argument that even if qualitative research is not about generalizing, the data and the analysis should be sophisticated enough to work alongside similar empirical findings, and should establish their methodological and epistemological validity in their own right. This point is particularly important for me because I am dealing with a group of women who in many ways are the representatives of 'ordinary' modern women of our time and the foreseeable future. I wanted to elicit rich and plentiful data. I have no doubt that the amount and the

richness of data I gathered was possible because I used a method appropriate to my research objective.

My decision to interview was followed by questions on how to prepare for my research encounters: the sophistication of the research design, the topics we choose and the ways we ask all influence the data we gain. I had to revise the question schedule several times to make it appropriate for the topic and the kind of knowledge I was aiming to gather. My research is about 'educated' Bangladeshi women. Therefore, I had to develop and organize topics centred on 'education'. This is one of the unique features of my research. Studies dealing with gender and migration generally begin with the context and condition of actual migration of their participants. In contrast, I went further back in my participants' history to understand the culture, context and situations within which they had been educated. My own experience of living in Britain influenced the themes I designed to find out about my participants' experiences. After several revisions, my interview schedule looked like this:

Table 4: Interview Topics.

Topics	Related Ideas and Questions
Family Background	Context; growing up in Bangladesh, parents' occupations; family's socio-economic condition; siblings.
Immigration	Reasons for coming to the UK; description and context of immigration; knowledge and expectation of migratory lives; first experiences; challenges; adaptation and feelings.
Education	Home and formal education; different educational stages; expectation and purpose of education; migration and its impact on education; future plans; meaning of education.
Employment	Whether employed or not; employment history in Bangladesh/UK; challenges and negotiations; perception and necessity of being employed; attitude to women's careers; future career expectations.
Lifestyle	Daily responsibilities and household work coordination; life in Bangladesh and in the UK; the ways in which participant evaluates cross-cultural life experiences.
Social Contact	Social networks in the UK; local Bangladeshi community; cross-cultural interactions; meaning of being part of British society and culture.
Future Priorities	Future plans and priorities; where the participant wants to see herself in the next five years.

It is common that qualitative research goes through changes. My first research question was 'how do educated Bangladeshi women experience their lives in the UK?' The more critical question with direct connection to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital came much later, once I gathered my interviews and started analysing the core themes. I was increasingly interested in unearthing the absolute and relational value of education as cultural capital. I reshaped the question centring on this: 'In what ways does education bridge the contextual gap between my participants' imported cultural capital and what counts as cultural capital in Britain?'

Before discussing how I selected my participants, I will highlight one specific decision related to the research design that required particular pre-hoc reflexivity. It concerned the language I would use for the data collection: both Bangla and English could have been the main language used for interviewing. Using English had two advantages: I could simply transcribe an interview as it was told and consequently I would not corrupt any meaning, word, or expression through the translation process. In contrast, Bangla is our language, an integral part of our 'Bangladeshi' identity. My feminist self is informed by the limitedness of language as a device to reclaim a woman's 'voice' (Anzaldúa 1987; Spivak 1993). With critical reflection, I concluded that asking my participants to speak in English would be an imposition. It might widen the power gap between me and my participants. Moreover, I could not see any valid reason why two Bangladeshi women, sitting in a living room in the absence of a linguistic outsider, should speak any language other than Bangla. I decided to keep the language issue open: in each interview I told my participant that I would be talking and asking questions in Bangla (Appendix A), and that she could answer in Bangla, English, or a mixture of the two. This language issue had a decisive impact on what data was (or was not) generated. I will elaborate on this issue further in the 'Translation and Transcription' section of this chapter.

Finding Interviewees, Arranging Interviews

Searching for and finding qualitative interview participants is a time-consuming and anxiety-provoking process. It is at this stage that a 'researcher is likely to feel' absolutely 'vulnerable' (Letherby 2003: 102), and perhaps is positioned at the lowest ebb of the research power scale. Any early-stage qualitative researcher perhaps generally shares Letherby's poignant concern: 'what if no one comes forward?' (2003: 102). As I write, I can still feel the palpating anxiety that I had in answering my supervisor's enquiry about my

progress in searching for, finding and securing the participants. One advantage was that I was looking for Bangladeshi women fulfilling two criteria:

- having an at least Bachelor or equivalent degree in any discipline either from Bangladesh or from elsewhere;
- coming to the UK as adults and preferably post-2000.

These requirements were both helpful and limiting for me. They meant that I had to be strategic to gain access to Bangladeshi women fulfilling both criteria. I began the search process with three methods, only one of which proved to be effective. The first method I tried was a rather random ‘search by surname’ technique on the websites of universities in Yorkshire (such as Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield etc.). Since education was a criterion, my plan was to find any reference to Bangladeshi women either working or studying at postgraduate levels at these places. A problem I encountered with this technique was that many of the common Muslim surnames are not exclusive to Bangladeshis; nor are all surnames gender-specific. Although my searches brought some relevant results, they were problematic in two significant ways: firstly, I found women from other Muslim countries (for example Pakistan); secondly, when the national identity *was* appropriate, they turned out to be Bangladeshi *men*. With this ‘absence’ of Bangladeshi women at the universities, I became aware of how my own subjective and somewhat ‘taken-for-granted’ educational position in the UK influenced my technique, and proved a hindrance to finding participants.

I also communicated with a number of Bangladeshi community centres to get some help. Reading the literature, I came to know that in almost all qualitative and ethnographic studies Sylheti women were reached via local community centres. Both Khanum (1994) and Hamid (2005) hid their original academic selves under the guise of community workers in the absence of any other overt method being available. I was not optimistic about this option, because in my years in Britain I had not been to a single Bangladeshi community centre. I had the impression that since the community centres are support-providing rather than purely social places there would not be any gathering of educated women. My communications with the centres proved me right. On the telephone, I was told either that they were for particular groups of women (such as the elderly or those seeking help learning English) or I was advised to do interviews with the main organiser or director of the centre. The latter option risked distorting my research standpoint and interest. My purpose was not to reiterate what had already been presented as the tokenized success of ethnic minority women serving the ‘minority’ communities. I therefore had to continue without that institutional information source.

When these processes proved futile, I used ‘snowballing’, a well-established ‘informal’ method to ‘reach the target population’ (Atkinson and Flint 2001: n.p). Loosely speaking, ‘snowballing’ is both a form of ‘purposive’ (or non-probability) and convenience sampling. This means that the researcher strategically looks for particular groups who are relevant to the research (Bryman 2008). Streeton, Cooke and Cambell characterise snowball samples as what ‘emerge[s] through the process of reference from one person to the next’ (2004: 37). It starts with a small group or ‘core snow ballers’ and as relevant contacts are made through them, a reasonable sample size can be created in a limited period (also in Blaikie 2000; Henn, Weinstein and Forad 2006; Bryman 2008). Blaikie (2000: 205-206) also suggests that ‘snowballing’ is a potential source for building up a ‘sociogram’ of people who regard themselves as ‘social equals’. This was the dominant pattern of my snowballing. My participants were ‘social equals’ not only in terms of their ethno-nationality, similarity of immigration and educational background, but in many instances they also belonged to similar social circles. Much like Streeton, Cooke and Campbell’s reliance on snowballing for their research on ‘health and social care’ in the UK, my experience was that once I had connections with a few ‘core snowballers’, I then had to struggle to make ‘decisions to limit the number of informants from particular directions’ (2004: 41).

As in any other aspect of research, finding participants via snowballing is easier said than done. My experiences taught me that it could be more productive to have multiple snowballing connections rather than depending on one or two. In her doctoral research on Somali refugee women in London, Akua- Sakyiwah (2012) identified over-reliance on one source as the main impediment in accessing her target group. Women from conservative cultures can refuse at the last minute lest their ‘private’ lives become a topic of common discussion. Thus, the Somali mothers, on whose behalf this researcher wanted to do her research, had little interest in taking part in the actual interviews, leading her to find alternative options through a community centre, which in turn led to a number of ethical and methodological challenges including the intervention of gatekeepers and interpreters. For me, conceptually knowing about women like me had little practical impact, because I realized that I hardly had any friends or social acquaintances with whom I could start to snowball. The few social connections I had had in Edinburgh were abandoned when I left.

My social connections were based on my educated identity. Since these were indirectly sourced by multiple other connections, I call my network an example of secondary social capital. For instance, I hardly knew anyone in London. One of my cousins, however, then recently migrated from Bangladesh, had begun living within a Bangladeshi community where many were educated, professional and relatively recent migrants. She enabled me to

do my first few interviews that I wanted to conduct as a pilot. Due to the richness of the data, however, I included them in the main data sample. Although I had to rely on snowballing and personal connections to gain my interviewees, after conducting the first set of interviews I tried to draw public attention to my research. I asked the women in London for information about the local newspapers they generally read. Based on their collective opinions, I placed an advertisement in the print version of a weekly Bangla newspaper published in London (Appendix B). My intention was to place the advertisement on the web version of the newspaper to draw even greater attention from home and abroad, but due to its very high cost, I was restricted to print only. Although I did not get any responses from the advertisement, this public notice helped me to establish the authenticity of my research among the community of women I came across later.

A further strength of having multiple sources is that it can add diversity even when working with a limited sample size. My research would have lacked the 'professional' women's dimension if women like Lipi and Rubi had not directly helped me. In Bangladesh, they went to the same elite school/college as my eldest sister. It was through my sister's 'word of mouth' that Lipi, a woman from Southhall, extended her sisterly helping hand to me. Lipi introduced me to Rubi, a professional woman with a stronger social network than Lipi's own. Rubi alone successfully introduced me to five other women (Zami, Tisa, Saba, Bina and Keya). Geographical variety, a departure from community-centrism, was possible because these professional/highly educated women lived in different places. I would say that the most community-centred interviews took place in Hull, where in one particular area, and indeed in a single lane, there were a number of well-educated Bangladeshis who had developed their own little community. Keya, who I came to know through Rubi and who lived in Hull, made the entire search process easier by introducing me to her neighbours - Taj, Mim and Shomi. These last three women, who lived in one area, had very different educational and employment statuses in Bangladesh and in the UK. This suggests that even if I had relied on one community, I might not have interviewed similar kinds of Bangladeshi women. Table 5 (below) presents my snowballing process and shows how my connections developed from one woman to another. The letter to invite my participants clarified both the purpose of the research and who could take part (Appendix C). I gave this letter to my main snowballers and all the participants. In this way, though my first interviewee (Rupa) was attained through my cousin, it was Rupa, rather than my cousin, who introduced me to my fifth and sixth interviewees (Shobha and Bokul).

Table 5: Sources of the Participants and Interview Locations.

Sources	Participants	Location
Cousin	Rupa, Dola, Simul, Hasna	Essex/Greater London
Rupa	Shobha, Bokul	Essex/Greater London
My sister	Lily	Somerset
Family connection	Maya	East London
Maya	Alia	Essex
Through a friend	Nipa	Manchester
Personal connection	Putul	Southall
My sister	Lipi	Southall
Lipi	Rubi	Maidenhead
Rubi	Zami	Maidenhead
Rubi	Saba	Brunel
Rubi	Tisa	East London
Rubi	Bina	Leicester
Rubi	Keya	Hull
Keya	Taj, Shomi, Joba, Mim	Hull
Mim	Zui	Hull
Mim	Ana	Manchester
Mim	Asma, Sita, Ratna	Leeds
Asma	Rupu	Manchester

As described above, I was introduced to Mim, another woman in Hull, through her neighbours Keya and Shomi. It was through Mim that I developed connections in Leeds and Manchester, the nearest of my interview destinations from York. The last five interviews (Zui, Ana, Ratna, Sita and Asma) were also developed through Mim. Asma, known to Mim, immediately introduced me to Rupu, her sister-in-law, a highly educated woman living in Manchester. My aim was to get interviewees from a range of locations and in most cases I

was successful. Aside from the clusters of snowballed women, I had to rely on ones and twos to keep the interview process (and the numbers) going. I interviewed Lily in Somerset, Putul in Southall, Nipa in Manchester, Alia in Ilford and Zui in Hull. They did not connect me to anyone else. Clearly, I had to travel long distances and seize any opportunity I got in the early stages of the data collection. Once I developed some strong connections, I had the luxury to 'choose' one potential participant over another. For example, Mim wanted to introduce me to some more women in Hull. However, because through the course of her interview I came to know that she had lived in Leeds and still had some good connections there, I requested that she to introduce me to someone there.

One of the key challenges of snowballing and qualitative interviews is how to end this process. In the literature, there are two dominant theories about when a qualitative researcher should conclude her primary data collection. One concerns numbers. Fifteen (+/-) interviews are often suggested to be the minimum of any qualitative or similar kind of in-depth research (Flick 2008; Bertaux 1981, in Mason 2010). A more sophisticated and widely acknowledged argument centres on the standard 'saturation' point of the data. Critiquing the inadequacy of information about interview numbers in the relevant social science/qualitative literature, Guest, Brunce and Johnson (2006) argue that both of these propositions (number and saturation) are partial and lack precision. They state that often, when purposive samplings are similar, data saturation can happen in as few as six interviews. They emphasize, however, that when the research aim is to understand 'common perceptions and experiences' (2006: 79) among a relatively homogenous group, twelve in-depth interviews will often be a suitable number. In my case, both these two issues coincided. I did twenty-eight interviews in four months (July to November 2011)⁸ - a reasonable number for my research. Since my interviews were topic based, my participants' narratives developed certain key patterns appropriate to the social position they occupied before and after their migration. Once I could interpret the underlying connections of the narratives, and once I had a satisfactory number, I decided to end my interviewee search.

My Participants at a Glance

In each interview I asked my participants to fill in a brief form containing certain demographic details (Appendix D), which helped to organize their brief biographies

⁸I could not do any interviews in August 2011 because it was the period of the Muslim Ramadan. I understood that talking for longer period of time while fasting would be challenging for anyone, therefore I did not interview anyone in that month.

(Appendix E).. To provide a better understanding of the women I interviewed, I present my participants' key demographic features (Table 6):

Table 6: Participants' Demographic Information (arranged according to the interview serial).

No	Interview ID	Age (2011)	Highest Educational Qualification	Job	Marital Status	Child(ren)	Family Type
1	Rupa	28	B.Com	Homemaker	Married	1	Nuclear
2	Dola	27	LLB	Trainee Solicitor	Married	0	Nuclear
3	Hasna	37	MA	Self-employed	Married	2	Nuclear
4	Simul	30	BBA	Retail assistant	Married	1	Nuclear
5	Shobha	32	MSc	Homemaker	Married	2	Nuclear
6	Maya	29	PhD (student)	Researcher	Married	1	Nuclear
7	Bokul	29	MA	Retail assistant	Married	1	Nuclear
8	Lily	38	MA	Retail assistant	Married	2	Nuclear
9	Alia	32	BSS	Homemaker	Married	3	Nuclear
10	Lipi	43	Childcare Vocational Level 2	Learning support	Widowed	3	Nuclear
11	Putul	29	BSS	Homemaker	Married	1	Extended
12	Rubi	36	MSc	Engineer	Married	1	Nuclear
13	Zami	35	PhD (student)	Researcher	Married	1	Nuclear
14	Saba	28	PhD (student)	Researcher	Married	0	Nuclear
15	Tisa	41	BSc	Engineer	Married	2	Nuclear
16	Keya	36	MBBS	Doctor	Married	1	Nuclear
17	Nipa	40	MBBS	Doctor	Married	2	Nuclear
18	Bina	31	MSc	Homemaker	Married	1	Nuclear
19	Shomi	45	MA	Homemaker	Married	1	Nuclear
20	Taj	36	MBBS	Doctor	Married	1	Nuclear
21	Mim	39	MA	Homemaker	Married	2	Nuclear
22	Joba	36	MBBS	Doctor	Married	1	Nuclear
23	Ana	34	MCom	Homemaker	Married	2	Nuclear
24	Rupu	40	MSc	Learning Assistant	Married	2	Nuclear
25	Zui	31	BBA	Retail Assistant	Married	0	Nuclear
26	Sita	42	BA	Facilitator service	Married	3	Nuclear
27	Ratna	39	BA	Facilitator service	Married	2	Nuclear
28	Asma	49	MA, MEd	Intervention Tutor	Married	2	Nuclear

The participants' demographic details were integral to the main interview themes. Certain key issues such as my participants' education and employment will be discussed in separate chapters (Chapters 3 and 4) but here I particularly want to highlight the differences in my participants' family patterns from those within the traditional Bangladeshi community. I mentioned in Chapter 1 that Sylheti Bangladeshis in Britain have been associated with traditional, big families, often extended and with large numbers of children. By contrast, in my study only one woman (Putul) lived in an extended family where she and her husband lived with her in-laws, in the in-laws' house in Southall. The rest of the women had 'nuclear' families consisting of husband, wife and child(ren). The number of children was relatively few, the highest being 3. Only three women had three children. Though one-child families outnumbered two-child families, at the time of their interviews, a few of my participants were expecting second babies. Similarly, the relatively young women yet to be mothers indicated that having a baby was one of their key priorities in the near future. It could be suggested that as part of the 'new' Bangladeshi immigrants, my participants' family structures were representative of the common heterosexual type that once used to be symbolic of western, modern nuclear middle-class families.

In the demographics form, I did not ask for the participant's religion. In spite of this, a 'Muslim' identity in the diaspora was a recurrent point of sense-of-self for a number of my participants. I began the research with a general assumption that all my participants would share my demographic characteristics: Bangladeshi, Muslim, educated and urban. Indeed, it was rather surprising for me that within such a restricted sample-size, even with the overwhelming Muslim majority, there were diversities of religion and ethnic groups from Bangladesh. Sita (from Leeds) was a Bangladeshi Hindu and Shomi (from Hull) was from the largest tribal minority, called Chakma⁹, which is mainly concentrated in the country's hill tracks in the eastern regions. In the following section, I will discuss my interview experiences with Shomi and Sita to reflect on my position as a knower and as a member of the majority in Bangladesh.

⁹Chakma (name given by the British census) is the largest tribal community in Bangladesh. Chakmas are heavily concentrated in the hill tracks and the country's hilly areas, although internal migration to the main cities such as Dhaka and Chittagong is a common trend. The current available population of Chakmas in Bangladesh is around 450, 000. Given the extremely unequal and disadvantageous situations of the minorities, it is difficult to access accurate information about them. For more, on their countries and their culture, see the Joshua Project. Accessed 20 September 2013.

The Interview Scene: Formal Disclosure and Rapport

The first couple of minutes of a qualitative interview are crucial. The proverb ‘the first impression is the last impression’ is rarely more pertinent than in a research-led interview setting where two ordinary persons meet as ‘interviewer’ and ‘interviewee’. ‘Rapport’, or the initial ice-breaking conversations, were of particular interest for early feminists promoting the virtues of knowing women by talking. Oakley (1981) saw rapport-building as a fundamental process through which an interviewer can present herself as an ‘insider’ (57) to the participant. However, as in any other feminist/qualitative ‘good practice’ the issue of ‘rapport’ is open to complicated debates. Feminist sociologists such as Finch (1984) and Cotterill (1992) problematize the ‘insider’s’ rapport, raising ethical concern. What Oakley saw as ‘non-exploitative’ is a potential source of ‘exploitation’ for researchers who argue that a too-informal and personalized encounter can make the participants feel obliged to provide the researcher with unchecked access to their life. As ‘insider’ research has become a common practice within both feminist and other branches of qualitative research, this debate has moved to stress that ‘rapport’ is a negotiated process even for an ‘insider’ researcher. Power in rapport is as contingent as the interview process in general, with possibilities for mutual recognition or resistance (Gunaratnam 2003: 82-86).

All of the issues raised above are relevant in a qualitative interview setting. Before I conducted my fieldwork, I was mainly aware of what I call the first layer of feminist intervention in interviewing. Oakley’s insider and non-exploitative rapport-making inspired me. I was conscious of how I greeted the participant (which must not be in too westernized a way), the language I used (which must not be too personalized) and when my participant and I had a generational gap, I sat somewhere lower to her sitting position. I was there to ‘listen’ to her stories. There were, however, official issues to sort out in the first few minutes. I briefed my participants about my research, explained the ethical consent form (Appendix F), highlighted their right to withdraw as a participant, and finally asked for permission to turn the recorder on. I partially agree with Oakley’s ‘insider’ position in the sense that in a Bangladeshi woman’s drawing room we were Bangladeshi, there was no doubt about it. Unlike in other professional or social settings in Britain (i.e. educational institutions, the workplace or in a mere conversation with a stranger), we did not have to face the question ‘where are you from’? Neither did we have to answer ‘I am from Bangladesh’. Often we talked about things and persons that had meaning only to us, and would never find a place in a conversation between a Bangladeshi and a non-Bangladeshi person. I would argue, however, that a researcher could never be a complete ‘insider’ because she cannot forget the reason she entered her participant’s house: for interviewing. Consequently, she needs to

accomplish certain duties that would not have been required otherwise. Part of these duties form informing the participants about the institutional aspect of ethics. On the institutional level, my research was underwritten by an official ethical procedure endorsed by the Centre for Women's Studies, University of York.¹⁰ Part of the scope of this academic ethics is to inform the participants about the research process and outcome, about maintaining their privacy and adhering to the data protection regulations, and on the immediate level of interviewing, gaining consent for recording the interviews. These issues were outlined in the consent form that I prepared (Appendix E). At the beginning of each interview I discussed these points with the participants, clarified their queries related to this, and asked for verbal consent to turn on the tape-recorder. I however kept the forms to be signed until after finishing the interview because typically the women were much more relaxed once the interview was over. I will discuss this topic below.

I agree with the growing argument that any kind of matching traits between a research and a participant should not be taken as guaranteeing an automatic relationship. Rapport and mutual similarities can occur even when the researcher and participant inhabit different positions. Luff (1999) reflected on her anxiety while interviewing self-proclaimed 'right-wing' and 'anti-feminist' women when she herself was a left-wing feminist. Yet in the context of such ideological differences, Luff still had *moments of rapport*: she found herself in the typical middle-class houses of her interviewees giving assurances that in their lived experiences they did not belong to entirely different worlds. From the opposite standpoint, although at face value it might appear that my participants and I lived in similar circumstances, there were degrees of difference between us. I would argue that in order to understand the conditions of rapport we need to go beyond the idea of demographic commonality leading to a relationship. Often rapport is about shared interests rather than shared cultural traits. For example, amongst my interviewees, Zami and I understood each other the best. I did not know her beforehand, nor did we meet after I left the interview scene, her house in Maidenhead.

I had certain specific similarities with Zami. We were of similar age (she was 35 when I interviewed, and I was 31 years old). We went to the same higher education institution in Bangladesh. We were both PhD students and had a child of a similar age, but our most powerful commonality was our academic interest: we belonged to a social science discipline and were interested in feminist ideas. Zami's interview was an impromptu one. When I went to do Rubi's interview, I did not know that the next would be Zami's. Rubi informed me that

¹⁰Centre for Women's Studies Ethics Policy. Accessed 7 April 2011.

Zami was particularly interested in being interviewed and I went to her house the following morning before heading back to East London. On entering her house, she explained the reason for her interest to me. Being a qualitative researcher, she knew well the complexity of the process. Zami extended her academic empathy and offered to be a participant in my project. Her prior knowledge did not lead to unequal power relations between us. Rather, we had the comfort of knowing each other's situation. Though, occasionally I was challenged by her. This was most apparent in my discussion of her family's financial condition. When I asked her this question, as I did others, she answered 'our family was financially affluent. Though if you ask me to categorize my family according to our society's class system, I will not do that. I do not believe in such kind of narrow class system such as "middle class" or "upper class"'. I respected her position and the ways in which she wanted to question the societal norm based on her intellectual position.

I have singled out this particular interview to discuss the issue of 'rapport' when a researcher is an obvious 'insider' in the interview context. I would argue that like most other relationship, 'rapport' itself is a relative term, and depends on a number of factors, perhaps most notably mutual interest and shared experiences between the researcher and the participant. As a Bangladeshi woman working with Bangladeshi women, I had rapport with all of my participants. However, the intensity of this rapport differed partly because being part of similar culture, class and backgrounds, we were often at situations to judge each other. This mutual judgment necessarily had an impact on the interview process, some of which I will discuss below.

Being a 'Knower': A Position of Contradiction

I mentioned earlier that I was encouraged by the feminist argument that a 'knowing' self is always partial, fragmented and approximate. Rather than focusing only on the stories themselves, feminists encourage us to consider under what conditions certain things are told and others left untold. Our position as a researcher or the presence of a third person in the interview setting influences what we get to hear. As novice researchers, we also have to reflect on how our anxieties and lack of confidence impact on what we get as data. On several occasions while transcribing the interviews, I rebuked myself for being an impatient listener. Often my questioning prevented me from getting relevant data. The following is an excerpt from my first-ever experience of interviewing someone. Rupa was my first interviewee and our meeting began smoothly. The interview was long (more than two hours).

In the middle of it, Rupa was telling me how her marriage placed a restriction on the kind of job she could do in Bangladesh. The conversation went:

Rifat: You got the job confirmation on the day of your bou-bhaat¹¹. Did you proceed with that?

Rupa: No, not at all. Once I went to my in-law's house, I found that it was not possible for me to do any kind of job let alone in the media. I was studying for an MBA at that time and it was even difficult to continue that.

Rifat: Where [at which college] were you doing your MBA? In Lalmatia [College] as well?

My first question was appropriate and direct. However, when my participant revealed sensitive information about her in-laws and her life plan, I intervened with a completely irrelevant question about my participant's academic institution. I interpret this second question as a subconscious reflexive resistance against going too far into personal matters. This response is contrary to my epistemological position. I wanted to know more about the gendered life of educated Bangladeshi women; I am aware that marriage in Bangladesh still perpetuates traditional gender norms, yet when the issue was raised between me (the active researcher) and her (the teller), I made poor use of my guiding role.

I count myself a fortunate researcher because in almost all the interviews, there was no adult in the room apart from myself and the interviewee. Often the husbands were at home, but they did not intrude upon the conversation. However, my position as a researcher was overshadowed by the presence of a hierarchically higher adult when I interviewed Putul, the only woman living with her in-laws. I did not know about her family arrangement beforehand. I was introduced to Putul's mother-in-law who asked some questions about me and my family in Bangladesh. She entertained us with good food and left the drawing room to Putul and myself. She did not enter the room while we were talking, but the awareness of having her mother-in-law wandering around outside created a stifled atmosphere. Putul, a full-time mother, told me that if she wanted to have a job, her in-laws would have been supportive because her mother-in-law did the everyday cooking anyway. Given the cultural dynamism of an extended family and the 'power' relation between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, this to me did not seem to tell the whole story about her home situation. In

¹¹The last part of the four-part marriage ceremony in Bangladesh.

spite of this, I did not ask her too many questions about it, partly because I did not want to make assumptions, and partly because I myself was slightly less confident in probing, knowing that Putul might be questioned by her family members once I left. I did not want to create an impression that I came to their house to elicit complaints about a mother-in-law from a family bride. I might have asked Putul a few questions about her family and future plans if she had been on her own.

One of the key challenges in doing research about one's 'own people' is to recognize and name the power dynamism between the researcher and the participants. If and when the researcher and the participant belong to a dissimilar race, class and social background, it can be assumed that the power difference in the broader social world has some influence on the interview. Sharlene Hesse-Biber (2007) reflected on her awkward position as a white, middle-class woman living in a 'safe neighbourhood' amidst a group of young African-American girls in an inner city, who wanted to see themselves first as 'black' then as 'women'. Biber could articulate her feelings of being cornered as a member of the majority amidst the social minority when she was trying to judge the young girls from her white perspective. This kind of fine line is less obvious when researchers are thought to be privileged due to their cultural, ethno-demographical *similarities* with the subjects. The complexity arises partly because in this context, a participant has better resources with which to judge a researcher in relation to herself and the world outside the interview context, and to tailor her responses accordingly.

Indeed, my own interview experience was affected by how I was judged by my participants. I interviewed a group of women who were highly educated, strategic actors. They had their own reasons for what they did or preferred not to do. Ironically, this equality of position gave them reasons to judge me in many ways: positively, negatively and ambivalently. Their judgments influenced what I was told and how I was told it. Take, for example, my third interviewee Hasna, a working woman, with a strong social standing in the Bangladeshi community in London. When it came to the discussion of her higher education in Bangladesh, she explained, rather elaborately, that despite having the academic credentials, she did not attempt to go to Dhaka University, considered a top institution in Bangladesh. She studied English in a well-established national college in Dhaka. Interestingly, a quick search of the interview transcript revealed that she used the term 'Dhaka University' six times in the interview, although she herself had not been a student of that institution. At the end, when I asked her if she had anything to ask me, this was her question:

Hasna: No, I do not have anything to ask about this [the interview or the research]. But my question is: will you join Dhaka University after you finish your study here?

My answer made Hasna realize that my PhD did not have any direct connection with my Dhaka University background. Once she understood that I did not intend to join there, she wished me good luck in getting what I deserve in life. Throughout the interview, she had positioned me as someone with a career at Dhaka University and she organized her narrative of her education by comparing herself with me.

The examples I have used so far highlight the fluidity of the researcher/interviewee intersubjective positions in the interview context. An interviewer is a negotiated identity. Her social identity – the intersection of gender, race and class - has contingent impact on what she might ask and what she might hear (see for example Phoenix 1994). Miri Song and David Parker (1995), through their individual research experiences, jointly point out the ambivalences of differences and commonality across the spectrum of ‘similar’, ‘partially similar’ identities of a researcher and an interviewee. Song, a Korean American interviewing Chinese young people in Chinese family takeaway businesses, noted her ‘circling’ relationship with her respondents and its impact on what she received as data. Some of her participants preferred her being outside of the community. By contrast, Parker’s Chinese-British participants often judged him in a detailed way, pointing towards their commonalities and differences. The women who considered me a complete ‘insider’ often judged me meticulously. Lipi, one of my core snowballers, expressed her polite reluctance to be interviewed when I reached her house (although in our repeated conversation over the phone she was very enthusiastic). Her first anxiety was I might spread details about her personal life amongst our common acquaintances. I was asked to turn off the recorder a number of times when she talked about her personal life. I reassured her throughout and restated her right not to answer. In the course of the conversation, there came a point at which Lipi was trying to work out what she got from life. At that moment, I appeared to be her immediate comparison. Lipi told me:

You left your daughter with your husband because you probably know that he would take good care of her. But there was not much trust between us. And whatever I was trying to do, my kids were my priority. I just did not want to leave them anywhere and to go forward with whatever I wanted to do.

Lipi contrasted herself against me; I left my child with my husband, which she could not have done. However, the details of her life told a different story that was curiously similar to mine. A mother of three teenage children, Lipi told me at length how an unplanned pregnancy (a year after the first son's birth) led to massive depression because she could not cope with the demands of her life. Once her second son was born, she sent both sons to Bangladesh to be looked after by her mother in an attempt to concentrate on her plan of becoming a law professional. Things did not work out for a variety of reasons, her dominating husband being one of them. Faced by someone who in her eyes had everything going perfectly, Lipi defended herself with a different narrative than this one.

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) introduce the phrase 'defended subject' (borrowing from Melanie Klein's psychoanalysis of the self) in their discussion of qualitative interviewing. In their in-depth interviews with people living in a high-crime neighbourhood in a British city, these researchers found that their participants - poor, working-class, with difficult past and present life experiences - used a defence mechanism to justify and gloss over the contradictions and ambivalences in their lives, both past and present. For the authors, neither the anxiety nor the mechanism to deal with this were purely psychological: rather, these were psychosocial and intersubjective processes. Talking with others, people can adopt defensive strategies in particular contexts, such as in-depth interviews, when the subject herself can reflect on her life (and what might happen in the future), and try to develop an acceptable discourse without victimising the self. Some of my participants' narrative strategies represent that of a 'defended subject'. Growing up in a strongly patriarchal society (more in Chapter 3) with very limited agency for women, my participants, like countless women in Bangladesh and many other places, had many reasons to be dissatisfied, frustrated and angry. Their change of context (from Bangladesh to Britain) had already developed in them an alternative perspective: that the meaning of being a girl and woman can be more assertive, respectable and autonomous than the meanings these positions had (or still have) in Bangladesh. My participants did not have access to information on my past childhood; they could only see me as I stood in front of them at that moment. The more the participants went into the details of their lives, the more I appeared to them as an outsider. I was told things to remind me of my privileges. I was certainly a knower, albeit slightly less persuasive, less in control of the whole situation, and definitely what Gabriele Griffin (2012) calls a 'compromised researcher'. I was researching women who were perhaps too similar to myself. One of the dangers of researching the similar, as Griffin argues, is the researcher's expectation to hear what she can count as 'data'. In reality, however, researchers are endlessly confronted with opinions and perspectives that challenge their expectations. In the

next section, I shall present how certain interviews perplexed me at first, but then provided means for prolonged reflection, giving rise to more questions than answers.

The Boundary of Normalcy

I mentioned earlier that when I prepared the interview schedule I used my own experiences as the basis for deciding on the topics of conversation. It was not until much later, and through a completely different experience, that I became aware of the fact that what had been considered the least sensitive ‘icebreaker’ topic for my research with Bangladeshi women might be quite the opposite in another culture and context. That particular experience is worth mentioning here. In a job interview about tutoring undergraduates at my British university, I was asked to prepare a mock seminar for the students. I chose the topic of ‘Auto/biographical narratives of donor and donor offspring’. I said in the interview that I would first encourage the students to talk about their own birth, what they heard from their parents about the event. The purpose was to understand the domain of ‘normalcy’ of family formation. I was told in the interview that in western culture, in particular in Britain, talking about one’s birth and family might be a sensitive issue because people have very different experiences, such as abandonment, surrogacy and non-biological parenting, and that I would have to think through the sensitivity of the topic and the social group I would be engaged with. No such discussion or awareness seemed necessary for me when I did my own research, nor was I warned what would happen if, as occurred to me in the job interview, someone told me ‘my mother dumped me right after my birth, I had never seen my dad. I wish I was not born’. And what was my expectation of my participants? That I would be hearing stories of genteel middle-class nuclear family life in Bangladesh, just as I had had. I was not wrong, for twenty-seven women had the kind of family life and childhood experiences that I expected. Bokul, however, did not.

Me and Bokul met in a common acquaintance’s house in greater London. I put the recorder on, asking her to talk about herself from the beginning. Bokul told me about her family, father, mother and four siblings in Bangladesh, adding that she was closer to her father than her mother. This last piece of information was atypical among my participants, so I probed further:

Rifat: Do you know why you have are closer to your father than your mother?

Bokul: Emm...it is from both sides...I mean my mother is my **stepmother**.¹² And I think **normally** daughters have closer relations with fathers than with mothers. In my case it is even more because I have a stepmother so I am closer to my father.

Wendy Brown (1993) wrote about the compromise between the individual 'I' and the collective 'we' in neoliberal, multicultural western societies. The proliferation of identity politics gave birth to a liberal notion of 'we', encompassing every kind of 'I', only as a variation of a standard we. 'Indeed,' to quote Brown (1993: 392), 'in a smooth and legitimate liberal order, the particularistic "I's" must remain unpoliticized, and the universalistic "we" must remain without specific content or aim, without a common good *other than* abstract universal representation or pluralism' [italics as in original]. Bokul's not having a caring mother of a typical middle-class Bangladeshi family challenged my perception of 'we-ness'. I did not have the 'wounded attachment' (Brown 1993) that Bokul had to her biological mother. Throughout the interview, whatever experiences Bokul talked about, she went back to the wound of not having her own mother. In her imagination, her mother would have saved her from a terrible marriage and all other forms of loveless, valueless living.

'Empathy' is a strategic emotion that has gained considerable academic weight as people's reported narratives have become central in the generation of knowledge across the social science disciplines (Hollway and Jefferson 2000; Alvesson and Sköldböck 2000). 'Empathy' bridges the gap caused by the differences within commonality. Gunaratnam (2003) argues that empathy generated within an interview context needs to be constantly interrogated to underscore the blurry relationship between the 'local' and 'wider' similarities and differences that we try to understand through our academic work. I argue that empathy is a mutual process. Empathy is possible only when a participant takes charge of talking about herself and what she wants to reveal. In turn, a researcher can appreciate the participant's experiences and place them in a wider perspective when there are commonalities. Through my research, I reassessed the incredibly strong position family holds in Bangladeshi culture. As either daughter or daughter-in-law, the detailed way some of my participants recollected the wounds they had suffered from their kin startled me. It is a struggle to describe their (or often my own) emotions in English. Perhaps these emotions are peculiar to collective societies where relationships are overloaded with expectations that cannot be met. I did not

¹² I use bold to denote words spoken in English.

always share the experiences of Bokul or the other women, yet I could empathize because our 'we-ness' was coded within our cultural/emotional commonality.

When my participants did not reflect on their uniqueness, I presented myself as a passive listener. This was most pronounced when I interviewed women with ethnic and religious minority backgrounds in Bangladesh. The first was Shomi in Hull. I only knew her first name; I talked to her over the phone from Keya's house (another participant) and agreed a time to do the interview. I went to her house: a typical, middle-class house (even by British standards) appropriate for an international academic working at a British university. The living room was neatly decorated with paintings, souvenirs from different parts of the world, and books. The family's richness in cultural capital was apparent in their material reality. I met her high school going son first, then her husband - the academic, and his wife, my interviewee. Their physical distinctiveness from myself indicated their tribal identity. Later I found, through their surname and the language mother and son used, that they are 'Chakma'. Shomi grew up in Dhaka, and had a typical middle-class background as the daughter of a professional government service holder in Bangladesh. They now have little connection to their ancestral home, and see themselves as 'Dhakatis' (residents of Dhaka).

In the interview, whilst talking about family and growing up, I asked my participants to reflect on the extent to which their family (and lifestyle) was similar to or dissimilar from those of the people around them. My purpose was to get an idea of how their perception of normalcy developed in accordance with and in contrast to others. I asked the same of Shomi, expecting her to tell me about the 'obvious' ethnic difference that her family had from others, and how it impacted her life in Dhaka. I could only probe further if Shomi gave me a prompt. But Shomi replied:

No, not at all. We were all quite similar. Most of the fathers were government service holders, and the families had similar kinds of economic conditions. Two of our very close neighbours were my father's year mate and friend. And there is another uncle who used to work in my father's department. Their children and we all grew up in a similar way – we used to go to the same schools, and we had lots of friends. Most of our neighbours were the families of government service holders of similar categories, so there was actually not that much of a difference between us.

At no point in the interview, even as a passing reference, did Shomi mention being part of a minority. Throughout the interview I was thinking, 'is it possible that she (or they) never experienced any kind of exclusion, prejudice, or discrimination? Did their neighbours and class-mates never joke about their physical attributes, language and other kinds of differences?' For however tolerant and civilized we thought we were, we surely did the same, out of our callousness, to so many who were slightly different from us. I read and write about Bangladeshi ethnic minorities in Britain. I am working on women who in terms of power are still strongly marginalised, but I could not ask a simple question of Shomi: 'how was it to grow up as a member of a minority in an unequal and prejudiced society?' Unlike in Britain (or any other developed western country), in Bangladesh (or perhaps in the Bangla language) there is no ready vocabulary to talk about the exclusion, seclusion and inequalities of the 'other'. There are countless white academics and researchers who work on 'others', those who are completely different from them – mostly with good intentions of giving them a voice, to represent what needs to be represented. But I could not do so.

Shomi was otherwise extremely similar to me, and to the other participants. We had a long conversation about our similar academic institutions. These similarities further impeded me in asking anything about our differences. Our sameness, ironically, 'functioned as barrier to knowledge' (Griffin 2012: 339). My vulnerability was as an insider. If I had been a complete outsider (a woman from a different country), I might have thought of Shomi as part of an undifferentiated mass of Bangladeshi women, in the same way minority ethnic women are often studied. I would perhaps not have been aware of her difference. As an insider, I am most certain that had I been a little more powerful (at least of a similar age, or a more experienced researcher) I could have immediately developed a strategy to ask my question about her difference.

This experience left me with many problematic questions. I thought that if I could not ask these questions of social importance and relevance to social justice in Bangladesh, how could I expect things to change in a society burdened with countless problems? When I got the opportunity to interview Sita (whose religious difference was obvious by virtue of her name), I prepared so that this time I would not make the same mistake as before. I would ask her about being a 'Hindu' in a Muslim-majority country, even if she did not introduce the topic herself. I did not have to work very hard, for Sita's life bore the scars of being a Hindu in a Muslim country, particularly as their 'otherness' was brutalized during the War of Independence in 1971. As a village landlord, Sita's family was the first target of the Pakistani army and their war criminal allies. Sita told me the stories with flat emotion: their house was burnt, their plants and cattle were confiscated, her eldest brother was taken away

and killed, her father went into hiding, otherwise he would have been killed. Her mother lost her mind, and remained so until she died five years later because she could not come to terms with the havoc.

Later, Sita also told me how her husband had always been discriminated against in his workplace, making them leave the country for Britain, where she was much more comfortable and secure (like others I spoke with). I asked a few probing questions such as, 'did the Pakistani army target Hindu families' like yours?' The War and the brutality against the minorities is common knowledge in Bangladesh. I used that knowledge. But did I ask her what was inside me? No, I did not. I did not ask her 'what about your mother's female body, was it left uncontaminated? And what about your teenage sister, who was looking after you and your brother at that time – did they leave her untouched and unmolested?' I could not, lest I had to hear a truth that was too hard to tell, and deal with. I was not strong enough; I was not prepared for that. I heard what I could, and I told myself 'well, those stories are not necessary for my research so I do not have to bother with them'. In every interview, there were moments of awkward pause in conversation. Just as in any traditional culture, in Bangladesh there are ranges of issues that should not be discussed openly or between people of dissimilar ages. For example, while talking with respondents who were a bit older than me, I found it awkward to ask about their marriage and their life immediately after their marriage. However, as I gained experience and developed confidence, I took a more professional approach and asked my participants about this subject. My experience of interviewing Shomi and Sita led me towards critical/intellectual reflexivity. Throughout Shomi's interview, I was in a feminist ethical dilemma, 'should I remind her of her different and minoritized status when she herself prefers to see herself as similar to others?' This is an important question, and is not always discussed in the feminist methodological literature. Are we, as researchers and feminists, in a position to decide which women belong where across the spectrum of differences and diversities staple to post-Second Wave feminisms across the globe?

'Interviewing Is Rather Like Marriage ...'

Ann Oakley's (1981: 31) introductory line of the extremely influential essay 'Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms' is perhaps true for any researcher whose research involves interviewing social subjects, and then writing about it. The textual version can never do justice to the nuances and complexities of each interview. Did the women's talk go uninterrupted? No. After all, as Daphne Patai reminds us about the world outside academe,

while academics spend nights reflecting on their standpoint and interview craftsmanship, 'babies still have to be cared for, shelter sought, meals prepared and eaten' (1994: 61). All this (including shelter sought) was relevant even when I did the interviews. Keya, a doctor from Hull, gave me a date in her busy schedule the day before her house move, so that whilst packing things, she could talk with me. In every interview, there were several pauses because children needed the toilet or simply felt bored when their mothers talked for hours (unusually for them) with a stranger and in front of a mobile phone style recorder. I helped Nipa to finish her cooking and Lily to put the lunch on the table because I did not want them to have a hard time from their husbands after I left. Being an insider with a background of experiencing a father's authority in the family, I knew very well what could befall a woman and the family in general when freshly cooked food was not on the table exactly on time.

In most contexts by the time I finished my interview, I turned into an 'insider'. I stayed there longer than strictly necessary, partly because I was offered food and hospitality, and partly because the participants themselves and other members of their family asked me questions about myself. These are also interesting parts of research related to the social world. For example, upon enquiring in most cases my participants and their husbands came to know that although I had a scholarship to do this PhD, yet the monthly allowances barely met any substantial expenses, let alone the costs of travelling by train in Britain. In addition, at that time my financial condition was particularly precarious since my husband left his job to look after our daughter. These sorts of information generated mixed reactions. To some, this information about my 'real' life behind doing a PhD lowered my social standing. Rupu, for example, asked me whether I would have an academic job in Britain once I would finish my PhD. When I told her that it would be very difficult for me to get that kind of job even if I had a PhD, she responded that this was (uncertainty of job) was one of the reasons why she did not want to study further in Britain (discussed in Chapter 3). In many other situations, within an instant, I became an unambiguous 'insider' needing some help. I was given lifts at least to the train station. I was advised ways to improve my income. Occasionally, much like Farhana Sultana worded it about her particular research positionality in rural Bangladesh, I felt 'being part of a larger family where people felt to prod, pry, and pontificate' (2007: 380). Yet I took countless information and advice as their humble ways of helping me out. There were also people like Ratna and her husband who expressed that doing a PhD at a university in the UK was a matter of 'respect', and one day I would be paid off materially as I, unlike them, would have the prospect of having a well-paid job in future.

Completing each interview gave me a sense of fulfilment. Once my interviewees confirmed that they did not have anything to ask me, I could turn off the recorder. After that, both the

participant and I signed two copies of the consent form, and I requested everyone to keep her copy for future references. I also told them that I would anonymize their data and keep all information confidential. Out of the twenty-eight women, only two (Alia and Asma) enquired about the result/outcome or completion of my thesis, while Bina (an engineer) asked me clearly, 'did you get the information you were looking for?' I had to tell her that I was not looking for particular information, nor was I testing any hypothesis; I would have to listen to all of the interviews to understand the stories, and to develop an argument. She seemed unconvinced, but respected that there might be different ways of doing research. I told all the interviewees, regardless of their level of interest, that I would be finishing my thesis in early 2014, and would let them know once I had completed it. On my return journey to York (mostly on the train), I wrote up what had happened in the interview, both routine and unique. Not all interviews appeared in their transcriptions as I experienced them 'in real life', or wrote about them in my notebook. This issue of translation, transcription and the gap of representation is the main point covered in the concluding section of this chapter, as is my data analysis.

Transformation through Translation and Transcription

Transcription and translation, although not always used together, serve a common purpose in a qualitative interview. They provide a widely accessible textual representation of material collected in oral form. As Nikander (2008: 225) points out, 'transcripts bring immediacy and transparency to the phenomena under study by allowing the audience access to inspect the data on which the analysis is based'. The expansion of the internationalization of the social science has caused an increased attention to this issue of translation and transcription, necessary to produce knowledge for the wider audience (Temple 1997; Birbili 2000; Temple and Young 2004; Temple 2005; Nikander 2008). In contrast to this relatively recent attendance from the wider social science perspective, translation has long been part of feminist 'partial' knowledge. The act of translation is not only always 'partial' and approximate, as Donna Haraway (1988: 589) clarifies but also, perhaps more significantly, knowledge through translation can only be partial at best. Translation carries the possibilities of losing as well as adding new meaning to representation. I experienced this through my experience of producing knowledge through several kinds of translation - from oral to textual, from one language to another.

Many dissertation methodologies written after adoption of a feminist stance become preoccupied with describing the cultural slips of language, the impossibility of word-by-

word translation and the lexical and semantic differences limiting the quality of the textual representation. These critical reflections clarify the methodological process, and provide an understanding of the strategies used by the researcher to minimize the risk of misrepresentation. However, the key task of the knower, the question of representation, is left untouched in spite of being crucial to feminist reflexivity. For example, in her PhD about Chinese migrant women in Britain, WenchaoWei (2011) mentions that to reduce the bias of cross-cultural translation she either chose the more neutral English version of a particular Chinese phrase or translated word-for-word to err on the side of accuracy. On the other hand, in her dissertation on the emergence of Russian psychological counselling in Post-Soviet Russia, Maria Karepova (2010) points out that due to her competence in the English language she could translate the interviews with relative ease. Furthermore, she mentions that not all of her participants were competent in English, meaning that she could not expect them to verify the quality of the translation. Both of these researchers, being influenced by the feminist debate on the researcher's ultimate power as the knower, improvised ways to reduce the gap between oral and textual narrative. However, neither author reflects on the impact of her intervention on re-creating an identity. What does the particular phrase that Wei struggled to translate in an unbiased way say about Chinese society and women's ways of talking (see Wong and Poon 2010)? What did Karepova's fluency in English do for the Russian participants she talked with and then represented?

The 'choice' of language itself is crucial in a cross-cultural interview context. I mentioned earlier that I left it to my participants to choose to talk with me in whichever of the two languages between Bangla and English they preferred. In practice, all of the interviews 'slip[ped] between' these two languages (Rossman and Rallies 1998 in Birbili 2000: n.p.) to varying degrees. Alia and Bina chose to speak in English, mainly to reduce my workload in both translation and transcription. Most of Lipi's sentences and discourses were a mixture of English and Bangla, and the rest of the women moved between the languages according to ease and usualness of use. After all, given its postcolonial context, standard Bangla has long been hybridized with English. Between Alia and Bina, the women interviewed only in English, there were differences that went beyond mere lingual competence. Alia, a sociology graduate from a London university, had had a long struggle with her Bangladeshi identity. A childhood in Iran, repressive teenage years in the elite society of Dhaka, and finally her strong diasporic Muslim identity peripheralized her Bangladeshi identity. With a marriage to a British born and brought up Bangladeshi Muslim and a household with three children growing up in partially British and partially Muslim, Alia had little necessity or craving for speech in Bangla, or to be called Bangladeshi. Therefore, although Alia told me before the interview that being a sociology student and knowing the pain of lengthy transcription, she

would help me out by using English, English was actually the language she commonly used. On a limited number of occasions, she started a sentence with a Bangla word but continued with English because she did not have full access to Bangla. By contrast, Bina had a background that might be shared by many educated immigrants from Bangladesh, including myself. A good education and an educated family environment gave her a solid grounding in English. Her quality of speech was improved by being in an English-speaking country, with an international degree and regular interaction with native speakers in her professional life.

It is one thing to speak English with a non-Bangladeshi, because there is no other choice, but quite another to speak English with a Bangladeshi, particularly in an interview setting where conversation leads to memories, emotions and explanations. Bina's interview was less conversational. Throughout the interview, I had the impression that she would have spoken more spontaneously had she not chosen to speak in English. I could not ask her to speak in Bangla, lest she think I was commenting on her English language competence. For example, in English Bina described the influence of the Islamic religion on her family and her 'conservative' upbringing:

My grandfather was very religious and he was a practising Muslim. And I regret that I have not started practising Islam seriously because one day I will have to die. One day I have to answer the questions that Allah will ask me, but still yes, religion is a big part in our family. Maybe we might not, yes, it is true we are not that secular in our ways of thinking.

The conservative family environment Bina describes here, associated with Muslim identity, is not at all atypical in a Muslim country. Rather, in the 1980s the time Bina referred here certain degrees of religious ordinance were part of the middle-class lifestyle, though Islam, the religion, was a softer though central hold of the family values. I still wonder whether, had the conversation taken place in Bangla, Bina would have used a political term such as 'secular' as opposed to Islam. In the second line ("... and I regret") she expressed her regret for not having been more religious earlier. Bina was one of the few examples in my study who had embraced her Muslim identity more tightly in a non-Muslim western country, in spite of this being quite common for Muslim immigrant communities in the western world. Through English and a specific vocabulary, Bina reconstructed her past with a political undertone which might have been less pronounced in Bangla, where terms such as 'secular' (or their Bangla equivalents) rarely appear in everyday language. On the other hand, perhaps I would have translated the whole idea in different words had the sentiment been expressed

in Bangla, because as I write and try to think of an actual Bangla meaning of ‘secular’, I struggle to find one.

Rupu, a woman I interviewed towards the end of my fieldwork, started to talk in English as I explained about the choice of interview language. However, after two sentences about her birth and family she told me ‘I better speak in Bangla’. None of the other interviewees, regardless of their academic or professional status in the UK, wanted to speak in English. Rather, they expressed satisfaction at speaking in Bangla at length and on diverse topics with another Bangladeshi. If I had made English the main language of the interviews, most of my participants would have been able to talk. However, that would probably have served only one part of the language dimension: logic and sequence. It would have missed out the more dynamic, meaning making and disruptive parts of speeches and silences. As Spivak (1993: 180) points out:

There is a way in which the rhetorical nature of every language disrupts its logical systematicity. If we emphasize the logical at the expense of these rhetorical interferences, we remain safe. ‘Safety’ is the appropriate term here, because we are talking of risks, of violence to the translating medium.

Spivak here refers to the translation of literary texts from lesser known to a central global language, namely from Bangla to English. Spivak's ideas of risk and safety associated with textual translation can be transferred to the social science interview context. If, for example, I took English as the medium of the interview conversation, I might have just gained what could be called ‘safe’ data: enough to (re)present the lives of my participants. I chose a language with ‘logical systematicity’ and ‘rhetorical interferences’ where safety and risk co-exist. This safety I maintained by doing a ‘verbatim’ translation, which I discuss below. The same technique took me to the potential of ‘risk’, with its more positive connotations of knowing things differently.

Translation and Verbatim Transcription

In translating and transcribing my twenty-eight interviews from Bangla to English, I adopted a ‘broad verbatim transcription’ strategy (Nikender 2008: 225). Each interview took almost one week (or towards the end, four to five days) to complete, because the interviews were long, the shortest one, Rupu’s, lasting for about an hour and twenty minutes. I had

approximately 30x28 = 840 pages of transcription, all done by myself. It was a tedious process. However, I see this process as an integral part of doing qualitative research, even more so when taking a feminist perspective. In both translation and transcription, the question of authenticity is paramount. The various forms of detailed notation, such as those proposed by Jefferson (1984) and Silverman (2011), the inclusion of signs of emotion and the symbols for gaps and silences (Nikender 2008), are invented and continuously worked to reduce the discrepancy between actual talk and the textual version. However, an extremely detailed transcription results in the fragmentation of interviews (see Poland 1995; McLellan, MacQueen and Neidig 2003). This is partly because a lengthy interview will consume enormous time if all the details of notations are maintained, and partly because such details hinder the flow and understanding of the conversation (Birbili 2000). I would like to add, following Hollway and Jefferson's (2000: 69) argument for holistic data analysis, that fragmentation always risks 'decontextualisation of the text'. The word 'data' evokes the image of a molecule under a microscope (see for example McLellan, MacQueen and Neidig 2003: 69). I did not want to reduce the richness of my data by reducing it to fragments of conversation. I concentrated on producing a word-by-word translation of the interviews, except for certain repetitions and unclear expressions.

Akua-Sakyiwah (2012) argues that in her work on Somali refugee women she had to produce a complete transcription because her participants did not maintain a linear order of conversation. Verbatim transcription can enhance the understanding of the broader framework of references, which might not appear directly relevant to the research topic, yet may still be revealing. I will provide two examples of these kinds of references here which directly resulted from my concentration on producing a holistic transcription. The conversations might not be relevant to the actual research themes (therefore I could have left them out), but they provide an interesting insight into the social groups I represent. As for the specific notations, I did include emotion (smile, big laugh, sob and cry) when it occurred in the interviews as well as indicating long and brief pauses in the conversation. However, emotion is culturally and contextually specific, and not always transferrable. For example, one of my participants, Zui, started crying in the middle of the interview while she was telling me that after coming to the UK, she worked in a medicine factory. I put ('sobbing') and a pause in interview into the text. For a western audience it might be difficult to understand how this issue of working in a particular place can be an emotional one, given that there was no specific incident of harassment attached to this. The in-depth explanation is that as an educated woman, Zui would never have worked in a factory in Bangladesh, and this particular experience made her aware of her immigrant status in an advanced country. At least in terms of jobs, she could not expect to have what she had had in Bangladesh. A mere

notation in brackets is not self-explanatory here. Similarly, on numerous occasions my participants and I laughed at things that might not be at all funny to people of different cultures.

To clarify how a verbatim transcription enriched my insights into my participants, I will use the example of a particular Bangla expression. Such expressions fall into the rhetorical dimension of language: they constitute the ‘lost’ part of the cross-cultural translation. They either are left untranslated (Temple 1997) or, as mentioned in Wei’s Chinese language discussions, are translated with certain strategies. Such phrases are usually puns, and represent the ways culture and languages are inherently intermixed. I draw attention to a particular phrase found in my interviews: ‘জুতা সেলাই থেকে চন্ডি পাঠ (literal English: from being a cobbler to a priest). This Bangla phrase is from the Sanskrit language. It represents the hierarchy of the Hindu caste system, where a Brahman is the head of the community (with a holy script) and a cobbler belongs at the bottom. This colloquialism presents a juxtaposition, the contrast conveying the value of multi-tasking. A competent person is one who can do both, and everything in between. Two of my participants used the phrase in different ways and in different contexts. Zami used the term in reference to professional and family work in Britain. One needs to do everything, regardless of the value of the work. By contrast, Asma used the term to explain how her mother taught them to multi-task from girlhood. When I asked her whether a similar rule was applied to her brother, she answered in the negative. Girls need to learn everything about housework while in education, boys do not.

In addition to being thematically relevant, this idiom clarifies a fundamental difference between contemporary British and Bangladeshi societies. Bangladeshi society still overtly maintains a traditional societal hierarchy based on both social origin and job status. By contrast, societal differences are softer and more subtle in Britain. A priest might not be intrinsically more valued than a cobbler. This phrase, so common and everyday to me, opened up new vistas of thought precisely because it was used in dialogues within a cross-cultural context. Although I agree that idioms are often difficult or impossible to translate, I suggest that such linguistic limitations can be compensated for if the phrase is used to reflect on women’s lives in a particular society, their ways of talking, and the extent to which things change with shifting context. I still wonder whether any Bangladeshi man would have used the phrase at all in an interview, given that they do not need to multi-task in the way women have to. Even if he did, what would be the socio-cultural and contextual connotations?

From this Bangla phrase, I now move towards a particular English language phrase that is not used in the English-speaking world, but has contextual meaning in South Asia. In the interviews, the comparison between Bangladesh and Britain came through in different ways. For my analysis, I took the most common ways (such as children's futures in Bangladesh and Britain) for the sake of thematic interpretation. References often covered what it meant to be a 'girl' in Bangladesh and in Britain. Few of my participants with daughters directly addressed the issue of sexual insecurity that girls face in countries like Bangladesh. Sita, a mother of two teenage daughters, used the term 'Eve teasing' in the interview to emphasize the point. Sita told me:

[In Bangladesh] girls cannot go out of the house when they are a bit grown up. They become victims of **Eve teasing**¹³. These things never change in Bangladesh. We went back to Bangladesh in July, and we found that things are still the same. There are few changes, but this is not enough.

'Eve teasing'¹⁴ is a compound word that was first coined in India, claiming and reusing the master's language to create a less serious linguistic impression of the everydayness of sexual harassment that is part of being a female in such societies (Good 2007; Shuter 2012). Increasingly, the term is included in mainstream English dictionaries. For example, Grant Barrett in the *Official Dictionary of Unofficial English* (2006: 109) explains 'Eve teasing' and the ways in which its meaning has changed since the 1960s, when the term was first introduced in Delhi. Eve teasing, according to the dictionary, stands for 'harassment of, or sexually aggressive behaviour toward, women or girls in India and Pakistan'. From the workplace to educational institutes, from buses to cinema halls, Eve teasing is an unwritten right of men and can be exercised in both in the culturally normalized ways (such as catcalling or gesticulating suggestively) and ways leading to some severe criminal offence such as rape, abduction and murder. In Bangladesh, the term is relatively new, and is undoubtedly imported from the neighbouring countries. Although casual crimes have always been practiced in the urban and rural spaces in Bangladesh and are a shared gendered experience for women, there was no name for this.

¹³ Participant's use of English.

¹⁴ Eve teasing is a highly problematic term. The biblical image of 'Eve' has a double meaning here; women are either virtuous or fallen. Being fallen (in this case being teased) is at least a partial consequence of a woman's unchecked femininity (Mohanty 2013). Feminists and women's organizations in India as well as in Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries have fought a long battle to abolish this term and to bring back 'sexual harassment' as a phrase in practice (Pretha 2012; Nahar, Reewijk and Reis 2013; Mohanty 2013).

In Sita's interview, the issue of Eve teasing appeared decontextually. Sita was describing to me the reasons why they had moved to Dhaka from a semi-urban place when her daughters started school. In that context, she mentioned that living in Britain, she realized that certain things would never change for the better in Bangladesh. Girls would never be free from indiscriminate sexual harassment in public places by male strangers. The particular reference – which I could have left out from the transcription if it were not verbatim – shifted my interest to another intellectual dimension. There has been an on-going discussion within global migration research about the meaning of the 'good life' when people migrate either for lifestyle 'choice' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009) or simply to be part of a better world (Bakewell 2008). I myself used this idea of a 'good life' to begin this thesis. The increasing focus on children's international education (as discussed in Chapter 1 and in Chapter 5) has already made the point clear that at least for skilled and educated migrants, remittances or earning foreign currency are not necessarily the main incentive for migration to a western country. It would be interesting to research how gender, among other issues, strengthens the claim to move to a western world where girls and females can grow up safely.

Textual Representation and the Politics of Partial Knowledge

So far, I have discussed how using Bangla and doing broad verbatim translation and transcription added depth and breadth to my participants' narratives. I will conclude this section by discussing the issue of their textual representation after translation and transcription. As a rule, due to the cultural and lingual specificities of written English, my participants seemed much more active and assertive than how they actually were when speaking. In Bangla, language expression is more circular and elaborate than in English. In addition, my own English limitations hindered me in reproducing the details of the circular pattern of the Bangla language. For example, Saba, an engineer from greater London, told me that after her marriage she came to the UK as a dependent spouse. I translated Saba's words: 'Before we got married, he [her husband] got a work permit visa here [in the UK].' When I re-listened to the tape, I realized that the phrase 'we got married' is much more straightforward than how Saba actually expressed it. The accurate translation would have been 'before our marriage was settled and took place, my husband got a work-permit job in the UK'. These slight changes cumulatively impacted on my participants' textual representations.

I was even more aware of the difference between the oral and the textual when the written text was read by a culturally different 'third eye': my PhD supervisor was this 'third eye' for

me. She read every transcription, corrected English grammar and odd expressions, and finally we had a number of sessions on the transcriptions and my experiences of the interviews. Based on her reading (and her cultural position), her comments would match or contradict how I saw and interpreted my participants and what I wrote about them. For example, Zami, who I mentioned early on regarding the issue of rapport, talked about a number of issues which did not appear in other interviews (for example, she told me about her gay friend in the UK and how this was viewed by other Bangladeshis). At some point in the interview, while she was comparing herself with her other siblings, she described herself as being a 'rebel' in the family, breaking the norm of how a 'good' girl should act. Reading that transcription, my supervisor commented that she was one of the most 'outspoken' interviewees I had. I agreed.

Much later, when we discussed Ana (a woman from Manchester) and Sita (mentioned above), my supervisor commented that Ana was 'conservative' and Sita 'outspoken'. Despite Sita's matter-of-fact comments on the conditions of the several kinds of minorities in Bangladesh based on gender and/or religion, while interviewing I did not see Sita as 'outspoken'. Interestingly, in my interview journal I wrote that Sita was the most traditional of my participants. Her traditional outfit (saree instead of salwar kameez), the embodiment of a Hindu wife (wearing vermilion on the forehead) reminded me of the traditional Hindu families with whom I had grown up in a small town in Bangladesh. My supervisor's comment made me wonder how I (and my way of expression) had represented Sita. As for Ana, I wrote that she was one of my most helpful participants. Without much probing, Ana gave me an enormously detailed description of how her marriage had taken place after episodes of misunderstanding between the families. I highlight two references that may be subject to multiple readings, often culturally specific. The first is about Ana's marriage. A marriage arranged by a shared relative, Ana told me once she and her (would-be) husband had seen each other, she strongly objected to the marriage because of her husband's 'skin colour', though in other ways they were well matched. Ana explained that in her family everyone was 'fair-skinned'. She did not want to marry a man who might be a breeder of 'dark-skin' in the family. When I heard her story, and even now as I write about her from my particular standpoint, I did not see her as particularly 'prejudiced' or 'racist'. My supervisor, reading Ana's transcript, critically pointed out Ana's reservation against 'skin-colour', that in most contemporary western cultures is tantamount to racism.

Whilst it might be argued that as an insider interviewer I took my cultural prejudices for granted and did not question my participant's viewpoint, there were more in-depth issues than mere 'culture' at play in this context. Our historical internalization of the superiority of

white/fair skin is most readily apparent in the 'marriage market'. We are not 'really' white skinned, i.e. we do not belong to the Caucasian race, but we aim to reach the closest we can. Women, as the bearer of biological and cultural reproduction, are expected to be fair skinned. A fair-skinned woman is thought to be 'naturally' better endowed than a dark-skinned woman: fairness has all the positive connotations which darkness lacks. If in the final analysis, race and racism is more about collective 'power' and less about one's individual skin tone and texture, Ana's position proved the genderedness of race. A woman is not in a position to determine her 'choice' based on a man's skin colour, but a man is. Ana married the man whom she disapproved of at first, because a man could not be disqualified due to his 'skin' colour. In contrast, the marriage would not have taken place if Ana's husband had raised similar objections against her. My supervisor's comment made me to think about 'race' and what it means to be 'racist' in much deeper way than I had before. My participants came from a country that is hierarchical, conservative and where most things are judged in a binary way (either/or, black/white, rich/poor). In a western context, this particular way of thinking is largely considered obsolete and archaic. This difference of interpretation means that when we take the responsibility of representing the 'other', we have to be even more careful about the consequences of the representation. We have to develop an alternative discourse to address issues such as the diverse meanings of race and racism that are vital in today's societies and cultures, but are often left to a handful of western countries to define.

Gunaratnam (2003) explores the slippage of meaning in an interview context influenced by cultural, racial, gendered and generational differences. As a young British-Asian woman researcher talking with an African-Caribbean working-class man suffering from prostate cancer, she (2003: 140) had an interview that was 'wide-open to different interpretations and readings'. Though her discussion does not take account of the wider audience and the slippages of meaning beyond the interview, her analytical framework to name ambivalences of meaning is still relevant here. She argues for three stages of interpretation, bringing 'local' and 'global' perspectives together. In this three-part contextualization, de-contextualization and re-contextualization, the final layer is the point where a statement and its multiple meanings point towards the 'wider context that could shed light upon the ways in which difference can take shape, be expressed in, and constitute the research interaction' (2003: 143). For Gunaratnam the 'ethics of analysis and representation' (150) consist in the ways certain interviews can make a researcher a hesitant knower; a knower careful and reflexive about the multiple ways the information she examines can be read and understood. Standing between my participants and an international university where I represent them, I often ended up asking myself 'is that what my participants mean?' I am aware that I might not

have presented an exact picture of each of my participants, but I am also confident that they and their life stories hold the central ground of the thesis's knowledge.

Finding an Analytical Pattern in a 'Messy' Heap of Data

In sorting and analysing data to produce a coherent argument, feminist qualitative researchers have two main dilemmas to deal with. On the one hand, there is the 'qualitative' dilemma of producing knowledge that should not be a mere retelling of the stories, rather they should, as Mason (2002: 149) argues, enable a researcher to develop knowledge about the social world in some general and/or specific ways. This entails some reflexive and interpretive reading of the texts. On the other hand, related to this issue of interpretation, there is the feminist dilemma of the researcher's power, subjective interest and bias in interpreting the interview data. Are we allowed to interpret others' life experiences to make a claim that serves our own purpose (academic or otherwise)? Are we, after all, neutral interpreters of the data? For feminist Reay (1996), the interpretation part of her research on mothers of primary school children was the most troubling one. Her own British working-class background constantly pushed her to favour one participant over the other, to have more sympathy for the working-class mothers, and to quarrel with the taken-for-grantedness of some of her middle-class participants. In this case, I agree with Silverman's argument that people's behaviours and 'accounts are always contexted or situated' (2011: 446).

I found Harding's argument of 'higher objectivity' (Harding 1993) as a simultaneous way to live with, and take a back step to understand the situatedness of my participants' reported accounts. This point of 'higher objectivity' comes as the outcome of a researcher's active interaction with the textual data. After each transcription, I read and re-read my interviews. To organize my data, I did not use any computer-based software. Instead, in the beginning I prepared a number of charts and grid sheets, giving the qualitative data some form of textual systematization. Mason (2002) argues that while creating categories and indexes is necessary to manage messy qualitative data, too many or too restrictive categories can be problematic. I created categories based upon topics and themes such as family (including parents' profession, siblings, upbringing, socio-economic condition), education (initiator, school, results and opinion), migration (time and reasons, first impressions, settlement, future plan), employment (in Bangladesh, in Britain, some short comments) and social contact (with other Bangladeshis, with other ethnic groups and with the white population). The richness of my data created a wider focus. I had to develop an analytical device suitable for my primary data. Education and gender wove through every stage of my participants' narrative,

encouraging intersectionality in my reading of gender, education and migration. Reading the interview texts, I also realized that my participants' narratives could best be understood against their original middle-class backgrounds. The centrality of education and its association with class made Pierre Bourdieu's theories of education and capital a particularly relevant theoretical framework for my thesis. My participants' narratives could be interpreted in multiple ways and from multiple standpoints. I took one particular standpoint to examine the interplay of gender, education and class cross-culturally before and after migration. The knowledge I produce here is a product of my own feminist viewpoint.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the methodology of my qualitative research on educated Bangladeshi migrant women in the UK. I used an auto/biographical reflexive narrative to talk about how through this research, and the knowledge associated with it, I grew as a feminist researcher. I further argued that feminist reflexivity is an ongoing process and contingent on myriad issues. I analysed my methodology focusing on its three main stages, first designing the research and accessing participants, second conducting the interviews, and finally doing the translations and transcriptions. In designing the research, I focused on certain topics about my participants' life course before and after migration. I used in-depth interviewing as the method to generate primary data for my research and accessed my participants through snowballing. My snowballing was partly purposive and partly convenience-based and was founded on two criteria: Bangladeshi women with at least a Bachelor degree, and who came to Britain in the 2000s. I argued that snowballing could work well when there are multiple connections that both safeguard, and add variety to, the sample.

In discussing my experience of doing interviews, I first analysed the issue of interview rapport. I pointed out that similarities are very important for rapport even when a researcher is an 'insider'. From there, I addressed the multiplicities of interview situations and the complexities of being a knower by focusing on particular examples. I discussed how my participants, from their gendered position, developed a defensive strategy to present a narrative about their lives which they contrasted to mine. My 'insiderness' also made me an 'outsider' because I was seen as someone having certain privileges: an obstacle to our 'witness'. My key concern was to highlight the ambivalence of an insider knower, pointing out how my capacity of probing was contingent on how much my participants revealed about themselves. Our own original 'majority' and 'minority' positions in Bangladesh limited my

capacity as a knower. Often I depended on my participants' openness and self-disclosure to enable me to raise further queries. When my participants' were not open enough, I could not always ask what I wanted to know.

In the final 'Translation and Transcription' section, I emphasized the issue of language. I highlighted the way that Bangla, the medium of my interviews, added richness to what I received as data and my own sphere of reflexivity. I argued that through translation the (re)presentation and our knowledge is even more partial because it is mediated by the translator's (in this case the researcher's) perspective. The culturally specific readings of interview transcription can generate ambiguities of meaning. I argued for deeper reflexivity in feminist researchers in the question of translation, textual representation and partial knowing. I concluded the chapter with a brief note on how I analysed the data and the thematic/theoretical framework within which I situate and interpret my findings, and stated that my participants' gender identity was intertwined with their educated and original classed identity. It is through this integrated lens that we need to understand their migratory and cross-cultural experiences. The next chapter will answer a central question emerging out of the narratives: 'how did my participants become educated?' This is where my participants' narratives and Pierre Bourdieu's theories interrelate due to the centrality of education in both contexts.

Chapter Three: Bangladeshi Women and Education as Capital

In this chapter, I present an analysis of my participants' educational acquisition attainment. My participants migrated to the UK as adults. Their education mainly took place in Bangladesh, where formal education and the middle classes have a shared history. I introduce and use Pierre Bourdieu's (1973, 1986, 1990 [1977], 1998) theories of education and social reproduction in the context of Bangladeshi education. Education as 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1986) and its academic structure in Bangladesh are discussed in section one. In section two, I employ this theoretical framework to analyse my participants' academic 'habitus' as a dialogic process between their social classes, families and gender identity. Then, I investigate my participants' education and their academic careers in their multidimensional contexts of opportunities and constraints. I will conclude this chapter challenging, as well as revising Bourdieu's definition of 'academic capital', his term for an individual's formal educational qualifications, bringing women's education to the centre of this.

Education as Cultural Capital in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is not a country known for its standard of education. Rather, over-population¹⁵ and natural calamities such as floods on the one hand and poverty and illiteracy on the other, form its national identity. The ongoing global development project, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), state that there have been some outstanding successes in improving the basic levels of education in Bangladesh (MDG Annual Report 2012). The basic literacy of most social groups has increased and primary school dropout at elementary level has been stabilised. Gender parity even at secondary school level is remarkable¹⁶ (Global Education Digest 2010: 51-52; MDG Indicator 2013). Privatization of education at all levels has made education accessible to many; even higher education is no longer a 'luxury' for the rich (Monem and Baniamin 2010). Imam (2005), however, notes that the indiscriminate privatization and 'internationalization' of education, even at school level, has

¹⁵According to the UNESCO Country Statistics, the total population of Bangladesh in 2011 was 157 million (approx.). This makes Bangladesh one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with more than 1000 people per square kilometre (UNESCO 2013).

¹⁶According to the Annual MDG Report on Bangladesh (2012) net primary education enrolment has increased from 60 to more than 90 percent from 1990 to 2011. The adult literacy rate (14-24) years is 70 per cent, the gender disparity between men and women has decreased substantially with certain reverse gender gaps emerging at secondary levels.

deepened the already hierarchical and unequal education system, contributing to social inequality. As in many countries, rich, enriching or poor, education in Bangladesh is much more widespread in the 21st century than it was ever before. Its tie with the middle class, as I will discuss below, are still as strong as they were historically.

The history of formal education in Bangladesh predates its history as an independent nation. It shares the collective colonial history of the British Raj in India, and along with many other countries gained postcolonial independence during or around the time of World War II.¹⁷ Bourdieu's theory of education is particularly helpful to understand this colonial enterprise. Education, for Bourdieu, is an arbitrary power in the first place, a social and cultural product. It needs to be understood 'as a system of power relations and sense relations between groups or classes' (1990 [1977]: 5). The idea that education has the power to reproduce and maintain societal hierarchy is not an altogether new one. Rather, most of Bourdieu's predecessors or contemporaries on which he builds his arguments - from Marx to Weber, from Durkheim to Althusser and Gramsci - all contribute to establishing education as the most silent but pervasive form of power in a modern, industrial society (see Cosin 1972). Despite this tradition, Bourdieu, in my view, is unique for two reasons. Firstly, unlike others who take the 'state' as the beginning point of education and its power, he locates education as a power preceding the 'state'. Education is itself a 'culture' proclaimed by those who can prove their superiority according to the standard of modern civilization. Secondly, unlike for example Althusser, who sees education as the most powerful ideological state apparatus, therefore, serving the interest of the powerful few, Bourdieu considers education as less powerful, accessible, though in varying degrees, to many. Education, in other words, is a benign form of social power which as Ottaway (1953: 10), even before Bourdieu, argues, is required both for 'conformity' and 'change' in a society.

Both features that I outlined in relation to Bourdieu's arguments of education are useful for understanding education and its social power in Bangladesh. Education in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent, of which Bengal was a key province, was introduced to civilize colonial society. British culture, based on formal education, knowledge and individualism, was in deep conflict with the natives' pre-colonial cultures, languages and religions. The key arguments for education were presented by Thomas Babington Macaulay, the secretary of the Board of Control of India between 1834-1838, in the *Minute of Education* (see for example, Clive 1987 [1973]: 342-399). Macaulay, a formidable figure in 19th century

¹⁷ For Bangladesh, see Jahangir 1977; for North Zambia, see Bond 1983; for South Asian contexts, see for example, Bêteille 2001; Varma 2001. All these studies provide evidence of the British colonial establishment formal education in the non-western contexts.

English history, argued that English education would create a ‘class who may be interpreters between us [British] and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect’ (n.p.). Bourdieu (1998: 24) notes two distinct qualities that make education more progressive than the old orders of feudalism or religious orthodoxy: the introduction of ‘public service’ and the emphasis on individual meritocracy. Both in turn give birth to a new class: the ‘middle class’ in society. Its culture bore certain similarities with the culture of the superior ‘other’. Macaulay replicated the English way of making ‘civilized subjects’ (Hall 2011) in colonial India. As a liberal colonist, Macaulay chose British education, rather than any other form of cultural capital, for the colony. Formal education and institutional knowledge were the key modernizing forces making Britain the ‘first modern nation’ within and beyond its geographical territory (Gunn and Vernon 2011: 3).

When Macaulay imagined a civilized class in India, the eastern part of then undivided Bengal (now Bangladesh), was populated by millions of natives with little hope of becoming educated. The widespread peasant class, a Muslim majority, producing indigo for the Raj, bore no similarity with the quickly growing ‘Babu’, or native gentlemen class in Calcutta, the capital of the British East Indian Company and the Empire of the 19th century. Therefore, when in the late 19th century Calcutta became the model for the ‘new’ intellectuals, the beacon of a changing time, Dhaka, the present capital of Bangladesh, was outside the catchment area for education. From the outset, education was unequally distributed even in undivided Colonial Bengal, favouring the Hindu zaminder and the new mercantile classes. However, eventually the ‘symbolic capital’ of education became well established even in the remotest villages, often in the form of a native magistrate or a physician serving his own people. Symbolic capital, as Bourdieu (1998: 47) argues, gives value to any property that is commonly recognized by most individuals regardless of whether they have it or not. Education became part of social culture and the driving force for mass improvement. Being educated meant being part of the ‘new’ middle class holding civil service jobs. It meant knowing the English language and being appreciative of ‘high culture’. Education meant social respect, recognition, and most importantly, a way to revolt against old customs. Education meant being liberal, without being libertarian. Education meant being modern ‘in-progress’, with certain dilemmas and new potentials. Education meant being active social agents rather than mere puppets in God’s hands. Academic qualifications, by certifying one’s merit, could create new opportunities for advancement. Gradually, men of different backgrounds, poor Hindus, relatively rich Muslims and then poor Muslims from East and West Bengal, engaged in formal education (Rahim 1992). In 1921, the founding of Dhaka University, the only university established by the British in East Bengal and now

Bangladesh, was proof that within a century education had become highly demanded in both parts of Bengal.

Belatedly, female education in colonial India and in Bengal also emerged as a sign of the Empire's policy of 'liberal imperialism'. Unlike men's education, implemented to create a new 'class', female education aimed at improving women's positions at a time when women regardless of their religious, class and social belongings had no access to the public sphere and education. Western and postcolonial feminist historians have maintained an exploratory interest in the new Hindu Bengali female self that emerged within the trajectory of the 19th century's liberal Empire, the new middle-class intelligentsia, and families with liberal values (Bannerji 1991; Karlekar 2000; Sinha 2004; Wilson 2004). A middle-class 'bhodromohila' (the wife of a bhodhrolok or a gentleman) was a young woman who was a match, intellectually and in taste, for the newly educated gentleman. Her main responsibility was to look after her family, which needed to be done in a modernized and classed way. In this way, in late 19th- and 20th- century Bengal, a new kind of gender ideology and practice took hold in the fashion of Victorian English society and morality. Highly-educated young men and home-educated young women (often home-schooled by the father and the brother) became the new bureaucratic, nuclear family ready to pass on 'cultural capital' to their future heirs.

Bengali Muslim women from noble families exhibited a similar history of women's emancipation. Formal education, though, never became a norm for Muslim women in Bengal, whether in the late colonial or later in the postcolonial context. For example, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, the pioneer of Muslim females' education in 20th century East Bengal, was never formally educated herself. Hossain benefited intellectually from being part of a liberal Muslim family with educated brothers, and later by being married to a newly educated 'gentleman'. Her school, the Sakhawat Memorial School, set up in Calcutta in 1911, and her relentless engagement with young Muslim women's education, helped to create the next generation of educated Muslim women during the first half of the 20th century (see for example, Haque 2006; Anam 2011). A highly-educated Muslim woman's family background was self-explanatory, because unless one had an exceptionally intellectual and liberal father, it was not possible for a young Muslim woman in the 1950s or 1960s to be university educated. It was only in the 1980s that urban women in substantial numbers started to enter into various ranges of higher education institutions in post-independent Bangladesh. This further increased the gap between urban and rural women's education because inequality of education across 'region, gender and classes' (Abdullah 1991: 69) was severe. My own study shows that most of my participants and their sisters are actually the

first generation of highly-educated women in their nuclear and extended families. I will approach this issue when analysing my participants' family and education.

The high value of education reproduced itself against changing time and situations in a country that stands at the bottom rung of global economy. Having an academic qualification is the main criterion for being part of Macaulay's middle class in Bangladesh, whether in the public or the private sector. The notion of a 'cultured' society is based on the 'cultural capital' of knowledge, taste, lifestyle, and an outward-facing outlook. Education is the moral standard against which one judges legitimacy and illegitimacy. Education is a value in itself because as Bourdieu argues, like habitus, education can 'make distinctions between what is good and what is bad, between what is right and what is wrong' (Bourdieu 1998: 8). Education provides social respect based on honesty and integrity. Education is the foundation for middle-class families standing against the tide of corruption within and beyond the social groups they represent. Education is the fantasy-ambition of those who never had it. Finally, education serves the interests of the socially rich seeking a way to legitimise their societal positions, although they can, in Bourdieu's words, 'do' without education (1973: 502).

Education itself forms a final barrier: it demands academic-mindedness and perseverance, which those who can 'do without it' do not always possess. Thus, it serves best those who serve it the most. This is where Bourdieu sees the middle class as the ultimate winner and owner of education, because whether by origin or in practice, the middle class serve and receive the most from this 'capital' of modernity:

In modern societies the middle classes, and more precisely those middle-class fractions whose ascension most directly depends on the School [*sic*], differ from the working classes by an academic docility which is expressed in, among other things, their particular sensitivity to the symbolic effect of punishments or rewards and more precisely to the self-certification effect of academic qualifications (1990 [1977]: 28).

Bourdieu's demarcation of the middle class and the working class here is typical of industrial and advanced western societies such as France, the United States and Britain. In the 1960s, when Bourdieu did extensive research on the French education system and French society in general, the central western countries were undergoing massive social change that impacted on their education systems. In his words, in the 1960s many western countries entered into a

new era of 'soft approach' pedagogy (non-directive methods, invisible pedagogy, dialogue, participation and human relations) (1990 [1977]: 18). This change was part of wider transformations designed to diffuse overt societal hierarchies and to develop a less-differentiated society, where any operationalization of differences was subtle and clandestine (Bourdieu 1998). Even in such advanced and apparently homogeneous societies, education has a certain heightened moral value.

This kind of moral value of education is more strongly cultivated in a traditional and rigidly stratified society such as Bangladesh. Academic honour is far-reaching. It starts in school, rises through the school years, and can be converted into academic, social, cultural, as well as symbolic capital. The interrelation of academic and social recognition based on merit and legitimacy is fundamental to understanding the social value and cultural significance of education in Bangladesh. They are crucial references for interpreting my participants' narratives of being middle-class and being educated. Appreciating my participants' educational attainment also requires some understanding of the pedagogic system within which they were educated. From this discussion of the social value of education, I move towards the main academic system through which 'educated community' is produced in Bangladesh. The structure I present here is contextual to my participants' education in the 1980s and 1990s in the national schooling system.

School Curriculum and Academic Assessments

The curriculum and assessment system are key elements of any formal pedagogy. In Bangladesh, school education is nationally regulated and standardized. School curricula are one of the main ways in which a state can influence and intervene in its early-stage education, an issue that made school curricula in Bangladesh a political contingent. Government and the political party in power provide the 'historical truths' to be taught in schools, and regulate subjects and topics. Recent years have seen significant reformations of school education which have included revisions of academic curricula, some of which can be called positively radical for a conservative society, namely the recommendation to introduce gender education at secondary school level (Bangladesh National Education Policy 2010: 49). Despite the changes, the basic principle of the school curriculum has remained the same. The principle is to introduce and habituate pupils into a wide-range of subjects and academic skills at an early stage. These are a poor country's academic strategies to make young people academically resilient, competitive and capable at national, and later on at international levels. The school curriculum includes a number of subjects. The main subjects such as

Bangla, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, and Religion are introduced at the primary levels (I to V).¹⁸ The last year of junior secondary (grade VIII) is particularly crucial for one's academic life. Based on the examination results of that year, pupils are classified into the three major academic disciplines. These are: Science, Humanities and Business Studies. The main secondary level (IX and X) introduces more advanced curricula in a number of subjects. The standard compulsory secondary curriculum of the 1990s and early 2000s generally included:

Table 7: Compulsory Secondary Level School Curriculum in Bangladesh.

Compulsory Subjects	Compulsory option (must take one)
Bangla (Part I and II)	Advanced Mathematics Bookkeeping and Accountancy Home Science and Economics Computer Studies
English (Part I and II)	
Mathematics (arithmetic, algebra and geometry)	
Geography	
Religious Studies	
Physics, Chemistry (Science I)/ History (Humanities I)	
Biology (Science II)/ Civics and Economics (Humanities II)	
Agriculture studies	

Sources: Adapted from Bangladesh National Text Book Board, and from Hossain and Jahan (1998: 67).

All of the subjects are primarily textbook-based. As mentioned above, depending on her academic orientation, a student needs to take particular compulsory subjects. A science student must take physics, chemistry and biology. The core subjects for the humanities are history, civics and economics. Students must take one additional subject, mainly though not exclusively, in relation to her core discipline. For decades, the choices were limited between advanced mathematics and home sciences (on the right side of the table). It is in this optional segment that the otherwise 'gender neutral' academic curriculum was clearly gender divided, as only girls used to take home science (Kabeer 2005). Traditionally, humanities students (again, mostly girls) took 'home science', whereas science students, regardless of gender,

¹⁸For details, see The National Curriculum and Text Book Board Website. Accessed 9 July 2012.

were encouraged to take advanced mathematics. In the early 1990s, gradually bookkeeping and accountancy and later on computer science made these choices more varied and timely. Today it is rather uncommon for girls, at least with an urban education, to study home sciences, as this subject has no academic prestige.

Any education system requires a grading method. Rigid and competitive examination is the most traditional way of assessing the ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of pupils. Bourdieu argues that through certificates, examination gives birth to a massive ‘self-eliminated’ segment of the population and a tiny group of ‘gift[ed]’ people (1990 [1997]: 162). In Bangladesh, education means examination. The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary School (HSC) which are similar in standard to the British GCSE (formerly O-Levels) and A-Levels. These public examinations are conducted by divisional or regional education boards. Currently, eight education boards (Dhaka, Rajshahi, Comilla, Jessore, Chittagong, Barishal, Sylhet and Dinajpur) preside over this process. Traditionally, the results of these two examinations were aggregated based on marks. Hence, they were clearly comparative and hierarchical. Between 2001 and 2003, an international standard grading system was introduced for both public examinations. This system made the hierarchy less obvious, but the fierceness of the competition increased (for an overall analysis of the system, see Haider 2008). My participants gained their academic qualifications under the earlier system. The basic rules are shown in Table 8:

Table 8: The Secondary School Examination (SSC) Results: Aggregated Marks System.

Total Marks for Each Subject	Minimum Pass Marks	Total Marks for SSC Examination	Divisions based on Total Marks
100	33 percent	1000 (100 x 10)	Third Division (33 percent)
	Distinction in Each Subject (80 percent)		Second Division (45 percent)
Board Merit List from One to Twenty: The first top twenty aggregated mark-achievers of each education board			First Division (60 percent)
			Starred (75 percent)

Students were required to complete the examinations in one registration year. If a student got below 33 percent in any individual subject, the aggregate mark was considered a fail. 80 percent in each subject represented a distinction. An aggregated total of 75 percent (or more) was possible when a student earned distinction grades in at least two key subjects, such as mathematics or science. The same system was repeated for the Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSC), although the grand total was 1200 instead of 1000. At HSC level, subjects were less varied. Each subject had two papers, which were more advanced than the SSC levels. The minimum pass mark for each subject in the HSC was 66 (on average 33×2) out of 200 (100×2).

The ways in which a qualification can be used as 'capital' depends on the quality of the examination results. For each education board, out of several million examinees, the top twenty students' academic certificates were stamped with an award of merit. These were officially the best achievers. The future academic life of a merit-listed student is expected to be smooth and shining. Thousands of students might achieve 75 percent or more. They are the unexceptional - as opposed to exceptional - meritorious of each year. The rest, falling into the first, second and third divisions, are the 'average' to 'worst' students. I will deal with the issue of these results more fully in relation to my participants' education, because the ways in which an academic certificate can write one's life-story needs practical examples to be explained fully.

Social Class, Family and Academic 'Habitus'

In Bourdieu's theory, 'habitus'¹⁹ and 'cultural capital' can overlap, as both operate inside the boundaries of culture, society, family, and individual 'disposition' as well as 'practical' reasoning of doing things (1984: 166, 1998: 25; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97). Further, he (1986: 244) argues that though social beings learn these factors over time, the most ingrained parts are generally indoctrinated at an early stage when most learning is

¹⁹Habitus is one of the key theoretical arguments of Bourdieu's work, through which he brings collective thoughts and cultural consciousness within the sociological framework of social class, fields of capital movements and social groups' as well as individuals' positions within these. In this thesis, I am not using this idea of 'habitus' extensively. This is partly because I am dealing with women in migration where the ideas of habitus cannot be as strong as Bourdieu asks us to imagine in one culture. Though occasionally I will be using the idea of 'practical sense' to argue the ways in which my participants take decisions and act accordingly. Feminist sociologists have asked researchers to use this term with caution because of its extreme emphasis on structure and disposition (Skeggs 2004b, Probyn 2004). Though I agree with Diane Reay's (2004a) argument that 'habitus' can be best understood as a changing factor, displacement from the usual context, as it happens with migration that can bring some change in people's structure of judgements. In Chapter 5, I provide some suggestions as how 'habitus' can be useful for feminists interested in women's lives.

unconscious and tends to be 'natural'. Academic habitus, through which education is introduced as capital worth having, needs a particular 'generative and unifying principle' (Bourdieu 1998: 8). Social class, family, culture and its changes, all have to have certain degrees of congruence to instil 'education' as a mandatory value suggesting that the sooner one starts, the better. In this section, I will discuss how my participants learnt to adopt education as both the family mandate and a value they should aim for. I begin my discussion by highlighting their social class position.

One's social class, beyond the label, is complex. This is partly because there may be a gap between how one perceives one's class, and how it might be defined according to, for example, the census. This complexity is particularly evident in a traditional society like Bangladesh where the middle classes have the legitimacy of constituting a norm. Being middle-class lacks the glamour of the upper class but it escapes the grindstone of poverty. In the interviews, I did not ask about my participants' social class *per se*; rather, I asked them to define their natal families' economic condition or the material surroundings in which they grew up in Bangladesh. The most common answer was 'we were middle-class'. A family's social class had a number of similar features. The main features included: a) the father's education and occupation; b) being part of an urban or urbanized social space; c) the family's 'not too much' and 'not too little' material condition; d) the nuclear patriarchal family; and last, but perhaps most importantly, e) the family's interest and investment in the children's education. These dimensions were interrelated and progressive. The fathers were often the first generation who had internally migrated, were educated, and were urbanized office-goers or business entrepreneurs. The children of such families could at least call themselves 'middle-class'.

Even if my participants' family backgrounds and fathers' and mothers' academic degrees are explained within Bourdieu's class/cultural capital, the situation was not only complex, but also highly differentiated. Family background in relation to cultural capital is important in making sense of why education or 'academic habitus' do not have equal value for all, and more importantly, how family backgrounds make a difference in the generational attainment of education. My participants' parental education demonstrates the discrepancy between men's and women's education across just two generations. Their fathers were typically the first generation of educated men in their traditionally rural families. Because most of the fathers were highly educated (only two being without first degrees), the mothers had some education too. Over the generations, the idea of educational equality between men and women has changed: my participants represented the change that took place between the late

1980s and the early 2000s. Table 9 (below) shows the academic capital each of my participants inherited from her family.

Table 9: Participants' Parents' Highest Academic Qualifications to Bachelor Level.

Academic Qualifications	Numbers of Fathers	Numbers of Mothers
Bachelor's Degree*	23	7
Higher Secondary Degree		4
Secondary School (completed)	2	4
Secondary School (without completion)		11
Total	25	26

*In most cases these fathers and mothers had postgraduate degrees as well. Note: Since these pieces of information emerged from the data, rather than I asked my participants precisely, I did not get information about two mothers' and three fathers' academic qualifications.

Whilst the majority (eleven) of the mothers did not go beyond secondary-level education, seven mothers were highly educated, all with postgraduate degrees. All of these mothers had their higher education after they were married. Asma, one of my participants from Leeds, recounted her mother's education. The mother was married early, before finishing her secondary school. Her husband, the participant's father, recognized his young wife's academic talent and interest. A schoolteacher himself, Asma's father's consistent encouragement and practical support enabled her mother to set an outstanding example of earning postgraduate degrees, as a mother of four children. Similarly, Maya's father and grandmother looked for an educated bride and the marriage took place on the promise that her mother, then a university student, would complete her degree. Maya's mother completed her education after her daughter was born. Bina, whose mother had a postgraduate degree in Bangla literature, narrated a similar story of how marriage and childbirth did not restrain her mother from completing her university education. Lily's mother, on the other hand, was more educated than her father. Lily's mother belonged to an intellectually elite family in Bangladesh. She had two postgraduate degrees, while Lily's father had a BSc and an MBA degree.

These success stories were examples of exceptions at a time when early marriage was the widely accepted norm for most. Both Nipa and Mim told me that their mothers were too beautiful in their teenage years to have their marriage delayed. They were married as soon

they were teenagers and a 'good' marriage proposal came. Similarly, Zami told me that her maternal and paternal grandfathers had a friendly promise to convert their friendship into a marital bond by their children's marriage. As a result, as soon her father became an economically independent young man, her mother (then a schoolgirl) became a young bride. Between these two sets of stories lay the 'average' for my respondents. Women's marriage after secondary or higher-secondary education was normal and expected. My participants, whose mothers belonged to this average group, generally gave me the information in one sentence: 'my mother studied until her SSC [or HSC]'. Marriage, family and childbirth followed on from that.

Gendered division of labour was main norm of these urban-based, nuclear families. In all families the fathers earned, and the mothers looked after the family. Family patriarchy itself put the fathers into one prescriptive straight jacket and the mothers into another. Any deviation or attempt to get out of this situation was a threat to both patriarchy and the norm. In this way, all my participants had fathers who stayed in the background, went to the office, earned money and did the family budget, controlled family rules without any dialogue, and were happy when their children did well in their examinations. In contrast, most of my participants had a strong maternal relationship, without much space between mother and daughter. From buying school textbooks to getting the approval from the father to go to a friend's birthday, the mothers did everything for their daughters. The mothers were the 'strict' ones because they had to enforce the rules of the family. As an intermediary between the children and the father (the head), the mothers had to make sure everything ran smoothly, in an organic way, and according to the family's social honour and status. The last two aspects of symbolic capital – social honour and status – were/are extremely valuable and equally delicate even in Bangladeshi urban contexts. They come with different priorities according to the children's age, and are often gendered.

Bourdieu uses the term 'doxa'²⁰ to define societies more comfortable with 'habitus': societies which exist socially by accepting the rules provided by religion, culture, the state, and at a more micro-level, by the family and adults. In a doxa society, acceptance often goes without challenge because the 'main ideological effects [. . .] are transmitted through the body' (1992: 115). Here, he makes direct reference to the so-called 'primitive' and

²⁰ I am aware of western feminists' contestation of this idea of 'doxa' within which Bourdieu writes of the societal script of gender on the female body (Lovell 2000). I agree with the frustrations that many feminists have in relation to Bourdieu's sociological/anthropological tendency to overgeneralize social systems and the principles of gender divisions as though societies are similar. However, I also argue that this idea of 'doxa' can be useful to understand women's - in particular young girls'- embodied experience in traditional and strongly patrilineal contexts where most kind of gender controls are based on controlling the female body.

‘advanced’ societies of modern times. While both societies have bodily rules for men and women (the way they talk or eat), in a strong doxa society, a woman learns the first lesson of being dominated ‘through bodily education’ (115). One of my participants, Lipi, described her embodied girlhood. Lipi’s world was happy until her mother intervened between her self and her body when she became a teenager. She told me of the time when things became more complex for her:

I think when I was a teenager my mother was really strict with me. She kept on instructing me to keep my orna [long covering cloth with salwarkameez] properly. There were regulations like I should not go there or I should not talk with him or her. I was very outgoing so I did not like when I had to live with so many restrictions. That was a bit critical – not critical- but you know not- so- liking time. But except for that it was always good.

Given that I did not necessarily ask any questions precisely related to my participants’ girlhood, identity and the body, this particular reference, canonical to any Bangladeshi girl, past and present, is revealing. References of this kind are a strong indicator of when and through what experiences, however mundane, a material body is gendered. A mother teaches her daughters the rules appropriate to girls of a genteel middle-class family. Keya, a doctor, recollected how her younger sister and her mother used to have arguments because her sister’s laugh was ‘too loud’ for a girl whose father was a socially respectable professor at a university. Whilst daughters learnt to be women through their control over their bodies, sons learnt to be men through being taught the ‘male breadwinner’ mandate. A few of my participants, such as Nipa, recollected how her brother had to bear most of her father’s anger because his academic performance was unpromising. However, daughters in the family had to live controlled lives under close adult supervision.

My participants’ education indicated that they all, though in different ways, had families where education was the central interest and investment. It is important to understand how the family’s combination of capital (economic, cultural and social) and the social space of belonging, made a difference to the ways education was emphasized, made available and dealt with. Let me begin with the participants whose families’ economic capital was higher than their cultural capital. Simul was the only participant in my study with a father who, by Bangladeshi standards, could be called powerful. Her father was an ex-minister of the 1980s government, who then became an industrialist. Simul described her childhood in one of the elite areas of Dhaka, where all of their neighbours were like them: the fathers were

politicians and businessmen, the mothers were social hosts, and the children first went to English schools and then moved abroad. With a certain consciousness of how she (and her family) could be judged in terms of being part of a corrupt regime, she dissociated her family from the rest in a decisive way: 'but my father had one key focus. It was our education'. Families rich in wealth but poor in cultural and academic capital ensured that their children should have 'the honour' of being educated. In the case of another participant, Nipa, her father had to be involved in the family business at an early age. A successful family-business owner, her father mandated that all his children, three daughters and a son, must be highly educated.

Participants with families at the threshold of the urban middle class, or belonging to the separate village-landowning class (see Cain, Khanam and Nahar 1979), used another kind of 'but' to emphasize their difference from those around them. Sita and Mim came from the rural landowning class and spent a considerable part of their lives in a semi-urban sub-district (upazilla). Both pointed out that despite living outside the main urban areas where not everybody understood the value of education, their families maintained social distinctiveness by making the children's education a family priority. Bokul, on the other hand, came from a family with weak cultural and economic capital. Bokul's family, however, benefitted from living in Dhaka. Like everybody else in the community she went to the local school, though the family did not have a high interest in education. Her lament over not having an educated family underscores that 'academic habitus' may need certain combinations of cultural, social and economic capital. In my study, this 'ideal' combination was the prerogative of 'proper' middle-class families. The fathers' occupations relied directly on academic qualifications and included Class 1 government officials²¹, university professors, bankers, doctors and engineers. College and schoolteachers, or mid-level officials in the government or semi-government institutions were another group. Of these two educated groups, the first was higher in economic capital. As Bourdieu theorized, and as I mentioned above, both groups had highly-educated family backgrounds. Rubi, Keya, Alia, Saba, Dola, Lily, Maya, Zui, Joba and Putul all had families with professional fathers. Some of these women such as Rubi, Keya and Maya mentioned that over decades their families' economic condition moved from 'middle class' to 'upper-middle class' as their fathers income and professional positions improved. Tisa, Rupu, Taj and Shobha lived in different parts of the country outside Dhaka, and had fathers either in teaching or in specific services.

²¹Class 1 government services are the main body of the bureaucratic and public services. These jobs are called Class 1 because one needs to pass through the Bangladesh Cadre Service (or previously the Pakistan Cadre Service) to be employed as a gazetted officer of the government. Most services are permanent and are subject to transfer and promotion.

These families were moderately middle class. None experienced poverty, though there was never economic surplus within the family budget.

References to each family's economic position were complexly intertwined with references to the (il)legitimacy of public power in a country crippled by endemic corruption. Most of my participants, in particular those with fathers in high government services, stressed their fathers' honesty in their profession. The family's prudent financial condition was particularly reiterated to make the point that they belonged to the 'moral side'. Their fathers did not misuse public services for personal benefit; there was no unwarranted or unaccounted-for flow of money. For the children, there was no way to 'get away' from education. Dola, the daughter of an engineer working in a government department, recollected the days when her mother sowed the seeds of hope around education. As children, they could not understand why the daughter of the next-door neighbour had so many things, though their fathers went to the same office. To Dola, education provided justice when she did very well in the secondary school examination and the neighbour's daughter, a pampered brat in their eyes, failed three times. Vignettes about their fathers' unbending honesty in the professional sector were an integral part of how my participants described the centrality of education in their family.

There was a strong sense of belief amongst my participants that families without a strict moral stance were also diverted from their children's academic concerns. Academic competence cannot be secured by money only. As a cumulative capital, education worked better for, and appeared to be more 'natural' to, some than others. It is of little surprise that amongst the twenty-eight women, those who were most at ease with education and its standards had parents who were both highly educated. Asma, Lily, Maya, Rubi, Saba, Bina and Keya found education easy because their families were already highly educated. If their mothers worked, as in Asma, Lily and Rubi's cases, they were schoolteachers. Therefore there was no gap between education and the family. In contrast, families with little cultural capital often had to work hard to understand the academic rules. Nipa told me that though her father made education the family's mandate, her mother had to manage it. Her mother had little academic capital of her own. Her mother carefully imitated the academic rules of her more educated relatives, and replicated them exactly in her own family. Nipa told me that her mother was even 'stricter' about their education and school results than her cousins' educated parents. Nipa's mother had to be the strict builder of the family's first-generation academic capital. Having discussed my participants' families' academic habitus, I proceed towards my participants' entry into the world of books and letters, where I continue to explore the mothers' roles in making their children educated.

Pre-Higher Education: The Primary to Secondary Levels

Bourdieu (1986) points out that although in typical modern nuclear families fathers are the cultural capital 'head', mothers, the carers of the family, take responsibility for moulding an academic mind and therefore take a systematic interest in their children. The family was the central anchor of my participants' education. All my participants started their learning with their mothers. It has to be said that the way Bourdieu imagines the 'idle time and interest' of a wife or mother of French bourgeois society of the 1960s and her engagement with her children's cultural capital cannot be easily translated into the Bangladeshi context, particularly in the last century. Despite managing large families with manual (as opposed to mechanized) support, mothers performed the role of the cultural transmitter. Mim recollected early memories of her mother teaching her the Bangla alphabet while doing the family cooking. Asma's mother, on the other hand, sat with the children in the evening to do the 'second shift' (Hochschild and Machung 1990 [1989]). As both parents were highly educated, Asma told me that in the evenings her father used to work as a private tutor to earn extra money, while her mother taught them their first lessons and used to tell stories of virtuous men and women winning against all odds through hard work, honesty and a love for knowledge.

Mothers not only taught children, in particular, daughters the alphabet, but also developed within them certain values and expectations of education, a standard that they should meet in the future. My participants' narratives reconstructed the early memories of being in education. Some of them took the family rules of being at the top in the examinations for granted. This was particularly the case for women who were the eldest of the siblings, therefore, had to take the burden of setting examples for others. Both Keya and Saba set themselves apart from their younger siblings. Unlike their younger siblings who often took it easy in their education, they, being the family adults, internalized the family's expectations and earned top positions in the baby classes. Children were aware of their family's expectations of them at an early age. Siblings, neighbours' and relatives' children provided ample examples of good and bad students. Rewards and punishments were strongly associated with these identities, developing children's consciousness around expectations.

Before the era of rapid privatization of education and the widespread demand for British-curriculum based schools in the 2000s, school choices were very limited in Bangladesh. As described in the first section, most schools followed the national system, its unified curriculum and the main language of education was Bangla. Schools were government, and semi/non-government public schools. The difference between fully-government and semi-

government run schools was minimal, because both types of school were ‘required to comply with the national standards regarding establishment, permission, recognition, staffing pattern, curriculum and teacher recruitment process’ (UNESCO 2007a: 9). Although the subsidized schools typically charged a higher monthly fee than the government rate, it was not extraordinarily high. In short, one can argue that government-subsidized public schools were established as an affordable substitute for general government schools. The reputation of schools depended on their tradition, the consistency of their good results in all public examinations, the quality of the students and their social status, and the competition for enrolment. These criteria, in turn, meant that the definition of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ schools was self-explanatory and well understood. Bourdieu (1990 [1977]: 147) argues that secondary school hierarchies and the ways in which the hierarchy is perceived depend on both the rank of the ‘school’ and the ‘social origin’ of the pupil. In other words, in the most general sense, as central social bodies families and academic institutions are mutually constitutive. This is required to optimize the quality of the educated community produced over generations.

In many societies, private and traditional boarding schools based on certain values (such as religion or political tradition) enjoy the status of being ‘academically elite’. Expensive boarding schools coordinate the academic, cultural and social capital on which the society’s ‘elite’ thrive, often through family patriarchal lineage. Bourdieu (1996) devotes one of his numerous books on education and society to the ‘elite schools’ in France. What can be called the ‘privilege of ease’ comes through the combined impact of elite families and elite institutions. In more recent times, the term ‘elite boarding school’ has undergone much revision with the argument that rather than any single overarching feature, elite boarding schools are defined by certain clusters of qualities including historical, scholastic, geographical, typographical and demographic characteristics (Gaztambide-Ferdández 2009). In Bangladesh, the academic crown goes to the Cadet Colleges of the Bangladeshi Army. The first Cadet College, Faujderhat Cadet College for boys, was established in 1958 by the East Pakistani army. The primary intake was the children of army professionals with national and international careers. Based on this first College, and the army ethos of discipline and skill, eleven more Cadet Colleges were established across the country, mostly in the 1960s and 1980s. The only girls’ Cadet College was Mymensingh Girls Cadet College established in 1983 in Mymensingh, a district town in the Dhaka division. Only in 2006 were two more Girls Cadet Colleges established, though in terms of reputation and results the earliest one is still the best known. From the outset, Cadet Colleges combined the English public school ethos with academic meritocracy. Therefore, although they supported the children of army professionals, the institutions were also open to civilians. Students are enrolled once a year at secondary level (VII), and they complete their secondary and higher

secondary examinations. Once enrolled, pupils have to live on campus, following traditional boarding school pattern. These institutions are well known as places of excellence in all fields, providing students with the best possible opportunities to be fit academically, physically and culturally.

Given that only fifty students are selected through stringent written, oral and physical examinations, Cadet College students, in particular female students, are rare. Understanding this exclusivity is necessary because in my limited sample, there were four women from the first women's Cadet College. Of these, only Lily's father was in the Bangladeshi army, the rest having civilian family backgrounds. As mentioned in the methodology, it is through the particularity of my snowballing technique that the former students of this elite institution became part of my research. Having grown up within those specific colleges, away from the home environment, this subgroup was the only one for whom institutional values overrode family values. While describing their adult lives, each of them, in various ways, went back to the life-long lessons they had learnt from being part of an army-run academy. Rubi, for example, told me about the two sides of living away from one's family in the formative stages of one's life. Life-organizing qualities such as being organized and independent, social and skilful were often counterbalanced by the emotional cost of being away from family. None of my other participants articulated such a lasting impact from their academic institutions as the ex-Cadet students. More relevant to their social circles, I will discuss this institutional impact in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Except for this subgroup, all others went to standard secondary schools. Women who had their first and entire schooling in Dhaka had more choices than those living outside of the city. 'There were actually two good schools for girls', explained Shobha who went to a non-government school in her district town outside Dhaka. Once enrolled at an established institution, the students generally completed their school education from there. My participants went to secondary schools of various qualities in 1980s and 1990s Bangladesh. Some were nationally known, some had local reputations of providing quality education, and others were big schools with large numbers of students. Each of these institutions strongly shaped their student body. In practice, the top students of all schools were ambitious in terms of their education and their future. Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination was the first national proof of that broad perspective and a student's capacity. Table 10 (below) demonstrates my participants' academic affiliation at secondary level.

Table 10: Participants' Secondary Education Institutions.

Secondary Education Institution	Number
Government Secondary School (in Dhaka)	6
Non-Government Secondary School (in Dhaka)	7
Government Secondary School (outside Dhaka)	8
Non-Government Secondary School (outside Dhaka)	3
Army Residential Institution (outside Dhaka)	4
Total	28

Secondary Bangla-medium schools in Bangladesh are mostly single sex. In most Muslim countries, single-sex schools are the norm, required by religion and endorsed by the state (UNESCO 2007b). Single-sex schools reinforce the societal moral code of education as an instrument of bounded modernization. Abdullah and his colleagues (1991) presented an early critique of the long-term effects of single-sex schools on men. These authors argue that this school segregation teaches young boys (who later become men) to see females as 'sex objects' (129) instead of friends, colleagues and companions. While males learn to control females by being in sex-segregated institutions, females learn to accept this control. Single-sex schools are another example of the 'symbolic violence' through which young girls and women are made responsible for their chastity and 'honour'. Just as single-sex schools can reinforce men's control over women, so it may reinforce women's lack of knowledge about men, and hence their sense of gender equality. My participants, such as Rupa, Shobha and Bokul, all of whom had their entire education (including higher education) in the single-sex institutions. They told me that their 'knowledge' of men had been limited to their fathers and brothers. When they reached marriageable age, all were married to men selected for them by parents, brothers or even the extended family. Though such issues are beyond any kind of generalization, all these women had a very controlled marital life, being dominated by their husbands and the in-laws.

Secondary education and teenage 'girlhood' both shaped and taught my participants what it means to be a middle-class educated Bangladeshi woman. Education was her only asset, the means to lift herself from an extremely compromised gendered position. Bourdieu (1990 [1977]: 43) sees secondary-education are fundamentally tied to pupil's early education and family environment. At this stage, through the results of repeated examinations, one internalizes the position that education legitimizes for a person. In the classroom as well as

in school, students are divided into three large groups: the minority is 'gifted', 'exceptional' and 'naturally talented'; the average majority is 'mediocre'; the rest falls into the 'weak' and 'weaker than average' category. In his conversation with Eagleton, Bourdieu explains:

When you ask a sample of individuals what are the main factors of achievement at school, the further you go down the social scale the more they believe that those who are successful are naturally endowed with intellectual capacities (1992: 114).

The high school results shaped my participants' rational academic habitus. By 'rational academic habitus' I mean the 'practical sense' that dominates a social being's expectation and action. The average and less-than-average result holders separated themselves completely from their best peers. In each class and in each school, there was a handful of the undoubted best. Some of my participants identified themselves as among the school best. The exceptional group never slipped below the top three ranks, found subjects such as mathematics and science extremely interesting, got all the attention from the teachers and other authority figures, developed distinct personalities around their academic achievement, and at times, as Lily recollected, started to believe themselves to be 'naturally endowed', at least at secondary level. Their opposite were those without any obvious sign of promise. Often, they were not part of the typical classroom competition. My participants such as Bokul, Ratna and Sita called themselves 'just an average' student, considering their modest achievements in school. Bokul distanced herself from the 'extraordinary' ones of her school who later on went to study engineering and medicine. She considered herself naturally penalized.

In between these two groups, there were diverse ranges of the 'mediocre'. With a parental occupation such as schoolteacher, a highly educated mother, siblings' good academic performance, and an education from a good institution, it was relatively easy to pull oneself up the academic ladder. I put 'good institution' at the end because my research lacks evidence that good institutions alone compensate for the rest. Simul, who I mentioned earlier, went to one of the best girls' school in the country because her father wanted to convert his economic capital into his children's academic capital. She was an average student at a very good school. Good schools often have high demands, with an assumption that the trickle-down effect of these will benefit the ones with little academic promise. Simul was one of these. Her friends, often academically better than her, were her key inspiration. Coming from an affluent family, Simul did not have the desperation to drive her to 'believe' that education

would be her only way out in life, and she got what could be considered an average result in the SSC. As a classic practice of meritocracy, my participants' academic performance bore the idea of 'natural justice': education gives those most who serve it best. Taj, a doctor from Hull, told me that the turning point of her academic career was when she was turned down by the best school in the district to which the family had moved for her father's job. She enrolled in a mediocre school, worked hard as a newcomer, turned into a 'new competitor', unsettling the classroom dynamism and eventually becoming the highest achiever from that school in the secondary examination.

My participants were the survivors of an academic system that demands high competition and constant engagement with one's studies and results. Most of my participants pointed out that 'good results' were their only aim; there was not much scope to see anything beyond that immediate outcome. Having and not having good results could decide one's academic destiny and level of social recognition. The secondary stage (grades IX and X) was the point at which adolescent seriousness, institutional pressure and expectation, a father's honour and a mother's sacrifice all coalesced to focus on the clearly comparative, generally expected and future-determining examination result. My participants' secondary examination results followed the rules of the academic order: one should get what one expected, and one should expect what one could realistically achieve. Science students typically achieved higher marks and better results than those in the humanities because 'hard sciences' such as physics, mathematics and chemistry can result in higher marks. The reasons for this are based on the traditional view of science as an 'objective' truth based on facts, equations and 'right' and 'wrong' answers. Pupils mastering maths and producing them accurately in the examination could earn high marks. Humanities and social science subjects, by contrast, are narrative and involve lengthy writing. Traditional pedagogy encouraged controlled rewards for these subjects indicating a pupil's novice position in the sea of knowledge. This in turn fueled the intellectual hierarchy already in place between the students of sciences and humanities. 'Academic capital', as Bourdieu (1984: 14-15) notes, is a 'guaranteed product of the combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school (the efficiency of which depends on the amount of cultural capital directly inherited from the family)'. His emphasis on the importance of hereditary law on children's academic results perhaps explains why the daughters of the highly educated (and, more importantly, employed) mothers were the best academic achievers at this stage, even though homemaker mothers were typically more directly involved with their daughters' education. The academic and social value of the examination results changed over time. Therefore, a first division grade (60 percent) in the early 1990s was richer in value than in the late 1990s. A first division grade in 2013 would hardly bring smile to a student's face. Many of my

participants spoke of their academic outcomes within their respective periods. Comments such as ‘in our time, a first division was a good result’ were made to clarify one’s academic performance. In the SSC, most of my participants earned what they expected. As Dola, one of my participants completing secondary education in the year 2000, told me:

There was a certain kind of competition amongst the neighbours and their children’s results. Mothers used to talk about whose daughter got what positions in the schools. And we used to hear people get a star [75 percent number] in the SSC, or they got a board position in their HSC. So we always had this focus that we must have at least a star in the SSC. We used to study with this intention.

Dola achieved a mark of more than 75 percent in science. A few of my participants achieved merit positions in their respective education boards. This included Rubi and Keya (in the mid-1990s) who studied science at the same institution (Cadet College) and Asma (in the late 1980s) who studied humanities at one of the oldest girls’ schools, which was well known for its tradition and good results. All my participants across two decades and from various parts of Bangladesh left school after finishing the first stage of their academic qualification.

The Higher Secondary Stage

In Bangladesh, school education is followed by a two-year long higher secondary stage leading towards the last big public examination. The Higher Secondary Examination (HSC) equivalent to A-Levels in British education is a mandatory step for those wanting to move to the tertiary level. Though many women from rural areas routinely drop out at this stage, the picture is quite different for women of relatively better social standing. Given the kinds of social backgrounds my participants had, all entered this stage as a natural progression from school. In terms of academic structure, the higher secondary stage is quite different from school. Most students have to go to colleges, which itself is a big change, giving someone a sense of adulthood. All of my participants from the Cadet College, and a few others from certain elite institutions with college sections, were rescued from the anxiety of choosing or being chosen by a college. Others went to different colleges, partly based on their results and partly based on their ambition. Many took different steps to make themselves ready for the next step - university admissions. Mim, who studied science at secondary school, switched to humanities in her higher secondary to get the outstanding result that helped her get into Dhaka University. Simul, on the other hand, left her original institution to study commerce in

a specific college reputed for that discipline. Those wishing to study science discipline in future had to concentrate on securing high marks in key subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology.

As a transitional period between early teenage and adulthood, this stage emerged to be a confusing period for my participants. These confusions were associated with the social pressure of being a teenage girl. Ana told me about the multi-layered social pressure she encountered at this stage. Ana's father invested adequately in his children's education without undermining the family honour and traditional expectations. Ana went to a government girls' school, but when it came to college she wished to go to an army-run co-education college nationally reputed for its quality. Ana's father, a well-known man in her small town, resisted for fear of social judgement. To shield her and her education from any kind of unwanted intrusion and social gossip, he decided that his daughter would go to a women's college. Examples like these suggest that families maintained strong gendered principles in educating their daughters. A son could go to a co-education college if his academic ambition needed so, but a daughter could not. Ana's father preferred to see her as an ideal daughter of the community in which they had to live. Feminists from different Muslim countries have long identified and debated the 'middle-class' girl as being an interest of family, society, state and national identity (see Kabeer 1991 and Hussain 2010 for Bangladesh; Ong 1990 for Malaysia; Jamal 2006 for Pakistan). More than anybody else's, young Muslim girls' sexuality, bodily agency and individual mobility are severely controlled, often discursively through language. As Jamal notes, analysing the sensationalized case of a wilful, runaway, middle-class girl in Pakistan, 'the positioning of a girl as a daughter arouse[s] issues of nation, family, and state protection, since daughters "belong" to families and since "the family" is an important trope for the nation' (2006: 296).

However, middle-class women often strategically use the capital they own, their education, to push the societal boundaries to bargain for their positions. For example, Taj was the opposite of Ana. The eldest daughter of a mid-level government service-holder, Taj and her family always lived in small to central towns in the northern part of Bangladesh; a similar circumstance to Ana's. For her higher secondary, Taj crossed all of the socio-spatial boundaries and went to Dhaka to compete with the best students. Taj told me that from childhood, she aimed to be a doctor, and everything was planned to that end. Similarly, Mim told me that her mother, having become a widow at a young age, had to stand against the whole extended family to send her daughter to the district town for a better education. She did not abuse the liberty her mother gave her. Rather, she told me, as a responsible daughter she proved her mother correct with her outstanding result in the HSC. Contrast can also be

seen between determined women such as Taj and Mim and the ones who took education for granted. Keya and Rubi, both exceptional achievers in their secondary education, took the liberty of behaving as adults for the first time at this stage. Without constant parental surveillance, both diverted their attention to other typical adolescent interests, ranging from first crushes to extracurricular activities. In the end, both struggled to achieve a result equal to their (and their family and institution's) expectations. As the academic standard is higher and more demanding at this level, any kind of negligence or inconsistency can be heavily penalized in the final examination. As is common in Bangladesh, many of my participants were particularly worried about their results in the HSC and its impact on their higher education, though as modern women all wanted to take their education beyond the higher secondary level.

Higher Education: Bachelor and Further Degrees

Most of my participants entered higher education before the massive privatization of universities in Bangladesh. Their choices, like those of countless students before the late 1990s, were restricted to either a handful of public universities or the government and non-government colleges. All public, medical, engineering and mainstream universities selected candidates based on merit, and still do so. 40 percent of the SSC and 60 percent of the HSC total scores are added to the score from the entrance examination. Because of this double screening only the best in both (previous examinations and admission tests) get places at the public universities, pushing countless others down. There is considerable debate about this admissions system, which at best accelerates the already unhealthy rat race for grades and results, and at worst increases the superiority of the already privileged (Muhammad, Haque and Hussain 2004). Yet the system of meritocracy and the colonial residue of competitive examinations still serve the purpose of producing the country's academic elite. My participants' higher education pattern was hierarchical and simple. The scientific elites either wanted to be doctors or engineers. Globally and in various local cultures, medicine is one of the most feminized science disciplines (Global Education Digest 2010).

Engineering, on the other hand, is the least feminized of academic disciplines, although the gender gap differs nationally. In particular, in many western countries (including Britain) doing engineering is not a culturally ingrained ambition of the elite. Women are even more marginal in this discipline. The massive drive to make school children, females in particular, interested in hard sciences in recent years is the country's strategy to fill the internal gaps in 'knowledge capital' through native skill development (for UK see, Sian and Callaghan 2001;

for Europe in general, see Sjøberg and Schreiner 2009). In Bangladesh, as in many other Asian countries, studying engineering is second to none in terms of academic and social prestige (Bunwaree 1999; Pong 1999; Dean 2008). Engineering has a ready association with bright males. Typically, a family with high cultural capital would be suggestive of an engineer son and a doctor daughter. Likewise, in my study more women wanted to be doctors than engineers. The women wanting to be engineers took their fathers as their academic role models. Pursuing engineering instead of medicine was a symbol of merit, as well as of young women's capacity to go beyond the feminine stereotype of higher education.

Saba, for example, the daughter of an engineer, told me her passion for mathematics and her desire to follow her father's profession made her aim towards engineering. Her mother, typically, wanted to see her become a doctor. Ultimately, Saba studied what she wanted. Saba, like Rubi, Bina and Tisa, studied at the most prestigious and globally recognized engineering institution in Bangladesh. Lily, on the other hand, was twice unsuccessful in seeking a place at that institution. This failure blighted her academic career. Both she and her brother wanted to study engineering, and both being unsuccessful, started studying sociology and economics respectively at Dhaka University. Lily's brother ultimately moved to the US to study engineering, while Lily, the daughter of the family, had to keep on studying a subject that did not reflect her own academic background or her family or the secondary institution's standard. 'One does not need to study seriously' or 'everybody knows sociology', was how Lily recollected her eldest brother's jokes. Her parents' lack of interest in her post-secondary education put her off from even trying hard at the university.

Lily's example shows that the relationship between education and gender at tertiary level is a complex one. Families with seemingly liberal attitudes and without any overt signs of preferring boys' education over girls' still did not go beyond the norms of that time. The common-sense rationality was that for the son the world should be wide open, but for the daughter it needed to be within a stone's throw, because she was the 'daughter' of the family, society and the state. Gender habitus powerfully circumscribed women's academic possibilities. Many of my participants such as Hasna, Shobha, Rupu and Nipa made certain, apparently minor, academic compromises, conforming to the proper feminine way of being careful regarding family rules. The academic directions of brothers and sisters started to take different routes; the brothers' typically being constructed as 'manly' and sisters' as 'womanly'. The best achievers in humanities studied traditional subjects, such as English or law, in elite institutions like Dhaka University. Others, depending on the value of their previous results and the situations within which they operated, made reasonable

compromises between choosing a good subject and a local college. Their academic disciplines and subject choices were also varied, ranging across sciences, social sciences, humanities, as well as business studies. Table 11 below shows the subjects they took for their first degrees.

Table 11: Participants' Bachelor Degrees by Disciplines and Subjects.

Discipline	Subjects						Total
Science	Medical (Keya, Nipa, Joba, Taj)	Engineering (Tisa, Rubi, Saba, Bina)	Chemistry (Rupu)	Computer Science (Maya)	Zoology (Shobha)		11
Social Science	Anthropology (Zami)	Public Administration (Mim)	Political Science (Asma)	International Relations (Putul)	Law (Dola)	Sociology (Lily, Alia and Bokul)	8
Humanities	A two years' Bachelor in Arts (Sita and Ratna)	English (Hasna and Shomi)					4
Business and Commerce	A two years' Bachelor in Commerce (Ana, Rupa)	Business Administration (BBA) (Zui)	Business and Accountancy (Simul)				4
							28

Disciplines and subjects were chosen carefully according to social and academic conventions and changes within these. The honours courses were typically three to five years depending on the subjects. Medicine, known as MBBS, for example lasted for five years, whereas a BSc in engineering was four years. Most humanities and social science courses were for three or four years. The 'two year Bachelor' was without honours. These degrees are easily accessible because almost all higher education institutions (including local colleges) can enrol students for these degrees, though the examinations are held nationally. These subjects and their degrees were unequally valued, and the individual's value depended on the results and grades. Therefore, even if someone like Hasna who had to compromise on her academic institution for a 'good subject' (English), her effort was to achieve best results in her BA. Upon attaining a Bachelor degree, everybody was eligible to take part in the competitive examinations for government services such as BCS or primary schoolteacher recruitment. Therefore, despite the internally differentiated values, tertiary level degrees were/are steps towards hope because these degrees can give someone better opportunities in life.

Higher education, according to Bourdieu's theory, is less punitive for those with wealth. In Bangladesh, trading off money for higher education only became a possibility with the advent of private universities, which was soon followed by the potential of going abroad, mainly to Britain and Australia, when both countries dominated the international higher education market (see Chapter 1). My participants who attended private universities, Nipa (medicine), Dola (law), Zui (business administration), went for these new alternatives partly because they could not gain admission to the public universities. At the same time, these new institutions had an international outlook attracting the affluent classes. Except for Dola, all came from upper middle-class or rich families. Dola, being unsuccessful in studying medicine, took law as her second option. Dola, like many other students in the early 2000s, preferred to take her first law degree from a private institution accredited by a British institution in Bangladesh. Traditionally, in the colonial/cultural imagination in the Indian subcontinent, law students should aim at going to Britain to become barristers. From the last decade, many students before moving over to Britain used these British-accredited institutions as staging posts in countries like Bangladesh.

Privatization and internationalization increased the competition for quality. These changes further contributed to widen a qualification's academic value. A single subject can have tremendously different value according to the geo-political location of the institution. These differences can best be understood by the examples of Alia, Lily and Bokul. These three women studied sociology for their bachelor degrees (Table 11). Alia had an international degree from England; Lily studied at Dhaka University; Bokul studied sociology at a local

college for women near her residence in Dhaka. These degrees had unequal recognition in both Bangladesh and Britain, and hence offered different possibilities. Alia, a full-time mother with three children, wanted to progress to PhD level. Her academic confidence was derived from having a British degree with a good grade, and her acculturation into the British academic system. Lily's degree did not have international recognition. Unlike Alia, Lily could not make a straightforward plan to return to higher education in Britain as a mature student. Bokul was an extreme example, at least in my study, of the ways in which the contemporary world, women's education, international mobility and the proliferation of higher education can be exploitative of women. Her education was others' 'capital'. Being married to a man below her educational level, Bokul was used as a bridge to migrate and reunite her husband with the rest of his family, who were already in London. Her education helped her to get a British visa via the so-called Bangladeshi private colleges in London. Once she fulfilled the in-laws' plan of bringing her husband to the UK, she suffered from domestic violence. In her interview, Bokul told me: 'if it had been possible I would have studied, but my studies were simply not on my mind. The visa was a student visa, but the college did not have an MBA course, nor was I brought here to study'.

Women's increased access to higher education has mixed outcomes for education, society and culture. Many Muslim countries and developing countries with relatively high rates of female higher educational achievement show that this educatedness does not transfer into the labour market to an equal extent (Jayaweera 1997a, 1997b for Sri Lanka; İKkaracan 2012 for Turkey). This finding fuels the age-old arguments that women's higher education is more about being an eligible bride in the marriage market and a 'competent' mother and homemaker than it is about being active in the economy. In contrast to this, there are also more recent findings that both in developed and poorly developed countries, if opportunities are available, women in higher education achieve better results than their male peers (Diprete and Buchmann 2013; BBC News 2003; MDG Global Report 2013). Both of these issues were at play for my participants. Saba, who described herself as a very 'good' and 'studious' student in her school and college years, told me that at the technology university she was merely a mediocre student like the majority, and the top positions were claimed by the super-bright male students. From her own experiences in that institution, Saba came to the conclusion that men are 'naturally' more focused on a career than women, even when they go to similar institutions. Similarly, Mim told me that once she had fulfilled her dream of becoming a student at Dhaka University, she had to take things easy: partly because she wanted to be a cultural activist, and partly because she realized that she did not have the cultural capital and academic skills to beat the best students.

Others rekindled their academic ambition. Zami told me about her 'rebellious' attitude that dominated her child- and young-adulthood, making her a mediocre achiever amongst her sisters. All through a better-than-average student, she fell in love with anthropology as soon she started this course at Dhaka University. Zami's belated passion and effort paid off with her outstanding results at university. Rubi told me that after being slightly less academically-minded in her higher secondary stage, once she started studying civil engineering she got back her oldest and most original self: making education the religion of life. Rubi got her reward, with consistent top grades that made her one of the first three students in this hyper-competitive and male-centric academic field. Similarly as Rubi, Taj told me that in her medical school, where she met her future life partner, she was the studious one whereas her husband (at that time her classmate) was busier with other activities and was less serious about his results and future career. Here I have given just a few examples of how women's higher education can be much more complex than could be suggested by any single conclusion. One thing, however, is clear: since a man's higher education, at least in a strongly patriarchal society, is entirely tied to his next life-stage, being the sole breadwinner, a woman's education, being without this compulsory tie, can take much more heterogeneous paths.

Marriage and Women's Education in Bangladesh

In gender-conservative or poorly developed societies, female education works as a type of 'contraception' (Heward 1999: 5), delaying women's reproduction. In rural and poverty-stricken areas, where females are assumed to be a 'burden' from birth, secondary school education symbolizes a victory over the practice of girls' early marriage delaying their motherhood. Middle-class and urban women's education can work as 'contraception' until they reach higher education or finish their first degree. This means that full-time higher education can delay a woman's marriage disproportionately when compared with the national average. For example, the official age at which a woman can marry in Bangladesh is 18 years. Though marriage is a norm for all, the age at which it happens depends on the social position women occupy in the country. The traditional norm of girls marrying during puberty, or even earlier in rural areas, can be contrasted with the urban educated women delaying marriage. My participants' marriage patterns strongly demonstrated their educated and urban identities. Most were married at various stages of their higher education and a few married once they started work after their postgraduate degrees. There is no single reason for

this diversity in marriage patterns. Rather, a number of interrelated issues, most immediately the availability of an eligible bridegroom, hastened or delayed the marriage.

Gender specialists mainly focus on how gender performance puts a bar on women's progression in education. There is little enquiry on how academic performance can hasten a woman's marriage. Ratna, the only woman who married when she was around 18 years old told me that in the early 1980s, it was the rule in small towns that women from good and wealthy families should marry after their college education. For her family, this rule was more readily proclaimed for her because unlike her two elder sisters, she always struggled with her education. Therefore, whilst her elder sisters were married after their bachelor degrees, her marriage took place as soon she completed her higher secondary and the family found a good marital match for her. This kind of penalty is even harsher for a woman who fails to fulfil her father's expectations. Lipi, another woman who married relatively early, told me that her father always had high hopes for her. Her good results as a student of the Cadet College did not transfer to her higher education. Instead of being a student of medicine or engineering, Lipi managed to get an admission to study English in one of the largest women's public colleges in Dhaka. 'One can finish studying English literature after marriage' was her father's line, Lipi told me, when seeking to compensate her poor academic performance with a 'good' marriage.

In some western sociology of marriage theories, the marriage market is compared with a job market, where the man should be higher in quality (like an employer) and the woman should 'fit in' with certain employee criteria (Oppenheimer 1988; Lichter, Anderson and Hawyard 1995). Maya, another woman studying English who was married before she reached the 2nd year of her course, told me that her father always knew that his daughters were all different, and each needed a uniquely compatible partner. The eldest of three sisters, Maya was the most studious, with a passion for knowledge and higher education. Her father chose the best man for her: a PhD holder from a British university, with an outstanding academic record of accomplishment and a seemingly bright career future ahead of him. Maya further told me that 'references' her father had received about her future husband from their common social networks testified to her husband's social and moral integrity.

These examples strongly indicated two important dimensions of women's marriage in urban Bangladeshi society. First, the decisive roles of the fathers; in general, once my participants moved beyond their mothers' realm of education, education mostly became a father/daughter partnership. Educated women's marriages were also more determined by their father's wishes and rationalizations than by their mother's. Maya told me that her mother always

wanted to have a 'handsome' bridegroom for her. Since her husband even fulfilled *that* criterion, there were no objections from any quarter. The apparent seriousness of her father's checklist compared with the lightness of her mother's suggests that as is commonly the case, Maya's mother had internalized the notion that once the children, even daughters, are grown up, her own input and opinion would be of limited value. No woman told me her marriage was 'arranged' by her mother. Either it was arranged by her father or, in absence of the father, by an older brother. The second factor is the issue of women's academic achievement and marriage. Clearly, when women study less-demanding and less-prestigious subjects, the probability of marital intervention is generally higher. In a gender-conservative family setting, where girls' education is a mere symbol of the family's modernization, young women grow up knowing that once the higher secondary level is over, the bell of marriage might ring at any time. Shobha, one of my interviewees, told me that she always knew her brothers would never allow her to study in a co-educational higher education institution. Preferring to study a science subject, Shobha settled for zoology in a single-sex college. Shobha's marriage in the 2nd year of her honours course required little consent from her, because everybody around her thought the proposal, by an educated man with a job in a private bank, was most 'suitable' for her.

Because marriage is the only way to enter into a legitimate sexual relationship in Bangladesh, there is an underlying implicit message that women, regardless of their individual circumstances and preferences, should be married at the prime time dictated by their biological clock. Therefore, the sandwich pattern of education and marriage - academic degree, marriage in the middle, and continuation of postgraduate education (often assumed) - does not differ based on women's academic careers. For example, the twelve of my interviewees who were married right after their first and/or bachelor degrees included women from elite disciplines such as medicine, engineering, and indeed three (Dola, Alia and Simul) who completed their first degrees in Britain. As mentioned earlier, marriage can be delayed for a few more years after the expected early-20s date for a number of reasons. One common reason is associated with the difference between 'arranged' versus 'love' marriages. 'Love' marriages often involve a halt on the marriage until the man has a firm economic base. The age gap between such couples is minimal because most relationships begin at the age of attending higher education. Hasna told me that her marriage was 'delayed' because she and her husband finished their MAs (Hasna in English and her husband in law) and she had to wait until her husband had become a marriageable man with admission to a postgraduate degree in Britain. Hasna had to take a strategic back seat to make the marriage happen without much familial and social fuss. The opposite reason for a 'love' marriage, i.e. not finding a 'suitable' man, was another strong reason for women's

relatively delayed marriages. Some participants such as Shomi, Mim, Asma, Rupu and Ana, fell into the category where their marriage took place once reasonably marriageable men were found for these well-educated women.

Women's education after marriage is an altogether different story from how it could be developed before marriage. Often it can be continued without much resistance, which, due to its rareness, can be viewed as an exception. In most cases, women's education faces a range of resistance, tied to the patriarchal culture and the hierarchy of the marriage. My participants had relative 'success' stories to share about this interrelation of marriage and education because this thesis is about highly educated Bangladeshi women. Yet their experience of education after marriage, on the one hand provides clues to why many women drop out of the higher education stage, and on the other hand, explains on what grounds women's education is possible once the value of this capital is contingent on a number of more pressing adult life demands. To elaborate on my argument, I shall discuss the different ways in which two of my participants, Shobha and Rubi, experienced their education after marriage. Shobha's life turned upside down as soon she stepped into her husband's family. An initial conflict about her dowry sparked multiple forms of long-term abuse and domestic violence from her mother-in-law. In this saga, her husband, a 'civilized' middle-class man, restrained himself from directing any direct form of abuse at his wife, but rather adopted the role of silent observer.

Shobha's desire to continue her education further fuelled the family feud. Yet she did not drop out in the 2nd year (when she married) and indeed achieved very good results in her BSc and MSc because her natal family, her mother and her three brothers, supported her constantly while making peace with her husband and in-laws. Shobha told me that she did not want anything from her education, nor had she thought that her education would give her anything, but she kept on going because it was the best thing she had from her parents:

It was not like I thought that I had to be self-dependent. Neither had I thought that my education would give me that opportunity. Actually from my childhood I grew up in an educational environment. I think that led me to drive my educational life forward. Otherwise the situation [after marriage] was not in favour of my education. It was not like this at all.

Rubi, an engineer, had an arranged marriage with another engineer directly after she completed her BSc. She conceived soon after her marriage and immediately after the birth of

her son, Rubi won a prestigious postgraduate engineering scholarship to Canada, which her husband could not get. Not only was Rubi permitted and encouraged to go for higher education, but also, quite uncommonly for Bangladeshi culture, she left her baby with her mother-in-law because her own mother, a working woman, had less free time. Shobha and Rubi's, as well as several other participants', contrasting experiences support the argument that when a woman's marriage takes place in a family with traditionally high cultural capital, with education instead of wealth at the family base, there is a high chance that even after marriage, young women will be encouraged and supported in completing their education. The husband and wife having a similar academic stake, and/or being engaged in academic jobs such as teaching, are advantageous. I shall elaborate on this issue of the 'equity of marriage' in the concluding part of this chapter, in which I discuss my participants' education within the trajectory of migration and settlement in Britain.

Migration, Gender and International Higher Education

Out of twenty-eight, only four of my participants' migration to the UK was related to their higher education goals. Others arrived at various stages of their lives, as wives or mothers, often both. This suggests that pursuing further education after migration may not necessarily be the priority of many highly educated immigrant women. Shomi, a woman in her forties with a teenage son, told me that she left her primary school teaching degree in Australia incomplete before coming to Britain. When I interviewed Shomi, she told me that although she had enough free time and financial stability, and her husband's co-operation, she did not want to go back to a stressful academic life. Shomi's example suggests a key cultural difference regarding education in Bangladesh and in Britain. In Britain, at least at present, education means 'lifelong learning' where men and women at various life stages can re-start their academic life according to demand or interest. In Bangladesh, for my participants, 'academic life' referred to one particular segment of life that should not overlap with later agendas such as looking after a family or earning money. Therefore, there is less evidence in my research of women returning to education after several years out. Rather, the possibility of recommencing education was greater when the gap was minimal, and when other priorities did not overrule a woman's academic commitments.

I began my discussions with the women who came to the UK for higher education. Simul, Dola and Alia did their first degrees in Britain. The diversity of these three women's family backgrounds and ways of settling into British academe serves to highlight the spectrum of differences among so-called 'international' students, even among those of the same

nationality. Simul, as mentioned earlier, belonged to a family wealthy enough to sponsor her university education in Britain. Yet Simul's family did not let their daughter go abroad alone. Once her brother came to Britain and started his education, she got admission to a college of business studies in London and came to do her three-year Bachelor degree in 2001. She told me that, as had always been the case, after coming to Britain her father never made the brother and sister feel 'the pang of financial crises'. Throughout her academic life, she was fully sponsored by her father, though she worked part-time to top up her earnings and to gain experience. In the early 2000s, it was more likely that women from backgrounds similar to Simul's chose higher education abroad as a strong option to earn high-value academic qualifications. Alia's example, on the other hand, was atypical in many ways. As an A-level student in Bangladesh, Alia wanted to pursue her higher education abroad. Though she belonged to a financially well-to-do family, they did not have enough money to sponsor an international tuition fee. Her father, a doctor with strong connections to the pro-Islamist political group in Bangladesh, faced political threats in the early 2000s. This eventually led the family to seek political asylum in the UK. Alia, already over 18 years old, was not granted a family-dependent visa immediately. Her father had to go through a lengthy legal process before she was granted a family reunion visa. Once in London, Alia re-started her first degree all over again. Her aim was to go to a prestigious institution. However, due to her family's financial limitations at that time, she went to a lesser-known 'new' university. In her interview, Alia compared her situation with that of her younger brother, who, unlike her, could attend one of the prestigious research-led universities in the UK.

Dola was a representative of a time in the mid-2000s, when studying abroad took on a 'massified' form. She also belonged to the countless young people from poor countries who took transnational migration to be a way to change their lives, yet often lacked detailed knowledge of life after migration. Her own family, as mentioned earlier, did not have the material means to send her abroad. Being adamant, she managed the tuition fee for one semester, provided by her maternal uncle, and arrived in Britain with an assumption that she would earn the rest of her tuition fees. It was only after coming to Britain that she realized that the friends and seniors who had inspired her and given her partial knowledge about Britain were from a different financial world. When Dola came to Britain in 2006, her dream was concrete and straightforward. She would first complete her last year of undergraduate study (two years having been completed in Bangladesh), and then complete her Bar-at-law in one year. When I interviewed Dola in July 2011, she had only completed her LLB, leaving her LLM half-finished, shifting from being a barrister to a solicitor. This last decision, Dola told me, was crucial. In Bangladesh, a solicitor degree does not have a recognized value in the professional law market. However, in Britain, while anybody can gain the initial Bar-at-

law training certificate, the main and practical part of it, the one-year internship called the 'pupillage' is hard-to-reach. Dola explained: 'you have to be white British or a British-born second generation to find an intern position'. No Bangladeshis, to the best of her knowledge, actually complete (or *can* complete) that part. This means that in Britain, none of them were professional barristers, though once they got back to Bangladesh, they call themselves such. Over the years, Dola wanted to see herself having a successful law career in Britain. She did not want to return to Bangladesh. This was why Dola moved to a solicitors' course, with which she could have a career in the UK. Dola's explanation stressed the necessity of having full access to an advanced society's cultural capital to find a space in its elite professions. I will discuss this issue in Chapter 4.

Marriage had mixed outcomes for these women's education. Dola got married in 2009 to her cousin after having a long-term mutual relationship with him. When her husband came to Britain as a highly skilled migrant and started sharing her burdens she could finally concentrate fully on her professional career. 'The stress of life is much less now, as I know there is someone to share my financial, emotional and all other burdens'. Simul, on the other hand, married a Bangladeshi man whom she met in London. After her marriage, Simul quickly became pregnant, and once a mother, she told me 'my husband did not cooperate with me fully' in studying for an MA. Over the years, Simul shifted away from her dream of becoming a 'full career woman' to being a part-time childcare worker. When I interviewed her in 2011, eleven years after she had come to Britain, she only had her long-since completed first degree. Unlike the other women, Alia was married to a British-Bangladeshi man of her father's choice. Alia did not have to prioritize her husband's career. Rather, she had the security of having a husband with a high-status professional job. Already a British citizen, her family's strong cultural capital, in particular the way her father implanted a passion for knowledge in her early life, gave Alia the confidence that once all her children had started school, she would go back to university to do a PhD straightaway.

Bourdieu's key argument, that privileged academic qualification breeds more privilege, helps me to understand my participants' performances at advanced stages of education abroad. In this case, having a grant can strengthen women's possibility to earn foreign postgraduate degrees. Amongst my interviewees, only Rubi and Zami had full scholarships, in Canada and in Britain respectively, for their postgraduate degrees. Both were top achievers in prestigious public universities in Bangladesh, and both told me that without the scholarships they would never have been able to pursue these expensive qualifications. Apart from Zami, there was only one other woman with a humanities/social science background who did a postgraduate Master's degree. Asma was a mother of two under-five year-old boys

when she, leaving her government school teaching job in Bangladesh, joined her husband permanently in Britain. Following the completion of his PhD in 2005, Asma's husband had a professional job in the UK. With a view to expanding her expertise, Asma, instead of going for a mainstream teaching degree, did a part-time Masters on teaching children with special needs. She wanted to pursue a PhD, yet to mould her children's future according to the family's standards, Asma postponed investing in herself.

If higher education is a well-reasoned move based on previous academic qualifications and their situation, the gendered re-investment in higher education needs double and triple layers of careful rationalization. The economic return of this investment was at the root of these rationalizations. All my engineer participants, high-achievers all along, did international postgraduate degrees. This decision to invest in one's education was driven by the promise of a professional job. Both as pairs and as individuals, the engineers were the most highly educated in my study, all with foreign post-graduate qualifications. Except for the engineers, there was no other sub-group with such a high proportion of foreign postgraduate degrees. It can be assumed that immigrant women's reinvestment in higher education would be subject to their opportunities in the labour market. The promise of having an equivalent return would enhance the possibility of this investment. In this sense, certain professional degrees such as engineering on the one hand, and primary school teaching on the other, would attract diverse ranges of immigrant women to British universities.

There is only one woman in my study who could virtually do her higher education all over again after marriage and migration. The wife of a Bangladeshi academic in a research-intensive British university in London, Maya told me how her husband's knowledge and social capital in the intellectual field had shaped her long academic path in the UK. An 'insider's knowledge', as Maya termed it, is essential to think through and act wisely to secure such the important capital of international education. Maya returned to science, departing from her original passion for English literature, and took computer science - one of the key subjects of global technology - as the most suitable subject to study in the UK. From big decisions such as selecting the discipline and the university, to minute details such as writing the personal statement in a proper way, Maya had her husband's 'insider' knowledge and practical assistance. Maya saw her husband's support, co-operation and knowledge as the necessary 'field' within which her own 'capital' could operate. Without this, Maya concluded, her path from undergraduate to PhD would have been difficult and potentially impossible.

If my participants' academic capital is examined through an intersectional lens of gender, family, class, academic performance, marriage, migration and mothering, the outcome is both similar and heterogeneous. It is similar because the final accumulation is devoid of any major positive radicalization: those who had it good could make it better with international degrees. It is dissimilar and internally heterogeneous because not all women, having similar academic qualifications, could avail themselves of higher education after marriage and migration. It is in this overlapping relationship between the local and the global that I want to highlight the limitations of Bourdieu's 'academic capital' theory. Bourdieu argues that social class, alongside one's biological family, is the most important element in having academic qualifications of dissimilar value. This argument suggests that individuals belonging to similar social groups should have academic capital of homogeneous value. There are two main limitations of this theoretical assumption. Firstly, Bourdieu took a male (perhaps western) perspective to define one's academic potential where all get some chances of education. Secondly, this classification, based mainly on one's social class, is more appropriate to a national context in which the opportunities and references for comparison are relatively limited. In his later works, in the wake of globalization, Bourdieu argues that international (American and British) higher education is the new 'cultural imperialism' through which the 'competition for cultural capital is intensifying and class inequalities are growing at a dizzying pace' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001: 3). However, his theories did not cover how this new capital would look at a time when the boundary between national and international education is fragile and overlapping.

For a feminist intervention into Bourdieu's theory, it is even more important to address how women, from their range of marginal positions, would respond to this increased academic standard. In the Bangladeshi context, a woman's quality of education is in the first place a class factor. Over the lifecycle, gender interacts with education more powerfully than social class. Therefore, depending on the gender 'pull' or 'push', two women of relatively similar academic background can have very different outcomes. Given that women, regardless of their geographical origin, are high in numbers in the humanities and social sciences which do not possess high value in the global market, women's internationalization of education could be marginalised. Despite the growth in migration of single female students in recent years, yet majority of educated women from countries like Bangladesh migrate to an advanced country after marriage, and for family-related reasons. Once married and placed within the traditional family patriarchy, a migrant woman will have to have strong reasons to invest a large amount of money in her education. Recognition of their original education in the host country, once again, is central to this rationalization.

Most of my participants, regardless of their academic backgrounds and disciplines, had a desire to earn a British degree. Hasna, for example, told me that the first phrase she (or her family) used to associate with England was ‘traditional education’: it was seen as the centre of historic knowledge. Yet there was not much reason in an immigrant woman heading towards middle age, with children or with the expectation of having them, investing £10,000²² in a postgraduate degree. Already ‘over-educated’ for wage-earning jobs, my participants had little confidence that a postgraduate degree would provide enough ‘cultural capital’ to get anything beyond the first-generation, non-white, poor country’s immigrant norm. Putul, a graduate in International Relations from Bangladesh, told me that despite her husband’s insistence on supporting her in every possible way, she did not dare to invest so much money in her postgraduate degree, particularly when the money would come from the family budget. ‘One does not need very high education to earn money in this country’: Putul, like many of my other participants, calculated the costs and benefits of working towards a British degree as a first-generation immigrant woman, and decided not to do so.

Bourdieu’s use of the term ‘academic capital’ is too general and gender-neutral. This is especially so when one tests one’s academic qualifications in a larger international field, as opposed to locally. Based on my participants’ final academic capital, or at least on how it would be valued in Britain, I have classified my participants’ capital into three main groups. These are:

- Elite academic capital: international postgraduate degrees in professional fields with high employability such as engineering, or certain national degrees with international recognition such as medicine.
- Standard academic capital: international (or more precisely UK) first or postgraduate degrees, in subjects other than engineering and technology.
- General academic capital: academic degrees in any discipline, from Bangladesh.

It might seem that my classification of academic capital is biased towards women having or not having foreign degrees. However, the present classification is a magnification of each of

²²The average international postgraduate tuition fee British universities in the 2000s.

my participants' academic pasts. Biological family, marriage and migration: all had cumulative effects on women's education. Given that only a fraction of the women can have a promising academic career after their marriage and migration, there is high probability that a large number of educated immigrant women from countries like Bangladesh are 'invisible', i.e. their education is either unrecognized or misrecognized. What is gendered about the model is that gender would not be a key issue in men's (for example Bangladeshi) academic hierarchies. A man's education is not compromised by being a 'man'; in contrast, woman's education has a history of accumulated compromise. Though in my study there is no cause to deny Bourdieu's fundamental argument of education and social reproduction, that middle-class families with high cultural capital are the ultimate breeders of highly-educated children, I argue that in the final calculation of women's education, gender played the most determining role. Life changing issues such as marriage, child-birth and migration had heterogeneous impacts on different women, regardless of the socio-economic and academic similarities in their backgrounds.

Conclusion

This chapter dealt with my participants' academic qualifications. I presented this analysis within the broader context of the socio-cultural value of education and its pedagogical structure in Bangladesh. I introduced and applied Bourdieu's sociology of education to examine the historical and contemporary value of education in Bangladesh. Through my analysis of its social, cultural and academic values, I have underscored how education has maintained its colonial tie with its direct association with the middle class and the meritocracy of an individual in a country where education is the key of all development strategies. My participants, by and large, belonged to the social class most commonly associated with education: the middle class. I pointed out that although both in terms of economic conditions and social status, my participants' 'middle-classness' varied, the families were marked by making education their central agenda. My participants' mothers were unequally educated in comparison to their fathers, as was common in the 1970s and 1980s. However, as the family carer, mothers had to take the executive responsibility for educating the children.

As is often the case in the Bangladeshi education system, my participants went to qualitatively varied academic institutions, including primary and secondary schools. Educational institutions impacted on my participants' attainment of academic as well as

cultural capital; there was little evidence that families low in cultural capital or high in economic capital could yield good results for their children only with the support of the academic institution. The privilege of highly educated families was exemplified by the fact that my participants whose parents were both highly educated (often working) were the best achievers at their schools. Once my participants completed their higher secondary school examinations, families had to decide the extent of the young women's 'modernity' within a heteronormative context. There is, therefore, little evidence in my research that women with strong academic commitment delayed their marriage. Rather, marriage was often dependent on the availability of a suitable (and somewhat equal) bridegroom. Women's education after marriage was complex. Though it is difficult to pin down, if there is a single factor that facilitated women's education after marriage, it was equity in marriage, with certain similarities being seen in both families' cultural and economic capitals. Marriage could trigger several forms of 'normal' and extreme resistance to women's education, resulting in a direct impact on their academic attainment.

Transnational migration and its relation to the immigrant women's educations can be seen as a continuation of the contingency that began with marriage. Re-investment in international education is strongly tied to the promise of getting an economic return from it. This means that the local hierarchization of knowledge, where 'hard science and engineering' are at the top, is often reinforced in an international context. My participants who studied engineering in Bangladesh went for foreign degrees with high employability. Excepting this atypical female profession, women working in the traditionally feminized jobs (such as teaching at schools) might take degrees relevant to their professional aims. This means that there can be a vast range of non-white educated women from poorly developed countries whose academic qualifications may go without proper economic and social recognition in a different country. Since it is still rare that an immigrant woman's education is the main family priority after migration, it is unlikely that after a long time away from education, women would have the personal confidence or financial capacity to invest in their further education.

Many of these possibilities depend on the ways in which a woman is supported by her husband in pursuing advanced-level education. Based on the analysis of the education of my participants, who in many ways represent the relatively recent influx of educated migrant women from the global south to the north, I pointed out the limitation of Bourdieu's definition of 'academic capital'. The term academic capital, I have argued, is an unfragmented category with almost sole emphasis on social class within a national boundary. I have argued that in a contemporary context, when the boundaries of national and international are increasingly blurred and particularly when education is a central global

commodity, it is necessary to revise the category to facilitate a more nuanced reading of it. This is more so because although a foreign education, international in nature, can definitely add value to an academic qualification, not all foreign degrees are of similar value. 'Elite', 'standard' and 'general' academic capitals - the ways that I renamed Bourdieu's academic capital - are partly based on this internationalization of education and partly on the gendered nature of women's education. In gender conservative society, women receive unequal treatment in achieving education. This inequality turns into a norm when women's education intersects strongly with their secondary position in society. While in this chapter I analysed the appropriateness of these terms in relation to my participants' academic qualifications, in the next chapter, I will examine the differing relations of these academic qualifications to the labour market, both in Britain and Bangladesh.

Chapter Four: Academic Capital and Bangladeshi Women's Employment in Britain

In this chapter, I investigate my participants' employment in Britain. In the Introduction, I mentioned that 'capital mobility' in the economy is one of my key aspects through which I analyse the value of my participants' formal education or academic capital. The central focus of this chapter is to examine the differentiated and unequal recognition of my participants' foreign academic capitals in the advanced economy, contributing to produce 'skilled' and 'less-skilled' categories for the educated immigrants. Relatedly, I will examine the centrality of the host country's 'cultural capital' in its labour market and the limited position immigrant women occupy within it. In doing so, this chapter will address how women's employment statuses influence their gender roles within and beyond the household.

I will begin my analysis by situating my participants as 'adaptive earners' in an intersection of culture, capital and their immigrant status. In the second section, I discuss my participants' employment in Bangladesh, where their education held its full value. Section three is about their employment within the trajectory of migration and capital mobility to Britain. Using the terms 'full-time professionals', 'flexible and part-time wage earner' and the 'economically non-active' according to my participants' occupations, I analyse the commonalities of constraints and 'choices' that determine women's employment in a 'post-industrial knowledge economy' (Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport 2006: 3).

Immigrant Women as 'Adaptive Earners' in an Advanced Labour Market

In Chapter 3, I showed that by the time my participants arrived in Britain, the majority had completed their higher education in Bangladesh. This means that there was little commonality with the Bangladeshi women in the UK who historically had little education and were largely unemployed (see Chapter 1). Rather, my participants' academic achievements and their job expectations after migration shared certain similarities with educated immigrant women falling loosely into the 'skilled migrant' category. Skilled migrant here refers to a wide range of educated people migrating to advanced countries through diverse means such as skilled family migration, as spouses of skilled individuals, as students or students' spouses. These categories are in sharp contrast with the original and still most prestigious definition of 'skilled' workers, those who move to different countries for professional reasons and with job certainty. Studies related to gender and skilled migration

have already established that however diverse the immigration routes might be, immigrant women with high academic qualifications are, at present, marked by a strong desire to utilize their skills and qualifications in advanced economies. Simultaneously, it is clear that women face obstacles to being skilled earners (see Mojab 1999; Dumon, Martin, Spielvogel 2007; Kofman 2012).

My participants came to the UK at various stages of their life-courses, most notably immediately after marriage or towards middle age with their own families. When I discussed my participants' immigration criteria in the Introduction, I mentioned that none of them came to Britain with any particular job or employment plan, though a few came for education. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the cultural gendered division of labour that allocates the main 'bread earning' to men and women the main 'caring' roles to women was even stronger when my participants left Bangladesh for Britain to start families and be supportive wives. Secondly, as I have mentioned concerning a few of my participants' higher education in Britain in Chapter 3, decisions made from a distance lack clarity and contextual detail. For example, Lipi and Keya were the two participants who came to Britain with British passports and an assumption that their British citizenship would be enough capital to find a future in the UK. Neither had a clear plan of what kind of job they would have in Britain or how they would secure it, though both told me that by the 'best use of their passport', they expected to find jobs in Britain relatively easily. Both Lipi and Keya spent a part of their childhood in the UK, had some first-hand knowledge of this country, and most importantly had close relatives (i.e. social capital) who had lived in the UK for many years. Yet neither had any clear idea of what a job meant in the UK or what kind of job an immigrant woman, however strong her academic qualifications might be, should expect from a de-regulated labour market in which educational qualifications are not the only criterion for paid work.

Other participants had even fainter ideas about their own employment futures in the UK than the women mentioned above. However, whether there was an actual plan or not, almost everyone wanted to earn money and over time, did so. Again, the reasons varied. Whether it was to respond to basic financial need, to get 'used to' British culture and society, to acculturate oneself among native English people, or to gain both experience and money for a better future, most of my participants became working women, the most common identity for women in post-World War II western countries. Over the decades in the western world, this identity of 'working women' has become fragmented, indicating the diversities within it. In her much critiqued work, British social scientist Catherine Hakim (1991, 1995, 2000, 2002) has categorized women in the western world according to their job preferences, positions and

their 'work/life' balance. She argues that the post-World War II periods have been crucial to develop a ground for women's employment in many advanced countries. Decades of feminist political movements, policies around welfare state, the changing pattern of individual, economic and social lives, and the reduction of sex divisions of labour in many aspects of life in advanced modern societies all contributed to the notion that women can organize their family/ work according to their circumstances and preferences. Hakim's key argument that women in rich modern societies 'choose' to have certain kinds of jobs to maintain their lifestyle is open to many challenges.²³ Criticism has been strongest from feminist sociologists such as Rosemary Crompton who argue that structural limitations and a particular welfare system, regulate women's paid work and maintain occupational segregation in the labour market (Crompton 1990, 1997; Crompton and Harris 1998; Crompton and Lynotte 2005). In my analysis, I engage with these debates to argue that there are serious limitations to the notion of 'choice' theory for a group of foreign educated women who can only 'choose' from the limited jobs available to them. 'Choice' is always structured and limited. Hakim produced one category, the notion of the 'adaptive earner' that I find useful to describe my participants' 'working woman' identity. This does not mean in any sense that I support Hakim's general view of women earners. Quite apart from her rather problematic notion of 'choice' in relation to women's working lives, much of what she says does not at all translate into the migrant worker context. According to Hakim (2002), amongst her three categories of women in a developed society - 'home-centred', 'adaptive' and 'work-centred' - the 'adaptive' label is the most common and constitutes the middle ground between the other two.

Hakim makes her adaptive group the dominant one by including a wide range of working women. Women with clear-cut career plans as well as those working due to basic economic need fall into this category. Adaptive women usually want to have some kind of independent income and a social identity based on their job. She defines 'an adaptive woman with a career' and a 'work-centred' woman differently. The difference, interestingly, does not lie in the work itself. Rather, it manifests itself in women's attitudes towards motherhood. In Hakim's words, 'the defining characteristic of this group [work-centred] is that their main priority in life is some activity other than motherhood and family life' (2002: 164). By contrast, adaptive women with a career want to *combine* employment and family 'without either taking priority' (165) or with shifting priorities. I have already mentioned that

²³Hakim's preference theory has been controversial. Ginn, Arber, Brannen, Dale, *et al.* (1996) highlight the complexities around Hakim's simplistic divisions. Nonetheless, many recent works on women's employment establish that preferences and 'choices' are important in women's paid work in contemporary Britain, e.g. Caven (2006) and Kanji (2010).

culturally, my participants are 'adaptive' earners because the idea that a woman can lead her life according to her 'choices' or only for a career is alien to their culture of origin. All were married and were (or expected to be) mothers, and the standard trademark of modern women was the combination of paid work and family life.

Hakim stresses that a woman can be 'work-centred' when she is committed to a particular profession 'from the start' (2002: 166), and when she invests strategically in herself at every step to reach where she wants to be. Hakim uses Bourdieu's forms of capital to make her arguments about women's work preferences, and more recently, to present her theory of 'erotic capital'.²⁴ However, she does not give due importance to the significance of the 'early start', which for Bourdieu is fundamental in the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital as well as individual success (see Bourdieu 1986). When academic qualifications are adequately backed by the sophistication of well-developed cultural capital, of which social capital is a part, one can hope to get the best return for one's academic qualification. Elsewhere, Bourdieu (1992) explains that the top level of any field is usually monopolised by the powerful few. 'There are higher markets,' he writes, 'places in which the dominant code remains absolutely efficient' (1992: 118); the 'symbolic violence' of this is easy to see, but extremely difficult to challenge or resist. My participants came to Britain as adults and, most importantly, from a country unequal in any form of power when compared with Britain. This capital, in all its forms, was not conducive to giving them anything better than an 'adaptive earner' status, regardless of their cultural preference or individual ambition. Their 'choice' was constrained partly because of the foreignness of their academic capital and partly because they were newly arrived.

This intersection of culture, capital and the new objective location of capital conversion finds a certain resonance in Amartya Sen's (1987,1993,1999) depiction of his 'capability theory' within his broader project of assessing local and cross-national issues of quality of life and well-being. Sen (1987: 3) uses the term 'advantage' to refer to 'the real opportunities that the person has, especially compared with others' to convert her resources to attain her diverse 'functionality' (his term). Though his key interest in 'capability theory' is to go beyond the rigid calculation of economic indices that measure micro to macro level 'well-being', much of his references and interests are related to one's capacity to attain the key ingredients of a

²⁴Hakim (2011) proposes her theory of 'erotic capital' within Bourdieu's framework of capital as power and strategy. The key thesis of 'erotic capital' is that contemporary societies are marked by the sexualisation of culture and everyday life. 'Erotic capital', for Hakim, is as essential as any other form of traditional capital: cultural, social, academic and symbolic. Women in particular should invest and make the best use of their distinct femininity as a strategy for success. Once again, Hakim's 'erotic capital' earned wide criticism within and beyond feminisms (see for example, Katroulis 2011 and Avril 2011).

quality life such as education, employment and equal but diverse opportunities to achieve one's goals. He therefore argues that it is important to assess an individual's 'functioning' – the term he uses to denote the things individuals can do or can be in life – as a complex intersection of one's capability (resources and ability to actualize the resources) and the objective arrangements, the field, where individuals can be active agents. Capability is fundamentally about having both standardized and alternative options from which individuals can choose various 'doings and beings'. Much of one's sense of capacity and the alternative combinations of achievements rely on the amount of opportunities one has been given culturally, historically and structurally and what one can perceive as possibility, a freedom to choose from, in an immediate context. Preferences and 'choices' though are the key means to attain an individual as well as a collective sense of being. These are constrained because they emerge from the locations of action. Such locations of actions are not equal for all. Capability theory has been much used to assess women's structurally (and culturally) unequal positions to be "human" at various context, at the heart of which lies the capacity to 'choose' in a just way (Sen 1999: 189-204, 2001; Nussbam 2000).²⁵ Sen's notion of capability helps one to understand how my participants could convert their capitals within constrained contexts first in Bangladesh and then in Britain, as their gender identity interacted with other forms of cultural/contextual impediments to define their negotiated positions in the labour markets.

Participants' Employment in Bangladesh

While academic qualifications are a central capital in the labour markets of all modern societies, their significance differs greatly between and within countries. Societies still dominated by traditional values and institutional structures maintain this relation more strongly than those with softer and more shifting values and structures. In traditional societies, formal education and academic qualifications are prerequisite to most non-manual jobs. This does not however mean that one's academic capital is sufficient to find a position in the labour market. Rather, it indicates that being educated is the minimum prerequisite to

²⁵Sen (2001) particularly focuses on the various forms of inequalities women face across the globe to actualize their full potentiality. In addition, many of his theories, including this capability theory, takes account of how girls and women in developing countries are deprived of the fundamental component of functioning and well-being. Martha Nussbam (2000) utilized capability approach to address the question of women's development at a global context. She and Sen agree on the basic elements of capability theory, i.e., the argument that individual as well as collective well-being depend to a large extent on the personal capacity to act and contribute meaningfully. They also differ in some crucial way, namely Nussbam's (1993) adherence to the Aristotelian thought of virtue and ethics to define the life that can in a general way be a truly human life.

compete in the labour market. In Bangladesh, at least, before the more recent shifts towards societal transformations in line with global changes, qualifications around education (i.e. good results, good institutions) had certain strong claim in the traditional occupational sectors. My participants largely belonged to those traditional / transitional periods. Their middle-class upbringing and academic qualifications shaped their employment opportunities in Bangladesh. Gendered tradition and gendered modernity both determined what educated women are expected and allowed to do as paid work, as single women and after marriage. If Hakim's argument of 'work-centredness' is contextualized, a number of women, studying medicine and engineering were 'work-centred' by definition. Their ambition was fuelled from childhood, their academic performances supported their plans and their future was open both at home and abroad. Rubi, an engineer, told me in her interview that the common ambition of the engineering students of her institution was to go abroad for a better professional future soon after their first degrees.

In contrast with the engineers, the doctors saw their careers as being mainly in Bangladesh, though having higher degrees from abroad was part of the long-term plan. Nipa, a doctor by academic degree, told me that in Bangladesh she was a 'careerist' woman who wanted to be a renowned gynaecologist. Part of the reason she was interested in coming to the UK with her husband was to take further degrees to be a specialist in infertility treatment in Bangladesh. Amongst my participants, more doctors than engineers took part in the competitive Bangladesh Cadre Service (BCS) examinations for government jobs. Both Joba and her husband had government careers in Bangladesh as doctors. When education led to a professional trajectory, the term career was commonly used to define job expectations and future progression. In the interviews, while enquiring about the women's purpose of education and their thoughts about future paid work, I did not introduce the term 'career'. Rather, I asked them whether they ever thought that they would be earning money, or whether they had any preferred occupations or jobs. Women with particular professional expectations used the term career in a sequential vision of their profession, with 'each phase building on the achievements [of] its predecessor in continual improvement' (Marshall 1989: 285).

Given the centrality of education in the employment market, it is perhaps less surprising that my participants' employment expectations and prospects in Bangladesh replicated their academic history. Well-educated women not only had higher ambitions, but they found it easy to get jobs in Bangladesh. Therefore, when some of my participants such as Hasna, Shomi and Saba told me that they did not have a strong on about their jobs even when they were getting towards the end of their university degrees this also highlighted the relative

security they expected in the job market due to their academic qualifications. Social networks or social capital, a central support in this conversion of academic to economic capital, has a culturally specific pattern in a conventional society. Like everything else, the source of this network was family. My participants with strong family connections were confident about their future. Hasna, for example, had a range of promising jobs even before she completed her MA in English. Her strong extended family background, that included well-educated and professionally successful women, spared her from serious job seeking. The fathers' professions and professional connections influenced the daughters' job opportunities. Shomi reported that she fulfilled her father's desires by being successful in the competitive BCS examination, and by becoming a teacher at a government college. Zui, a woman representing the generational change in professional expectation, wanted to pursue a career at managerial level in the rapidly spreading privatized banking sector. After completing her bachelor degree in business studies, Zui did her internship in the same bank at which her father worked. This gave her a solid start in the profession.

Teaching, privately or in schools, was a common means of earning 'pocket money'. For a few, this later turned into a serious profession. Bokul, who had never worked in Bangladesh, told me that if she had ever worked, she would have been a teacher at a local school. For Bokul, 'ordinary' women like herself could at best be a teacher in Bangladesh. Rupa worked at a local private school until her father decided that a 'working daughter' was a symbol of the family's financial struggles, and asked her to concentrate on her education only. Asma, by contrast, took her parents (both teachers at public schools) as her role models, and took the necessary degrees (B.Ed and M.Ed) to be a teacher at a government girls' school in which she herself had been a pupil. In contrast, Mim had to settle for the administrative wing of a well-known English school in Dhaka when her family demands mounted and her full-time job in a business company overpowered her identity as a family wife. My participants' occupations indicated the ranges of ways these educated women became working women in their generations. Table 12, below, highlights their employment status in Bangladesh (p. 133).

Table 12: Participants' Occupational Status in Bangladesh.

Sector	Total Numbers	Sector	Total Numbers
Government/ Public	5	Non-Government/ Private	7
Key Fields of Jobs/ Professions*			
Education	Schoolteacher (2)	College teacher (1)	University academic (1)
Health	Public hospital doctor (1)	Private clinic doctor (2)	NGO health officer (1)
Banking	Government bank branch officer (1)	Private bank trainee manager (1)	
Others	University administrator (1)	School administrator (1)	Translator in an international organization (1)
Self-Employed	Architect and interior designer (1)		

* The numbers of participants for each profession is in bracket.

The fact that 50 percent of the women (14 out of 28) were working in Bangladesh is perhaps an interesting revelation about the wider picture there, where middle-class women's paid work is still not a norm, but is rapidly gaining currency, at least in the capital cities. My participants' job patterns also illustrate the relatively recent wave of privatization. Like education, the effect of privatization on the job market was to widen professional options and gave it an international appearance. When it came to equating jobs with social respect, however, work such as being an academic in a traditional university was ranked the highest. Zami, an academic at Dhaka University, told me that she had to 'sacrifice' her job in one of the leading independent research institutions because her immediate family members (parents and parents-in-law) wanted to see her as an 'academic'.

In Bangladesh, there are both cultural and structural threats to women's paid work. Once they had become part of Britain's well-regulated labour market, my participants could directly argue that a working woman's life in Bangladesh is much more difficult than in the UK. Women's participation in paid work in Bangladesh does not herald much substantial change

in their traditional home-making and caring roles. Therefore, a working woman is inevitably far more burdened than the home makers. Asma told me that being the 'bride' of the eldest son of her husband's family, she had to make sure that 'everything was ready' before she could leave for her teaching job. Asma talked about the early 1990s, when extended families were still common in central cities such as Dhaka, with both their advantages and drawbacks. For example, she pointed out that although she had to look after her big family, she could work without much worry because she knew that her children, both toddlers at that time, were in safe hands with their grandparents. This assurance and support enabled Asma to attend some evening courses necessary for her career.

Transformation in the social order means that traditional extended families are exceptions among urban dwellers in Bangladesh in the 21st century. This change might have been welcome for over-burdened women, if these traditions were replaced by professional systems. Societies expecting women to contribute to the national economy need to address and work on how the 'work/family' balance can be maintained. In addition, there needs to be dialogue and policies that should go beyond the 'equality' discourse with the assumption that education itself can solve problems related to gender inequality in the wider context. Most of my participants were high achievers in education, and those who worked in Bangladesh had good jobs. The 'real' experience of working in public places was much harsher than their expectations. Joba's childhood dream of serving her country by being a doctor in public healthcare turned into a torment that finally made her leave not only her job, but also the country. In the interview, Joba told me the reasons why she left Bangladesh despite having a prestigious job:

I was posted to Pabna according to my home district, my husband got his posting in Khustia, and my daughter was in between. Still, both of us decided to take the jobs but we had to struggle a lot for the following two years. Sometimes I had to leave my daughter with her grandparents in Dhaka, and there were times I used to take her with me to Pabna. A domestic helper would assist me. Over the years, I realized that it was getting far too much and it was not possible. My husband had a longstanding wish to do an MRCS [in a foreign country]. Then we decided that since my husband wanted to do an MRCS we might try to move abroad.

Shomi, another woman in government service, left her job when she was posted to a remote village while her husband had a job in Dhaka. Whilst transferring jobs in government

services creates its share of problems, things are no better for those living and working in one city. All my participants said that big cities like Dhaka were insecure for men and women alike, but women suffered the worst (also in Malik 2012: 12-13). Consequently, being the secondary earner in the family, women often had to sacrifice their jobs or settle for something manageable. Zui told me that many female colleagues at her bank found it almost too difficult to juggle childcare, family work and professional demands, when there were hardly any facilities to manage these. These problems are exacerbated by malpractice, lack of transparency in the workplace and the politics within it. The key ethics of education, such as meritocracy and hard work, are replaced by political lobbying, corruption, unfairness and similar kinds of 'influences' in recruitment and promotion. In most cases, women struggle hard to survive and to get recognition for their work.

My participants were part of the massive changes that have taken place in Bangladesh in the last three decades, allowing women of diverse backgrounds to be both empowered and mobile. This change is the 'new norm' of the country. However difficult things might be, there are strong indications that women get better education and try to be economically active, whether by choice or need, perhaps by both. There has been some scholarly work to address the lives of urban wage-earning women (such as garment workers) and the ambivalences of being a woman and an earner in Bangladesh (Salway, Jesmin and Rahman 2005). With the growth of 'middle-class' women's economic participation, it is vital that these issues are addressed at all levels. This is even more crucial in the light of ongoing globalization and its specific manifestation in the labour markets of aspirant countries such as India (see for example Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport 2006). These authors, in their inter/national perspectives of men and women's work/life patterns, note that the 21st century's global economy has certain similarities across countries, though the contextual details may be significantly different. It is important that countries like Bangladesh should address these issues at multiple levels to face the challenges that define contemporary society. For my participants, the way that their academic capital was recognized in Bangladesh and their 'real' experience of working within the system, were crucial points of reference for how they defined, compared and perceived their paid work positions in Britain. The rest of this chapter will address my participants' employment in the UK.

Academic Capital, Differentiated Value and Participants' Employment in Britain

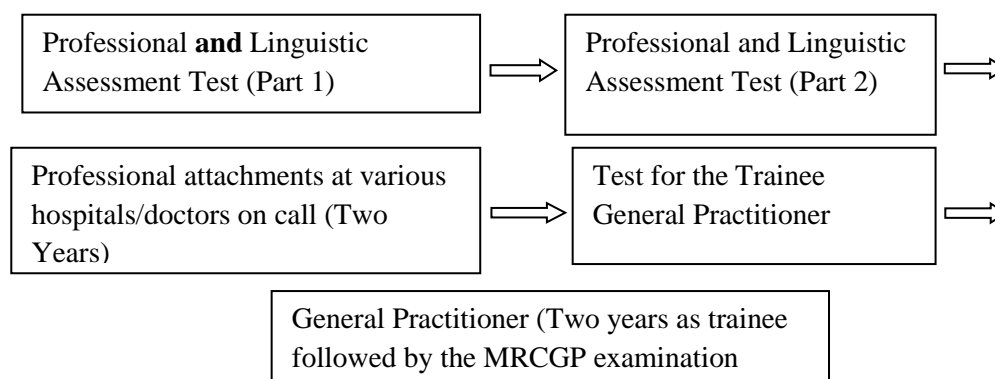
I mentioned earlier that my participants, as is common among migrant populations, came to the UK at various stages of their lives and with diverse ranges of skills, experiences, and academic and occupational portfolios. Building a career and addressing financial needs were often the two main impetuses for the women's continual engagement with paid work. Not all the women could get jobs based on their academic and /or cultural capital. The relatively flexible relationship between academic qualification and paid work, at least for certain types of jobs, was advantageous for women with general academic qualifications. This was the case for women who had to be in paid work, often for the first time in their lives, to meet their family's financial needs. The classification of my participants' academic value into three distinct categories, elite, standard and general, was partly based on the internationalization of their degrees (see Chapter 3). This was partly based on the strength of the academic qualifications in a different and more advanced labour market. 'Elite academic capital' (foreign degrees in science and technology) often have high value in a knowledge economy with its continuous advances in science and technology. In contrast, standard academic capital (foreign or British degrees in humanities and business) often led to a mismatch between academic qualification and jobs. Finally, general capital (education only from Bangladesh) suffers from a lack of relevant recognition for equivalent jobs. I begin my discussion with the professional group who, due to their degrees, could directly enter into professional jobs to fill the labour market gap in the British NHS.

Full-Time Professionals Doctors

I interviewed four doctors: Nipa, Keya, Taj and Joba. Except for Nipa, all worked as General Practitioners (GPs). Professionally, they were attached to health centres in a town in Yorkshire, England. The British health sector has always been the key public sector for recruiting foreign-educated doctors, nurses and other service providers (Goldacre, Davidson and Lambert 2004; Bradley and Healy 2008: 24). Though there is a strong expectation that in the future Britain should fulfil these employment demands internally or from neighbouring countries, in the early years of the 21st century, when Britain took a skilled approach to migration, international doctors were welcome. In the section on gender and skilled migration (Chapter 1), I pointed out that NHS female doctors from countries such as India were the focus of studies on skilled female professionals in the UK. Like these Indian doctors, my participants mainly came to the UK to build their medical career.

All my participants with successful medical careers in the UK began the process earlier than their husbands, who were also doctors. These decisions were strategic responses to their immediate situation after migration. Taj and her husband came to Britain from Sweden in 2006. Taj had a student visa to begin with. Her husband took on the main earner role by taking a full-time job in a superstore, allowing Taj to work part-time and to prepare for the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board Test (PLAB) for overseas doctors. In contrast, Joba came as a student's dependent spouse. While her husband undertook his postgraduate degree, Joba worked as a phlebotomist in a local health centre in London and prepared herself for the entry test. Finally, Keya, as mentioned earlier, was herself a British citizen. She came to the UK after her marriage, prepared for her medical job, and after more than a year sponsored her husband to come and join her. The contingency of women's career prospects was exhibited by Nipa, who could not attain a medical career in the UK. The wife of a professional computer engineer, Nipa came to the UK in the early 2000s, mainly to settle down with her husband. Although she had a strong desire to establish herself professionally, she did not have much of an idea about the NHS before she came to the UK. Nipa faced two major obstacles that no other female doctors in my sample encountered. First, she and her husband's complicated immigration status kept everything up in the air for years. Second, she joined as the bride of her husband's already-settled extended family. 'I hardly realized that all my doors were getting shut one after another', Nipa, a mother of two primary school children, concluded about her unfulfilled plans after migration. Her experience highlights the multiple structural issues that can make an immigrant woman's job expectations subject to drift. Nipa is an example of the increasing number of invisible skilled women migrating and settling in a developed country at the expense of their individual career. Even professional degrees such as medicine are not readily transferred after migration. Rather, one needs to begin elsewhere, and gradually get into the professional process by following particular steps (Figure 1: p. 138):

Figure 1: The Process of Becoming a General Practitioner for the Doctors with Foreign Degrees in the UK.



Sources: General Medical Council and The Royal College of General Practitioners Websites. Accessed 23 October 2012.

The first two professional assessment tests (PLAB) are the main gate through which overseas doctors enter the health service in the UK. They involve both English language and basic professional assessment tests. However, getting a professional attachment, the mandatory internship required to complete the training process, is a challenge. My participants passed the entry test relatively quickly, but struggled to get a professional attachment in any hospital. Keya's British passport could not compensate for her foreign degrees at a time of stringent immigration and labour market rules:

At that time [2006] doctors from all over the world were coming to the UK and there were not many opportunities here. I think the portal was open at that time and perhaps for this reason, for one position ten times more doctors were applying. At that time, even from Bangladesh a large number of doctors came, and some of them are still here. And when there were so many doctors then they restricted the visa process and it was something like UK resident doctors or those who had degrees from here would get priority. Then many doctors went back because they could not get a job here. After that, there were vacancies and we could get positions.

Immigration is often more fundamental an issue for people seeking skilled work than the ones settled in routinized and less skilled jobs. In particular, in a profession such as medicine where most people arrive in the UK with an aim to build their career in the field of their expertise, any unexpected immigration issue takes a toll on their career plan. Keya's words

stress the competitiveness of the labour market at a particular time in the mid-2000s, when doctors without specific work permit visas were not allowed to work in the UK (for commentaries on this rule, see Boseley 2006). As a British citizen, Keya did not encounter the struggles that doctors without the proper visas faced. Joba, for example, had to go through a lengthy legal process when both she and her husband converted their student category visas to highly skilled ones. Her husband was the primary applicant, hence his visa had the work-permit seal. In contrast, Joba's visa (as the dependent of a highly skilled person) had a bar preventing her from working as a doctor. This immigration rule was crucial in the medical sector, because without the proper immigration status, one could not enter into the main systems.

The examination to be a trainee doctor, and after that the actual three years of training, are in effect the main procedures through which one establishes one's career as a doctor in the UK. In his work on Asian doctors in the NHS, Aneez Esmail (2007) notes that historically there is an unwritten tradition that immigrant doctors, at least in the initial years, do the 'Cinderella services' for the NHS (829), working either in ethnically concentrated areas or in a remote place. Often, when one starts the process with a PLAB test, it is difficult to know how life-course priorities will impact on one's career, or how long one will require to reach a more stable stage. My participants and their husbands had to live apart in the UK for professional reasons. Some were still managing families and relations from a distance. And all took this arrangement as a usual way of coping with the demand of being in a career. The two-year long training period was also a crucial time to decide one's future professional route within medicine. This is where the British healthcare service is gendered and occupationally segregated. Decades of studies about NHS doctors suggest that female doctors take the more family-friendly general practitioner route, while male doctors take lengthier but eventually more rewarding hospital-based specialized paths (Crompton 1997; Crompton and Le Feuvre 2003; Crompton and Lyonette 2011). My participants were no exceptions, though the tradition itself was new to them. In Bangladesh, the medical profession is not clearly divided into two routes between GPs and surgeons. When my participants left Bangladesh their idea of a career was an ambitious one, mainly to be a specialist. Over the years their ambition became attuned to the condition of where they developed their profession, and all preferred to be GPs.

As wives and mothers, my participants highlighted the advantages of having a GP career. This sector is family-friendly not only because it is routine-bound, but also because it is more stable than the one in a hospital. Whilst the women generally preferred to be GPs, the men had more options. Both Keya's and Joba's husbands wanted to be specialists in

medicine and surgery respectively, and worked in hospitals. Gender did not have a compromising impact on their 'choices'. Taj's husband, who always wanted to have a better balance between work and family, chose to do the GP training. Whilst Taj could clearly see when both she and her husband would be fully trained GPs (after the training and once they had passed the MRCP), this equation was complex for the families with a hospital job and GP combination. From the perspective of stability and completion, in such families the one taking the GP route (mainly the woman) was the main 'anchor'. Specialist jobs not only take years to get, but there is a high dropout-rate due to the intensity of the workload (Crompton 1997). Keya, for example, told me that although her husband was hard working and passionate about his hospital career, she and her Bangladeshi doctor friends assumed that he might also join the growing numbers becoming GPs because of the high demands.

If, however, the husbands reached the top of their career ladder, their job could open the professional world for them, including if they wanted to go back to Bangladesh. A highly skilled professional job often gives an immigrant a strong sense of settlement and reason to stay in a different country. My doctor participants, like all others, wanted to see themselves as remaining in Britain until their children grew up and settled in the UK. However, if for any reason they had to go back to Bangladesh, their career, with a GP trajectory, might have a reverse migration penalty. My participants took nationally specific medicinal routes, whilst their husbands took a route that was international in nature and of high value in countries like Bangladesh. Keya, for example, told me that although she always wanted to stay in the UK, her husband had a mind to go back once they had finished their professional training. Over time, she became less inclined to spend her life in the UK, and might consider going back to Bangladesh in the future. In that situation, Keya's worry was what position she would get in Bangladesh, where her GP training would not formally be recognized.

Medicine is perhaps one of the few professional jobs in the UK where foreign degrees are recognized at a primary stage. One can start one's professional life with that degree, and keep building a career. My participants seeking to be GPs in the UK fall into the 'women with career' group in Hakim's 'adaptive' category. The nature of their educational qualifications and its acceptance in the British job market was crucial for this. It strongly suggests that 'choice' depends largely on the value of one's capital. For example, Nipa, though she could not build her medical career but she did not give up hope. Working as an administrator in a GP surgery, Nipa wished to be attached to a hospital as an 'on call' doctor. Her original medical degree from Bangladesh was more than a decade old when I conducted her interview (2011); she had lost confidence that she could pass through the hurdles to be a

GP. However, she and (according to her) her husband and children would be proud if one day she would be in a hospital, doing the job that was her childhood dream.

Professional Engineers

Engineering, and in particular information technology, is at the heart of the 21st century's 'knowledge capital'. Engineering is the key sector of knowledge that imbalanced the global labour market hierarchy. In the early 2000s, advanced countries such as the US, Canada, Britain and even Germany, had to depend primarily on 'non-western' countries for an adequate supply of professional engineers. Attracting skilled engineers was, to an extent, the key driver of the skilled migration strategies of these countries in the early 2000s. Engineering also occupies a particular place in the gender discourse of 'knowledge capital'. Walby (2011), in addressing the question of whether knowledge capital as well as society is gendered discusses this. From the perspective of western women's educational backgrounds and professional lives, knowledge capital is gendered because of the centrality of science and technology within it. Women in many advanced countries are still disproportionately underrepresented in science education at all levels (see also Chapter 3), and therefore in occupations related to these fields. In contrast, the expansion of engineering in the western world has changed professional non-western women's transnational migration patterns and increased their ratio of skilled participation on the global map. This is because of the traditionally high value of engineering in both the education and employment sectors in many Asian and other non-western countries, including Bangladesh.

I mentioned in Chapter 1 that the growth of Chinese and Indian female IT specialists in the UK is the 'new' subject of study concerning immigrant skilled professionals from a gender perspective. Whilst it might be true that the technological revolution was largely driven by computer science engineers and IT specialists, engineers from diverse categories were also part of the big picture in this shift towards science and technology. I interviewed four engineers (Tisa, Rubi, Bina and Saba), all of whom were married to engineers from the institution they had attended in Bangladesh. Only Tisa and her husband worked as software programmers in the UK, although both were architects by academic degree. Rubi was a civil engineer, while Bina and Saba were mechanical and electrical engineers respectively. Rubi and Bina's husbands were electrical engineers and Saba's husband was a civil engineer. These diversities, even in a limited sample, suggest that whether as international students or as skilled professionals diverse ranges of engineers arrived in the UK in the early years of the 21st century.

Earning a postgraduate degree from a host country to enhance the quality of one's capital is perhaps the most common way skilled and educated immigrants strive to have stronger professional positions in their respective labour markets. A number of studies on skilled immigrants found that to enter into the host country's job market, whether by choice or out of necessity, even highly skilled immigrants often had to undertake a further academic degree (Liversage 2009; Dean and Wilson 2009). Among my four participants, Rubi already had a North American degree in civil engineering before she came to Britain in 2004 to join her husband, who was a PhD student at a British university. Rubi found a professional job in the UK very swiftly. In 2004, her international engineering degree was in high demand in the British civil engineering sector, as it underwent massive digitalization. Rubi started working as a computational model designer for British roads and highways.

For the three other women things were not so easy. Both Saba and Bina lacked work experience, as their migration took place soon after they finished their first degrees in Bangladesh. Therefore, even though they started looking for professional jobs as soon as they arrived in the UK, there was no positive response. Nor did they get positive responses from other occupations unrelated to their academic qualifications. Saba pointed out that 'too much education' actually made her an unsuccessful candidate for other types of job:

In the beginning, I looked for a professional job in sectors related to electrical engineering. But after six or seven months, parallel to that kind of professional job I also looked for general jobs in supermarkets and those places. Yet I did not get any response from them, and I was very surprised. Other Bangladeshis used to joke I was too qualified for working at the superstore, and I should not write that I am an engineer on my CV.

Bina had similar frustrating experiences searching for jobs. Finally, both Saba and Bina took postgraduate degrees to upgrade their CVs. Both were careful to choose courses with high employability in both the UK and other advanced countries. From mechanical engineering, Bina shifted to an urban and environmental planning degree and Saba moved towards power engineering. In defining knowledge as capital, Walby argues: 'knowledge can be understood as a form of capital, as human and social capital, when capital is understood broadly as a set of resources and a social relationship that is stabilized and institutionalized' (2011: 4). All of my engineer participants had strong social connections with other Bangladeshi engineers in the UK and elsewhere. Ranges of information on the short-term and long-term market value

of certain courses shaped their investment strategies. Both mentioned the difference a British postgraduate degree made to their CV and their career path. They got positive responses through university graduate schemes to industrial companies, and got professional jobs as soon they earned their degrees.

A mother of two toddlers when she migrated, Tisa had a different career plan for her after the family migration. An architect by training, with diverse work experience in computational programming in Bangladesh, Tisa was determined not to start working until she got a proper professional job that would do credit to her academic and professional qualifications. Tisa described the first two years after migration as a period of ‘feeling bad’, with constant job searching, CV distribution, and facing interviews, then being rejected. Tisa’s individual context was different from the others’. Married to a university classmate, she regularly had professional clashes with her husband who according to Tisa never wanted her to be more professionally successful than him. By the time she and her children came to the UK as her husband’s dependents, their marital relationship was at its lowest ebb. Tisa described her complete financial dependence on her husband at that time as the greatest compromise to her self-respect, yet she did so as her aim was to start a professional career in the UK. Tisa first worked as a freelance interior designer with an Indian architect in the UK, and acculturated herself to the rules and systems of the labour market and of society in general. Tisa recollected that every interview call and every job interview took her one-step forward, and every rejection letter gave her reason to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of her candidature. Confidence, not knowledge, was the key to career success in an advanced country, Tisa concluded, explaining the difference high levels of confidence can make to people with skills:

There are some basic things here [in the UK] that one needs to learn, like writing a CV in a way that sounds appropriate for a particular job position. You have to think, ‘what are the qualities they are looking for?’, and you have to prepare your CV highlighting those qualities for a job. Another thing is that I think Bangladeshis generally suffer from a lack of confidence. In particular, when they are abroad they seem to be handling things without confidence. But in reality they know a lot more than many other people, but when they present themselves in the interview they seem a bit shaky. And in the job market of this country, there is no place for being shaky. They put a lot of emphasis on confidence, and this is very important here.

Her observation unpicks an interesting and important contextual particularity of the term 'knowledge'. The way Tisa talked about Bangladeshi people as 'knowledgeable' is associated with its traditional Bangla meaning. Such knowledge is primarily based on rigorous academic culture. 'Knowing a lot' is itself a mark of capability that does not always need further proof. By contrast to that definition, confidence in knowledge comes from its practical experience in actual contexts. When it comes to knowledge as a practical means of doing things, many Bangladeshis, as Tisa as well as others pointed out, found it difficult to be confident in a new work culture that requires the ability to employ common sense and knowledge effectively. These complex differences made some of my participants such as Taj and Saba critical of Bangladeshi education and society in general where the emphasis had always been on knowledge derived from books and demonstrated in examinations.

All of my participants in various ways reflected on their individual limitations as a rationale for their constrained participation in the British labour market. They did this through making broad comparisons between Bangladesh and Britain. British society, its labour market, education system, the practice of meritocracy and professionalism made them think that unlike in Bangladesh where nepotism rules the labour market, in Britain success is all about individual competence, and the capacity to manoeuvre one's position according to this advanced country's normalized standard. It is interesting that none of my participants critiqued such criteria of success in the labour market; rather they gave the impression that it was largely immigrants' responsibility to acquire the assimilative qualities (such as confidence, fluency in English, interpersonal networking) to achieve more than what they were offered in the labour market. Mim, one of my participants in Hull, for example, told me that she was aware of what could be called a three-tier system recruitment practice in Britain. In this tier system, new non-white immigrants would only be recruited when that position could not be filled by a native white person (or British-born minorities), and members from European Union countries (for the rule see Table 1, Chapter 1). Mim, like many of my participants, accepted this arrangement as 'normal' because 'patriotism' – as she called it- (i.e. favouring one's own people over others is normal) is both expected and accepted.

In recent decades, studies of critical race theory have increasingly taken an interest in immigrant populations' internalization of 'white supremacy' as a norm of being adequate in a western country, thereby perpetuating what can be called the 'symbolic violence' of race. Both in the US and in the UK as well as elsewhere, many of these studies have emerged in relation to education research where mixed ethnicities and internationality mark western educational institutions, from schools to universities (see for example Gillborn (2005) for a critique of British education policy; Huber (2010) for undocumented Chicana college students in the US). The main focus of enquiry here, therefore, have largely been young

people, primarily second generations of immigrants who, as Pyke and Dang (2003) show in their qualitative research with Korean and Vietnamese young adults in the US, struggle to normalize their lifestyle to be accepted by their white peers. Critical race theorists have located internalized racism in a complex intersectional web. For Pyke (2010) this complex and hidden pattern of intersectionality is one of the key reasons why this issue often goes unchallenged in contemporary studies of race and racism. Race and racism are difficult and shifting terrains, and there is a difficulty in articulating what can be counted as institutional racism and when an immigrant should take the responsibility to bridge the subjective versus structural gap in a racially hierarchized country.

My participants in some instances made explicit reference to how structural limitations (lack of a work permit, lack of childcare etc.) affected their opportunities and possibilities in the labour market and beyond (discussed below). However, in all their narratives there was a tendency to take personal responsibility for what they achieved (or otherwise), and to idealize the rules and regulations that made Britain a far more advanced country than Bangladesh. Because of these fundamental differences between the countries, my participants highlighted their own limitations with an assumption that if they could overcome these individual, professional, academic barriers, they could expect to be treated as 'equal' in the labour market. For critical race theorist and anti-racist community organizer Donna Bivens (1995), the power of white people to 'set and determine standards' for others as well as for themselves, and the acceptance of such norms as the best way of doing things by immigrants can be defined as 'internalized racism'. As she explains:

Seeing internalized racism as a systematic oppression allows us to distinguish it again from human wounds like self-hatred or 'low self esteem' to which all people are vulnerable. It is important to understand it as systematic because that makes it clear that it is not a problem of individuals. It is structural. Thus, even people of colour who have 'high self-esteem' must grapple with internalized racism (1995: n.p.).

The collectiveness of internalized racism was apparent in my participants' narratives. They all, to various degrees, struggled to identify 'race' as a key issue operating in the current labour market. Bina, an engineer, was perhaps an exception who pointed out that it was 'racism' above everything that pulled qualified immigrants like her and many others in British labour down. Others mostly organized their discourses around race but not exactly on race. Blaming 'race' only for their precarious positions seemed to be a weak point in an intersectional context where race operates in relation to, and in accordance with, other forms of long-term and immediate inequalities. It is even more difficult to articulate concerns or

dissatisfaction over so-called identity fixation terrains such as gender, race and nationality when the rapidly changing paradigm of the neoliberal economy prescribes personal capabilities and capacities as key to one's career as well as to individual success. In her interview, Tisa, who I mentioned earlier, told me that proving one's capacity was the only way to break through the intersectional glass ceiling of sexism and racism in the professional world where men – in particular white men – still found it difficult to accept that a woman of colour could be at the top of the ladder.

This complex intersectionality not only between race, class and gender but also the geo-political inequalities between countries made some of my participants accept that globalization demanded a certain uniformity of standards. People, regardless of their global context, should try to acquire certain competences that could be recognized as legitimate 'global' cultural capital. Taj, for example, mentioned that people planning to go abroad from Bangladesh for careers should be well aware of the cultural and structural differences within which some workers could appear more confident and able than others. She particularly referred to how issues such as interpersonal relations and professional skills could relentlessly produce differences between native and non-native workers in similar professions in Britain. As she explained in her interview:

In Bangladesh we think that education is everything, we do not learn anything about lifestyle, we do not know how to handle a critical situation. We do not care for having different sorts of skills and other activities. Here [in Britain] things are completely different. So I think Bangladeshis need to be careful about these issues and learn things from countries like these [Britain]. Those who are born and brought up here, they do not have that much problem because they are grown up in this system. They know how to handle a colleague and maintain a group of staff, and most importantly they know how to be polite and nice just to make their works done.

We cannot always be that polite and nice because we are not used to be like that in Bangladesh. It is a bit of problem. My white colleagues – I always see them -, every time they use 'please', 'thank you' and all those nice words with everyone. Often I feel 'what is the point of being so polite and nice?' Make it simple 'will you do the work for me? If yes, then fine. If not, I am asking someone else' [mutual laughing]. If anybody asks me to do something, I will do that. I do not care whether that is a request or an order or what not. But here these things matter a lot, they take every note of how you are saying something, and you have to think every time how you should approach someone. Here if two nurses are talking and if you go and ask for help without saying something

nice, they find it insulting. We do not find it insulting because we are used to getting and giving direction. But they are not. So I think before we leave our country, and want to go to a different culture, in particular for working, we have to have some kind of knowledge about their ways of living.

In a deregulated and market oriented structure - where everyone in one way or other are tied to a buyer and seller relation - qualities that can be called personal capital (such as charisma, confidence, ability to control) are integral parts of any kind of job regardless of its apparent link with the market. Valerie Walkerdine and Peter Bansel (2011) examine the complex ways these global forces have brought fundamental shifts in the ways in which individuals not only relate to their jobs, but also develop emotionally engaged narratives around them in advanced countries. They, however, argue that ideas of governmentality, or the core individual references of neoliberalism where individuals - like institutions - should take some responsibility for their 'choices' and consequences are extremely complex. This is partly because in an ironic way individuals are becoming less capable to take meaningful control of the kinds of jobs they have, how they can organize their lives around their work, and to what extent they can keep on changing and upgrading themselves according to the demand of the labour. Yet individuals are increasingly taking their jobs as integral parts of their individualized identities, even when their jobs do not match their actual expectations. This particular issue I will elaborate further in relation to my participants who had flexible jobs in Britain.

The professional female engineers had certain distinctive experiences and views of the British labour market that were largely based on their professional integration into a corporate culture (see also Fearfull and Kamenou 2006). The post-2008 economic recession in Britain took a toll on their careers. Being made redundant from work, as Bina and Tisa had been, was an unfamiliar unsettling in their otherwise settled careers. Unlike the doctors who worked within a national welfare organization, these women worked in the private sector. Blossfeld and Hofmeister (2006) argue that liberal welfare-based systems such as those in Great Britain and the United States create employment mainly through market-based private sectors. The key characteristics of these countries' contemporary labour markets, such as wider ranges of paid work and flexible outlets, were rooted in the 1980s' wave of privatization, which grew decade by decade. Private sectors are more quickly affected by, and responsive to, any form of economic change. Government regulations and labour unions have limited impact on the private sector, giving individual organizations more power to recruit and lay off employees as circumstance demands. The female engineers talked more about job-related stress than any other sub-group. Because of business closures and lay-offs, Tisa had to find three new jobs in the space of a year. Bina became a full-time

mother and Rubi did not dare change her job, even though she was not completely happy with her current position and the remuneration it offered. These women quite critically suggested that in terms of a career, the UK did not have much to offer for engineers like themselves. This was partly because of the recession-stricken job market and partly because of the professional 'glass ceiling'.

The top levels in any profession require sophistication in a worker's orchestration of capital. In Bauder's work (2003, 2005) on skilled migrants in Canada, his highly skilled Indian immigrant subjects mentioned that not only professional social networks, but also the topics of conversation between colleagues, could make professional differences. If one knew everything about ice hockey in Canada (or perhaps football in Britain), one might feel confident in maintaining a conversation with a white colleague, thus 'acting' like someone smart and culturally assimilated, and therefore having better relationships and opportunities. All of my participants, in particular the professional engineers, mentioned that the rules and regulations of equality, anti-discrimination and anti-racism were at work in the lower levels of the profession, up until an immigrant was perceived as being a threat to a native's professional job. When it comes to top-level succession or who should be promoted, the convention was to prefer the natives in the same profession. Foreign skills and qualities, without the full support of cultural and social capital, could easily be ignored, or be rejected by pointing out faults in their knowledge capital, particularly language. Bina, one of my engineer participants, emphasized the significance of context in getting the best return for one's qualifications and skills:

If I were in Bangladesh, people would have known me for professional reasons. Here nobody knows me and nobody knows our background. All they know is that I have done a Master's at Cardiff University. They do not know which schools I have been to. In Bangladesh your CV tells people which school and colleges you have been to and what kind of results you had. Here nobody knows anything about you, and they will not give you the chance to be something here. In Bangladesh when someone is bright, people can judge why she is bright and it has an influence on people's career path. People can push you to go up and to get promotion to a senior position like a project manager or administrative officer. Here, who is going to push you? First of all they will tell you that they do not know you very well, and in the second place they have their own people to be in those positions.

The engineers came to the UK with very high levels of academic capital and managed to utilize it successfully. However, the ever-increasing demands for career-commitment in this neo-corporate culture made all of the professional women less assertive about their future careers. A wide range of feminist and sociological studies across the contemporary western world highlights ‘the global spread of neo-liberalism’ and ‘the pressures of competitive capitalism’ (Crompton, Lewis and Lyonette 2007: 243). This unchecked occupational pressure in combination with local inequalities reinforces men and women's public and private gender role segregation (Houston and Marks 2005; Rose 2005; Wall 2007; Gash, Mertens and Gordo 2009).

Crompton and her colleagues’ critical engagement with the structural limitations of the British welfare system (lack of free childcare) highlight its effect on working mothers’ full-time paid-work practices in Britain. For them, the ‘choice’ of going for ‘the best of both worlds’ by cutting down career commitment is increasingly common in professional jobs not because of individual choice, but as a reasonable compromise to harmonize everything. Whilst my doctor participants took the ‘feminine’ option as their profession, for engineers the future was more uncertain, with stronger signs of professional downshift. Bina’s next long-term plan was to be a skilled accountant and to be self-employed, as it would give her more room to balance family and work. Rubi told me that after a day in a stressful job, she could hardly see herself taking up further training related to her profession, though she knew it would give her better chances in her career. Only Tisa was engaged in a part-time postgraduate diploma course that would be necessary for her to compete to be a team leader. Tisa had a financial necessity to stick to her career, being almost the single provider for herself and her teenage children. When heterosexual relationship is stable and is maintained following certain conservative norm, women’s structurally determined preference for less demanding paid work can reinforce their position as the secondary earners in their families.

Other Full -Time Occupations

When education is used to *regenerate* education, such as when an educated woman works in a school, it is assumed within Bangladeshi context that her academic qualifications are used appropriately. Teaching or being involved in professions related to education surfaced as an ‘ethno-gendered’ strategy for some of my participants to be recognized as immigrant women with an education. Asma, Lipi and Hasna had all spent considerable years in the UK, worked in different occupations, and finally found themselves where they wanted to be: being involved in education. Asma had been working as an intervention tutor at an ethnically

diverse high school in Leeds for ten years. Similarly, Lipi was working as a support assistant at a primary school predominantly populated by South Asian students in Greater London. In contrast, Hasna held the position of executive coordinator of a family-owned private college in London. Ethnic minority communities, in particular the Bangladeshi community, were the main location of their professions. Asma had her first job as a bilingual teacher at a primary school with a large number of Bangladeshi pupils. Through that institutional connection, she had also worked as a tutor at a community-based homework club. The suburb in West London where Lipi settled and worked as a learning assistant at a primary school has one of the largest South Asian diasporas in the UK. Hasna, by contrast, took a more aspirational route than these women. In Britain, the growth in numbers of skilled and educated immigrants coincided with the complexity of its immigration rules. All immigrants, new or seeking British citizenship, have to earn some mandatory cultural capital, within which basic English language skills are key. There has been wide a range of criticisms of the implications of these rules at community levels, in particular, on ethnic minority women and the ways in which such rules are discriminatory against them (Alexander, Edwards and Temple 2007; Ahmed and Jones 2008). In other words, in the 21st century, unlike the decades preceding it, non-white, non-European immigrants cannot 'make do' without having some proof of British cultural knowledge. This particular institutional drive towards educating the minorities has created opportunities for educated immigrants at local levels. Overnight, educated and recent immigrants desperate to find a way out of low-level jobs or working in catering, flourished within the mid-level education business: privately-owned 'colleges' in big metropolises such as London, Manchester, Birmingham and so on.

Education and academic capital, Bourdieu (1986) argues maintain the basic law of economics: scarcity increases demand. The Bangladeshi communities in Britain are in need of people who can help them find their way through the complex British immigration and similar legal processes. This demand coupled with young people from Bangladesh's aspiration to migrate to Britain as 'students' has created business opportunities for educated immigrants. Hasna and her husband's college in London offered various levels of immigration-related courses to both people from the Sylheti community and relatively newly arrived Bangladeshis. Significantly, in my research more than one woman's husband had what they called a 'college business' in the UK. However, Hasna was the only woman who was an active part of this business. Her education, a degree in English from Bangladesh, was itself a key capital for this. Hasna explained the context within which their college had emerged:

After three years of working in the Sky Chef, my husband wanted to do some business work. He had two close friends in London and one day while we were talking, he suddenly said that they would do this restaurant business. Then I said ‘forty years ago our forefathers, our uncles came and worked in the kitchens here. If we do the same, what is the benefit of coming here with years of education?’ Women do not work in the Bangladeshi restaurants here and at that time, my intention was to come out of all these jobs [in superstores] and to do something on my own.

Hasna’s narrative highlights the interrelated struggle for recognition and respectability of people living in social marginality (discussed in Chapter 5). When capital devaluation is only measured in economic terms, as is routinely the case in skilled migration studies, extremely important socio-symbolic aspects are sidelined. The larger impact of the ‘brain-drain’ or the deskilling of immigrants cannot be fully understood until the related socio-symbolic loss is adequately addressed. Hasna mentioned that in the first three years after their migration in 2000, she and her husband earned an amount of money that they had not equalled since. Both worked full-time: she in a superstore, and her husband in a catering company that served British Airways. However, money alone could not satisfy them, as it did not give them the kind of social distinction they aimed for. Hasna felt a gendered threat linked with her husband’s proposal of a restaurant business. She perceived that her life would have been stuck, either in a superstore or as a full-time homemaker with two children, if she could not convince others of the strength of the (then relatively new) college business. Over the years, she and her husband moved towards a business that suited educated and cultured people. In the interview, she also mentioned her other community-level involvements including in both print and popular media. It was through these kinds of involvements around education that Hasna established her identity as an educated Bangladeshi woman in Britain.

The image of woman as social ‘carer’ was muted as these participants described their jobs and their identities as ‘working women’. There were both ‘community’ and humanitarian dimensions to their discourses. Both Hasna and Asma stressed their ‘commitment’ to work for a community that needs support to deal with its range of problems. Lipi, on the other hand, saw the impact of her job in a much wider context. A carer for a physically and emotionally challenged child in her school, Lipi saw herself as part of the advanced welfare system working for those who need both support and care. This personal satisfaction emerging from ‘helping others’ shaped her future decisions, either in Bangladesh or in Britain:

I would like to go back to Bangladesh when I know that they [her teenage children] are independent. At that time, I would like to do some courses so that when I go back to Bangladesh, I will have different doors open ahead of me. If this is not at all possible, then I would like to do some charity work through different organizations here [in the UK]. There are loads of opportunities here and I would like to get involved with some kind of charity.

Whilst Lipi stressed her path forward, her words also hinted at the background as to why women like her ‘choose’ to work in schools. Jobs in schools rank highest in the ‘best of the both worlds’ discourse among Bangladeshi women. Advantages include the flexibility of jobs, limited hours for a full-time job, and an ideal organization of work according to family demands. Both Lipi and Asma stressed their success at managing their jobs, family and beyond efficiently, as expected from an ideal woman in a collective culture. My study further reveals how working at a school was becoming an ‘ideal’ job for Bangladeshi educated women who wanted some recognition for their educatedness and capital, but did not want to overstretch themselves.

One of the vital structural blocks presented by jobs in schools is occupational stagnation and the lack of promotional mobility (see for example, Crompton 1990). Just as a primary teacher cannot automatically become a secondary teacher, the diverse intermediary positions my participants described do not qualify one to be a teacher. As my participants lacked any concrete plans to earn the necessary degrees, there was hardly any indication that they would make any vertical progress in their jobs. Asma hoped that in the future she would return to university to complete a postgraduate degree in primary education. However, she mentioned that the plan was to ‘satisfy’ her rather than to gain any career prospects from it. Asma had little confidence that she would have many prospects when her competitors would be young and fresh teachers. Moreover, working in ‘too ethnic’ schools for a long period of time often makes a candidate unsuitable for schools with good rankings in the league tables, which hence are dominated by ‘white middle-class’ people. As Asma told me towards the end of her interview, talking about the nuances of racism at work in the labour market:

From many job interviews, I have realized that even if I have better education and work experience, I cannot get all the jobs. It is because as soon as they [the employers] see me, they presume that this person will not be suitable to a particular place. This is a hidden thing but we can understand that. That is why I

sometimes say that it is very necessary to adopt their dress-ups and styles, but you cannot change yourself completely. If you have strong belief in your religion and if you think that this is how you want to lead your life, you cannot easily get out of it. At this stage [of life], I have to compensate myself with the thought that one should be happy with whatever one gets. One should not aspire too much to get something. It is a kind of imposed mental satisfaction because there is not much we can do about it.

Perhaps much more subtle and subsumed now than it was two decades ago, yet racial and religious stereotyping still hamper the possibilities of non-white ethnic minority women's career progression in Britain. These issues, once again, are most pronounced in jobs with professional prospects, or in professions where the presence of ethnic minority women - in particular Muslim women - are still scanty. These issues were surfaced in Aston, Hooker, Page and Willison's (2007) qualitative study on Bangladeshi and Pakistani women's employment that included both older and recently migrated women as well as the second generations. A few of their highly-educated first and second generation British-Asian respondents expressed that they never applied to jobs where they could assume they would never be successful. While a number of second-generation participants working at various corporate environments expressed the ways in which they found themselves alienated because of their cultural and religious backgrounds. Interestingly also some of these British-born Bangladeshi and Pakistani women emphasized the issue of cultural capital in the labour market, although these authors did not interpret such narratives within the economic/cultural capital framework. A Bangladeshi young woman in her 20s pointed out that a white young woman of her age would always be more attractive and fitting in the corporate-organizational environment because she might have the 'extra edges' that many Bangladeshi women - even if when born and brought up in Britain - would not have because of their strict family upbringing. All of my participants - regardless of their job positions - expressed similar issues through which their employment in Britain progressed through different kinds of compromises than they had in Bangladesh.

Part-Time and Flexible Wage Earners

Of the twenty-eight women in my research, nine were wage earners, working either part-time, or in flexible shifts in a wide range of non-standard occupations. In advanced industrial economies, occupational flexibility is associated with both the flatness of occupational

hierarchies, and relatedly, a less hierarchical and more interactive participatory culture in the workplace. Both of these were a new normal, and were new values for my participants, as might be the case for anyone moving from non-western to western parts of the world. Given that all of my participants had higher education qualifications, in my research this particular subgroup represents what is widely known as the ‘mismatch between education and employment’ and its inevitable outcome: professional ‘deskilling’. In their work on over-education among ethnic minorities, Batto and Sloane (2004) established that although Muslim communities (such as those of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis) were relatively less educated than other ethnic communities (such as Indians and African-Asian groups), newly arrived educated adults from these countries suffered from particularly high levels of devaluation of their human capital. As these authors took their data from the Fourth National Survey on Ethnic Minorities in 1993/94 (see also Chapter 1), their work could only establish a trend, which over subsequent years, with the influx of educated immigrants from these countries, would turn into a norm for new immigrants.

The increase of educated and skilled migrants in all advanced countries has exposed the gap between human movement and capital movement – the two are not equal or synonymous. Nonetheless, deskilling and capital devaluation are frequently presented as the inevitable outcome for all to a similar extent. I would argue that the outcome of this movement is much more variegated and less evenly distributed than these issues are generally assumed. The mismatch between qualifications and employment operates along a spectrum, where some qualifications are more devalued than others. The most substantial differences between women working in ‘non-standard’ routinized skilled and ‘highly skilled’ jobs were related to their disciplines in higher education. The women in highly skilled jobs had science and technological backgrounds; in contrast, the women in basic level jobs studied humanities, social sciences or particular science subjects with little transferable value. In most cases, their degrees lost their legitimacy through migration: there was little hope that reinvestment would generate an equal or better return. Both as cause and consequence of this lack of recognition, for ranges of personal, familial, circumstantial and structural reasons, a substantial number of educated women took up basic wage-earning jobs as their temporary or permanent economic activity after migration.

In the labour market and migration studies, there is a tendency to emphasize that only foreign degrees earned in countries *dissimilar* to advanced countries face devaluation through migration. This type of conclusion hints, perhaps unintentionally, that educational investment in the host country, even in adult life, could be a possible solution. In practice, however, investment in education alone cannot retrieve this lost value, because of the

relatively loose relationship between education and employment in advanced countries. In other words, career or job success in the deregulated economy depends on one's stock of cultural capital, which is ingrained in culture, class and social customs. My research includes women who did their first degrees in Britain, and women with degrees from British-accredited institutions in Bangladesh. Their job status in the UK did not bear out the promise that a British academic qualification could hold enough capital for an adult immigrant to be successful in the labour market. Simul, who got her degree in accountancy from a college in London, worked as a part-time customer service operator in a pharmaceutical superstore. Zui, who had a BBA degree from a British-accredited private institution in Bangladesh, and whose academic degree had given her a professional job in a private bank there, had worked in a similar position in another superstore ever since she arrived in the UK in 2006. These examples highlight another education and employment 'mismatch', seen when migration for higher education and then settlement in that country is suggested as a key way to have a 'better life'.

Simul and Zui's job statuses further highlight the occupational concentration of educated immigrants. The increase in women's participation in rich countries' labour markets from the 1960s onwards gave birth to the term 'pink ghetto' (Inkson 2004: 100) to define women's concentration in basic jobs in customer and care services. This particular history overlaps with the history of less-skilled immigrants' working patterns in the post-World War II western conditions. I mentioned in Chapter 1 that when Bangladeshi women entered the UK in the 1980s, the country's economy experienced a feminization of the labour market with the expansion of the 'care services'. However, Sylheti Bangladeshi women, with little education or English, could not take the advantage of this change. Almost two decades later, educated women from Bangladesh arrived in the UK, becoming visible in the occupations that gave British white women the so-called 'choice' of having the best of both worlds, and Black Caribbean women the chance to be employed full-time (for details see Lindley, Dale and Rex 2004; Bradley and Healy 2008). My participants' job patterns had more similarities with white British women, than with those of African and Caribbean origins. All worked part-time, with jobs depending on their visa entitlements concerning work in the UK. Their occupations varied, as shown in Table 13, below (p. 156):

Table 13: Participants in ‘Non-Standard’ Jobs.

Occupation	Job Title	Number of Interviewees
Retail	Part-Time Sales Assistant	3
Retail	Fixed-Time Store Administrative Staff	1
Fast Food Chain Restaurant	Sales Assistant	1
NHS	Receptionist (Part-time)	1
School	Part-Time Learning-Support Assistant	1
University	Support Team Member	2
Total		9

Each of my participants told me in detail about the individual, familial and structural conditions within which they started work, and how over time they had to get used to the idea that they had made the best decision according to their culture, capital, and position as foreign-born recent immigrants. All had to rely on their local job market for paid work. The strength of the local job markets varied widely, in particular between large cities and towns with limited opportunities (Buckner and Yeandale 2007). Zui, living in Hull for example, told me that if she lived in a place such as London or Manchester, she might have a slightly broader range of opportunities than in Hull. Mim, who stopped working after having a second child, found an administrative job in Leeds, where they settled after migration. When her husband got a job in Hull, the family moved there, and Mim could not find a similar job to the one she had had in Leeds. This lack of choice reinforced her decision to be a full-time mother. Zui’s observation about the context of the labour market had relevance for my participants living and working in big cities. Big cities offer a number of facilities, including wider opportunities and better ethnic networks. Bokul, working in a fast food outlet in London, and Sita and Ratna, who worked as support staff at a university in Leeds, told me that they first heard about the job vacancies ‘from another Bangladeshi they knew’. Small towns, or ethnically less-concentrated cities, often lack this ‘word of mouth’ network. As a consequence, while all of the women worked in places below what would be expected from their educational qualifications, the local job market structure further decided the degree of devaluation of their capital. My findings show that women living in small towns had bigger gaps between their education and their employment than those living in big cities. In terms of education and then employment status, women like Zui and Mim on the one hand, and Bokul, Sita and Ratna on the other, would have been quite dissimilar in Bangladesh, given

that the first two women were highly qualified and in professional jobs, whilst the others had basic degrees and were homemakers.

Gender was a fundamental factor in their employment statuses. Part-time options were preferred to full-time shifts to organize employment around the family. Mothers with very young children or children in primary schools did not see full-time wage-earning jobs as a rational choice because it meant, as Mim noted, 'earning money with one hand and giving it away' with the other for childcare. Part-time jobs, i.e. women's involvement in a family income were symbolic of the husband's earning capacity as well as the couple's 'liberal' and modern attitude towards women's lives and lifestyles. In Britain, this 'combination' of family income model was typical to the post-War period and until the 1970s. In these decades, women entered paid work in much greater numbers than before, however, the 'male breadwinner' model did not undergo a similarly massive transformation. Jane Lewis (2001), writing about the historical erosion of the male breadwinner model in Britain and the Netherlands, points out that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, this traditional 'breadwinner' model shifted to an 'adult worker' model in which both men and women had wider lifestyle options than being married and having a 'nuclear family'. In more recent decades with alternative varieties available to organize paid work around families such as 'working from home', flexible or reduced hours, there is a growing tendency amongst women, in particular mothers, to accept this traditional pattern of women's paid work (Lewis 1997; Dex and Smith 2002).

Therefore, though the erosion of the male breadwinner model and the increase in women's economic participation went hand-in-hand in Britain, it did not necessarily change the centrality of women working part-time or at the lower rungs of their professions. In particular, my participants who worked part-time in occupations such as retail had little chance to see women working full-time, or move to the top levels of company hierarchies. A number of my participants told me that before they came to Britain, they thought *all* western women tended to be careerist, preferring to live a life with few family obligations. Years of work experience and socialization with colleagues shattered that cultural myth, and gave them a stronger indication that many white women were actually 'like them', preferring to take paid work as a part of life, rather than as life itself. The lack of examples of women in general, and non-white immigrant women in particular, moving up vertically combined with a lack of opportunities to move up themselves. Zui explained that the professional ladder in her superstore was constructed in a way that, in the retail world, is commonly known as 'from shop floor to top floor'. This means that one needs to work in a department for a considerable time and has to move horizontally through several departments before one can even hope to move up vertically. She mentioned that her store manager was perhaps much

less educated than she was, but he had moved up because he had moved between departments first. Often, the workload was disproportionate to the wage, which blocked the motivation to move up. Lily had been working in her superstore for almost a decade, and several times the company asked her to move to a supervisor position in her department. Lily did work as a supervisor for a few weeks, but decided to step down because to her the workload seemed to be 'never-ending', though in terms of wages it was not radically higher than what she got before. The idea that advances in a job often mean being involved in multidimensional responsibilities, within and beyond the apparent job description, worked as a foil to career aspirations for all of my participants. However, the kind of 'imposed mental satisfaction' that Asma mentioned (noted earlier) was an integral part of these women's narratives, as was a keen awareness that their education was completely devalued in the British labour market.

Christina Hughes (2002) analyses the blurry relationship between discourses on market and motherhood in the late-capitalist, neoliberal economy in Britain. A good mother is one who retains her sense of social identity, does something to earn money, but does not get involved with something too costly to her 'motherhood' identity. I will address my participants' 'mother' identities separately in Chapter 5. Hughes argues that in this intertwined discourse, 'part-time employment has all the appearance of rational compromise', because:

It enables the mother to negotiate a variety of discursive positions at less personal cost than otherwise might be the case. In return for a devalued occupational position of a part-time, temporary or casual worker, the mother retains some financial independence and also experiences less guilt and anxiety at leaving her children for extended periods. She also experiences less social approval (2002: 64).

My participants who worked part-time in non-professional sectors described their status as 'paid worker' as being intrinsic to their identities as educated modern women. They asserted this just as emphatically as those in careers. Rupu, a learning assistant working flexible hours, told me that her 'love' for her job was perhaps deeper than her engineer husband's commitment to his well-paid professional job. None of the women, regardless of their age, employment status or occupation, wanted to see themselves as fully dependent homemakers, whether they had previously been such or not. Relatively younger women, currently without children or expecting to be mothers, showed a clear understanding that having a baby would make their paid work status more conflicted. Their husbands were employed. Being a much

lower-paid second earner meant there was always the threat of giving up one's job to look after the child, as Rupa, my first interviewee, had to do once she became a mother. Going back to work after her maternity leave, which was longer than expected, created its own penalty: Simul could never get a second office job once she left the first. She looked after her daughter until she went to pre-school, and had then wanted to return fully to the labour market. But this did not happen. However, both women had a strong sense of being contemporary women of the modern world, who, in spite of constraints, got a taste for both worlds.

Economically Non-Active Women

Education and educated women have a specific place in Hakim's theory (see 2002: 159-161). In line with her theoretical framework of 'preference', she argues that even highly educated women can be economically inactive, in particular when a woman's 'not working' is a strong symbol of a richness of cultural, social, intellectual, and of course, financial capital. In Britain, Bangladeshi women's worklessness has always been attributed to two factors: a lack of education and a difference in culture. There are a number of studies that point to how certain structural issues such as the lack of universal free childcare (Blackwell 2001; Lindley, Dale and Rex 2004; Houston and Marks 2005; Sigala 2005; Dale 2005). This emphasis on 'work' gives rise to a presumption that women, particularly ethnic minority women, do not work, either because they do not have the relevant education or because they are not allowed to. Whilst these arguments might be valid for 1980s Sylheti women, there is little truth in such claims for new groups, such as my participants. The eight women I discuss in this economically non-active category were highly educated, and had a range of reasons for being economically inactive. For example, although formerly an academic in Bangladesh, Zami's scholarship barred her from undertaking any paid work. When I interviewed Zami, her scholarship had finished and she was continuing her PhD as her husband's, a highly skilled professional, dependent. The wife of a financial analyst, and a new mother, she had never worked in England. The family had planned to migrate to Canada, where her husband had better prospects. Zami was confident that her degrees and previous work experience in Bangladesh would enable her to find work commensurate with her intellectual abilities.

Zami's example illustrates two main reasons that highly educated immigrant women can be out of the labour market, either temporarily or permanently. The first is associated with the protection of capital value, and the second with a lack of structural support. Bourdieu argues

that social beings, depending on their positions and the exchange rate of their capital, may use strategies to 'conserve' rather than 'increase' it (in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 99). All of my participants in this category used 'not working' as a strategy either to protect the actual and local value of their academic and cultural capital, or to invest in themselves in order to be fully prepared for future professional competition. The families were not in dire financial need, nor did the women have to support their parents or siblings in Bangladesh or elsewhere. The women had high social status within their communities due to their husband's job and social position. The husbands' employments included being academics at universities, holding high positions in corporate finance and accounting, professional engineering, and self-employed business entrepreneurship. In their interviews, everyone told me that their 'earning money' would have been in addition to the family income, but not a necessity even for comfort, as almost all of them owned houses in the UK and had the capacity to fulfil desires such as going on holidays or visiting Bangladesh.

By their standards, working in 'non-standard' sectors that were neither economically rewarding nor bearing any kind of social recognition, was an affront to what they regarded as valuable: their education, their background and their relatively high status within their ethnic community. Maya, who had always invested in herself through education, told me in the interview that 'people, for example students, work in the superstores for money only. I never had that kind of need, so why should I work there?' She told me that many local Bangladeshis knew that her husband was an academic at a British university; she could not just work anywhere, or with 'all sorts' of people. Maya's husband advised her to concentrate on her higher education while he continued as the sole earner. Similarly, Shomi, the wife of another academic, did not even try to find any kind of paid work after coming to the UK. A woman with a high level of awareness of her own cultural capital, Shomi told me that she could spend hours reading books, and that was what she enjoyed most about her life in the UK: having the leisure and the luxury to cultivate one's long-standing hobby or passion. Shomi described her particular hobby as being something not at all related to the economy, which in Bourdieu's language is the 'disinterested' interest, the kind of cultural cultivation that symbolizes a family's tradition and its transmission across the generations.

These women, like others, had a certain awareness and knowledge of the British labour market. Their social lives were intertwined with those of Bangladeshi women working at various levels. However, they resisted being part of what has become the 'norm' for the western world. Rather, in order to validate their capital, they 'chose' to be part of the alternative. There was an indication that highly-educated women rich in cultural and social capital might focus on to involve themselves in certain non-traditional professions based on

the digital technology. Alia, for example, left her job as a schoolteacher at a private school for Muslim girls in Britain after she was married. A mother of three toddlers, when I interviewed Alia, she told me that she had little inclination to return to similar kind of job when her children would go to school. Though she had a plan to return to university to earn more degrees to be an academic in Britain, which was her ultimate aim, she also mentioned that there might be a possibility that she would build her profession on what she started as a hobby. An editor of an on-line magazine on Muslim ways of parenting, Alia told me why she was interested in this:

My priorities changed a bit because when I was pregnant I used to read many magazines on parenting. Then I realized that there were so many Muslims in this country but there is a lack of magazines about parenting for Muslims. All the practical things I got from the magazines were brilliant and I really liked them. But I just felt that these magazines did not fulfil my spiritual demands as a Muslim. I mean the things that we are supposed to know as Muslims. What are we supposed to do when the baby is born or when a woman is pregnant. Given that, Muslims do not read that much we are not academic people, is not it? That was why I thought of magazine but magazine publication costs quite a lot of money. So what we started – me and my husband – both are involved in it and we have some common friends. We started an online magazine. We started this magazine two years ago and at the moment, Alhamdulillah, our viewers are truly international – mostly from Australia, America and South Africa. I am the editor of the magazine so most of the jobs are actually mine and I have to do it. I mean getting people to write and getting online, it is quite a lot of work. But since I am doing it from home, it is not that difficult. And at the moment I am thinking that when they [children] will be independent and when they will go to school, I will get more time to do my stuff. To be honest with you I have people who want the magazine to be bigger but I just do not want it bigger right now. I will not be able to deal with it and now my priority is my children.

Throughout her interview, Alia made comparisons between Bangladesh and Britain, and mentioned how being in Britain gave her opportunities to do things differently that might not be possible for her or for many women in Bangladesh. However, though migration to an advanced country can itself bring some new opportunities, what appeared to be the key capitals for women like Alia to opt for an atypical profession as a Muslim, immigrant woman was her family background, her transnational upbringing, education as well as strong transnational social and cultural capitals. These issues suggest that transnational migration

and the opportunities are largely based on people's backgrounds and their wider socio-cultural and economic positions in the host country.

Like my other participants and as found in other studies related to Bangladeshi women's employment in Britain, the economically inactive respondents associated women's employment with their better standing within and beyond families. A few made direct contrast between women's conditions in Bangladesh and Britain. All pointed out that in a welfare state it is possible for a woman to survive without direct independent income, provided that she is a citizen of that country. By contrast in countries like Bangladesh where people's income and expenditure are widely mismatched and the state does not take responsibility of anybody, there women must have some income of their own. Putul, for instance, mentioned 'child benefit' her daughter (a British citizen) was entitled to and as mother, she could have that money. Alia, a mother of three British national children, told me that she always had some 'pocket money' of her own. Some part of it came from her children's money and the other part came from the way that she and her husband negotiated their family budget. Alia and Maya both stressed that they maintained their family lives according to the rules of Islam, where it is mandatory that a husband (a bread earner) should give his wife a monthly allowance for looking after his family. Both earned money from their husbands.

Shomi, on the other hand, thought that women's differing positions in these two countries had an impact on how she viewed the whole issue of women's employment in general. For her, in Bangladesh women should have employment because otherwise it is very difficult for them to gain acceptance and meaningful respect in both family and society. By contrast, advanced societies are apparently less patriarchal, therefore the reasons she mentioned for women's jobs would be somewhat different. As she said:

Shomi: [...] if someone works, yes when a woman has a job she has a relatively stronger position in her family. She can express her views strongly. I do not feel it here [in Britain] that much but in Bangladesh it is very important that a woman has a job to have respect in the family. Yes in order to have a strong position in the family a woman needs to have a job there.

Rifat: Why are you saying that it is more important in Bangladesh?

Shomi: It is because I think men are more dominating there. The kind of culture we have there, we have to be part of the in-law's family when you are married.

If you are educated and if you are working then other members value your opinions. It is hardly the case that they can brush you away when you are educated. If you do not have education or if you are not working then ultimately you are dependent on your husband so it is not the case that your opinion is heard or valued there. But when you are independent and you have a say on important matters then they cannot easily ignore it.

I mentioned in Chapter 1 that negotiating their gender roles within the family as well as in the community was one of the strongest reasons reported by many British-Bangladeshi women for having or intending to have jobs. Shomi here mentioned the issue of ‘culture’ and extended family patterns that could add extra value to the employment of women in traditional cultures. Unlike Shomi, Rupa reflected that a Bangladeshi woman regardless of where she lived should have a job. Without a job, a woman was always either a ‘daughter’ depending on a father or a ‘wife’ depending on her husband. In her view both were less helpful when women actually needed help. These differences of opinions suggest that all of my participants had some similar as well as dissimilar views on women’s paid job, partly based on individual experiences and partly within the context of migration.

Rupa fell into the common group in Britain where being a mother has obvious job penalties. This is associated with the by now age-old problem of childcare. In the UK, external private child-care is mainly adopted by couples in full-time professions, who are ‘at the top of the household income distribution’ (Houston and Marks 2005; Kanji 2010: 2). A similar trend emerged in my research. The women in professional jobs had alternative options for childcare once they returned to work after their maternity leave (also in Houston and Marks 2005). This was not an option for all. Given that the majority of immigrant women found themselves working in part-time and basic jobs, it was more likely than otherwise that once mothers, they would sacrifice their ‘little’ job. This is one of the central ironies of gender and migration. Transnational migration was a massive cultural transition for my participants. The gender norm was relatively relaxed; often housework was shared and, most importantly, the range of possibilities was wider than in Bangladesh. However, these factors did not give my participants a remarkable amount of economic autonomy and independence. Many educated women had to move back to the traditional ‘grateful slave’ role (Hakim 1991) because of the lack of both opportunities in the labour market, and the support framework needed to manage both parts of their life.

Skeggs (2013), when talking about the significance of Bourdieu's theory to generate a different viewpoint of the social world we live in, argues that cultural capital is vital not only because it is an overarching and all inclusive capital, but also because it is central to legitimate one's other types of capital in the economy. Cultural capital and symbolic capital can provide recognition for one's academic capital, and both are vital to make the transition from education to employment. Many of my participants' academic qualifications suffered because of absence of cultural capital to back them up. Therefore, although all the mothers I interviewed desired to start or re-start their work in primary schools to balance their jobs with their children's needs, this plan was hedged with uncertainties. Ana, for instance, told me that she knew a few Bangladeshi women working as assistants in the local schools, but also noted that she was still not confident that she could bridge the gap between the 'Bangladeshi style' and the 'British style' of dealing with pupils in the classroom. Ana, like other women willing to work in schools, had academic qualifications much higher than required for positions such as a learning assistant. However, the gap was one of 'culture' and 'cultural capital'. Mim, the mother of two children, began familiarizing herself with the specific cultural capital necessary to get this kind of job a year before her second son started at his primary school. She did some voluntary work in the local school, maintained strong connections there so that she would not 'miss out' on any vacancy information, and developed good relationships with her first son's class teachers. If everything worked according to her plan, she would first work in the local school, and then would do some professional vocational training in a local college to solidify her career as a learning assistant. Her strategies show how she tried to make her own niche, to get the best value for what she had, and to accrue cultural capital for her children in Britain. These women could at best move towards the edge of the category of 'adaptive earner' if they could get into their preferred jobs. However, it was more likely that they would be concentrated in already feminized and ethicized occupations (i.e. schools).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analysed the economic mobility of my participants' academic qualifications. The comparison between my participants' employment in Bangladesh and in Britain highlighted the contextual differences of these two countries' labour markets. In Bangladesh, education and employment still have a linear relationship. Therefore, my participants, by virtue of their academic qualifications, could get professional jobs. 'Constant struggle' is an appropriate title for women's paid work in Bangladesh, because of the acute lack of supporting structures and systems within a highly gender-differentiated socio-cultural

order. Through the example of my participants' paid work after migration, I presented a critique of Catherine Hakim's 'choice and preference' theory, arguing that 'choice' is not only contingent and constrained, but is also often strategic. My central focus was on analysing the nuances of capital movement within skilled migration patterns. The growth of skilled migration has resulted in an increased focus on skilled immigrants' labour market participation, with critical attention being paid to the gender dimension. I moved beyond the overarching ideas of 'successful capital mobility' and 'deskilling' to argue that not all capital is equally valued, nor is it all equally *devalued*. There are ranges of contributory factors in advanced economies that make some types of capital more effective than others, while all foreign capital lacks the support of the host country's cultural capital.

Using three categories; 'full-time professionals', 'flexible and part-time workers' and 'economically non-active' women, I analysed my participants' job statuses in a diverse range of 'highly skilled' and routinized skilled jobs. I argued that in an advanced economy, recognition and acceptance of certain educational qualifications makes some immigrants more 'skilled' than others. The more a person's education is based on science and technology, the higher its value in the contemporary 'knowledge economy'. My participants, as adaptive earners, organized their paid work according to family demands, regardless of their professions. Not receiving proper recognition for their education had a significant impact on their aspirations regarding paid work, and as I argued, highly educated women's economic inactivity can be seen as a strategy to protect their academic as well as social value, and project their status distinction. The tendency to get 'symbolic' recognition for one's education made working in schools particularly popular amongst immigrant women trying to find their own niche within the spectrum of what it means to be a modern woman. This profession was, at the same time, crucial in working towards achieving the ultimate distinction of being an educated woman with enough cultural capital to be a '*good mother*' even when the context was diasporic. This last point is the central topic of the next and final analysis chapter.

Chapter Five: Social Skills, 'Mother Work' and Children's Cultural Capital

In this chapter, I analyse the social use to which my participants put their education. I examine the centrality of education in their social connections, and the ways in which these connections are useful for their 'mother work'. I use the term 'mother work' to address the systematic labour that these immigrant mothers invest in their children's formal education in Britain. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital (discussed below) and its convertibility to other forms of capital such as economic and/or cultural capital, I see my participants' social connections as carefully maintained social capital, based on similarities of interest. My analysis fleshes out the filtering processes through which some social connections gain durability and work as capital in the diaspora.

I begin my analysis by discussing my participants' social circles in Bangladesh, which form part of their middle-class identities. In the second section, I address the social cost of migration, analysing my participants' struggle for social distinction. In the third section, I elaborate my participants' social world once they had moved to Britain. Finally, I examine the strategic use of these social connections as social capital for my participants' involvement with their children's school education which I see as an investment towards the future.

Women's Social Circles in Urban Bangladesh

The urban context and a culture emphasizing collectivity shaped my participants' social connections in Bangladesh. Traditional family values and the priority of kinship were the key social rules. In the interviews, all of my participants recollected their extended family relationships. There were ancestral ties in the villages, where grandparents and relatives were met on occasion. These ties were partly superseded by the continuous expansion of urban ties, the social world here being relatively individualistic in comparison with the rural one. There were also 'elite' relatives already settled in advanced countries. Many of my participants told me that their childhood fantasies of countries such as the US and Britain were shaped by the stories they heard from these relatives.

Social connections, even when based on blood relations, are hierarchical. Bourdieu (1986) identifies these hierarchies as founded on the possession of capital. Families traditionally rich in cultural capital, or individuals accumulating substantial wealth, may develop and maintain socially influential networks, the dividends of being privileged. Even when social

relationships are pre-given, as with family ties, there can be degrees of preference. A keen sense of this distinction surfaced in the interviews when some of my participants emphasized their extended family's middle-class past, as Hasna did:

Actually, my parents were cousins, and we have family relations in both this part [Bangladesh] and that part [India] of Bengal. My maternal grandfather was a lawyer and my aunts were married to some well-established people in Bangladesh. For example, my eldest aunt's husband was the chief justice [of the Bangladeshi Government]. Another of my aunts' husbands was a principal secretary. So, I would say that our family was very much involved in education. There was a tradition of women in education. And whatever the reason, whether it was because of their husbands or anything else, I would say that my mother and my aunts were a bit different. I would not say that none of them was a housewife or anything like that, but still they were a bit different. Even at that time, some of my aunts had PhDs. I would say that, at that time, my mothers were a bit ahead of their time.

The ways in which Hasna brought references to her 'extensive family relations' – in particular that of the female members – to talk about herself might not be readily translated in western context. By contrast, though emphasis on family relationship is a usual way of constituting the discursive self for people with non-western backgrounds, the extent of these references can be decided by people's immediate and shifted experiences. Many of my participants at various stages of their narratives (often without any apparent connections) mentioned about their family status, their familial connections with well-known people in Bangladesh. This was a key narrative technique through which these women reconstituted what they 'originally' were, what was lost in migration, and how they demanded to be represented in text. Their childhood memories – memories of social reciprocity and boundaries – highlight how contradictory principles of social lives can play out at a context where relationship based on kinship is taken-for-granted.

Preferences and boundaries were strongest concerning neighbours. As girls of modest and respected families, the women grew up in a culture where family adults decided children's social interactions. This was as much the case for the participants who lived a typical urbanized life in Dhaka as it was for those outside of that city. Families had a range of boundaries based on the principle of children growing up in 'good' and secure company. Maya, who spent her life in Dhaka, was not allowed to mix with the neighbours' children.

Instead, family relatives, living in the same apartment building as a 'big family', encompassed her childhood social world. Bruggeman (2008) argues that societies with strong rules of judgement usually differentiate social groups and individuals keenly. In resource poor and collectivist societies where people live overtly interdependent lives and expectations of people (be they relatives or neighbours) are high, keen judgements are a strong part of the culture.

Many of my participants, even years later, recollected how they (and their families) judged neighbours who were part of their everyday lives. In small towns where family honour was ingrained in the day-to-day culture, some families deliberately excluded themselves from the local majority. Exclusion rather than inclusion was a symbol of prestige, social honour and status. 'Role-model' families, in particular traditionally respected ones, had to be extra-cautious about their social boundaries. Any overstepping of these ran the risk of defiling the family name. Rupu told me of how her father's judgements created boundaries against any unwanted social contact:

My father never wanted us to mix with the local people. He thought that if we mixed indiscriminately we would adopt their bad habits and their ways of living. We only used to associate with some particular neighbours. Apart from them, we never mixed with other local people.

Internal migration often reinforced the boundaries between the local and the newcomers. In the 1980s, Saba, the daughter of a man in government service, grew up in several different towns. Saba's mother, a highly educated woman, had little similarity with other women in the community. Although geographically Saba was in a less urban part of the country, her mother never let her be one of the 'locals'. Rather, Saba was socialized like her cousins in Dhaka. This example demonstrates how mothers took responsibility for maintaining their family's social class. Most of my participants described their social world in terms of their education and cultural capital rather than, for example, wealth or economic capital. Their social connections, whether given or chosen, were mostly with people of similar middle-class backgrounds.

Academic institutions such as schools, colleges, and later on universities, widened my participants' scope for making social connections. Friendships, particularly at school, largely followed their families' social rules. This was partly because school as a social body was itself classified according to social groups. The widest of social connections was possible in

the elite boarding school, due to its national intake. Lipi told me how her schooling enabled her to be comfortable with girls coming from various parts of the country. She linked these early experiences to her post-migratory settlement when she moved into a completely different country:

We really had girls from all over the country. It was from not only Dhaka or Mymensingh, but also girls came from places like Chapainawabgonj, Comillia, Chandpur, Chittagong or Barisal. There was one thing there – we knew that the girls were coming from different parts of the country. But that was not how we wanted to know them, I mean I still do not know by heart about my class friends' original hometowns. We regarded everybody as part of the family and Cadet College was like our home. That was our most important identity. Now I feel it even more; because here [in the UK] when you meet anyone from Bangladesh, you get to know straightaway from which part of Bangladesh he or she came. For example, a while ago, I met someone from Comilla and recently I came across a woman from Chittagong. But when we were at Cadet College, we did not think who came from where. Even now, if we meet someone from Cadet College, she is known to us as an ex-Cadet, and it is her most important identity to us. I am very much in touch with most of my year mates and some of my seniors and juniors from Cadet College.

Lipi's statement indicates a transition from the acknowledgment of people's differences to the comfort of similarity. In retrospect, Lipi recollected how the boarding school enabled girls like her to break socio-geographical boundaries. Over the years, these students were most comfortable with their mutual similarities organized around their academic institution. This durability of relationships gave Lipi a sense of pride and a very strong sense of belonging when many new relationships lacked such depth. This is a classic example of what Bourdieu (1986: 248) calls the 'institutionally guaranteed right' to we-ness, a single sense of 'groupness' built over time, with passion and care, through education.

Being in education gave my participants a real chance of developing their own social connections, friendships, and some life-long relationships. This attention to women's own social connections, often used as capital, is extremely important from the theoretical intersectionality of gender and social capital. Western social capital theory is largely male-centric, mainly advocated by men. In these theories, women have specific, peripheral and at best executive roles serving the interests of others. Bourdieu (1986: 248), for example, sees

women as 'objects' (like gifts and words) exchanged between social groups, often in the form of marriage. In a similar manner, but in a different frame, social-capital-as-social-good theorists such as James Coleman (1988) and Robert Putnam (2000) see women as either 'good' or 'bad' mothers responsible (or not) for maintaining the soundness of the community, society, and in a larger context, the state.²⁶ Women's social capital is a much-discussed topic in contemporary decades. In western context, especially in Britain women with diverse backgrounds and their increased individual shares of networks and the political discourses of social cohesion at community levels both has contributed to develop a distinct body of knowledge around gender and social capital (see for example, Franklin 2005; Hudson, Phillips, Ray and Barnes 2007). Even in developing countries, women's traditional community or other networks are seen from the perspective of women's empowerment, economic gain and long-term development (see Molyneux 2005). Despite this growth in interest, single women's social connections are less extensively discussed. Perhaps it is the case that in most cultures, to varying degrees, single women's social connections, friendships and relationships are considered an adolescent matter, to be given up when life becomes 'serious'. This notion is extremely limited even for societies where women's lives are ruled by rigid gender norms. Lipi's comment already indicated the durability of women's friendships when developed at a tender age. I will conclude my analysis with some more examples that help to understand women's heterogeneous positions within various kinds of social connections in a gender conservative society.

Women's own social circles such as that of friendships can be useful in wide ranges of ways and is not always restricted to the ideas of 'capital' or 'social agency' straight forwardly. A few of my participants' experiences of marriage (or post-marriage) can exemplify these points. Social networks play a crucial role in arranging a marriage in a collective society. My participants were no different in this regard. In my research, Sita was the only woman whose marriage was directly organized through her own social network: by her best friend. Both lived in a semi-urban town far from Dhaka, and their social network was local. Sita's friend was married to an engineer from a different village. She found her husband through this friend when a friend of her husband's, another engineer, was looking for an educated young woman to marry. Sita categorically had a 'better marriage' than her elder sisters, who were

²⁶Lorraine Blaxter and Christina Hughes (2000) draw attention to an absence of wider power relations in the functionalist social capital theories provided by both Coleman and Putnam. The authors, presenting a feminist critique of the dominant social-capital-as-social-good theories, highlight the linguistic overlap between these and some key feminist theories about notions of social improvements. I agree with these authors that feminists need to be cautious in using existing social capital theories that give women sole responsibility for the traditional meaning of the social good, where a middle-class woman is better than a working-class one in her capacity to be economically inactive and be a family woman.

married locally either to businessmen or men from the village's landowning class. In this way, Sita, through her own social capital, became part of a stronger social order than she had previously belonged to. Shobha, another participant, had a different experience of her own networks to share. She had little agency in her abusive in-laws' house. Her mobility was heavily restricted, and after marriage she had little connection with the outside world. Despite this, Shobha took the preliminary examination of the Bangladesh Civil Service. When she did not however receive a letter telling her the outcome of that examination, she assumed that she had been unsuccessful. Months later, Shobha's friend from college contacted her after spotting her absence from the written examination. Shobha came to know that she had been successful in the preliminary examination, as her friend had seen her candidate number on the merit list. Upon enquiry, and against severe resistance, Shobha discovered the existence of the letter that she should have received months previously. The letter had been handed to her father-in-law, who, along with her mother-in-law, hid it from her. Though Shobha could still not break the boundaries she was subject to, this particular incident made her aware of the extent of her in-laws' vindictiveness towards her as an educated daughter-in-law.

Lily, on the other hand, exemplified the complexity between women's constrained and strategic positions in wider social networks. Her marriage to the man of her choice did not reflect her natal family's high social status: Lily had to bear the punishment. She and her husband experienced what John Field (2003) calls the 'dark side' of social capital. Her father, a powerful man, utilized his social capital to produce an indirect but strong barrier to their advancement. Lily described the way that her father worked as an absent/present factor in the couple's life when both were struggling to get jobs in Bangladesh:

He [Lily's husband] came here [the UK] first, and he finished his MBA. Our plan was that we would go back to Bangladesh after his studies. We thought he might get a better job there. But you know in Bangladesh the possibility of getting a good job also depends on whether you know anybody who works in a high position or what kind of family connections you have. In this situation, again, I did not get any support from my father. At that time, there were some new private universities like Queens and some others. He [her husband] had a couple of interviews and in a few cases, my father was one of the members of the governing body. My father said that he could recommend my husband only if my husband asked him personally. There was always this conflict between my father and my husband. My father gave me some conditions, and I knew

that my husband would never compromise. Many of our family members were in high positions ... but whatever they were, we did not get any kind of support from anywhere. More than this, we found that nobody was ready to accept us.

In this hostile situation, Lily and her husband, despite having a good education and hence supposedly job prospects in Bangladesh, left the country. She told me that migration for them was a strategic decision to get away from this hostility and to try their luck on their own accord. Her example of migration as a way to survive, not entirely uncommon in my research, suggests that women can exercise some agency even when the situation seems oppressive and without any 'choice'. Though women's marginal positions in closed-social contexts fuels ongoing feminist debates on gender and social capital regarding the conditions under which women's social belonging can be called their social capital: whether it is when they belong to social groups of high value, or when they can actually operationalize any connections themselves (Gidengil and O'Neil 2006). In her qualitative study of a group of British women's social capital and political activities, Lowndes indicates that women's social capital 'remains within the community sphere, rather than spilling over into the political domain' (2006: 226). This suggests that women may have various kinds of social networks, but such networks are only 'capital' when women are in a position to use them. These examples suggest that there needs to be deeper and more nuanced theoretical understanding of women's social connections and how these relations affect women's usual life-courses.

My participants' transnational identity was itself an important enhancer of their own and their families' social networks within and beyond Bangladesh. Families, once close-knit and mono-cultural, are now dispersed across the globe. Often, daughters move out of the country while sons stay behind or return to Bangladesh to look after their parents. Increasingly, women are becoming a part of wider social networks in their own right, not only as 'objects' of exchange. Rubi's description of her own trans/natal family is one that has become common in educated communities in urban Bangladesh in the 21st century:

We are three sisters and a brother. My eldest sister studied management at Dhaka University. Now she lives in Canada, and she works at a bank there. I am second. I studied at the BUET [Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology] and I am working as an engineer here [UK]. My youngest sister studied at Dhaka University. Later she went to America and then she got her degree in computer science. She works there. My brother is the youngest. He

studied sociology in Bangladesh and now he works at Grameen Phone Company [in Bangladesh].

The unprecedented increase of global circulation of human, culture, capital and technology compelled to take a shift away from the normative understanding of ‘family’, relationships, belonging and being. Concepts of transnationalism, transnational movement and identities have already widened their intellectual boundaries to include these various dimensions of ‘family’ that spreads globally and connects technologically (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Goulbourne, Reynolds, Solomos and Zontini 2010; Madianou and Miller 2012). Though my current analysis does not cover the inevitable impact of technology through which my participants maintained and strengthened their virtual social as well as familial networks, however, the changing pattern of family itself strongly indicates the changing nature of relationships. The rest of the chapter will investigate how migration affects a particular group of women’s positions and perspective of sociality within a blurry context of transnational continuation, converge and change.

Migration and the Crisis of Social Distinction

Rubi’s comments are a useful starting point from which to discuss the issue of social distinction in migration. In her text, Rubi mentions that her sisters, all professionally skilled, chose key advanced countries (Canada, the US and Britain) to migrate to. For Bangladeshis, Britain is different from other advanced countries because of its enduring colonial influence on early migrations. Britain, unlike other countries, recruited large numbers of unskilled migrants, including some from particularly rural backgrounds in Bangladesh. Therefore, the British based diaspora is quite atypical compared to many other countries, though there might be degrees of similarity in terms of social judgements and preferences. In Britain, as already mentioned there were a large numbers of Sylhetis. The highly skilled or generally educated population was, in contrast, marginal until the early 2000s. Within the wider Bangladeshi community, this feature triggered a struggle around social distinction that in many ways is a replication of the original: the division between the educated and the uneducated and the power relations based on culture versus wealth.

Around the 1980s, the Bangladeshi community was strongly divided into a few high professionals, the educated, and the majority Sylheti population. Some early research mentions the ways in which this intra-community parallelism was maintained (Alam 1988;

Anjum 1999; Rahman 2008). These studies highlight the centrality of education and social class in establishing distinctions within the community. Intra-community parallelism was not only a way to be grouped with the similar; it was, to an extent, a response to the ascribed associations made by the host country. 'Bangladeshi' is at best an ethno-national term in Britain, most often used as a synonym for 'early Sylheti migrants'. Non-Sylheti migrants are largely not recognised within this category. In the 1980s, many upper-class families who did not fit (or not did not want to fit) into this ascribed category employed differing strategies to maintain their distinctiveness. Anjum writes about her family and their struggles living in East London, where they turned into another 'black working-class' family:

With the process of migration, class takes on a different face. At one level, all black people are viewed as working class regardless of their social origin prior to their migration. However, those who came from a middle-class position have more flexibility and opportunity to achieve more and even to integrate. They might still face racial discrimination but materially they are possibly well off (Anjum 1999: 165).

Early immigrant families' material as well as cultural status often led to an assimilative strategy within the host society. Reflecting on his queer identity in a South Asian Muslim Bengali²⁷ family in the 1970s, Rahman writes about his family's, in particular the female members', 'western' lifestyle. These families maintained closer connections with the white community than with their own, hence maintaining their socio-cultural distinction from the community majority. This kind of strong boundary between Bangladeshi groups was plausible in the early decades when the community as a whole was small in size. From the early 2000s onwards, however, the community has become increasingly diverse. The inevitable intergenerational changes, some of which I discussed in Chapter 1, firmly established the community's diasporic hybrid identity. In addition, Bangladeshis of diverse backgrounds used Britain as their destination through various available routes. The idea of 'elite migrants' was no longer as clear-cut as it was thirty years previously. Rather, many newcomers, whether to accommodate themselves or to make a living, had to rely on members of the older community to establish themselves in the UK. This mutual dependence will continue. As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, many young and well-educated Bangladeshis capitalize on their own community, using it as a base for their profession, either as a teacher, a lawyer, or a language instructor. Such interdependent positions create a struggle for distinction particular to the educated communities of the present. For some of my

²⁷I am using the term Bengali as Rahman (2008) used it in his description of his family's migration to Britain before Bangladesh became an independent country in 1971.

participants, the community's original and present emphasis on Islam as the foundation of its identity has limited importance. It does not represent the secular view of many Bangladeshis (in Bangladesh or abroad), who want to prioritize their *national* identity. In her interview, Zami highlighted this limitation:

Here [in the UK] it is more important whether you are a Muslim or not rather than being a Bengali or a Bangladeshi. On the other hand, we [new immigrants] mainly want to know whether you are a Bengali or not before we want to know about your religion. 97 percent of the Bangladeshi population here is still Sylheti (although they are not a representative sample of Bangladesh) but still they are an enormous majority here.

There is a strong similarity between the views of Zami and those of Lipi referred earlier in the chapter. Both pointed towards the limits of the diasporic community, where women like them are a minority. Both developed their own circles relying on their previous associations. Lipi relied on her old friends from the alma mater and Zami developed acquaintances with other Bangladeshis like her, who are not an 'enormous majority' in the UK, but who represent a modern and changing Bangladesh.

In contrast, some of my participants strongly appreciated the firm establishment of Islam in their community in a western country, as it gave them the opportunity to embrace Islam in a meaningful and life-changing way. My participants, such as Alia in greater London, Nipa in Manchester and Bina in Leicester, gradually integrated with the local Bangladeshi, South Asian and/or Muslim communities to gain spiritual fulfilment. Despite these different views and positions, none of my participants had serious 'social' connections, by which I mean meetings and gatherings for pure entertainment, with members of the older Sylheti communities. The reasons are complex and have roots in their backgrounds and transnational contexts. If my participants came with particular ideas of social connections based on people's social origins and/or achievements, these ideas had reasons to be reinforced in their new surroundings. It took my participants who, like many Bangladeshis, lived in the so-called South Asian or Bangladeshi-concentrated areas little time to understand the general positions communities such as Bangladeshis hold in the wider British context. In 2006, when Mim came to Britain with her husband and son, they first lived in a Bangladeshi-concentrated area in Leeds. Mim, like many others, felt out of place instantly:

The area where I lived in Leeds was very multicultural – there were Sylhetis and other Bangladeshis, and Indians and blacks. You would be counting yourself lucky if you could see a single white there. There were many Bangladeshi grocery stores and you could find everything in walking distance. Although they were Bangladeshis, my background and the kind of life I had in Dhaka was completely different from their background and their lifestyles. Here I think there are very few Bangladeshis who do not communicate in Hindi with Indian and Pakistani people. This is my personal issue, and even when I was in Bangladesh I never watched Hindi movies or Hindi serials. This is just not in me. I neither understood their Sylheti nor Hindi language, so how could I communicate with them? And they spoke English with very strong Yorkshire accents which I did not understand in the beginning. What is the main factor of communication? If I cannot talk with you freely then can I be your friend? No, it is not possible. That was what happened with me. I tried my best, I was very cordial with them and I invited them a lot but they did not come to my house. So I did not have any friends there...it was like that.

Social connections can transform into social capital as a result of the status of the people one knows. Anthias (2007) presenting a critique of the simplistic notion around ethnic ties as social resources argues that the emphasis should be not on ethnic ties, rather the *mobilisability* (793) of such resources for social advantages. She extends Bourdieu's conception of social capital as a non-economic form of capital facilitating longer-term strategies for ethnic minority members while stressing the necessity to develop more nuanced understanding of the ethnic/ social networks trajectory. Anthias' argument is particularly relevant in this discussion of educated Bangladeshis' social lives in Britain. The older generation of Sylhetis did not have a middle-class background in Bangladesh. This original limitation hindered their efforts to imitate the host country's traditional middle-class values. Many second-generation immigrants, though born and bred in Britain, often lived within their communities, had basic access to education, and developed a hybrid identity that could be celebrated as both postmodern and postcolonial, but which had little real value. By value, I refer to what Bourdieu calls 'exchange' value, through which most of our actions and strategies lead to some kind of economic and symbolic gain. I also refer to what Skeggs (1997, 2004a) calls 'use value': taking as a point of departure Bourdieu's sole emphasis on economic gain, she develops 'use value' as a strategy for people living in a marginal position. People living with several layers of social marginality can use their local culture's limited capital in a way that might not have central 'exchange' value (i.e., might or might not be

rooted in economic purpose) but the use of which might itself generate some kind of social validation in the locality. My participants did not want to be part of the already existed Bangladeshi ethnic minority identity in Britain. The previous generations' somewhat socially parallel identity and their second-generation counterparts' hybrid but localized value had little meaning for them. They wanted to develop their own value, both in comparison and in contrast of the host country's standard.

Skeggs argues that 'self-worth' within marginality is strongly associated with the notion of social respect and respectability. Social respect is built on tradition, family background, intergenerational novelty of taste, profession, culture and breeding. Social respect, in other words, comes easily to those who already have it, or who conform to type. Many struggle to attain this social respect, either due to their previous social and material histories (for example, many white people with a working-class background in Britain) or due to their immigrant community's background being little, or only partially known. It is in this gap between what one has and what one wants to achieve, that the idea of 'respectability' dominates social beings' strategies. Respectability is the art of being valued: the combination of strategies that one (or a group) uses to attain 'positive' judgements from others. Skeggs (1997), in her ethnographic study of a group of white women with working-class backgrounds (who did not want to see themselves as working class), identifies respectability as their main class struggle:

Respectability is one of the most ubiquitous signifiers of class. It informs how we speak, who we speak to, how we classify others, what we study and how we know who we are (or are not). Respectability is usually the concern of those who are not seen to have it. [. . .] It is rarely recognized as an issue by those who are positioned in it, who are normalized by it, and who do not have to prove it (Skeggs 1997: 1).

'Proving' is a key word for self-validity. Proving refers to a mixture of affirmation and negation, being a way of busting many myths, a way of showing the world one's capacity and also about resistance to 'fitting-in' completely. Skeggs' participants, therefore, took many steps, such as being the first in the family to be local community college students, preferring to study vocational care studies (like childcare) and completely dissociating themselves from members of the family or community living 'on the dole' (1997: 58), but none wanted to be seen as members of the English middle class.

For my participants, this idea of 'respectability' had different implications, strongly tied to their changed context. With migration, my participants became part of a nation where 'respect' (showing and attaining) is part of national culture. In more recent time, respect, like democracy, is a tool to establish/maintain the basic equality of all members of this advanced society. This equal-respect regime is completely different from its original meaning for my participants, belonging to a rigid society where respect meant maintaining hierarchy. The advanced country's idea of equal respect had a lasting impact on my participants' sense of inclusion within the host society, some aspects of which I will analyse shortly. Despite this universality, when respect is expected to be measured against some form of social distinction, a significant symbolic capital, this apparent equal distribution is insufficient for many who struggle to earn more than what they are given. This struggle is significant for women like my participants who strongly fitted into their own society's convention of 'respectability'. Whether as young girls, or later as educated women of 'middle-class' families, most of my participants were women who had respect in Bangladesh. This relatively secure position enabled them to pass judgement on others similar and dissimilar to themselves. Migration put a limit on both of these aspects. The host society's single perspective on Bangladeshi ethnic women overshadowed these women's original positions of respect and respectability. Without the distinction of their social class, they lost the 'valid' position of judging others, although they were judged collectively by the host society. My participants' social skills and their usage, whether routinized or instrumental, were embedded in the community-internal frictions, though they were also directly linked to wider society. Their social connections, through the principle of dissociation and, in a more enduring way, their mother work in a competitive market economy, were some of the active strategies they took to regain what was lost through migration: their ability to fall into conventions where respect came with distinction.

From Social Interactions to Women's Diasporic Social Capital

Migration has close associations with people's social connections. In my analysis of skilled migration (Chapter 1), I indicated the growing attention focused on skilled communities' social circles facilitating individuals' international and/or transnational professional careers. This understanding of social networks is elitist in its model, creating the impression that *all* skilled or similarly high-standing migrants have equally strong connections, even in a different country. Social connections hold an important place in the concept of migration because of their 'fungible' nature that can be used outside the original context (Cheong, Edwards, Goulbourne and Solomos 2007: 37). Migrant people, in other words, need some

form of support system in order to settle down. In this respect, many social connections that might not necessarily fit into the theoretical and/or elite model of social capital, which is tightly tied to economic factors, can work as social capital according to context. My participants (and their families) mainly had these kinds of basic support systems, either in their own right, through their husbands, or both. From family relations, to close friends, to mere acquaintances or indirectly known Bangladeshis, the range was vast. In a new context where people hardly know anyone, all of my participants, drawing on their collectivist identity, depended on other Bangladeshis to settle down in Britain.

New networks within and beyond these initial ties soon followed. Most of my participants developed new circles in two main ways. First, through their workplace interactions, since the majority of my participants were involved in paid work, or had some job experience after migration. Second, their 'choice' of living in neighbourhoods largely thought of as 'mixed' of a multicultural/multi ethnic society, indicating the spatial integration of people of various groups in one area. Both of these factors were immensely important for my participants, like many other immigrants, in getting used to the idea of the diversities and differences in a multicultural society. More important than this acculturation of diversity, both these forms of interactions were the key sources of coming into contact with members of the white British communities, who, being native, held a special attraction for these immigrants. This attraction is due to their knowledge of the host country: how to do things in an appropriate way. Encounters with countless others enabled my participants to bust many cultural myths. With the passage of time, many new reservations and boundaries emerged within and between their social circles. Priority, experience, similarity and a sense of belonging dominated the ways in which some interactions earned durability, a key characteristic of social capital, while others were lost in time.

Workplace interactions were the main way in which my participants experienced the democratic meaning of respect. Almost all of my participants started work in occupations they had never expected to work in. Yet all could appreciate themselves and what they did because their contributions were valued: they got due respect for what they did. A congenial professional atmosphere, where positions or hierarchies did not mar colleagues' relationships, gave my participants valuable insights into what the idea of an 'advanced society' meant. This advancement was not only about wealth and money (although they were a part of it): more importantly it was about ensuring dignity, security, and respect for all. All of my participants found themselves included in their professional places because others were broadly speaking at ease with their differences. Observing a Muslim dress code such as a hijab did not hamper their basic employability; neither were their values undermined. Dola,

one of my participants from London, specifically pointed out the congenial colleague relationships that gave her workplace an emotional-social dimension:

When you are sitting in the canteen it does not matter whether you are a general assistant or a store manager. You can even have fun with your store manager in the staff canteen. I would say that when you are working here you would never feel that you are going to be a solicitor very soon and now you are working in a restaurant or in a shop. You do not feel like that. The reason is that you know your responsibility and if you can finish your part, you are going to have money in your bank account next month. This money will secure your next month.

Dola's text contained two equally powerful, though contradictory, points about the social rearrangement that all of my participants told me about in various ways. Dola appreciated the absence of professional hierarchy; the flexibility with which people of various statuses could maintain equal social relations. My participants pointed out that 'fun' and 'joke' were not external to their professional relations, rather these were the detailed ways that the society upheld its key values of interpersonal skills, communication and, to an extent, advanced professionalism. Dola however shifted emphasis to the point of conflict, where she saw her job as a mere means to an end. She was training to be a solicitor. She belonged (or expected to belong) on a different social level than where she was. This limited her interest in developing any lasting social relationships with the colleagues she mentioned.

All of my participants began their paid work, with many remaining so, in occupations and ranks that had few 'middle-class' connotations. They worked in places where white middle-class people or people with a high level of education did not work. Rather, these jobs were symbolic of the contemporary 'working-classes' in a society where material inequality is managed. None wanted to see themselves labelled as 'working-class'. Hasna, who I mentioned as someone with a high-status family background in Bangladesh, found herself feeling out of place when she worked at a superstore, where most of her colleagues were white and dissimilar from her:

We used to live in Gatwick and there were more Indians, Pakistanis and white people than Bangladeshi in our area. And in that [name of the store] store there were only three Bangladeshis. So I mainly worked with English people. And while working with them, I realised that this class had a very narrow outlook. There was nothing to learn from them. You could learn swearing, if you were a

minute late, you would hear people swearing. So what was there to learn from them? It was true that I might not speak as good English as they did or I might not move around wearing pants and shirts, but my mentality was not that narrow. I was not working class.

The first move towards association with one group or individual is dissociation from another. Bourdieu (1984) provides a sociological meaning of 'taste' because taste externalizes people's social backgrounds and social positions. Taste distinguishes one social group from another; similar taste brings individuals closer, while the absence of it sets them apart. People with a strong sense of taste befitting of their society's 'legitimate culture' find it difficult to accept the 'sacrilegious reuniting of tastes which taste dictates shall be separated' (Bourdieu 1984: 49). My participants resisted being a part of this new taste mishmash. The idea of equal respect worked for them at a superficial level, as a way not being discriminated against, but it obscured their original social positions. Either they were recognized as Bangladeshi (therefore perhaps from Sylhet) or they were identified as ethnic minority working class because of their job statuses. Both these identities challenged their educated identity that was central to what they were or how they wanted to be known.

In addition to workplace, my participants' places of residence were key sources of social awareness about themselves as well as about others. Social space symbolizes one's past and present: family upbringing and material capacity. Names of the locations elicit ready images of the social groups and their lifestyles in those places. Social space carries symbolic value, a key reason why it is fundamentally important in Bourdieu's sociology of the struggle for distinction:

[T]hrough the distribution of properties, the social world presents itself, objectively, as a symbolic system which is organized according to the logic of difference, of differential distance. Social space tends to function as a symbolic space, a space of lifestyles and status groups characterized by different lifestyles (Bourdieu 1989: 20).

My participants wanted the social recognition that migration had taken away from them. Spatial movements, moving to a better locale from an abject one, were a common strategy to earn this status. This movement, of course, depended on a family's material conditions. Dual-career families, families with high incomes, could live in the affluent parts of cities. Families of moderate-income groups prioritized moving to an

affordable and 'good' neighbourhood. Shobha told me that she and her husband decided to buy a property in a particular area in Essex because it was within their budget. The presence of other Bangladeshis like them made them happy to settle there. Lily, on the other hand, moved to a small town in Somerset from East London. For her, the social distinction she could create by living in a good neighbourhood in a small town was fulfilling; there no one, unlike in London, gave her a 'racist look'. Lily retrieved some of her class value through a spatial movement, an 'ethnic minority flight' from traditional communities, an increasingly common trend, as Phillips, Davis and Ratcliffe (2007) established, amongst aspiring and educated members of minority communities.

Families who had yet to manage this spatial flight, mainly due to their financial constraints, asked me to understand their arrangements as temporary. Sita and Ratna, both living in a Bangladeshi-concentrated area in Leeds, told me that they had little time for (and interest in) mixing with the local Bangladeshi women who talked in the Sylheti dialect, spent their days cooking, and often wore expensive clothes without any obvious occasion. They created the impression of being stuck in the wrong place. The English people around them, or the ones with whom they worked, were just about adequate for day-to-day social interaction. Their original social networks consisted of some people known to them from Bangladesh, who became even bigger parts of their lives once they started living in a different country under different conditions. However strong the judgment was towards any social group, my participants had a clear rationale of why some social groups were not part of their lives, and yet maintained the understanding that there could not be any generalized judgement. A single white mother could be just as nice a neighbour as a Sylheti woman in the local mosque, though they were not part of their usual social gatherings. As educated and modern women appreciating the host society's core value of tolerance towards others, my participants prioritized mixing with educated people of various backgrounds who bore some basic similarities with themselves.

Differences and distances are the key words in maintaining one's positive distinction from the rest. Critical judgements over others' lifestyles are one mechanism through which this difference is articulated. My participants used this mechanism for various social groups and largely on the basis of the social meaning of education. All other kinds of judgements, such as family values and sophistication of some form of basic cultural capital, such as language, lifestyle and appearance, were tied to this centrality of education. Many Sylheti families and the white people living in the council flats reinforced their beliefs in education as a form of agreeable and acceptable cultural capital. Cultural capital based on education was helpful for

maintaining an agreed-upon lifestyle. Living well often denoted prudent judgement, individual's long sightedness and investing in things earning value in the end. This idea of a socially accepted lifestyle based on a largely 'middle-class' qualities, cultures and capital has remained a consistent interest for feminist sociologists investigating British social class largely within Bourdieu's framework of capital, habitus and social power (McRobbie 2004; Skeggs 2004a, 2004b, 2005). This perspective is mainly used to analyse the intersection of race and social class where contemporary white middle-classness is differentiated from white working-classness through the emphasis on cultural capital and the ways in which 'real' and popular representations of white working-class men and women reinforces their pathological positions in the national culture.

My interest here is quite different from the feminist sociologists whose arguments I am using to develop my arguments. My interest is to provide the views of those who are not fully insiders. My participants' views of British society were partly informed by their background in a society where social groups are strongly divided across material, social and cultural lines. Partly it was informed by their collective imagination of what meant 'Britain' to them from colonial/postcolonial perspectives. All of my participants in various ways told me there were much difference between the 'Britain' they imagined and the one they actually experienced. Britain for them was strongly associated with traditional civilization, knowledge, Shakespeare and Jane Austin – the elements of culture that made many of them 'middle class' in Bangladesh. Such views were not instantly apparent in the Britain they were asked to accept. Rather, the more they lived in this new society, the more they could assess the nuances of societal differences which Bourdieu (1997), quite rightly, points out to be extremely difficult to articulate in the modern, post-industrial and neoliberal society. The more nuanced the differences within a society, the more 'cultural capital' itself turns into the key parameter of judgement. Joba, one of my participants, told me that she was not sure whether 'social class' would be so much of a big issue in any similar advanced country as she could see in Britain. A doctor by profession, she could judge a person's social class from the distance, as soon as a patient entered her room. Joba, however, made the most crucial difference about societies between Bangladesh and Britain. In Bangladesh these issues (one's social position, material issues) effected hugely what one could get or expect to get, but in Britain these issues did not affect how she, as a doctor, could treat a patient. In terms of basic rights, all were equal in Britain.

Cross-cultural judgements at various levels strongly influenced how my participants developed wider social bonding. Similarity was the key criterion for developing long-term social relations with people from different cultures and countries. Bourdieu (1986) argues

that whether consciously or otherwise, people build on their social relationships through reciprocating mutual similarity. Similarity can be of various kinds, creating possibilities of and limitations on reaching out socially. My participants pointed out, for instance, that members of other South Asian communities such as Indians and Pakistanis were the easiest groups with whom to build social relations. This ease was based on the in-depth similarities of these shared cultures and the range of customs organized around traditional hospitality. Religious similarity, i.e. being Muslims in a western country, made some of my participants align more with the Pakistanis than, for example, with the Indians. Many pointed out that the Indians had stronger western acculturation than other Muslim-majority South Asians. Many Indians could adopt the western norms of socialization such as partying and drinking alcohol, which is prohibited in Islam. Social customs, how people conduct social gatherings, in this context could create further differences of preference. People emphasising collectivist cultures often use their 'home' as the key place to organize their social lives. In a western context, in contrast, casual social gatherings do not necessarily take place in people's homes. These varying meanings of 'private space', closely associated with the idea of 'trust', affect the permissibility of social relations. Nipa, for example, told me about a clear boundary she maintained around her 'home'. She frequently invited Bangladeshis into her house. However, when it came to people of other communities, she was selective. When meeting her friends and acquaintances of other ethnicities, she preferred restaurants and other locations outside her house. Nipa told me that this was because knowledge about others would always be partial and immediate; she did not want to 'trust' everyone indiscriminately.

Immigrant people's shared experiences were the strongest points of similarity between otherwise different people. All of my participants discussed the differences in experience that set people of privileged parts of the world apart from people belonging to less privileged, and in this case, poor areas. This difference is perhaps most notable in a casual social scene, a microcosm of wider local and global conditions. What my participants found to be recurrent topics of conversation for their white colleagues, such as 'holidays, television programmes, and often, boyfriends and sex', were peripheral and culturally unrelated to them. It was peripheral because as immigrants struggling to find a place in a new society and its economy, my participants, like countless immigrants, have big issues to deal with elsewhere in their lives. Rubi, an engineer, told me that being an immigrant was in itself an important social tie between foreigners:

I have another Ugandan friend [apart from a friend from Hong Kong] but she has moved to Leeds recently. I had very good relations with her and she even

stayed at my house with her baby. We share many things. And then there is another girl...it seems like everybody is non-British [soft laugh]. Yes, actually it is with the non-British people we can associate more. We have a similar sort of mentality, we are all migrants, and we are staying here. Because we have these kinds of similarities, we become friends. I have some British women working at my office, we talk, but not beyond a certain limit. We do not associate socially outside office gatherings or anything like that. I have a Russian friend and both of us have visited each other's houses. But with British people, no, I do not think I have ever been to someone's house or nobody came to my house. Oh no, there were two British girls at my previous office and they came to my house once. But I do not have any connection with them as I left the job, so it is like that [soft laugh].

Casual conversations, seemingly innocent social spaces where people are generally unaware of their power relations and where the possibilities of ethics as reaching out to others²⁸ are strongest, in such contexts differences however little can impact on people's social bonding and bridging. Zui was one of the few women in my research who had strong social relations with her colleagues, who were all white British, outside the formal workplace. She told me it was through mixing with her colleagues, she realized that white people could be good at 'having fun' but when it came to asking for any help, she would go to any Bangladeshi, because it would be difficult to expect anything from her white colleagues. Bourdieu (1992) has a specific interest in people's social relations, conversations and the ways in which these micro contexts bear and reproduce macro differences. He particularly uses references to a context of conversation between a 'white' and a 'black' person speaking in English:

[E]very linguistic interaction between whites and blacks is constrained by the encompassing structural relation between their respective appropriations of English, and by the power imbalance which sustains it and gives the arbitrary imposition of middle class, 'white' English its air of naturalness (Bourdieu in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 143).

At one level, his ideas here are problematic. This is because he imagines a 'black' person in an English-speaking country as someone who is essentially an immigrant. Therefore his (or in this case her) language and its appropriation would always be inferior to someone white,

²⁸I have adopted this idea of ethics as a social mechanism for contemporary multicultural society to deal with the idea of alienation from foreigners from Julia Kristeva's (1991) *Strangers to Ourselves*.

native, perhaps middle-class. But in deeper way than this, his arguments are precise and valuable. A black person can only imagine herself 'equal' to a white person in a western country when she can adopt 'white' English as 'second nature'. Language in this context is not a mere means of communication; rather, it is a means of making meanings between two people with dissimilar baggage. The more the position an immigrant and a native find themselves similar (in terms of jobs, or perhaps access to wider belonging), the more aware the migrant might be of the subtle differences between them.

My participants came to the UK at a time when Britain had had a long period of multiculturalism. Strong race-relations and anti-discriminatory laws in public places are strictly maintained; overt and personal racism is mostly a thing of past, and from neighbourhood to professional life, from friendships to intimate relationships, the world is socially diverse. Despite this social and cultural melting and mixing, there are unspoken boundaries. My participants stressed that the way in which white people 'look', and the language of their eyes, reminded them of their difference, their immigrant and hence marginal status in society. 'Exchange' of any kind is central to Bourdieu's theory of social networks leading to social capital: 'Exchange transforms the things exchanged into signs of recognition' (1986: 248). A mutually recognized exchange is the first step in moving forward, the absence of which denotes the limit of that social interaction. Bridget Byrne (2006), writing about the everydayness of maintaining 'whiteness', describes her participants', mainly white middle-class women from London, reluctance to talk about race altogether (their own and others), lest they were called 'racist'. She notes that 'the dropping of the voice' as soon the word 'race' came up in discussion suggested the 'sensitiveness, awkwardness as well as the conspiratorial affect that the word can bring' (2006: 72). This suppressed and unspoken awkwardness (or politeness) affected the white women's social networks as mothers involved in children's local activity clubs. Byrne writes:

[Their] friendships were focused on the local area and clearly involved classed and raced practices of inclusion and exclusion. The women discussed the different practices of 'filtering' that were involved in finding friends in the local area. Friendships with people who fell into similar classed and raced positions were easily made, whereas encounters with others were limited, and sometimes a little fraught (2006: 107).

Byrne looks at the gazers' perspectives on race: how race concerns being 'seen, unseen or ignored' (74) by a group of women who can both choose and control how much recognition and respect they want to give to others.

Useful though this perspective is, it does not tell us what this gaze means when it is being received. It is under this constant ambivalent white gaze, neither fully accepting nor fully rejecting, that immigrants with non-white skins who cannot hide their 'difference', live. In order to illustrate my point, here I shall invoke Ana's experience. A mother of two schoolchildren, I imagined her encountering any of Byrne's white middle-class participants, though in Manchester, rather than in London. A British citizen by passport, when I asked Ana whether she felt herself part of British society, she answered:

What I believe is that it does not matter that we are British citizens and how much we might try; I do not think British people would ever like to see us as part of their own. They always maintain a kind of gap with us. I realise it when I see my children at school and my husband realises it at his work place. It might be called racism or might not be. I would say it is a kind of racism because even if they are not saying anything explicitly in front of you, they tactfully send you the message that we are different from them. They might not say anything but they keep a kind of distance from us. I realise it even at my daughter's school. My daughter is Asian, even if she is a British citizen, her skin is brown and her hair is black. And I can see that even kids maintain a subtle difference from her.

Here, Ana uses visual communication, 'seeing', to decode and recode (Hall [1980] 1992) the received meaning. Many interviewees stressed the racial gaze, whether it was overt as Lily mentioned in reference to white men's gaze in places such as Tower Hamlets, or in the workplaces where white colleagues, beyond causal courtesy, concentrate on themselves. All of my participants were of the opinion that it would be difficult to be fully part of British society, even if they spent the rest of their lives in Britain. This was partly because they have a different culture and different values that they wanted to maintain. It was partly because racism, through the language of the eyes, asked 'others' to maintain some distance from what is 'pure'. Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of 'purity and impurity', Duschinsky and Lampitt (2012: 1203) theorize 'pure' as 'phenomena or forms of subjectivity that are taken to be unadulterated'. Purity has moral as well as epistemological value. Purity requires strategic distance from the mixture that may weaken its historically derived privileged position. Therefore, although Byrne's white women of British origin and my participants of

Bangladeshi origin celebrated the diversities of which they were a part, when it came to prioritizing what should be maintained and passed on, both groups chose what was 'pure' to them. My participants' wider social acquaintances often made them feel obliged to strengthen their original social connections within their own community. It was within their small and highly concentrated educated social group that they could expect to receive full recognition of what they were. Full respect, based on who they were in Bangladesh rather than who they are in Britain.

The transformation of social connections in social capital is a complex one. It is built on the principles of similarity, recognition and exchange. There are expectations, though often unconsciously nurtured, that these particular relations require continuous effort and social/cultural skills. Bourdieu (1986) argues that people invest in maintaining those kinds of social relationships that can be useful in both the short and the long term: all of my participants, regardless of their socio-economic positions in wider society, saw themselves as active parts of their local, or even wider, 'new' Bangladeshi communities. Their usual social gatherings relentlessly confirmed their key identities: educated, urbanized and cultured. Financial capacity, some degree of legitimate cultural capital, familial upbringing and the exercise of good taste: these were the necessary competences to attract other people socially.

The centrality of traditional hosting gives women an active role in building social networks which transforms into capital. Women's central position as social hosts is ingrained in cultures and societies where women's positive reputation is built on their caring roles, as they are in Bangladesh. My participants, in most cases, took the responsibility of hosting their social relations. Full-time homemakers would often appreciate the value they gained by being competent social hosts. Shobha emphasized the ways in which she occupied a central position in bringing other people together in her house:

Although everybody is busy here, still we maintain our main cultural festivals together. For example, we have celebrated the Pohela Boishakh [First day of the Bengali New Year] at our house. I have made all the traditional bhortas [mashed food with spices]. Everybody wore red and white coloured sarees. Nearly sixty people came and we all got together to celebrate the day. All the events took place in my garden.

My participants, regardless of their occupational or other positions, performed their social host roles in a culturally specific way. Social 'role-model' families were those where

husbands and wives both fulfilled traditional markers of hospitality, satisfying the guests with the highest level of custom. These social skills were the ultimate marks of an immigrant family's symbolic value, at least within their known world.

My participants lived in various parts of Britain, ranging from London, with large numbers of Bangladeshis, to small, low-key places with only a handful. Their social lives were largely similar, involving regular weekend gatherings, social parties such as children's birthdays and religious festival such as Eid. Such social circles compensated for the social cost of migration. At the same time, these events were invested into to raise immigrant children in a balanced way, lest they outgrow their parents' values. Rupu, a mother of two primary school-going children, told me of the significance of social gatherings in reproducing their cultural values:

My husband has a big association from the BUET [Bangladesh University of Science and Technology]. We organize a big party each year and there are many events for children. They play together. We encourage children to get involved with that kind of social interaction. We organize cultural events for them. My daughter performs there regularly. If there is a party at a big house with a garden, we organise games for them. We give them prizes; we want them to know our culture and ways of living. All our efforts would be useless if they did not grow up knowing our culture and customs.

Rupu's comment addresses the key significance of intra-community networks and festivities. For the adults, these social gatherings were slices of the homeland and home culture, developing the strong 'we-ness' that Rupu stresses. For the children, these socio-cultural occasions were the processes of their diasporic identity building, requiring a balance of both cultures. For women and mothers like Rupu and many others, these social connections were central to their identities as both social hosts and mothers, needing very particular, largely 'womanly' skills, to execute the roles.

‘Mother Work’ and Children's Cultural Capital

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, in discussing Sylheti-Bangladeshi mothers' (in)capacity to cope with the demands of the on-going marketization of school education in Britain, where parents' one-to-one involvement with children's schooling has been a measure of 'good

parenting', I highlighted the ways in which the British school system has normalized white middle-class ways of mothering. A number of feminist sociologists within and beyond education have explored the impact of education policies on both white and non-white mothers, partly to understand the dynamism of parenting, and partly to throw light on how educated mothers are an increased means of middle-class reproduction in an advanced society. In the early 1990s, British feminist sociologist Miriam David (1993a) presented a critique of the gap between feminist work on families and mothering (more broadly parenting) and the so-called reforms in school education. She argued that a strong and intersectional feminist perspective would be necessary to illuminate the wider implications of these educational reforms for families, for women – mothers and would-be mothers -, and for society in general at a time when mothers' involvement with children's in/out-of school activities had been asked to be intensified. This trend, as this author concluded, is 'here to stay' (27).

In some of her subsequent works David (1993b; 1996), and David and her colleagues (1998) established a gendered pattern that turned into the mainstay of number of subsequent feminist inquiries into mothers' involvement in primary school going children's education. Firstly, between mothers and fathers, mothers took the 'overriding responsibility' in children's school matters; secondly, mothers' own level of education had a strong influence on their expectation and level of being 'active' in their children's future. Since this research included children and their parents of both white and non-white parents, it established the point that despite cultural and class differences within and between ethnic groups, due to certain changes in the school system, parents of diverse backgrounds would respond to their children's needs in a similar way. These authors concluded:

Overall, the results point to more highly educated mothers trying to ensure that their children's chances of success in the educational system are increased. The implication is thus that these mothers perceive that there are benefits of having higher levels of educational qualifications – that they already have – and they have the capacity to contribute to these benefits. Their own cultural capital and often financial resources mean that they are in a position to seek to maximise their children's chances of educational progress (1998: 482).

At around the same time, British sociologist Diane Reay (1998) while investigating the gendered pattern of this home-school relationship brought issues of social class, ethnicity, and mothers' backgrounds to the fore of the discussion. In many ways, Reay's interest is rooted in Bourdieu's (1986) theorization (though he gave this area scant attention) that

mothers, i.e. women, would be the bedrock of the intergenerational maintenance or development of children's cultural capital, namely their academic achievements. She explores the contemporaneity of Bourdieu's rather ahistorical theorization of mother's 'free time' (1986: 251) and its investment in children's education, and argues that in an advanced country's market economy, mother work is not a 'choice', but rather a necessity on behalf of the children's future. Mother work, as Reay shows, is not about investing mothers' 'free time'. Rather it is more centred on using it strategically, efficiently and with knowledge; a skill that English middle-class mothers have in greater quantity than their working-class and/or ethnic-minority counterparts.

Others using the same empirical topic, i.e. mothers' involvement with their children's education, examined the complex relationship of intergenerational mother/daughter relationships, and motherhood (still and increasingly so) as a site for achieving individual and class-based valorisation of the self (Lawler 2000; 2004). Lawler (2000) explores this through the concept of reworking the self. Motherhood, from this perspective, is almost always a mixture of traditions and contemporary values. It is a way to reproduce tradition (how one was mothered) and a way to bring change (how differently one can mother one's child). Motherhood is an ambivalent position of possibility and constraints. This is often apparent for women on the margins, who are striving to earn social recognition, respect and validation. Skeggs (2004b), therefore, suggests that motherhood is still one of the potential strategies through which white working-class women follow social conventions, desiring respectability. This relatively renewed feminist interest in mothers' involvement with their children education in the western context is not confined to Britain only. Rather, in many other advanced countries, for similar reasons of the changing pattern of the home/school relation in the neoliberal economy, the issue of the mothers' (in particular middle-class women's) detour to maintain social class through children's aspirant future has been a topic of feminist concern. Dorothy Smith and Alison Griffith (2005), for example, in quite the same way as Diane Reay does for Britain, examine the hidden, and perhaps, continuous labours that mothers engage in for their children's success in Canada. Using Smith's previously outlined and much used feminist/sociological methodology of 'institutional ethnography' where individuals' everyday experiences are interpreted to comment on the ways in which institutions (i.e. family, organizations) dominate people's living experiences, these authors establish the changing pattern of family and parental (mainly maternal) responsibilities in relation to changes in the broader societal context.

These studies, in different ways, confirm a certain uniformity of mother work in contemporary culture when transnational forces such as globalization, neoliberal ideologies,

and market economies have brought various changes in most societies. However differently mothers are positioned in a given society, individually and collectively, their mother work has certain similarities, in attempting to give children that which is better than what the mothers themselves had or have. Lovell (2004) argues that women as a socially divided category can share certain similarities in motherhood, being responsible for social reproduction and following the norms of society. In recent years, the renewed attention to migrant women's mother work from the perspective of Bourdieu's cultural capital theories has been influential in underscoring these similarities across motherhood in advanced countries (Creese, Dyck and McLaren 2011; Erel 2011). Contemporary migrant mothers, often educated and employed, prefer to raise their children according to the advanced host society's standard cultural capital. In her doctoral dissertation on Indian-immigrant mothers in the USA, Babu (2006) examines how these mothers invested themselves to build their children's 'bright' future in the US. This standard cultural capital is significant in ensuring immigrant children's future equal participation in the host society. This capacity to be invested beyond their cultural boundaries can validate an immigrant family's decision of migration, and at the same time can prove them as responsible and competent migrant citizens. This standard process of investment however does not mean that a specific culture and cultural values of parenting do not play their own share in this complex dynamism. In a recent comparative study about young women from Britain and Hong Kong, Jackson, Ho and Na (2013) established that while British mothers helped their daughters to reach university by encouraging them, and often by providing real material support, the women from Hong Kong went through strict familial rules to reach the top of the transnational ladder. These studies powerfully articulate the political aspects of migrant mothering. Mothering is not merely a cultural responsibility. Rather, mothering has been, and is increasingly, a complex investment for purposes related to identity, respectability and ambition.

I locate my arguments within these interconnected and broad perspectives, where motherhood is as much a strategy for the future as it is for the present. In the diaspora, my participants' main social strategies were to negotiate the limits that migration put on their class identities. Specific social connections, as I have so far analysed, partially served the purpose of retrieving this value locally, within their community. Mothering was the ultimate strategy in this project, often unconsciously used, in desiring social value beyond the local. Mothering, in this way, was a multi-dimensional investment. It aimed at building up children's futures competitively, but also gave symbolic value to its key investor, the mother. These strategies and their symbolic values were essential to claim these immigrant women's acceptance and affinity with the contemporary neoliberal socio-political discourses within a

fluid framework of ability, responsibility, morality and affectivity. In dealing with my participants' 'mother work', I would expand the arguments around mothering, responsibility and respectability from a singular perspective of a group of immigrant women who responding to the neoliberal demand of mothering invest themselves to develop a diaspora within a diaspora based on their backgrounds and their sense of social distinction.

My participants were aware that as an advanced country, Britain had a relatively 'decentralized' value of education. In other words, in Britain, unlike in Bangladesh, the value of education is not unquestionable, and being 'good' at education was only one amongst many ways of developing one's cultural capital. The realization that, like many other things, education is of relative value did not change my participants' priorities. All wanted to see their children having what they thought to be the best of Britain: its education. This 'choice' itself proved their agency as educated mothers. As educated women, my participants wanted to pass on that value, although not in a straightforward way, to their children growing up in a different world than their own. Education was the capital that they could manage for their children in the most effective way. This was *the* capital under their control. Focusing on children's education was, therefore, a way to remake themselves. Shobha, a mother of two primary school-going children, explained why she embraced education as the best way to raise her sons:

This love for education is within me. So perhaps I want to pass on that love through my children. I think this is the main reason [why she was preoccupied with children's education]. And what can you do without education? There is no alternative to education. If you want to do something worthwhile, you need education.

Bourdieu argues that the 'most powerful principle of the symbolic efficacy of cultural capital lies in the logic of its transmission' (1986: 245). Culturally and socially, my participants had a durable disposition around education and its value. All my participants, like Shobha, pointed out that there was no alternative to education. Education might have differing values, but it was an absolute value in itself, an obvious element in increasing one's worth. Though education was 'naturally' valued, none assumed that anybody would 'naturally' succeed in education. Rather, all shared the view that education should be cultivated, often rigorously, from early on. A good education required a firm foundation. From their own educational experiences in Bangladesh, my participants knew about the centrality of the family in cultivating a love for education in children at an early age.

None of my participants had received school education in the UK, and none had full access to the country's traditional and/or contemporary cultural capital. All largely grew up before socio-economic as well as cultural change became rapid in Bangladesh as globalization made most countries 'similar' in terms of certain principles and practices around market economy, corporate labour market and the internationalization of education, technology, knowledge and culture capitals. However, all were mothers of this changed time. As part of being developing their identity as conscious and active mothers, most of them worked hard to get the 'right' sorts of information about the country's education system, its hierarchies and the implicit and explicit 'glass ceilings'. This ability to differentiate between the academic systems, the ability to become an 'insider' in the shortest possible time, set these educated women completely apart from the previous first-generation Bangladeshi mothers. In the 1980s-1990s, the majority of Sylheti mothers, themselves little educated and culturally constrained, struggled to deal with their children's education in an advanced system, as I discussed in Chapter 1. My participants, in contrast, found their own ways to assess what counted as the 'best' education in Britain. This included sending children to primary schools of good repute, then private secondary schools leading to the elite universities in either the UK or similar countries.²⁹

Bourdieu, as mentioned earlier, theorized the longevity of cultural capital emphasizing its transmission and reproduction either in 'identical or expanded' form (1986: 241). Based on this suggestion, I would argue that in a cross-cultural context, the regeneration of cultural capital is both identical, expanded and, perhaps more importantly, *modified*. It was through mothering than any other form of social identity, my participants wanted to know about and be part of British society, its cultural, its 'high' and 'low' because this knowledge was necessary to be 'good' and responsible mothers. Most of these ideas were intertwined with their engagement with children's education. Nipa, a mother of two children, used the term 'research' when describing educating herself about the British school system:

I did a lot of research on the education system here and I gradually realised that the children from state schools generally do normal kinds of jobs. But people who are at the highest levels in this country such as prime ministers, ministers,

²⁹Despite moves towards diversity, many reports in the last few years have established that students from private schools disproportionately dominate British elite universities and top-earning jobs. A recent study shows that though only 7 percent of UK children are educated in private or independent schools, 40 percent of undergraduate students in universities such as Oxford and Cambridge have private school backgrounds (Grove 2013). See, for example, Buchanan (2013), Paton (2009), BBC News (2009).

consultants, they have very good backgrounds and most of them are from grammar schools. So I realised that my target would be to send my son to a grammar school.

It is significant that Nipa mentioned about professions and social groups who ideally have the 'best' of British cultural capital. She wanted to ensure that through his academic affiliation, her son should earn the qualities necessary for a successful neoliberal subject. A grammar school, as Nipa pointed out, would be an ideal place where her son would acquire qualities such as competence, capital, confidence and connections that neutralize ideas of meritocracy in western neoliberal society. Although by using the term 'research' here, this mother wanted to distance herself from the ambition she had for her son, this craving for children's best possible capital was rooted in her own experiences of career (un)fulfilment in migration. Like most immigrant women from developing and less-advanced countries in advanced ones, all my participants experienced several kinds of hindrances partly because of the kind of capital they imported and partly because of their cultural and social upbringing. Nipa, for example, was a doctor but could not build on her career in the UK. She wanted to see herself a 'success' as a mother, enabling her children to reach the top. Reflexive and conscious of their present positions and the ways in which family and education can impact on what an individual can do (or expect) in life, most of my participants used motherhood as their own strategy to achieve what they could not achieve otherwise: personal fulfilment, social recognition and a secure future at least for their children.

The high standards that my participants set for their children needed adequate material support. This material underpinning makes mothering a differential experience for my diverse participants. Women in professional jobs could make financial investments in their children. All emphasized the importance of good schools, particularly secondary schools; the full-time professional women ensured the best for their children. 'Private school', once again, was a strong option for this, as Joba pointed out:

In this country [the UK], education is not the same everywhere, and the quality varies quite greatly. Emm...it differs a lot in terms of area. Now the school she [the daughter] is going to, it is a good school, and it is one of the best schools in Hull. But it is not as good as the school she went to in Stockport. I do not think any other school is better than the school she is attending here in Hull. So we have decided to put her into a private school. I already have all the information,

and we have decided that from next August [2012] we will send her to a private school.

Rifat: Oh, that is good, and quite expensive I assume.

Joba: It is very expensive but we have calculated in many ways and since both of us have professional jobs we think that we will be able to maintain it. We only have one child and her education is very important to us. We are happy to spend whatever is needed for her better future. People in Bangladesh generally think that when children have an education in England they automatically have the best things. But this is not the case; here you also have to spend money and time to give your children the best education. For example you - you had the best kind of education - and so when you think about your daughter, you would prefer her to have the best of it, and you never want her to have something below what you have got.

Rifat: Certainly.

Professional mothers made sure that their children could at least maintain their family's standards. Most professional mothers preferred to send their children to a private school or a state school of good repute because they expected such schools would also perform some of the 'caring roles' that ideally should be performed by mothers. Juggling a busy career and mother work, these mothers had some uncertainties regarding their children's upbringing; the cost that a family often needs to bear when both parents are busy professionally. As mothers, they ensured their children's best possible institutional upbringing. This economic investment points to a key limitation of Bourdieu's understanding of women's roles in the family's future. He, observing 1960s' bourgeois family structures, imagined that middle-class women would largely be economically inactive, and hence full-time carers. This assumption bears little similarity to contemporary times, when women in high professions can secure their children's futures economically.

Not all mothers had the economic capacity to translate this into their children's future academic/cultural capital. Most mothers, like Nipa above, had to put all of their efforts together to ensure their children's best possible school education. Full-time mothers with moderate family income aimed towards their children winning a bursary or scholarship at a local private school. This is where women's own social connections and the routine interactions of 'educated Bangladeshis' were strongly interlinked with their maternal identity. 'Snowball' sampling enabled me to see the similarities in maternal discourses on children's

education. These mothers often knew each other socially. Their aims for their children and the ways in which they wanted to execute their plans resembled one another. Social capital, in practice, is a shared one, and should be beneficial to most, if not, all those who congregate around it. This was the case for the women I interviewed. Asma, a mother of two sons preparing for university acceptance, could be seen as a community role model. She worked at a secondary school, and was therefore an insider in the system. In the interview, she told me that her children went to a Bangladeshi-concentrated primary school in Leeds. She preferred that arrangement, as it gave her plenty of time to prepare her sons at home for the big competition. Her ultimate plan was to admit her sons to a grammar school in Leeds, using scholarships. Both mother and sons had to work hard and sacrifice many small wishes to reach their goal. When two sons in consecutive years won scholarships to that prestigious grammar school, Asma counted herself a success. Many young mothers, she told me, routinely followed her suggestions to reproduce this success.

My research also highlights the standardization of this kind of investment. My participants with children at primary schools opted for strategic investments to reach their aims. When I interviewed Mim, she was busy preparing her oldest son for the entrance examinations at a number of private secondary schools in and around Hull. Mim wanted to be a 'good mother', by which she meant to achieve other people's positive judgement:

I believe children are like plants, if you maintain them well then they will be like big trees with green leaves and fruits. I want to help my children grow up in a way so that nobody can ever say that my children made any mistake because there was fault in my upbringing.

The strong sense of being 'responsible' as apparent in Mim's text was common to most mothers with children in schools. Through their narratives, these mothers situated themselves within the accepted neoliberal discourses of responsible immigrant citizens working hard for their own as well as the host country's better future. Since uncertainty was the nature of their future, she wanted to make sure that she did her best. This prioritization had its costs. Mim did not return to her part-time job after she had her second son. Her eldest son was recognized as a 'troubled child', with a poor performance in the early years at his primary school. Things improved at first slowly, and then radically, Mim told me, when she took full control of her children's caring. She made her sons develop a routine of learning through fun, encouraged them through some extra work, rewarded them, and gradually her eldest son became ready to sit the private secondary school entrance examination, while the youngest was already ahead in his elementary learning. Like Mim, Rupu and Nipa in Manchester, and

Shobha and Simul in Greater London took the same routes and used similar strategies to secure their children's academic careers.

The ways in which my participants responded to their children's academic demands are common practice in middle-class Britain. The preference for good neighbourhoods, ethnically balanced primary schools with high rankings, as well as opting for private secondary schools, are the main reasons for children of middle-class families in Britain still faring better than the rest. Middle-class mothers, despite many changes in societal gender roles, take almost full responsibility for their children's academic achievements. Working-class and/or ethnic minority mothers, as Reay's (1998a, 1998b) studies show, found themselves inadequate in coping with such demands. Likewise, in my research there were mothers who, despite having knowledge of what makes a child 'extraordinary' in Britain, could not execute their mother work accordingly. These women had several kinds of inter-related limitations. Often they had arrived with teenage children who missed out on the early foundation years in Britain. Sita and Ratna both came to Britain on family visas. Their children went to local schools in the Bangladeshi concentrated areas where they lived. Sita's eldest daughter and Ratna's eldest son were aiming at the 'new' local universities, relying on student loans to pay their fees. These women had direct social connections with the 'competent' mothers. In their eyes, women like Asma or Mim were 'extraordinary' and their children were the pride of the community.

Mother work can be an emotional response to how one was mothered oneself. Reay (2004b) applies the term 'emotional capital' to address the mixed forms of emotions that her participants expressed in response to a competitive situation. Women need to manage the emotional burdens of the family, leading Reay to discuss the 'emotional cost' that women as mothers need to bear. My participants experienced a different form of emotion from the kind of 'emotional cost' this author notes. Most saw themselves as liberal, friendly and fun loving when contrasted with the ways in which they themselves were mothered. All wanted to practise some traditional values of mothering, copied from their own lives, but none wanted to reproduce the didactic relationships that they had had with their parents. Rather, all pointed out that the era of strict family rules, the 'law' of a father and the executive power of the mother, had long gone. All preferred to adopt a 'western' style of mothering where flexible communication and friendly relations were key. Lily, for instance, had a distant relationship with her own mother. Her mother's full-time job, strict disposition, and Lily's adolescence at a boarding school, all resulted in a permanent fissure between mother and daughter even years later. In her interview, Lily told me that she did not want her daughter to have the same kind of distance that she had experienced with her mother. Such distance, for

Lily, was devastating enough to haunt a life. Lily developed the habit of spending time with her teenage daughter every day after school.

The efforts my participants made for their children, particularly for their academic excellence, were not mere maternal duty. This was a potential way of achieving serious recognition. It is one thing to be a 'good mother' in Bangladesh as a Bangladeshi woman and it is altogether different for the same woman to be a successful mother in an advanced country like Britain. My participants expressed a lasting feeling of pride that motherhood, more than any other experiences, enabled them to achieve in a different country. This pride was associated with their educated identity, and the recognition they could gain from this. When they became part of a country like Britain where individuals are valued in their own right, where the norms of respectability are flexible enough to include different social groups, my participants had to embrace motherhood (the most traditional of women's identities) to receive their due. Lily took pride in being a tutor for her daughter:

Many children at secondary level take private tuition because they have to deal with advanced level Chemistry and Physics. And I often ask my daughter if she wants to go. But she does not want to go anywhere; she is comfortable with the way I teach her. Since I am educated therefore I can help her with her homework.

Children's performances at school validated their mothers' 'educatedness'. From schoolteachers to mothers of other children, many recognized and valued this, respecting the mothers' knowledge and efforts. For many, this value was more important than the material value they could earn by working full-time in superstores or similar occupational sectors. If long-term goals are more valuable than short-lived ones, their 'choice' gave them a path to secure more durable value. This long-term view was itself an expression of their middle-classness, which as I have noted earlier in this chapter.

Though central, education was not the only capital that my participants wanted to reproduce for their children. Rather, all of them, in different ways, emphasized the significance of making their children competent in a range of areas, including sports and extra-curricular activities, as well as the skills to be a practising Muslim. Cultural capital in its strongest or most complete form was their aim. They wanted their children to be flexible enough to move between cultures, without undermining one for the other. For a Bangladeshi mother such as Asma or Mim, there was no contradiction in their children performing in the school Christmas choir while taking weekend lessons in the nearby mosque. It was part of how they

wanted to see their children: comfortable with their hybrid identity, and competent when competing with white middle-class youngsters aiming for elite education. As Reay argues:

...[e]xtra-curricular activities have become increasingly important in the middle-class home because they generate cultural capital which can then be further invested in an increasingly competitive education field. All the activities middle-class mothers ensured their children were engaged in, from tuition to the acquisition of high status cultural accomplishments, were reinforcing their position in the educational field and guaranteeing their children's success in the competition for places at highly academic selective secondary schools in both state and private sectors (1998b: 202).

There are some indications that career-successful mothers place (and could afford to pay for) more emphasis on their children's alternative cultural capital than, for example, on mainstream academic performances. Tisa, an engineer and a carer with two teenage children, was the only woman in my research who did not mention her children's good education when discussing her future priorities. Rather, she talked about her own career and unusually for a Bangladeshi woman, aimed at travelling to different places in the next five years. She wanted her children, both at a secondary school in North-East London, to follow their own academic interests. Tisa, however, preferred to take her children on holiday in Europe or elsewhere, something she wished to do in the near future. Going on holidays and talking about such experiences, as I have mentioned earlier, is a form of western cultural mode, a social type of Britishness that many first-generation immigrants find difficult to maintain. Tisa, perhaps unconsciously, opted for a priority that has an ingrained value in an advanced country's usual field of cultural capital.

My participants' carefully maintained social circles, their mother work to keep their children ahead in the game both augment the debates regarding the contradictory and complex forces within which individuals in a marketized condition operate. Educated women, at least immigrant women whose educatedness has a culturally strong connotation with 'good mothering'; tend to submerge in the popular western discourses of 'ideal' but 'different' mothering. This is where educated women's mothering can be more demanding than less-educated women's or women living in a less advanced society. In Chapter 3 where I discussed my participants' educational acquisitions, I examined their mothers' role in educating them. Although mothers were central figures, there were some occasional references of fathers' helping them with their studies. This was partly because most mothers

had limited education, therefore could not help the children out at the advanced stages, and in part it was because few fathers were directly associated with the education profession. Fathers in those cases helped children in key subjects such as English and science. When it came to my participants' own experiences of involvement with their children's education, there were no references to their husbands' involvement. Reay (1998a) has already established the clear-cut gender role division around children's education where fathers are at best at the margin, performing some executive roles. Mothers in fact perform all or most of it.

For my participants the demands were both cultural and structural, and are embedded in their educated as well as immigrant identities. It is in this culturally specific demand of doing mothering and the different means of doing the roles, I would argue that Bourdieu's theories and their feminist rendition can develop productive dialogue to understand contemporary women's lives. Bourdieu's relentless emphasis on cultural/social/generational reproduction and women's rather dated repository roles is at odds with the feminist emancipatory view of 'change' (Moi 1991; McCall 1992). Some feminists have come to the conclusion, as Adkins (2004: 9) puts it, that Bourdieu's change needs to be located *'in regard to a shift in the conditions of social reproduction in itself'* (emphasis as in original). Like these feminist sociologists, I locate change in the shifting conditions within which my participants, as Bangladeshi women, performed their ordinary social roles as working women, wives and mothers. Through migration, my participants came to a country much more advanced than their own. They had possibilities and limitations. Their actions underscored the types of comparisons they could make between Britain and Bangladesh. Throughout the thesis, I have argued to understand non-white, immigrant women's 'choice' as closed-ended, rather than, an open-ended. Professional jobs were hard to attain, and investment in the self was only minimally profitable. Society, for them, was divided down the line of cultural capital between different social groups. My participants – as Bangladeshi women in Britain - used strategies that suited their cultural, social, structural, material and individual conditions, ensuring the maintenance of what they valued most: education, middle-class civility, 'high-cultured' enjoyment, social sameness, and thus invested in a better life for their children, the future British-Bangladeshi citizens.

Looking at educated migrant women's mothering can provide a useful way of thinking about Bourdieu's contested idea of 'habitus'. In Chapter 3, I mentioned that feminists who use his theories and revise them in order to use them in relation to gender provide cautionary note about the term 'habitus'. The intentions are, as Anne Witz argues to 'better disentangle the good bits from the bad bits in Bourdieu' while appropriating him for the sociology of women

(2004: 221). Witz herself provides useful criticism of Bourdieu's own 'androcentric world view' with which he reduces societies and their gender relations into mere fields of bodily differences, dispositions leading to gender habitus and their everyday practices. Despite these concerns, habitus, as Bourdieu himself and others pointed out, is a changeable 'habit' or way of looking at and doing things. Reay (2004a) in her explanation of this term particularly with reference to educated women who are often marked by conscious senses of habitus and have better agencies to change. For her the changing possibilities of habitus are most apparent in dissimilar contexts when one's own (or collective) disposition is in conflict with others', positively or challengingly.

Throughout my analysis of my participants' social lives and mother work, I have examined the permanence and changing aspects of a group of migrant women's disposition and actions. Here I argue that Bourdieu gives 'habitus' a rather structured rationality because social subjects, in the long run, think about and act as part of a 'bigger picture' where they need to fit in. Just as the world is not an easy place, in a similar way, as Bourdieu describes, 'people are not fools' (1992: 130). They will act according to their needs and agendas to the best of their ability. Strategic use of capital requires a kind of practical sense that is adaptable, changeable and, often, improvable. In fundamental way, my participants can at best be argued to maintain and reproduce the same intellectual, cultural, social and gender values that they were indoctrinated in their own families, contexts and country. 'Education' the earliest and the profoundest of these values aided them adequately to regenerate these combinations of traditional 'middle class' requiring specific forms of gendered labour. Bourdieu often calls habitus this 'practical sense' (1998: 25). Despite this unbroken chain of social reproduction across culture, context and generation, women, while taking this responsibility, learn to be flexible and changeable according to the demands and time. The practicality of habitus is contingent on time and context. Highly educated immigrant women can bridge certain gaps between their own and the host country's standardization of cultural capital by being active social agents negotiating their (and others) positions in migration.

My participants' endeavour to invest themselves in things they value can be interpreted within the overarching question of what Sen calls one's ability to 'reach a valuable state of being' (1993: 30). Sen's 'capability theory' that I have already referred to in relation to my participants' negotiated economic positions before and after migration (Chapter 4), asks us to consider the complex matters that contribute to one's sense of being by functioning adequately. In this sense, Sen argues one's attempt to achieve self-respect, or to take part in the community, or to appear in public places with certain degrees of freedom, can all facilitate the understanding of how one can organize one's life to achieve the highest sense

of being. Nussbam (2000), who uses and revises Sen's capability theory, includes certain precise activities and contributions that are central to having a sense of being in a wider context. This sense of being is as much dependent on 'self' as on 'others', and on the physical, intellectual, emotional ability to do things what one prioritizes. Advanced countries and their socio-structural arrangements often give individuals better opportunities to organize their life according to certain forms of preferences. These are not available in less-advanced countries where resources and their distribution are highly problematic. There was a consistent understanding in my participants' narratives that one's sense of well-being should not be confined to one's material situation. Rather, one's capability is a constant process and it should emerge at various locations through multiple dimensions of being. Immigration to an advanced country with a certain liberal social order enhanced their possibilities of wider socio-economic and community level participation. The limitations of these possibilities are apparent in their adjusted life courses in migration.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on my participants' social lives. The central purpose was to examine the threads between their education, usual sociality and their roles as mothers in social reproduction. The first part of the chapter explored the natures, patterns and commonalities of their social connections in Bangladesh, and the meanings of these connections in a society emphasizing collective living. In that section, one of my main interests was to place value on women's social connections, built in their own rights and working *for* women. I investigated how being in education enabled my participants to develop their own social circles and friendships. Some of these female friendships not only outlived expected time-barriers, but also proved helpful in a society permitting women limited agency. I pointed out the limitations of the dominant social capital theories, being largely male-centric and positioning women as others' interests. I argued that women, even in conservative cultures, could develop and maintain their own social networks, outside of their mandatory social relations before and after marriage. I concluded this part by highlighting the massive changes families have undergone in urban Bangladesh; these once close-knit and controlled units became transnational in the 21st century.

I elaborated upon this changing context in the second section. Here, I addressed my participants' loss of socio-symbolic value through migration. Not only were their middle-class identities muted through migration, but Britain's Bangladeshi community, mainly developed by the unskilled populations of the 1970s and 80s, also limited their identities. I

discussed the mixed ways in which these women negotiated their 'ethnic' identities in Britain. The centrality of 'Muslim' as a common identity across the communities was problematic for those preferring a national one. Many others, in contrast, transformed themselves by adopting the community's Muslim identity in a western context. A lack of clear-cut boundaries between the 'old' and the 'new' communities exacerbated this loss of distinction, giving the educated women little chance of maintaining their uniqueness. Concerning this slippage, I employed the ideas of 'respect' and 'respectability' (borrowed from Skeggs') to argue that becoming respectable, a shift from the periphery towards the centre, was the main aim around which my participants organized their social lives and mother work.

I expanded upon my participants' intra- and extra-community social relations in a multicultural society in the third section. Bourdieu's theory of 'social capital' as a hierarchical, filtered and preferential process was the main theoretical ground for this analysis. I elaborated on how key public places such as workplaces, neighbourhoods and school grounds enabled my participants to understand the historical as well as contemporary social dynamism of this materially advanced society. When material inequality appeared to be managed, the disparity of cultural capital between the social groups in this rich country was obvious to my participants. Lifestyle, taste, social spaces and their socio-symbolic associations: judging these issues, my participants, as a primary rule, dissociated themselves completely from the white working class, and largely from Sylheti-Bangladeshi communities. Their social lives proceeded through various kinds of similarity matching. Cultural similarities, commonalities of lifestyle, the 'immigrant' identity: these factors brought them closer to other non-western immigrants, whether they be official colleagues or neighbours.

Educated local Bangladeshis stood apart in the final assessment of my participants' social lives. Routine social gatherings of educated Bangladeshis could establish their 'local value', generating mutual social respect and a group identity. Women as social hosts played a major part in mobilizing and maintaining these gatherings, whether it meant celebrating religious festivals, or organizing a regular weekend social. This routinization of exchanges stabilized their 'we-ness', replicated from their original context, and facilitated the transmission of culture across generations. Its short- and long-term usefulness gave these particular homogenous social relations value as social capital in the diaspora.

Women used these social networks to reproduce or enhance their family's cultural capital. This was where I linked my participants' social skills to their mother work. I pointed out that despite being first-generation immigrant mothers, my participants aimed at attaining the

'best' British education for their children. This included ensuring children's affiliation with schools of good repute as well as their mothers' involvement with their education. I argued the material underpinning of this maternal project. Professional women and mothers in highly-paid jobs could invest their economic capital on behalf of their children's cultural capital, choosing local private schools. Women in wage-earning jobs or full-time mothers had to employ strategic labour and social networks to fulfil the same goal, making their children competent enough to earn prestigious private-school bursaries. Comparing my participants' mother work with that of white middle-class mothers, as discussed in Reay's empirical work, I pointed out the ways in which these women followed the 'middle-class' norms of the host society.

I concluded this chapter by reflecting on the meaning of this strategic mother work. Immigrant women's sole investment in children is not only a cultural duty, but also a major means by which they can reconstitute their social positions from the margins. This kind of value-added ambition around motherhood, I argued, not only reinforced women's caring roles, but also expanded their types of engagements. Crucial to feminist thought, this sole emphasis on 'good mothering' highlighted the limited 'choices' within which immigrant women operate in an advanced country. My participants, educated and modern, used their judgements from their specific cross-cultural positions and invested in what was valuable to them: their middle-class selves and those growing up to be middle-class Bangladeshis in the British diaspora. The final chapter of this thesis will draw together my original findings about educated Bangladeshi women, as well as continuing the discussion about my thesis' contributions to feminist knowledge.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

In this final chapter, I foreground the key findings of my thesis. These constitute my original contributions in relation to work on educated Bangladeshi women and in the field of Women's Studies. I address the primary findings and their implications in three main ways. First, I reflect on the empirical, theoretical and thematic originality of my research on educated first-generation immigrant women in the UK. Second, I revisit the main findings of each chapter to establish their interconnection within the overarching theme of gender, education and migration. In the concluding part, I critically interpret the meanings of these primary findings within the two main scholarly frames of this thesis: global skilled migration and feminist knowledge incorporating my use and extension of Bourdieu's theories. This develops into intellectual questions emerging out of the analysis, which would benefit from further research.

I embarked on my research with scepticism about the academic representation of Bangladeshi women in Britain. I had an assumption that the numerical majority of this ethnic minority group might dominate its academic landscape. My review of the relevant literature (Chapter 1) reinforced that scepticism, revealing a significant academic gap within its body of knowledge. I engaged extensively with the literatures documenting the histories and settlement patterns of Bangladeshis in the UK, and decades of scholarship about Bangladeshi women as Muslim and ethnic minority women. Bangladeshi women were represented within the traditional western feminist frame of oppression: gender, race and class. Whether it was a significant book-length work such as Kabeer's (2000) or Gardner's (2002), or a social work policy paper or a PhD dissertation, 'Bangladeshi women' meant first-generation women from rural Sylhet. In more recent decades, with this attention shifting towards the British-Bangladeshi generations, the focus has continued to be limited to women of Sylheti descent. There has been no academic acknowledgement or awareness of the possibility of there being different kinds of Bangladeshi women.

This gap of knowledge is not only limiting but also static, compared with the major ways in which Britain's immigrant populations have changed from the early 2000s. The internationalization of British higher education, as well as the introduction of highly skilled migration in a global context, made Britain one of the most accessed advanced countries of the 21st century for certain groups of migrants. Established ethnic communities such as Bangladeshis experienced major changes in their population dynamics, a topic I covered in Chapter 1. Different national and local statistical bodies reviewing migration trends and the

labour markets identified these changes and analysed their implications for Britain. However, this new information did not translate into a new academic gaze on Bangladeshis. In other words, the academic knowledge regarding the Bangladeshi community has become stagnant, reproducing the same or something similar.

From a feminist perspective, knowledge on Bangladeshi women and their gender roles was limited. A first-generation Bangladeshi woman, with little education and a rural background in her native country, is the antithesis of a modern woman of any society, particularly a western one. The fossilization of a singular picture of Bangladeshi women made it hard to imagine her differently. When I first began this thesis, I wanted to generate another picture of Bangladeshi women, examining the questions of their use of education as a mobile capital in relation to their migration. I ended this thesis by generating a *new* image of them, an image not restricted to them alone. Education, employment, global migration: these are the most fundamental ways in which contemporary women, to varying degrees, have reclaimed their positions, often in their own right. In introducing educated Bangladeshi women into the British feminist landscape, I have contributed to its widening horizon of difference, diversity and commonality.

My research is then original in terms of the social group on whom I collected data. This group demanded new or innovative applications of existing methodological, theoretical and thematic frameworks. For instance, unlike the previous generations of Bangladeshi women and their common routes of family and chain migration, my participants came through routes largely falling into the skilled and/or student migration categories. This characteristic makes this research the first qualitative study bringing educated Bangladeshi women and skilled migration into a single framework. In migration and gender literature, the demand for an intersectional framework has long been discussed. Pessar (1999) for example argues that against the growing diversities of migrant women in western countries, 'the next wave' (594) of gender and migration scholarship must be intersectional. Migrant women's backgrounds as well as their foreignness need to be brought into closer dialogue to gain a better understanding of their gender roles in migration. My primary approach was intersectional. The centrality of 'social class' in my participants' lives was established through their narratives. My participants actively demanded to be positioned as middle-class, convincing me that these women could best be understood through their original social class.

Education was the catalyst through which I established the dialogic relations between gender and social class. In Bangladesh, my participants fell within a universal definition of middle-classness: fathers' mid- or high-level office jobs, mothers' homemaking responsibilities,

prudent lifestyles and families' ambitions for their children's education were some general features of this. Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of education acted as my theoretical framework because both education and social class are central to his and to my analysis. I used Bourdieu's work on education, though in a completely different context from his own, or the western context he is used in extensively. Bourdieu's theory enabled me to trace back the historical moments when education in colonial Bengal was established to produce 'superior' natives, imitating the master (Chapter 3). I not only used Bourdieu's theories in a completely different context, but also, perhaps more importantly, used him for women. In so doing, I have contributed to the debate where Bourdieu's work and feminisms come together.

From the perspective of skilled migration, where Bourdieu's concept of 'capital' has gained considerable academic popularity, I have contributed in two significant ways. Firstly, I strengthened the on-going debate about the economic mobility of foreign academic qualifications as a negotiated and strategic process, dependent on a range of other capital, skills and personal charisma (such as confidence). Secondly and perhaps more importantly, I filled a significant thematic gap in the British skilled migrant literature by establishing a clear narrative interweaving immigrant women's economic production and social reproduction. In doing so, I extended the feminist debate about women, social class and cultural reproduction beyond national boundaries. Simultaneously, I established the possibility of utilizing Bourdieu's sociology to develop new knowledge about a transnational community and the ways in which women orchestrate that community's economic, as well as social mobility. Thus I contributed to the use of a Bourdieusian framework in the debates about skilled migration and mobility of capital, and women's positions within these 21st century phenomena.

Key Findings of the Thesis

What I have not addressed so far in this discussion about the originality of my work is methodology. Methodological issues have been fundamental to my contribution to the construction of feminist knowledge in understanding women's experiences. It is with methodology that I begin the next section, where I will synthesize the key findings, focusing on my primary analysis.

Being a Feminist 'Knower': A Methodological Development

I begin this discussion with methodological issues because I think, as Skeggs points out, that 'questions of methodology underpin all theoretical productions' (1997: 167). The way that I designed my methods and executed them determined the knowledge I produced. In Chapter 2, I explained how and why this thesis *cannot* be read as an objective piece of work. My 'knowing' self, by which I mean a situated self at a particular point of this research, influenced what I heard in the interviews and how I interpreted and analysed them. Throughout the methodology chapter, I explored the idea of a feminist knower from various perspectives. I began with a feminist vantage point of being a 'partial knower'. Through this, I took the responsibility for producing approximate, as opposed to 'true' or 'real', knowledge.

From a feminist perspective, I was arguably an ideal person to generate knowledge about educated Bangladeshi women in the UK. I was 'ideal' because feminist methodologists have long argued, applied, and mainstreamed the idea of the researcher from 'within', someone not external to what (or who) is to be known. Although at that time I was completely new to Women's Studies discipline, I was hopeful. After all, I would be talking with women like me and in our language, Bangla. I was, despite extensive reading, less prepared for the actualities of my experiences; how the taken-for-granted beginning points could lead to positive challenges, testing my ability to be a feminist knower, both reflexive and empathic. I will revisit the key challenges that emerged from being an insider knower.

First, I want to emphasize the kinds of complex emotions particular to interviewing social equals. Emotion, often culturally specific, can have various complex forms, embedded in women's experiences of deprivation and inequality. I interviewed twenty-eight educated Bangladeshi women living in various parts of Britain, who were involved in a range of professions. In each context, to differing degrees, I was judged by the interviewee from her position of achievements and disappointments. These judgements were rooted in our shared histories in a poor and heavily gender-unequal society. The immediate reasons, though, were associated with our adult lives as wives, mothers and immigrant women. I was not a white woman; I was not extraordinary. On the contrary, I was extremely comparable to them. I was one of them; our positions were endlessly relational. However my academic career in Britain, and more importantly, my family arrangements with my husband, challenged ordinary Bangladeshi women's lives of compromise. I, unlike many of my participants, had the chances and made the choices to fulfil my ambitions; hence I was the object of their benign envy.

These kinds of strong emotions (comparisons, judgements and, at times, envy) controlled my position as a knower. I was not prepared for the defensive mechanisms employed by many of participants, indicating a defence of their self-respect coming out of the 'sacrifice' they had made of their careers and ambitions. I was forced to be a partial knower, a shy prober, when my participants consciously or unconsciously resisted revealing anything beyond the superficial. My insiderness automatically blocked me in the presence of a hierarchical third person in an interview context, such as a mother-in-law or a husband, for example. I asked questions, listened to my participants' answers, and often took those answers as post-hoc rationalizations of their conditions but remained silent. I showed respect to the mother-in-law or the husband who, without exercising any obvious power, controlled our interaction.

Feminist methodologists and researchers routinely reflect on the 'ultimate' power of the researcher, after finishing interviewing or similar kinds of fieldwork. The main stages of knowledge dissemination (interpretation, analysis, (re)presentation) make someone a knower, giving her a voice to represent others. This is when language plays a powerful role in a cross-cultural research context. My choice of using Bangla as the main means of generating primary data was a deliberate one, a decision I took valuing the rule of democracy and equal participation of all. This language of *our* own, which enabled my participants to tell their stories, with its gaps, elapses, emotions and rhetoric, challenged me later when I translated and transcribed their interviews.

Languages and their expressions are not only culturally specific, but can be culturally conflicting. This issue of conflict can be particularly relevant when the cultures involve various kinds of historical and contemporary inequalities. Many of my participants, for example, used a certain tone, language or topic in relation to others that in contemporary British society can be judged as prejudiced or discriminatory. These included the ways in which they discussed and referred to issues around race, social class, and how they positioned others within these social categories. These kinds of judgments, as I myself experienced while interviewing, are linguistic mechanisms for people striving hard to get ahead. While translating, I had the fear of decontextualizing them, allowing others (in particular my white audience) to judge these women from their privileged and self-referential perspectives. I found myself even more tightly bound by the responsibility of power at these later stages of knowledge production than I was at its early stages. I transformed this dilemma into a positive process to help think through the meanings of what my participants told me in a much bigger context than their immediate circumstances; in the micro, macro, local and global contexts within which women's knowledge should live and flourish.

While I hope that my representation of educated Bangladeshi women will inform scholarly dialogues about contemporary women and their constrained ‘choices’, this thesis, both as process and a product, is in some ways fundamentally about me. Doing this PhD has been an intellectual, emotional, ethical journey for me, not least because a degree of this kind demands full academic attention and prolonged devotion. More than anything else, this PhD, my ‘choice’ to represent educated Bangladeshi women and their life-courses in migration, pushed me to confront and quarrel with myself, relentlessly, in reflection, in reason and in over-powering emotion. When I started my course, I was confident that in just over three years, I would earn the highest academic qualification and would settle my life. Three years later, I am in constant battle to define the ‘cost’ of success and failure in life – as a woman, as a Bangladeshi woman, as someone with a strong passion to be a feminist knower, as a daughter and as a mother. My journey was difficult and I completed this thesis at a cost about which I feel ambivalent. I feel ambivalent because I got, without much effort, the opportunity that many women, including most of my participants, struggle to get once they are married and mothers. My husband took sole responsibility for looking after my daughter in a different country. My feminist self should have been happy when some of my feminist colleagues tried to see this arrangement as a winning streak in their political thoughts. I could see their point. After all, the struggle of feminisms, among other issues, is to give women the contexts and conditions that men have always enjoyed and still enjoy, hence can go ahead in their life. I myself enjoyed the liberty of being on my own, living an independent and individualized life that I had never had before, and perhaps would not have again.

I wanted to believe that I became a ‘living’ model for countless Bangladeshi educated women. I wanted to tell them that even we could experience change. We would be able to do what we dreamt of, our life would not be defined by our relations only – as daughters, wives and mothers. We would have opportunities and contexts to actualize the possibility to create our own identity, slightly away from the traditional patriarchal paradigm into which women like us are asked to ‘fit’. But my confident ‘voice’, the optimism, the winning example of being a feminist, was consistently ridiculed by its associated cost. I was angry because I knew I could not be this model. I would not suggest to any mother to live away from her child to earn a degree. I do not have the language to defend myself if anyone tells me ‘well, you made a “choice” that I would never make, show me a more balanced way of becoming a knower, as a woman’. Often I reflected on what kind of cost and gain I would have if I had taken the decision to organize my life differently. I tried to find myself in each of my participants, because they did (or had to) make decisions that had their own sets of ‘loss’ and ‘gain’. Often I thought that they were less burdened than I was because they did not ‘choose’ to be an academic knower. But I knew that some of them, if not all, would love to be

knowers if they were given adequate cultural, structural and situational opportunities. As this journey of doing a PhD came to an end, it became a more personal journey, a stubborn one, that might be described as a tension between the choice I once made and where this choice has taken me. I know that soon the actual experience of doing and attaining this PhD will be over. I will move on as life appears to us with its own sets of demands. Some of these we can comprehend, hence plan for, others are beyond our comprehension.

For example, I always knew that once I would complete my degree, I would go to Malaysia to join my husband and daughter, and would get a suitable job until life made a different demand. But life had different plans for me. Towards the end of my thesis completion, my father, who had been the immediate reason why I wanted to do a PhD, had a massive cardiac arrest resulting in severe, permanent brain damage. This particular incident reminded me of what a few of my participants told me how they, all of sudden, got phone calls from home, and received the news of their fathers' demise. They had different strategies to cope with their immediate situations. My experience around this made me understand another meaning of being a 'partial knower' and Sandra Harding's 'standpoint' theory. I realized that if my father had fallen ill at the time when I was collecting and analysing my data, my analysis and interpretation would have been heavily influenced by this experience. I would probably have focused on themes of 'loss' and 'death' and bereavement in my participants' narratives. This made me realize how the timing of particular experiences in our lives is as significant as our relatively fixed sources of experiences and identifications (such as gender, ethnicity, social class and background) to the knowledge we produce as feminists interested in the everydayness of living as a woman.

My father could not see the completion of my thesis and the degree, though he clung on to his life in a vegetative state. For me, now, it is time to make a reverse journey home: 'home' that seems so different now from what I left behind, that 'home' which is over-burdened with memory, 'home' that presents so little possibility now. Yet I will go back to look after my mother, perhaps, if he continues to live, my father, with my daughter. Life for me is not linear, there is no straight line of constant progression. Life is cyclical, unanticipated, doubled, messy and patchy like many other always-heard and never-heard women's lives. This thesis, its journey, both academic and personal, the pleasure and the pain of reaching somewhere, the confusions and contradictions of being a 'partial feminist knower', the unwon battle of being an 'international student' in a white-power-centred academic world, the struggle to represent my participants without judging them, taught me how to be a 'woman'. Perhaps in a similar way as Alice Walker defines a woman: 'loves music, loves dance, loves the moon, loves the spirit, loves love and food and roundedness. Loves struggle.

Loves the folk. Loves herself. Regardless' (1984 [1983]: 235). I will reflect on the struggles, the lessons they have taught me, I will let others know that being a knower from inside is not necessarily an easy or unchallenging process, though it is a process that can take us one step ahead in articulating the conditions within which feminist partial knowledge is produced.

Bourdieu's Academic Capital, Gender and Women's Education

Although out of necessity I produced partial knowledge about my social group, the knowledge itself was in-depth and dense. I achieved this density through an analysis of my participants' life-course narratives. This approach is still rare in migration literature, where life course, unless it involves elderly immigrants, often means life immediately before migration (see Phoenix 2009 for an exception to this trend). I would argue that having knowledge of the full-length life courses of immigrant populations is imperative for making sense of their lives and contextualizing their expectations and priorities. For example, the frustration and envy of many of my participants that I encountered, and reflected on in the methodology, make sense when held against their backgrounds. Chapter 3 of this thesis provided the cultural, social and familial backgrounds of my participants while analysing their educational attainments.

An urban, middle-class Bangladeshi female child is not a usual topic of academic discussion. This is mainly because the development and empowerment discourses around female children in the 'third world' mainly focus on the most underprivileged. Middle-class girls are left unaddressed due to their relatively secure position in society. My focus on my participants' girlhoods in the 1980s and 1990s revealed the intricacies of what it meant to be the daughter of a middle-class family in a conservative, hierarchical and honour-based society. A middle-class girl has basic rights that many do not have in their society. On the other hand, she often has to live for others. Parental wishes, cultural obedience, family statuses and social expectations: embodying the combined idealization of the 'good girl' and the 'good student', a middle-class girl symbolizes her society's key principles, traditions and changes. My participants were emblematic of the significant changes that gave women's higher education some status in a Muslim and poor country. Higher education gave them the possibility of having better lives than, for example, their mothers.

In view of its global rise in various countries and contexts, women's higher education has become a topic of interdisciplinary interest. For feminists, gender specialists and in disciplines such as Women's Studies, knowledge about the conditions and contexts within

which these changes are taking place are particularly important. My findings highlight the complex interrelation between cultural, social and academic trajectories that contribute to this growth. For reasons related to their subordinate position in society, many women take education and their academic achievements seriously, often against significant odds. The educational structures, the law of meritocracy, and issues that reproduce academic (or more broadly, social) inequality, can have contradictory effects. The principle of 'privilege breeds privilege' in education can be powerful for women. My analysis indicated that the daughters of highly educated families, attending the best institutions, could reach the academic top. However, there were several kinds of exception to this rule. Promising achievers from a modest background, as well as those with a belated interest in education, could also become high academic achievers.

These exceptions were possible partly because although education can contribute to the improvement of women's conditions, it does not necessarily change the principles of gender norms in traditional societies. The more women move up the academic ladder, the more pronounced the effects of these norms. The norm of marriage, as I showed in Chapter 3, is independent of middle-class women's academic achievements. For their families, the ideal marriage meant ideal timing: the point when women were completing their Bachelor degrees and when marriage-proposals were supposed to come in abundance. Marriage was the single most powerful force in making a difference in the women's education. Women's education, before and after marriage, was an altogether different story. Direct and indirect familial resistance to women continuing their education, social pressure, pregnancy and childbirth, family responsibilities: their education was hardly the top priority for anybody, including the women themselves once they took on their roles in the material family. Hence, a number of early achievers turned into modest ones, though there were strong signs that these women, despite impediments, aimed at completing their Bachelor degrees.

My most original contribution to these discussions of women's education is its transnational migration lens. Women in international higher education are another powerful phenomenon of the 21st century, and an inevitable outcome of globalization, the marketization of education, and the changing structure of individual ambitions and strategies. My research included examples of Bangladeshi women who at the onset of these changes responded ambitiously, leaving Bangladesh to earn a British higher education. It also included women getting postgraduate degrees on prestigious grants or those taking such degrees to recapitalize themselves after migration. These diverse examples enabled me to articulate the interrelated conditions within which immigrant women could invest in themselves. Education can be relatively easy commodity for the socially rich in developing countries,

who are in a position to invest transnationally. The children of rich families (politicians, business entrepreneurs or similar) from a poor country like Bangladesh can buy a foreign education, often from little-known institutions. A solid academic background in the home country with outstanding results in public universities was essential to earn grants and scholarships at postgraduate levels. My findings regarding my participants' foreign education (and its quality) did not challenge the classic coalition between the educated middle-class family, merit based on previous results, and a context conducive to women's life-chances. On a qualitative level, my research matched some of the already established trends of international higher education. At present, in British universities science and engineering subjects are the most internationalized at postgraduate level, where male students outnumber females. Despite this gender imbalance, my findings showed that amongst these Bangladeshi women, engineers outnumbered others disproportionately in academic reinvestment. My research developed significant in-depth knowledge about mature immigrant women's higher education. These educated immigrant women return to university under similar circumstances. The foremost of these are financial security and family support. Not having these may lead many women, as I showed, to deprioritize their education, lest the accumulated cost (financial, familial, and emotional) overshadow their achievements.

In thinking about women's higher education using a Bourdieusian framework of education and academic capital, I took a point of departure from his emphasis on social class. I took an intersectional perspective combining gender and social class to explore the inequalities in women's education. In so doing, I made an intervention to reframe his academic capital in terms of three subcategories denoting a range of values. These were 'elite', 'standard' and 'general' academic capital. Elite academic capital includes subjects and qualifications of global recognition (such as engineering and medicine). Standard academic capital includes a wide range of subjects that rise in value with foreign degrees. General academic capital, in contrast to these two, includes qualifications earned nationally. Countries occupying the bottom rung of the global hierarchy struggle to attain others' recognition. Consequently, many academic qualifications earned in a materially challenged country such as Bangladesh are insufficient anywhere beyond the local. Although I revised Bourdieu's theory and made these classifications according to the analysis of my primary data, I would argue for their applicability in much broader contexts, particularly at a time when the boundary between national and international education is increasingly blurred, when both investment and inequality in education is on the rise in most macro and micro contexts.

Migration and Capital Conversions in the Labour Market

After education, as the obvious next step, I focussed on my participants' employment. The conversion of other forms of capital into an economic form is one of the main themes of Bourdieu's work. In Chapter 4, I examined the possibilities of the economic conversion of my participants' education. This analysis enabled me to theorize the differing economic values of education in unequal countries. As a country with a limited number of educated people, academic qualifications are still a key capital utilized in the Bangladeshi labour market. My participants' academic qualifications enabled them to work in government and non-government jobs. As doctors and engineers on the one hand, and bankers, teachers and office administrators on the other, these women were part of Bangladesh's mid-level labour markets.

The gendered conditions of a society and its entrenched discriminatory practices are often most clear when women are visible in the outside world: when they are in jobs. In Bangladesh, as mentioned earlier, women's growing participation in education, and to a lesser degree in employment, has not resulted in a fundamental structural shift. The workplace ethic is at best masculine and 'gender-blind'. At worst, almost all employment sectors are controlled by several kinds of political turned bureaucratic, hence paternalistic, power. Women, despite having qualifications, struggle in their jobs due to myriad social, cultural and structural problems. Culturally occupying a 'secondary earner' status, a woman's job is the first thing to be 'sacrificed' as soon as there are any signs of problems. Married women's employment is only possible if their extended families adequately support them. The absence of professional childcare in Bangladesh leaves mothers doubly burdened, reinforcing the 'appropriateness' of divisions of gender in the household in a poor country. These situations are in conflict with the remarkable progress women have nonetheless made in education, and various other fields and occupations. Since dealing with these issues in-depth was beyond the remit of my research, I restricted my analysis to depicting the situation based on my participants' reported experiences. My research reinforced the need to deal with women's issues with the singular goal of improving their economic empowerment.

My participants' employment after their migration to Britain was the main topic of Chapter 4. I utilized an integrated theoretical framework to discuss first-generation Bangladeshi women's various occupational patterns in Britain. Part of this framework was derived from the ideas of skilled migration and the transferability of immigrants' academic qualifications in the host country's labour market. It was also partly drawn from sociological theories of women's work/life balance in 21st century Britain. This sophisticated theoretical framework

enabled me to present a completely new interpretation of Bangladeshi women's employment in Britain. Its newness lay in going beyond the existing cultural model within which ethnic-minority (in particular Muslim) women's job patterns are understood. I introduced, for example, Catherine Hakim's 'women's work/life preferential choice' theory to define my participants' 'adaptive earner' position. Presenting a critique of her theory that sees being 'adaptive' as women's strategy to get the best of both worlds, I argued that capital marginalization could force immigrant women to be adaptive earners. Immigrants from unequal countries struggle to attain the full value of their forms of capital in a developed country. This affects their economic performance after migration.

I also discussed cultural capital and its obvious as well as less evident significances in an advanced labour market. In the skilled migration literature, there has been a growing concern about highly educated immigrants' low positions in advanced economies. My arguments underscored the centrality of cultural capital (and its numerous details) in post-industrial labour markets where many immigrants, despite having academic qualifications, struggle to integrate fully. The degree and intensity of this penalization depends on the nature of the educational qualifications and the demand for them in the host country's economy. Foreign professional qualifications in medicine and engineering are in demand in Britain for its healthcare and knowledge-based economy. These professional degrees can earn full, or at least high, value in an advanced economy, overcoming the barriers of cultural capital.

Most other academic qualifications, mainly subjects belonging to the social sciences and humanities, are under- or de-valued in the labour market. This last issue partially explains immigrant women's higher rate of deskilling than men's. All of my participants working part-time and basic-level jobs in the UK were overqualified. These women had the least 'choice' among my participants to move vertically. I established the internal inequalities of deskilling. Women with stronger academic backgrounds from Bangladesh or with British degrees were the most deskilled as their jobs did not match their academic qualifications. My analysis also established that experienced and educated migrants might increasingly take ethnic 'serving' professional jobs as their career options. This alternative arrangement is becoming popular with the promise of material as well as social actualization based on influential connections within the community. It would be an interesting area to investigate to what extent the community (and its internal divisions) serve as working opportunities for new immigrant women from Bangladesh.

One of the strongest points of my analysis was to address women's gender role reproduction through their occupational status. In so doing, I threw light on the complementary relations between women's paid work status and their household responsibilities. Instrumental

changes in gender roles within the household take place as a function of migration. Immigrant men from conservative cultures, outside their original patriarchal context, often share domestic chores to some degree, while women also do so-called men's work involving responsibility in informal public places ranging from doing the usual grocery shopping to having jobs. To a significant extent, the degrees to which these changes take place depend on a heterosexual couple's professional equity. I have demonstrated that my participants in dual-career households had the most modernized lifestyles, based on the couple's shared responsibility for domestic work and childcare. Though these women struggled the most to balance between their professions and family demands, in particular once they were mothers. Some of these issues and the ways in which professional women opt to minimize their working hours to maximize their family involvements are common in Britain. Tomlinson's (2007) qualitative analysis on British (mainly white) women employed in the hospitality industry establishes that the absence and presence of care networks in combination with professional childcare and family-led arrangements such as partners, friends and extended family members have a substantial impact on what options and choices working women can have to juggle work and home.

I have argued in the chapter that my participants lost the informal care network in Britain that was the mainstay of their jobs in Bangladesh. Furthermore, the professional equity that could give women stronger bargaining power within the household was still rare among immigrant couples. Husbands are often highly skilled, full-time earners, with little inclination and systematized time for domestic chores or childcare. Wives, with their unequal income, concentrate on their domestic roles. However, there were certain exceptional trends emerged related to transnational migration decisions. I had two participants whose husbands followed them, leaving their own jobs behind. Although it was not possible for me to go into the detail of this issue due to the inadequacy of samples, these women's narratives indicated that women had to take the 'moral responsibility' to prioritize their husbands' careers according to male expectations. Often this might lead to complex negotiations and family crises. Further detailed research is needed about this new trend of trailing husbands and what happens to them and within the family after migration. Pessar (1999) passed on to the next generation of feminists the responsibility of investigating why migrant women's gender roles do not transform substantially even when they are in an advanced country. My analysis provided one key answer to this. Many immigrant women still earn far less than their husbands. This monetary power imbalance reproduces other forms of imbalance and relational hierarchy. To redress this obvious imbalance, immigrant women often 'prefer' to return to the traditional role of a family carer, particularly at a point

when 'good motherhood' can be a strategy to reclaim a sense of self in the wider world, as I explored in my last analysis chapter.

Immigrant Women, Social Lives and Social Reproduction

While in Chapter 4 I investigated my participants' gender roles in relation to their paid work, in Chapter 5 I explored these roles in further detail in relation to their social lives and mother work. This analysis of Bangladeshi women's social lives is another original dimension of my thesis. I established a significant link between the social and the maternal aspects of immigrant women's lives that I called 'mother work', providing new thoughts in the contemporary feminist debate around the intersection of gender and social class. Bourdieu's idea of social relations as class-based interactions was a key starting point for my analysis. At various stages of my argument, I utilized Bourdieu and feminist critiques of his theories in relation to my participants' marginalized and racialized position in Britain.

In Chapter 5, I made certain revisions to the theories I used. First, I presented a critique of the male-centrism of the dominant social capital theories where women are passively positioned. This is most apparent in Bourdieu's (1986) argument of a single woman as an 'object' of marriage and an 'exchange' that intensifies patrilineal relations between families, as well as in society. I challenged this view when analysing my participants' female friendships as single women in Bangladesh. I argued that women's friendships, even in a traditional society, provide ample reason to problematize these theoretical stances. Educated women play out their agency even when their conditions are heavily objectified. Throughout my analysis, I extended this theme of women's active social relations at various stages of their life courses.

Immigrant populations' displaced social relations were Chapter 5's key focus. I established the social value of education, recognizing its power for social filtration. I explored the intricacies of social relations within a community fraught with myriad forms of parallelism between its longstanding and newly arrived members. This social knowledge is important in understanding the internal social fabric of this ethnic-minority community, which saw a sudden upsurge of educated and middle-class immigrants in the post-2000s. The intra-community power relations between the various Bangladeshi social groups are complex. This is partly because migration unsettles people's original status and partly because each ethnic minority community occupies a generalized position in the host country. These complex issues reinforce the social demarcation around education. In order to maintain their

original social distinction, educated Bangladeshis prefer to socialize with other educated Bangladeshis, developing a strong sense of 'we-ness' based on who they were in Bangladesh. This thesis is the first-ever exploration of educated Bangladeshi women's social networks at a time when women are increasingly marked by having their own social circles ranging from local to transnational as well as virtual domains.

Women's struggle for social recognition is exacerbated by educated immigrants' compromised labour market position in Britain. Most of my participants, in common with countless other immigrants, found themselves doing jobs that, at least in many non-western cultures, have little social value. In Britain, the social landscape is 'flat'; respect is everybody's democratic right, and the articulation of social class is more muted than it is in more traditional societies. While these positive trends help immigrants to adjust to their new conditions, they also limit their social identities. The apparent flatness of these societies does not undermine the centrality of white middle-class people's position at the top of the social structures. Advanced society's working-class people, often due to their material history, prioritize paid work over education. This limits their access to their society's traditional ideas of 'cultural capital' based on good education, family status, prudent taste and long-term investment. If immigrants want to validate their migratory decisions by leading 'better lives', then the so-called 'working class' of contemporary British society has little to encourage them. This was particularly so for my participants who throughout their lives used education as a means to achieve better futures. Immigrant populations, consequently, find little reason to develop serious sociality with the members of the white working classes.

I explored the social signs and meanings of racism in the intersection of gender, race and social class. This is a significant point of departure from one popular view in Britain, within which white working-class people are considered as racist. I investigated how unarticulated racial boundary and middle-class whiteness impose their impact across a variety of locations. Casual social gatherings reinforce immigrant women's otherness from white women, even when these women share high professional platforms. The nuances of cultural capital play out at common gatherings when white people's agendas of 'enjoyment' rule the conversation. These apparently insignificant boundaries inhibit the fluidity of social integration. I also examined the various ways educated Bangladeshi women extended their extra-community social networks across the immigrant groups. Though partly due to cultural reasons and partly due to similarities of 'immigrant' experiences, these relations were mainly concentrated on other non-white, preferably, South Asian communities.

I interpreted the power of the 'white middle-class' norm for many immigrants through my participants' ambitions for, and investment in, their children. My participants shaped their children's 'better lives' (at least compared to their own) by aiming at what is considered a standard or elite education in Britain. From a good primary school to an elite university, these women, having limited access to the host society's cultural capital, followed the ground rules of producing diasporic middle-class identities for themselves, as well as for their children. This process needed a fair balance of traditional and contemporary ways of mothering: 'good mothering' involved the capacity to adjust and learn the rules of an advanced society. This is where educated women's gendered investments directly reproduced their (middle) class even in a different context. Professional immigrant women, who are middle-class in economic terms, can invest their economic capital to ensure their children's full access to the host country's range of cultural capital.

However, since most migrant women may not have such direct access to material riches, they have to invest themselves in their children's good education. Educated women's intra-community social relations, I argued, can create a pattern of 'good mothering' that is followed by other mothers. Combining my participants' narratives of their past, present and future with a range of theoretical frames, I established how immigrant women's lived experiences in Britain reinforce the power of education as a durable and useful capital. Perhaps most importantly, women can take some possession of this capital to make strategic use of it. I established the patterns through which the intersection of class and gender of one country can reproduce similar pattern in a different country, even when these countries are unequal in their historical, global, local, material, cultural and structural positions.

I concluded this chapter by reflecting on the feminist intervention of Bourdieu's key term 'habitus'. Habitus has long been a contested term for feminists using his theories directly and indirectly. I argued that it might be useful at least for feminists to emphasize on the 'practical sense' meaning of habitus. In so doing we can see that habitus is not only changeable, rather, this change itself can be effectively used. It might also be useful to look at specific 'field' within which social agents interact to locate this change. I used my participants' 'mother work' to examine the ways in which they changed their cultural habitus of mothering and adopted the rules required to be competent mothers to ensure their children's good education in Britain. These mothers responded to the need to prepare their children in a way so that they could be competent and competitive citizens required for the future neoliberal and global market. My 'choice' of 'mother work' to identify changes might be problematic because it raises crucial questions about women's labours and their investments in social reproduction rather than economic production. But this centrality of mother work for a group

of immigrant women itself raises questions about 'what it means significant questions about 'what it means for us to live in a global space called "west"' - the question, borrowed from Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix, I asked at the beginning of my thesis. Educated immigrant women like Bangladeshis and perhaps of similar cultures and countries, though strategic, conscious, and flexible, yet still are strongly tied to their social reproduction roles. Women's strategic gendered responsibilities, the centrality of education in relation to it as well as the global trends of skilled migration also raised questions about the meanings of being citizens of advanced countries that I will address in the final part of this Conclusion.

The Bigger Picture: More Questions

When I started this thesis researching relatively recently migrated Bangladeshi immigrant women in the UK, I saw skilled migration as a mere category within which to analyse my participants' immigration patterns. Upon its completion, this thesis provides more questions than answers about this issue. The relevance of this topic to the wider context is obvious: immigrants and immigration are, and have been, one of the most debated topics in Britain for several decades. Each decade had its own categories of 'useful' and 'useless' immigrants. Useful and useless immigrants are mainly, though not exclusively, categorized according to the immigrants' economic performance in the welfare state. Educated immigrants in this context are 'safe'. Not only can educated immigrants contribute to the host country's economy and therefore put less pressure on welfare services, but they need less basic support (such as language training) to integrate into society. In 2014, with the continuous tightening of the immigration rules, at least from outside Europe where Britain has more control in 'choosing' its immigrants, educated people (either as students or skilled workers) are accepted. The ambitions regarding these international immigrants are high. On 25 March 2013, in front of an audience at a British University, the then British Prime Minister David Cameron outlined his government's strategy for immigration. Britain would be the abode of bright and capable immigrants; engineers, doctors, artists, as the prime minister noted, who could contribute in a real sense to maintaining and strengthening the country's global economy. The references here are to skilled immigrants. What is problematic in this discourse of 'bright and brilliant' immigrants is the exclusive emphasis on their academic qualifications. Education is defined as a capital beyond boundary, capable of moving independently.

However, education or academic qualifications are not self-sufficient capitals. Their economic conversion requires help from other forms of capital, most notably a country's

cultural capital and its labour market rules. This strong influence of cultural capital is tied to some of these countries' relatively low valuations of education, at least in their labour markets. In contrast, many immigrants from non-western countries come from backgrounds where education is *the* central capital of ordinary economic power. These immigrant populations (although to hugely varying degrees) are limited by the requirements of cultural capital. In an English-speaking country, most educated immigrants possess some kind of cultural capital (most obviously the language) that can help them to be economically mobile after migration. However, this competence itself cannot do justice to the immigrants' academic qualifications and imported skills. This crisis is particularly pronounced for immigrants who, according to my classifications, fall into either standard and/or general academic categories.

Although in 2014 countries like Britain aim for the highly talented and professional people, it is unlikely that this will stop the influx of immigrants with more modest qualities. Many may come as students and stay, or many highly talented immigrant families may have unequally educated adults, as was the case with most of my participants. In these cases, the host country needs to have clear strategies to mobilize these groups effectively. My research has established that academic qualifications in humanities and social sciences struggle the most in passing the barriers of context-specific cultural capital. It would be particularly useful to have research on immigrants (both male and female) with social sciences and humanities backgrounds to provide a clear knowledge about these educated groups. From the perspective of gender and skilled migration, this exploration is highly necessary, partly to give voice to these unknown educated women, and partly to find ways to deal with the rising numbers of de-skilled, or skill-displaced women.

This last point about educated immigrant women offers fresh challenges to the western feminist debate about inequalities *between* women. Throughout this thesis, I have examined and established the heterogeneous processes and mixed outcomes of women's strides towards equality with men. Women gain education unequally. The reasons are culturally and contextually specific, and depend largely on how education and gender interacts in a given society. In poor, materially challenged and conservative societies, gender norms still harshly control the available choices of women of similar social and educational backgrounds. Every factor that can reduce the gender gap may widen the gap between women. From education to employment, from national to international contexts, women are advancing unequally. These unequal steps effect how women can negotiate their private roles, their agency, and their sense of independence.

Transnational migration to an advanced country changes women's situations unequally. Women's backgrounds play a strong role in defining the limits to their achievements. Some immigrant women can invest in themselves and can get reasonable returns on these investments. The majority of women, however, do not have the privilege to invest in themselves, and the advanced labour market does not provide enough reason to prioritize themselves. Therefore, traditional ideas about non-western immigrant women putting their husbands and then their children's agendas before their own are as much a cultural indicator as a strategic response. Children's education, the making of future citizens, can both reduce and enlarge women's senses of inequality. I have strongly argued for the recognition of immigrant women's mothering within a personal, professional and political framework. Competition, ambition, strategic investment, profit and risk, are integral parts of contemporary mothering in a market economy. Economically successful women rely on a range of market-orchestrated services to cope with the demands of motherhood. At the same time, countless women rely on motherhood to be valued adequately. Many immigrant women might not have either of these capacities to prove themselves as competent and successful immigrant citizens. In the near future, it will be necessary to examine how immigrant children's academic achievements affect the adults' relations, particularly in communities where education has high value and where immigrants are widely divided, as are Bangladeshis in Britain.

The world we inhabit now is fragile and complex. Several kinds of insecurity and inequalities are in place at local and global levels. In these turbulent situations, all of our prolonged investments, from whatever positions, even in the richest countries, are what American feminist Lauren Berlant (2006) terms 'cruel optimism'. In a world of speed and competition, where every form of labour is demanding and full of expectations, as the author notes, 'the labour of reproducing life in the contemporary world is also the activity of being worn out by it' (2006: 23). Berlant's radical exploration of the meaning of 'hope' and the 'good life', with its inevitable cost, sheds some light on the ways in which women in advanced societies are moving in various, often extreme, directions to gain the most for their material, labour and emotional investments. This thesis, while foregrounding the lives of educated Bangladeshi immigrant women in Britain, touches on the local and the global issues within which many contemporary women are (re)making their lives, with obvious and not-so-obvious costs. If we are to make a better world, where women have better opportunities and 'choices', we need different ways of looking at women's lives. This thesis is one contribution to this effort.

Appendix A

Interview Script in Bangla

Before the recorder is on –

- Brief the participant about the research project and purpose of the interview;
- Outline the ethical frame, data recording and protection;
- Ask for consent for putting the recorder on.

Background and Immigration

আপনার পরিবার সম্পর্কে কিছু বলুন। আপনার বেড়ে ওঠা সম্পর্কে বলুন।

আপনার পরিবারের অর্থনৈতিক অবস্থা কেমন ছিল?

ব্রিটেন কেন এলেন?

ব্রিটেন এ আসার জন্য আপনার কি ধরনের প্রস্তুতি প্রয়োজন হয়েছিল তা যদি একটু বলতেন।

আপনি ব্রিটেন এ আসার পর প্রথম কি কি হল -এই ব্যাপারে কিছু বলুন।

Education

আপনার পড়াশুনা নিয়ে কিছু বলুন। কে আপনাকে প্রথম পড়তে শেখালো, কোন স্কুল এ পড়তেন ইত্যাদি।

যখন আপনি আরো উপরের দিকে পড়ছিলেন তখন কি আপনার পড়াশুনার পেছনে কোনো উদ্দেশ্য ছিল?

আপনার পড়াশুনা আপনার কাছে কতটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ছিল?

পড়াশুনার বিষয়ে বাংলাদেশ এ থাকতে আপনার কি ধরনের পরিকল্পনা ছিল? ব্রিটেন এ আসার পর আর কোনো ডিগ্রী নিয়েছেন কি?

Employment

আপনি যখন পড়াশুনা করছিলেন চাকুরী নিয়ে কি কিছু ভাবছিলেন ? বাংলাদেশে কি ধরনের চাকুরী করতেন, কেমন লাগত ইত্যাদি যদি একটু বলতেন।

ব্রিটেন এ সেই পরিকল্পনার কি হল? ব্রিটেন এর কাজ করার কারণ, অভিজ্ঞতা, ভবিষ্যত পরিকল্পনা।

আপনার নিজের চাকুরী থাকাটা আপনি কতটুকু গুরুত্বপূর্ণ মনে করেন?

ভবিষ্যত চাকুরী নিয়ে কি ধরনের ভাবনা আছে আপনার? (পরিকল্পনা; এই পরিকল্পনার কারণ; কিভাবে বাস্তবায়ন করতে চান; কোনো সংশয়).

Lifestyle

আপনার দৈনন্দিন জীবনযাত্রা (lifestyle) একটু বর্ণনা করুন।

ব্রিটেন এ আপনার যেভাবে জীবন যাপন করেন সেটা কি আর সব বাংলাদেশী মহিলাদের মতই মনে করেন?

বাংলাদেশ এ আপনার যে ধরনের lifestyle ছিল ব্রিটেন এ আসার ফলে কি ধরনের পরিবর্তন হয়েছে?

প্রাণী নিজেকে কিভাবে British society এর একজন মনে করেন।

এই যে জীবনযাত্রার পরিবর্তন এই বিষয়ে আপনার অনুভূতি কি?

Social Life

আপনার বাসার এলাকাটা সম্পর্কে বলুন।

আপনার আসে পাশের যাদের সাথে আপনার যোগাযোগ আছে তাদের সম্পর্কে কিছু বলুন.

ব্রিটেন এ কি আপনার আর কোনো friend বা relative আছে যাদের সাথে আপনার নিয়মিত যোগাযোগ হয়? (কে তারা, কোথায় থাকে, কেমন সম্পর্ক)

ব্রিটেন এ আসার পর তো আপনি নানা ধরনের বাংলাদেশীদের সাথে মেশার সুযোগ পেলেন -এই বিষয়ে আপনার অনুভূতি কেমন?

আম্বা এবার আপনি আমাকে বলুন, বাংলাদেশী ছাড়া আর কোন দেশী মানুষের সাথে আপনার নিয়মিত যোগাযোগ হয়?

এইসে বিভিন্ন দেশ, জাতি আর সংস্কৃতির মানুষের সাথে আপনি এবং আপনার পরিবার এর মানুষজন মিশতে পারছেন এই বিষয়টা আপনার কেমন লাগে?

Future Priorities

আপনার সুদূর প্রসারী ভবিষ্যত পরিকল্পনায় কোন কোন বিষয়েগুলো প্রধান্য পায় ?

Appendix B

Advertisement about the research in a Bengali Newspaper The Bangla News (10 September 2011)


10 September, 2011

সুনতে চাই আপনার গল্প
আপনার কাছ থেকেই

আপনি কি ১৯৯০ এর শেষ অথবা ২০০০ এর প্রথম থেকে
ব্রিটেন এ বসবাসকারী একজন বাংলাদেশী নারী?

আপনি কি কল্পপঙ্ক জাতক ডিজীথারী?

যদি তাই হয় তাহলে আপনাকেই আমি খুঁজছি....



আমি University of York এর
একজন বাংলাদেশী PhD ছাত্রী. আর
আমি তুলে ধরছি শিক্ষিত বাংলাদেশী
নারীদের গল্প.

আমার সাথে গল্পের আয়োজন করার জন্য
দয়া করে যোগাযোগ করুন ..

Rifat Mahbub
Univeristy of York
Email: rm836@york.ac.uk

Appendix C

Letter of Invitation to the Participant

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

Centre for Women's Studies

Heslington, York YO10 5DD

E-mail: rm836@york.ac.uk

<http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/cws/>

April 2011

About Me and the Research

My name is Rifat Mahbub. I am a PhD student at the Centre for Women's Studies, University of York. I am at present working on a project about Bangladeshi women in the UK. This project is funded by the University's Overseas Research grant. The main objective of the work is to understand educated Bangladeshi migrant women's experience of living in the UK. This research will address certain issues about them such as, their family in Bangladesh, their education and employment, lifestyle and also about their friends and families who are important to them. This research therefore will try to give a platform to educated Bangladeshi women to talk about their lives - their gains, expectations and also concerns of living in a different country far from their homeland.

Who Can Take Part?

I am looking for Bangladeshi women who came in the UK as an adult (18+) either in the late 1990s or in the early 2000 (no later than 2007). The person should at least have a Bachelor's degree either from Bangladesh or UK or from elsewhere in any discipline. There also is no particular preference to the person's working status. This suggests that women, working in various professions as well as those who are not working (or never worked), can take part. The person should have some family in the UK.

How to Take Part?

I will talk with each of you face to face once you decide to take part! This conversational interview will be conducted mainly in Bangla, at a time and place of your convenience. Our conversation will be tape-recorded for further use, although your anonymity will be maintained. For the convenience of the whole process, I also request you to keep around 2.30 hours at hand for the interview.

When to Take Part?

I will (probably) complete my fieldwork between July to December 2011. Please communicate with me to arrange some convenient time.

Why Should You Take Part?

First of all, it is only with your active participation I can hope to finish this existing project! At the same time, I also believe it is important for you and for all of us to know about the

achievements and negotiations of Bangladeshi women in the UK. This project is a small endeavour to do so.

How to Contact Me?

If you think you are the person to take part please let me know. And if you know anybody who may be interested please let them know as well about the project. I am happy to contact with each of you. If you have any queries or comment on the project, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me either. I am really looking forward to hearing from you! You can write or email me:

Rifat Mahbub (PhD student)

Centre for Women's Studies

The University of York,

Heslington, York, YO10 5DD, UK.

Email: rm836@york.ac.uk

Appendix D

General Questionnaire

Interview No:

Participant's ID:

Interview date:

Place:

People present:

Start and finish time:

Participant:

Date of birth:

Education:

Marital status:

Family:

Total family members:

Participant's relation:

Number of Children:

Gender:

Age:

Household structure:

- i) Nuclear
- ii) Extended
- iii) Other (please specify)

Appendix E

Interviewees' Short Biography

Rupa (28) had her Bachelor degree in Commerce (BCom) from Bangladesh. In 2007 she came to the UK as a highly skilled person's dependent spouse. Following the birth of her first child, she stopped her part-time job at a British clothing retailer. She lived in Essex with her husband and their son. Her husband worked as a marine engineer in a private company.

Dola (27) came to the UK in 2006 on a student visa to study law. She had a LLB degree, and trained to be a professional solicitor. She lived in London with her husband. Her husband was a highly skilled migrant working at a college in London.

Hasna (37) had a BA and an MA in English from Bangladesh. In 2002 she came to the UK as a student's dependent spouse. Hasna worked as the coordinator and an examiner at a private college – a family business - in London. She lived in London with her husband and two children.

Simul (30) had a Bachelor degree in Business and Accountancy from a college in Britain. She came to UK on a student visa in 2001. She worked part-time at a chain chemist retailer. Her husband had a full-time job in a community project. She lived in Essex with her husband and a daughter.

Shobha (32) had a BSc and an MSc in Entomology (zoology) from Bangladesh. She came to the UK in 2007 on a highly skilled family visa. She never had paid work in Britain. Her husband was self-employed business entrepreneur in Britain. She lived in greater London and a mother of two sons.

Maya (32) had her BSc and MSc from Britain in Computing and Information System. She came to the UK in 2001 as a student's dependent spouse. Her husband was an academic at a British university. She lived in London. During the time of the interview, she was expecting her second baby while commencing her PhD.

Bokul (29) had a BSc and an MSc in Sociology from Bangladesh. She came to Britain in 2007 as a student. She had a part-time job in a chain restaurant. Her husband was self-employed in the restaurant business. She lived in East London with her son and husband.

Lily (38) had a BSc and an MSc in Sociology from Bangladesh. She came to Britain in 2000 as a student's dependent spouse. She had a part-time job in a grocery retailer. Her husband was involved in the self-employed catering business. She had two children – one son and a daughter -, and lived in a town in Somerset.

Alia (32) had BSc in Sociology from Britain. She came to Britain in 2000, after her family was settled in Britain. She left her job as a schoolteacher after marriage. Her husband worked as a chartered accountant in a finance company. She had three children, and she managed an online parenting magazine for Muslim communities across the globe.

Lipi (43), a British national, settled in the UK in 2001. She worked as a learning assistant at a school, retraining herself in vocational childcare courses. A widow, she lived in greater London with her three teenage children.

Putul (29) had a BSc in International Relations from Bangladesh. She came to Britain in 2004, as a British citizen's dependent spouse. She was a full-time homemaker. Her husband worked as a computer engineer. She lived in greater London. A mother of a daughter, when interviewed she was expecting her second baby.

Rubi (36) had a BSc in Civil Engineering from Bangladesh and an MSc from Canada. She came to Britain in 2004 as a student's dependent spouse. Both she and her husband worked as professional engineers in Britain. She lived in greater London, and she had one son.

Zami (35) had a BSc in Anthropology from Bangladesh. She had MSc from both Bangladesh and Britain. She came to Britain as a student to do her PhD in 2005. Her husband, a highly skilled migrant, worked as a financial analyst in a multinational company in Britain. She lived in greater London, and had one child.

Saba (28) had a BSc in Electrical Engineering from Bangladesh and an MSc from Britain. She came to Britain in 2006 as a highly skilled person's dependant spouse. She was a research assistant as well as a PhD student. Her husband worked as a professional engineer. She lived in greater London. She did not have any children.

Tisa (41) had a BSc in Architecture from Bangladesh. She came to Britain in 2004 on a highly skilled family visa. She worked as a professional software programmer in a company in Britain. She lived in greater London with her two teenage children.

Keya (36) had a medical degree (MBBS) from Bangladesh. She came to Britain in 2004 as a British national. She worked as a general practitioner in the NHS, where her husband worked as a hospital-based trainee consultant. She lived in Hull and had one daughter.

Nipa (40) had a medical degree (MBBS) from Bangladesh. She came to Britain as a dependent spouse in 2002 with her husband. She worked part-time as a receptionist in the local health centre. Her husband was self-employed. She lived in Manchester with her family two children and her husband.

Bina (31) had a BSc in Chemical Engineering from Bangladesh and an MSc from the UK. She came to Britain in 2004 as a student's dependent spouse. Before she was made redundant, she worked for British Transportation. At the time of the interview, she was a homemaker, taking a course in accountancy. Her husband worked as an electrical engineer in a private company in Britain. She had one daughter and lived in Leicester.

Shomi (45) had a BA and an MA in English from Bangladesh. She came to Britain in 2006 on a highly skilled family visa. She was a homemaker and her husband worked as an academic at a British university. She lived in Hull with her family. The couple had one teenage son.

Taj (36) had a medical degree (MBBS) from Bangladesh. She came to Britain as a student in 2005 after spending a year in Sweden. She and her husband worked as general practitioners in the NHS. They lived in Hull and the couple had one son. At the time of the interview, Taj was expecting her second baby.

Mim (39) had a BSc and an MSc degree in Public Administration from Bangladesh. She came to Britain in 2005 on a highly skilled family visa. She left her part-time office administrator job after having her second child in 2008. At the time of the interview, she was a homemaker, developing her skills in the childcare. Her husband was a self-employed accountant. They lived in Hull with two children.

Joba (36) had a medical degree (MBBS) from Bangladesh. She came to Britain in 2005 as a student's dependent spouse. She worked as a general practitioner and her husband worked as a hospital-based trainee consultant for the NHS. She lived in Hull, and had one daughter.

Ana (34) had a Bachelor degree in Commerce (BCom) from Bangladesh. She came to Britain in 2004 on a highly skilled family visa. She was a homemaker. Her husband worked as a full-time accountant for a care-home service provider. They lived in greater Manchester and had two daughters.

Rupu (40) had a BSc and an MSc in Chemistry from Bangladesh. She came to Britain in 2005 on a highly skilled family visa. She worked as a learning assistant in a primary school. Her husband was a civil engineer. She lived in Manchester and had two daughters.

Zui (31) had a BBA in Accountancy from Bangladesh. She came to Britain in 2006 as a student's dependent spouse. She worked as a sales assistant in retail. Her husband was self-employed in the catering business, finishing his course in accountancy. They lived in Hull. The couple did not have any children.

Sita (42) had a Bachelor in Arts from Bangladesh. She came to Britain in 2006 on a highly skilled family visa. She worked part-time in a university support team. Her husband, an engineer, worked for the Leeds city council. They lived in Leeds and had three teenage children.

Ratna (39) had a Bachelor in Arts from Bangladesh. She came to Britain in 2006 on a highly skilled family visa. She worked part-time in a university support team. Her husband worked as an administrator at the same university. The family lived in Leeds and had one son and a daughter.

Asma (49) had a BSc and MSc in Political Science from Bangladesh and a postgraduate degree in teaching from both Bangladesh and Britain. She came to Britain in 1999 on a work-permit dependent visa. She worked at a secondary school in Leeds. Her husband worked at the British Equality and Human Rights Commission. The family lived in Leeds and had two late-teenage sons.

Appendix F

Confidentiality assurance and consent agreement

My research focuses on educated Bangladeshi women's experiences in the UK, and you have agreed to be interviewed as part of this. Thank you! The process will be as follows:

- a. We will do the interview in a conversational manner in about 1.30 hours.
- b. The interview will be recorded by tape recorder. I shall then transcribe it so that I can analyse it for my research work.
- c. All the information and the typed transcription of the interviews will be kept confidential and secured. All data will be suitably anonymized.
- d. The interview data will be used in my PhD and in any associated publications.

You agree to the interview and that I may use the data from that interview as indicated above.

Therefore, you..... agree to take part as a voluntary interviewee of Rifat Mahbub's study of '**Educated Bangladeshi women's experience of living in the UK**'. You also give consent to be quoted and published anonymously in the researcher's PhD thesis, and in any other publications of the work. You are also aware that the PhD thesis will be accessible to other researchers in the future.

Participant's signature

Date.....

Researcher's consent: I certify that I have explained the research procedures as well as the terms and conditions to the participant and consider that she understands what I have explained.

Researcher's signature.....

Date.....

Name of the researcher: Rifat Mahbub (PhD student)

Centre for Women's Studies

The University of York,

Heslington, York, YO10 5DD, UK.

Email: rm836@york.ac.uk

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