

**Navigating Histories: An Exploration of
Second Generation High-Achieving
British Bangladeshi Muslim Young Women
Living in North-East London**

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I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

(Shamea Y. Mia,
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Abstract

This thesis examines the lives of second generation high-achieving British Bangladeshi Muslim young women living in various parts of north-east London (within the M25). My respondents are educated to at least degree level and are in, or aspire to, middle class employment. This research explores their relationships with their families, and in particular their first generation parents. It also looks at school friendships, romantic relationships, issues of travel to Bangladesh and, finally, how religion shapes both the respondents' sense of self and the ways in which they orient themselves in relation to their nuclear family. My respondents' accounts are explored through in-depth narrative analysis in the empirical chapters.

This research draws from literature examining migrational and postcolonial understandings of psychoanalysis, Bangladeshi communities, relationships between first generation migrant parents and their second generation daughters and intergenerational dialogue. It is qualitative in nature, employing grounded theoretical and ethnographic research methodologies. The data upon which the research is empirically based is drawn from semi-structured, in-depth interviews with twenty young women, which were carried out between 2006 and 2012.

This study's findings suggest that these young women are able to speak from various historical positionalities. By navigating through and between different cultural histories, this thesis argues, such young women have become or are in the process of becoming 'hybrid' in their complex and multi-layered identities. This research has the potential to contribute to the study of intergenerational ethnicities and diasporic identities, as well as enriching our understanding of how a sense of self is formed when respondents belong to a number of differing cultures.

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Preface: RESEARCHING SECOND GENERATION BRITISH BANGLADESHI MUSLIM YOUNG WOMEN

The idea for this project emerged over time, through conducting other similar projects at both undergraduate and Masters' levels. It also emerged after a brief but revealing interaction I had with another young woman, which I will discuss further in the Introduction.

My undergraduate project examined how second and third generation children belonging to an organisation called Bengali International understood their relationship to Bangladeshi culture whilst living and going to school in North East London. As such, it looked at who their friends were, which languages they spoke with friends of their parents and how they felt when they travelled to Bangladesh. The data for this study was gathered in the early 2000s (Mia, 2004).

My Master's project focused upon young Muslim women, though not specifically from a particular geography or culture, and their wearing of the hijab. These young women were mainly undergraduate students at London University. Here I explored themes such as how they felt about wearing the hijab, what their influences were in the choices they made, and how their families and parents responded to such decisions. This study was conducted from the early to mid-2000s (Mia, 2006).

An amalgamation of ideas brought forth from these previous projects has informed this project. To carry out the research for this thesis, I conducted in-depth interviews between 2006 and 2012, in north-east London and its surrounding suburbs, in which twenty young women narrated their stories. (This will be explained further in the Methodology section of this thesis).

The choice to focus on second generation British Bengali young women living in London (within the boundaries of the M25) also stems in part from a desire to explore my own sense of self and ways it connects to a sense of cultural histories, family and lived experience.

The age range of my respondents, between 20 and 30, appears to fall within an important transitory stage in their lives. It is the time when many young such women finish university studies and make decisions about their career choice. It is also the stage where many British-Bengali women choose to find a life partner and settle down.

This thesis explores the dynamics of the family, namely the relationships between first generation parents and their daughters, as seen through the eyes of the young women themselves, examining how they manage to balance historical yet lived cultures with those that might prove more vital for survival. Living as they do in a supposedly 'foreign' land with its own histories - histories distinct from those they have inherited from their immigrant parents - creates issues of identification.

I will suggest that it may be the relationships a young woman has with her parents that determine the extent to which she is willing to carry such cultural histories.

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION – HAND HOLDINGS AND (IN)VISIBLE HISTORIES

The focus of this thesis is on second generation British Bangladeshi Muslim young women living in London's suburbs and how a sense of self is understood in relation to relationships within the family (with parents) and those formed outside of it. The young women speaking in this thesis are aged between 20 to 30 years of age, have been educated to at least degree level and/or are academically high achieving, career orientated and live within a nuclear family consisting of both parents (who are first generation immigrants) and, in some cases, siblings. My respondents for this thesis live with their families in the various boroughs of north-east London, within the boundaries of the M25, and have historical roots in the various districts of Bangladesh.

The central sociological research questions are around issues of migration, integration, cultural diversity and its affect upon identity. With a particular focus on intergenerational dialogue and how migrant parents influence their daughters' sense of self, I examine how my respondents feel both British and Bangladeshi and what this means to them and in particular what it means to their sense of religious identity. It will explore the spaces created in which notions of identification relating to historical cultures are pertinent. In doing so, this thesis offers an interpretation of how specific young women are able to establish a platform from which they can articulate their own identities.

This thesis focuses on understanding the self and identity and seeks to explore how such young women create a sense of self when carrying historically differing cultures and how they might 'navigate' between such cultures. This is examined in relation to their relationships with immigrant parents and school friends, love and romantic relationships, their experiences of travelling to Bangladesh and, finally, how they perceive religion.

This thesis speaks of specific women whose voices need to be heard, if they are not to be silent. I wish to argue that such young women are in continuous flux through familial and cultural histories. Through the example given in this chapter and others in this thesis, I explore what happens when British Bengali Muslim young women are in process of 'hybridising.' Without words, these voices go unheard and in a sense become invisible. Indeed, as Amitava Kumar argues, 'words are our defence against

invisibility' (Kumar, 2000:14). This thesis is concerned with listening to the young women through their own voices. The main arguments of the thesis can be summarised in the following points:

- 1) Differing cultural histories, the histories from which the culture, are 'carried' - embodied through experience and narrative culture, which penetrates the psyche - by second generation British Bangladeshi Muslim young women. They are able to manoeuvre, primarily through language, through and between cultural histories. The ease with which these young women move through such cultures (which are themselves change over time and space) depends upon the relationship they have with their first generation parents, as well as how they are treated in the realms of the community. Indeed, I argue that these young women often grow more adept at manoeuvring through these complex cultural landscapes as one they grows older and more discerning. Moreover this thesis will examine the incorporation of differing cultural histories that are carried by such young women.
- 2) I argue that first generation immigrant parents give their daughters one set of cultural (and fluid) histories. However, daughters simultaneously belong to another (equally fluid) set of cultural histories. I use Bhabha's (2006) concept of heritage as transformative to make sense of the complex cultural positioning of second generation Bangladeshis and to highlight the creative potential this positioning opens up, examining the ways in which respondents both navigate histories and articulate new cultural forms and identities. In this way, through listening to the accounts of these young women, I will show that culture is not fixed, but rather is fluid and in constant flux.
- 3) The voices of affluent young Bangladeshi women are not usually heard if they do not belong to the East End, e.g. Tower Hamlets, and are not Sylheti. In examining the stories of the young women in my sample, who come from various regions of Bangladesh, I aim to show that there are variations within Bengali culture, often not represented in research. Moreover, through Shaheed (2006), for example, I will argue that there are different ways in which Muslim young women portray themselves and their beliefs.

- 4) A key aim of this thesis is to explore how certain second generation British Bangladeshi Muslim young women understand a sense of self. It will examine some of the tensions that are located in families and the wider Bangladeshi community in relation to migration. However, while such tensions are felt by these second generation daughters, they may not always be verbalised. For example, parents often left well-to-do jobs when they migrated in order to better their lives, which might have disrupted or diverted their psychic development in a way that would not have occurred had they not migrated. Through understanding Erikson's (1997) concept of identity development, I will argue that it might be that these migrants often attempt to fulfil dreams they could not realise themselves through their daughters, and thus somehow live their own lives through their second generation children. In listening to my respondents' narratives, I will explore intergenerational relationships and how they shape the young women's sense of themselves.

It is through such arguments that this thesis seeks to develop a new way of thinking about certain British Bangladeshi Muslim young women, and further generate new thinking about the wider Bangladeshi community. Indeed, through this thesis, I propose that examining the relationship with first generation parents opens a means of understanding how cultural histories become embedded in a sense of self and, furthermore, shape how these young women interact with and integrate into the wider community and extended family. I also argue through this thesis that with regard to issues of integration, for instance, as the experiences of these young women show, that how individuals are viewed and/or treated by the wider community affects their desire to integrate themselves into the British or Bangladeshi community.

This introductory chapter reflects upon how cultures that might be distinct (but at the same time fluid and moving) come together through the young woman of second generation. It is they who navigate through and between cultures, bringing such histories together. The nuances of the different cultures these young women carry are learnt over time as they grow older and more discerning. This chapter points to different trajectories of understanding and the different ways in which familial relationships underlie them. It must be stressed, however that there are different ways of 'being' in such spaces. . I will shortly describe an incident of 'being' in nuanced

spaces in which although the young woman at the centre of the incident remained silent, she brought forth questions that are echoed by my respondents in the empirical chapters. These questions recur throughout the thesis.

This introductory chapter is divided into six sections, beginning with the story of this incident that took place between a young British Bangladeshi Muslim woman, her non-Bengali partner and myself. I will describe what happened to my sense of self in the encounter and how sometimes it is necessary to interact with others in order to have a deeper understanding of one's own sense of self. It also poses questions about whether, how and to what extent relationships between first generation parents and their children shape the choices of the latter. It explores the willingness of certain second generation young women to adhere to cultural and community 'norms', and the boundaries which are negotiated and re-negotiated around those norms. The final section of this chapter gives an outline of the chapters which follow.

The Incident of the Train Platform and the Young Woman

I will now introduce this project through the encounter between myself, as a silent observer, and a second generation young woman of Bangladeshi heritage. The event is an important one that begins to illustrate the ways in which certain second generation British Bengali young women balance, and indeed, 'navigate' between cultures. It reflects how historically distinct cultures become merged and negotiated within the diasporic community.

Whilst waiting for a friend of mine at a train station in London, I sat upon one of the benches. As I waited, I was talking on the phone and was therefore unable to speak to anyone else. I happened to notice a young woman walk hand in hand with a man on the platform. This was not odd in the slightest. I see couples walk hand in hand all the time. What was odd, however, was that as soon as she saw me, she let go of her partner's hand.

A young woman holding a man's hand is seen every day. The young woman whom I saw however, I recognised, and after she let go of his hand, I knew that she recognised me too. It was mutual recognition, without words.

She was, like me, borne of Bangladeshi parents who were immigrants to England, and as a result, carried her parents' histories as she integrated into British

culture. I want to stress that neither culture is necessarily *foreign* – our parents' histories are given to us as we grow older and become aware of such histories, and at the same time, we are integrated into British culture through, the schooling system, and latterly through our work and careers.

I was acquainted with this young woman as our families knew each other, though they were not particularly close. As a result, we did not know each other very well, this young woman and I.

As I have said before, that she was hand in hand with a man was nothing out of the ordinary. But she happened to be holding hands with a *white* man. I found it very interesting that as soon as she saw me - and I admit I was watching her to see whether she was the person I thought she was - she let go of his hand. Her face became worried. The distance between her partner and herself grew slightly as she took a small step *away from him*. She continued to watch me, and I her.

The train came. I was still watching them – her – as I sat on the bench on the platform. In some way to increase the distance, it seemed to me, she let her partner get on board first and then followed. However, to increase the distance between them even further, she waited for another person to board before her. This meant that between herself and her partner, there was another person who became somehow 'sandwiched' between them. It was as if she had consciously placed a visible *barrier* between herself and her partner. In some way, the person in between acted as a shield – perhaps to protect him from my gaze, the outside onlooker, making it so I could not clearly see him. Or maybe it was to protect her also – by creating a distance, I could not enter into her physical or psychological space.

When she was on board the train, she had her back to me – the young woman had crossed cultural space by entering the train, a theme which shall be developed in Chapter 4. Even though she was in this position, she turned her head slightly to see whether I was still watching her, which, obviously, I was. She kept watching me, and I her, until after a few seconds, the doors closed and the train started to move, and then suddenly, she was gone. The speed at which she left was beyond her control.

The entire exchange was transmitted in a language that was *unspoken*. Its unspoken-ness was what gave it meaning. Her body spoke, it was not silent. I am not sure whether she was aware that she spoke to me on so many levels using her body. For instance, we can question whether she was even *aware* that she had let go of her partner's hand after she saw me watching her on the platform. Was it a *conscious*

letting go of her partner's hand, or an *unconscious* letting go? Unfortunately, we can never know.

Afterwards, when I was contemplating why she did not exchange words with me, I realised that there were issues of trust and leakage involved in this unspoken exchange. I did not know her well, but I shared both British and Bangladeshi histories with her. Most importantly, there was the fact that our *parents* knew each other. This would explain her wariness in our sudden and unexpected encounter. This would certainly explain the expression that I read as tension and worry on her face. Because we were both part of the same 'community', perhaps she had seen the 'community' in me; perhaps she felt *unsafe* because we knew some of the same people. By the connection of our parents, and our shared history, I had become the *symbolic marker* of this shared history, because I had reminded her of certain boundaries. And because of this reminder, she may have felt a sense of *guilt*, because she had in some way, moved past or beyond a boundary. I will further examine these ideas of trust and community, an often-skewed term, in Chapter 3.

Moreover, this notion of the 'symbolic marker' signified some kind of transition of a part of her own self onto me. As a consequence, there were underlying tensions that might be used to experience culture in different ways. These were brought to the fore by my visible presence on the train platform. Certain histories are made active, histories that may be buried, but at the same time very much alive. If we, as the second generation carry the histories of our parents, then I argue that the young woman on the train platform projected her histories outward and onto me.

On the other hand, and as I will examine in more depth in Chapter 6, it may be plausible to argue that it is through the concept of the 'other' person – be it in a romantic relationship, or otherwise – that one comes to a fuller understanding of her own identity. Because of my presence, the young woman's partner's presence becomes confused – I am unexpected, perhaps not even wanted at that point – I remind herself of another part of her histories and a different side of her self. She might rather have kept such aspects of the self 'hidden' from her partner, and the situation thus became unsettling for her partner, for me and for herself.

The Autobiographical 'I', The Possibilities of Differing and the Young Woman on the Train Platform

This section explores why I have chosen to describe the incident on the train platform and myself from my particular perspective and the questions that are brought forth. Also, by describing the event as I have, it acts as a therapeutic device, as an unburdening of the 'self', as we will see Chapter 3. It was in this brief moment on the platform that I came to understand my position as both researcher and as a young British-Bangladeshi woman trying to explore her own identity.

I argue in this thesis that it is as we get older that we learn tacit rules and subtleties within each of the specific cultures to which we belong. Through her relationships with different people, including parents and other family, peers, teachers, and later workmates, second generation young women develop multi-layered and complex identities. For the young woman on the train platform, it might be the case that although she was familiar with the rules of each culture, there was a 'hybridisation.' By this, I mean in that specific situation, she drew upon different parts of the cultural histories she carries and merged them together, but at the same time they became confused when she saw me.

In understanding such histories, Kakar has argued that 'culture is so pervasive that even when an individual seems to break away from it, as in states of insanity, the "madness" is still influenced by its norms and rituals' (1981:9). In the case of the young woman, I argue she might have been influenced by a particular and complex history which she carried and also saw in me. This Bangladeshi culture, it could be argued, was what influenced her to react the way she did upon seeing me. Manoeuvring between historical cultures is not always easy, especially if the situation is not rehearsed or is unexpected. But it also emphasises the changing nature of culture, and the ways in which different cultural histories come together, sometimes uncertainly, to giving rise to something new.

This thesis aims to explore how much we might be influenced by our parents' histories, of migration and war for instance, and how these histories might be communicated and narrated. It also explores the contexts in which their cultural inheritance, and that of their parents, become salient for the young women taking part in this study. As Erikson argues,

nobody can quite ‘know’ who he or she ‘is’ until promising partners in work and love have been encountered and tested. Yet, the basic patterns of identity must emerge from (1) the selective affirmation and repudiation of an individual’s childhood identifications; and (2) the way in which the social process of the times identifies young individuals – at best recognizing them as persons who had to become the way they are and who, being the way they are, can be trusted. The community, in turn, feels recognized by the individual who cares to ask for such recognition. By the same token, however, society can feel deeply and vengefully rejected by the individual who does not seem to care to be acceptable (1997:72).

Acquiring and understanding culture might be the primary factor in a person’s development as it is the mother and latterly other caregivers who are influenced by their *own* cultural development in bringing up a child. In particular, how histories might be transmitted in intergenerational dialogue and the types of relationships between respective generations that follow are vital, as I will argue in Chapter 2. I draw on the conceptualisation of navigation through language and reflect upon how these young women navigate between and through the cultures they carry. This might also be seen in how they react to others, or how they understand their position in certain cultural situations. The next section explores how for some of the young women personal histories allow for acknowledgement of their differing cultures, for instance, how by seeing me on the platform these were brought to the fore and certain histories were forced alive.

Questions of Familial Histories

Although family dynamics obviously vary considerably across different families, I will argue that it is through acknowledging one’s own *parental* histories, which one can link, or be linked to one’s geographical histories. The closeness in the relationship with one’s parents might allow for this to happen. If, on the other hand, one is unable to associate with one’s parents and their histories, then this perhaps automatically makes familial histories distant, in some cases, impossible to reach.

It is important to have an understanding of inherited histories. I wish to start with when our own parents were young and lived in then British India (and onwards).

During this time, our parents also experienced, it could be argued, proximity with ‘foreign’ people - those who were from England and did not know or understand Bengali culture - in a context in which ‘foreignness’ was imposed, rather than welcomed and negotiated. This is considered in more depth in Chapter 2, where, drawing on the accounts of my respondents, I argue that our parents grew up in ‘mixed’ (or hybrid) cultural surroundings in a way that was both paradoxically similar to and different from those in which their daughters grew up.

The histories of British India, latterly East Pakistan and currently Bangladesh, have been bloody and riddled with tension and unease. One hears of stories that tell of loved ones brutally murdered or of families being forced out of their homes. Some of these narrations are not shared with those who are outside the community, while others are not even shared with those who are outside the family. But such stories can be very present and remembered. Indeed while such private stories do not make it onto the pages of history books, they are passed onto family members and through generations.

Importantly we must recognise that though these histories are not made public, it does not mean that they are silenced or silent to the family. Sometimes it depends where the histories are spoken about and who is allowed to speak about them. As I will now turn to discuss, re-telling painful histories might mean to bring alive such painful emotions that they cannot be spoken publicly because those who do not share them are unable to comprehend the pain behind them.

Questions of ‘Carried Histories’

The histories we carry from our parents of first generation sometimes need to be understood over time. Indeed, many histories are not spoken about but ‘felt’. I argue that these histories are multi-layered and uneasy. Some histories give a sense of unease because of the tales of horror they entail. They can be invisible, but very, very present.

By listening to the experiences of our parents, when and if they are told, it becomes easier to understand the nature of their histories. Many of the histories parents carry have been lived through very violent times and are difficult to voice. These histories include for instance, the rule of the British Raj, the Partition of India in 1947, the tyranny of living under East Pakistan and later the formation of

Bangladesh in 1971. There are countless stories of the Muktiyuddho (Freedom Fighters of Bangladesh), who fought in the war of 1971, whose efforts are still celebrated today, along with 21st February, (Ekushe February), which commemorates Shohid Dibosh (or Martyr's Day) and Language Movement Day; 26th March, Shadhinota Dibosh (Independence Day), the day Bangladesh declared independence from Pakistan and gained recognition as an official country; 14th December marks Buddhijibi Dibosh, the day commemorated for the Assassination of Intellectuals and 16th December, which remembers Bijoy Dibosh (Victory Day), to mark the end of the War of Independence and the day the Pakistani Army officially surrendered.

I will give here an example of how parents who have lived through the establishment of Bangladesh narrate these histories to their daughters. It raises questions about what 'talk' means in Bangladeshi culture and how speaking of the past might allow for discoveries of what is known or not known. Further, it opens up questions of how second generation young people develop an awareness of cultural and familial histories. Around 2007, I was preparing a document for funding, with the institutions of Bengali International and the South Asian Health Foundation. A meeting took place in my house and consisted of members of the first generation who were students when Bangladesh was first recognised as an independent country. One of the people present at the meeting was my father, who lived in London at the time, and another was an uncle who had been in Bangladesh.

In that meeting, my father and uncle spoke of the struggle, horrors, and personal tragedies of war, verbalising histories that have often remained unspoken. As will be reflected in this research, there are sometimes silent tensions in the family around histories. Though not always spoken, as Seidler (2000) has observed, such histories can be very much present, a sort of lived nostalgia whose silences are somehow 'felt' by the children within a family. Questions around inter-generational dialogue both within the family and the community are thus opened up around who could speak of such histories, in which language they can be spoken in, and who is allowed to listen. These are issues that shall be examined in the methodological and empirical chapters that follow.

The young women whose accounts are considered in this thesis are the daughters of this migrant generation. Their parents are Bangladeshis who have, with much difficulty, established their lives and professions. Our parents have become, through their own hard work, high earning professionals. They are, amongst many

things, engineers, lawyers, doctors and accountants. The histories parents have brought with them may need to be re-told in further investigations within the Bangladeshi community, as these stories are often unvoiced. Indeed, understanding such histories allows for community borders and boundaries to be negotiated and re-negotiated by what can be brought into the community and what cannot. In this thesis, I will examine how this process of negotiation affects second generation young women.

Establishing themselves in their chosen professions, these parents have been able to give their daughters comforts that they often lacked once they had immigrated to a 'foreign' place. They might not have always understood the histories of this 'foreign' place, but they had the ability to learn the culture and become part of that culture. To establish their lives in a place that is 'foreign' has meant for our immigrant parents leaving behind their own family, loved ones, and language, and moving into and learning a culture that has not always been welcoming. They have done so in order to give their own children the comfort of a solid schooling that would establish sound future careers - and make them high-achieving.

From time to time, as second generation daughters, who have for the most part, grown up in relative comfort, we forget such histories. But this does not mean that they have somehow disappeared or have become irrelevant in our understanding of ourselves and our identities. They are indeed present and (in)visible histories that we carry, willingly or unwillingly, and learn to navigate through and between, primarily through languages we speak.

I shall now give an outline of the chapters of this thesis.

Chapter Outline

1) Chapter 2: *'Gifts from our Parents': Literature Review*

The aim of Chapter 2 is to examine the relevant literature in relation to British Bangladeshi young women. It will look specifically at the types of histories these young women carry and the notions of change and intergenerational dialogue. It will also introduce the notion of navigation through language and how these young women meander through such histories.

I examine the histories and struggles of South Asian women, in relation to my respondents, as well as notions of community, and boundary making. Also explored, are notions of hybridity and understandings of the self, and intergenerational dialogue. I also consider how my respondents are finding their voices through, for instance, education and familial support.

Finally, in this chapter I explore the changing relations within Bangladeshi culture and British culture, how they have been shaped by multiple histories and how they are brought together and are articulated by my respondents.

2) Chapter 3: *'Finding Voices': Methodology*

Here I aim to explore the methods and methodologies employed in the collation and analysis of the data upon which the four following empirical chapters are grounded.

It discusses the methods of in-depth interviewing and examines the issues involved in establishing rapport with the respondent. Themes of trust and leakage of respondents' narratives will be explored, as well as my own ambivalent stance as both an 'insider' within and researcher of the community I have researched. As such, it will examine the importance of narrative analysis. It will examine notions of sensitivity and affect in the interview scenario and in relation to topics that prove vital in the generation of data. Finally, I will consider the ethics involved in conducting this research.

3) Chapter 4: *Speaking Bangla with the First Generation?: Mothers, Fathers and Language*

The first of the empirical chapters explores some of the types of relationships the young women have with their parents. As such, it will look at language use and its changing nature as well as how the young women themselves are changing through the language they use. This chapter will also examine how language use is changing within the dialogue between generations and how my respondents have changed through dialogue with their parents.

Through a close examination of the respondents' narratives, I will examine the extent to which their parents' histories shape their perception of

their own identity, as well as the ways in which they position themselves in relation to those histories.

4) Chapter 5: *The Friends We Made in School and Some Later*

The second of the empirical chapters aims to examine how friends and acquaintances outside the family, who do not share similar Bengali histories, contribute to an understanding of a sense of self. Friendships can also give rise to tensions and in this chapter I will also explore how tensions might be eventually resolved as respondents grow and understand the nuances of each culture over time.

The chapter looks also at how friends who share similar histories might feel more comfortable in acknowledging them, and how this might also shape the ways in which respondents navigate through their different social worlds.

5) Chapter 6: *'Desires for an (Historical) Partner?': On Marriage and Relationships*

Chapter 6 investigates ideas of marriage, romance and relationships. Here I revisit the young woman on the train platform and her non-Bangladeshi partner, and the questions the encounter raises.

It examines the impact of family and community in choice of partner, and how the respondents feel about potential relationships with partners who share similar cultural histories and those who do not. It explores romantic choices that may depend on more than the two individuals involved in establishing a relationship. It looks at how a sense of self is understood in relation to complex notions of romantic relationships.

6) Chapter 7: *'Navigated Travels': The Experiences of Religion and Culture*

The final empirical chapter examines how young women feel when and if they visit Bangladesh. In some of the accounts considered in this chapter, respondents speak of feeling 'close' to the place from which their parents originate. Others do not wish to travel to Bangladesh, as it gives rise to a feeling of alienation. Here I will explore what this might mean in terms of the ways in which these young women perceive their identity and cultural positioning.

In this chapter I will also explore questions of religion and how religious identities are not always marked through clothing. I ask how - if culture is deeply entrenched into the psyche from an early age - whether religion and spirituality, if at all, become important to my respondents.

7) Chapter 8: *Conclusion:*

The Conclusion will give a summary of the main findings of this thesis. It will highlight the main arguments of the thesis, its significance and give new insights into the changing nature of one specific part of the Bangladeshi diaspora in London. It will suggest further and future projects that could build upon this specific piece of research.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW - GIFTS FROM OUR PARENTS

My overview of the literature which has informed this research, and to which I hope this thesis will contribute, is divided into six sections. To begin, I discuss the changing emphasis in the literature on South Asian women, from the perception of them as voiceless and downtrodden to hybrid, strong and articulate. I will then discuss the histories of South Asian women's migration to Britain, and the ways in which their struggles have shaped their daughters' lives as well as their perception of their daughters. I will also consider the notion of diaspora and its tensions and the relation of both to the psyche. I then explore what relevance such issues have for my respondents, in particular with regard to their cultural positioning and navigational use of language. I further investigate the notion of diaspora by looking specifically at Bangladeshi migration to various parts of the world, the effects of this on the ways in which the community is both understood and shored up through the making and remaking of boundaries. Finally, I examine the relationships between immigrant parents and their children, and how through dialogue mis/understandings might be acknowledged and worked through.

Speaking of Change and South Asian (Bangladeshi) Women

This section aims to show briefly through time how it is that South Asian women, both migrants and non-migrants, have been viewed across generations, from being conceived as static, immovable, and victimised to 'hybrid, pastiche, sari and sneaker wearing young women' (Puwar, 2004). This is why second generation young women form the focus of this research. I argue through this thesis that my respondents are - or are in the process of becoming - hybrid and that they are able speak from different cultures and histories.

As one of the primary arguments in this thesis is to argue that identity for some second generation British Bangladeshi young women is not fixed and static, it is useful to think of identity in terms of movement, or as Ballard (1994) has suggested, in terms of 'navigation.' I adopt this concept of 'navigation', arguing that it occurs primarily through language. Feminist research, particularly Bhavnani and Phoenix (1994), prove especially useful in understanding the fluidity of identity, especially

when a young woman can be said to carry differing sets of cultural histories. Drawing upon Stuart Hall's work, they have described it in the following terms:

[I]dentity is not one thing for any individual; rather, each individual is both located, and opts for a number of differing, and at times, conflictual, identities, depending on the social, political, economic and ideological aspects of their situation – 'identity emerges as a kind of unsettled space... between a number of intersecting discourses. This conception of identity thus precludes the notion of an authentic, a true or a 'real self'. Rather, it may be a place from which an individual can express multiple and often contradictory aspects of ourselves, (1994: 9).

I will provide numerous examples throughout this thesis that illustrate the ways in which the identities of my respondents are indeed in continuous flux.. Moreover, Bhavnani and Phoenix's insistence that identities are multiple is especially relevant for my respondents, carrying, as they do, different histories.

For such reasons I want to use as a starting point for one of the main arguments of this thesis, Chandra Mohanty, who examines the status of immigrant South Asian women on entering Britain. Mohanty argues in a feminist reading of 'Other' women that

a homogenous notion of the oppression of women as a group is assumed, which, in turn, produces the image of an "average third world woman". This average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being 'third world' (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimised, etc). This I suggest, is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions (2011: 243).

My respondents are representative of Mohanty's argument, almost the opposite of the image put forth by some Western feminists; they are educated, articulate and have the freedom to make their own choices. At the same time, they

also belong to families who are supportive and transmit histories and values from a 'different' culture.

Moreover, as Mohanty argues, it is the 'consensual homogeneity of women' which alludes to a kind of diminishing of different women's histories and narratives (244). This is a space where women are perceived as 'exploited', 'harassed', 'weak' etc, and in which they become silenced, especially the case, as Mohanty argues, for so-called third world women. It is from this starting point that I want to focus on second generation British Bangladeshi Muslim women, insisting that voices should be heard.

Pratibha Parmar, in an important study on South Asian women in the 1970s and early 1980s, argues that first generation South Asian migrant women were pathologised in terms of their roles in their families. Indeed, their roles of domesticity and not leaving the house, for instance, impacted the immigrant mothers of my respondents. This issue, however, is not necessarily straightforward. I want to argue with Parmar against the stereotypical notions highlighted below:

[T]he image of Asian female domesticity and its related 'cultural patterns'... is 'theoretically' expounded by a number of sociologists, anthropologists and journalists. The specific literature on Asian women conceptualises them as non-working wives and mothers, whose problems are that they do not speak English, hardly ever leave the house, and find British norms and values ever more threatening as their children become more 'integrated' into the new surroundings. Their lives are limited to the kitchen, the children and religious rituals, and they are both emotionally and economically dependent upon their husbands. (1982:250)

In theorising about migrant mothers of my respondents, it is important also to examine their histories and the social relations and economic conditions they had prior to migration in order to understand their lives afterwards. In speaking about their relationships with their mothers, some of my respondents spoke of how they had 'changed' their mothers' outlook on life in a 'foreign' place. But daughters also acknowledged the immense struggles their mothers had to overcome in order to make their lives here and bring up their daughters.

An example of this can be seen in Kabeer's (2000) study of Bangladeshi women employed as garment workers in Tower Hamlets in London's East End and in Bangladesh. It is important in showing how female workers have moved gradually into the public sphere and have become empowered by earning their own money, particularly in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. In the second half of the study, Kabeer shows how first generation women migrants to England, with little education and knowledge of English might inhabit spaces within the home as garment workers.

My study looks at a different socioeconomic group within the Bangladeshi community. The mothers my respondents were educated and have moved into the public sphere to work in professional capacities such as teachers and business owners etc for instance. Indeed, this is an aspect of the British Bangladeshi experience that might be a site for further research.

Chatterjee is one scholar who has begun to explore these issues, examining how some Bangladeshi mothers have overcome stereotypical notions and become part of the professional workforce. In a collection of stories, poems and short essays written by mainly first generation Bengali women, Chatterjee writes of her own experiences of the transitions that she made upon arriving in Sheffield from Bengal. She tells the story of how she came to England to join her husband, who was a professional, after their wedding. She describes her career prior to her marriage and then discusses the upheaval she experienced upon arriving in Sheffield. She writes:

I had been a teacher in a higher secondary school in Calcutta. The sudden change from being a busy schoolteacher to a full-time housewife in Sheffield made my life both boring and depressing.

I could not find pleasure in anything. Neither could I concentrate on my household duties. For convenience I started to wear trousers instead of sarees. This also caused me mental unease.

Just after two years I started to work in a private firm in Sheffield and from then on a change began to take place inside me – outwardly I was following English customs and inside my own home I was a pure Indian. Gradually 15 or 16 years passed by. People used to tell me, “You are one of us – not in any way a foreigner!” I also started to feel that I was a Sheffielder. In a way I fell in love with everything there – especially the people. (1990:82-83)

Then further on, reflecting upon her experience after moving back to India, she writes: [W]hile I was in England... I did not notice one thing – the influence of British culture on me. The latent influence of British culture tries to make itself felt every now and then' (83).

Chatterjee's story is similar to the stories of mothers of some of my respondents. There was often an initial unease and tension upon arrival to England, leaving family and familiarity behind for a country that was unsettlingly different to join her husband. Importantly, it was through work and her colleagues and friends telling her that she was part of them that Chatterjee began to feel accepted. Being accepted within their culture is an important issue for my respondents. Crucially, however, the conscious decision taken by Chatterjee, as a first generation migrant and part of a diaspora, to willingly and actively participate in this foreign country and culture, later led to her children being able to integrate into that culture and take it on as a part of their own identities. My respondents have voiced similar narratives relating to their own mothers.

In examining such processes, Avtar Brah's analysis of diaspora is illuminating:

[A]t the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey. Yet not every journey can be understood as a diaspora. Diasporas are clearly not the same as casual travel. Nor do they normatively refer to temporary sojourns. Paradoxically, diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots 'elsewhere'...multiple journeys may configure into one journey via a confluence of narratives as it is lived and re-lived, produced, reproduced and transformed through individual as well as collective memory and re-memory...As such, all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common 'we'. It is important, therefore, to be attentive to the nature and type of processes in and through which the collective 'we' is constituted, (2006: 443-444).

This is precisely what this thesis aims to investigate. I argue that it is through such journeys – and such re-settlings - that my respondents' narratives are formed.

I will argue it is important to understand the extent to which our first generation parents, in ways similar to Chatterjee, actively and willingly took on this

‘foreign’ British culture. Importantly, it is the narrations of their lives that we hear from our parents— both our mothers and our fathers, in their own voices and words — that might have a critical impact in helping the second generation to establish a sense of self in relation to these histories and an ability to navigate the tensions within the cultures we carry. Certainly, this has been the case for me. As children of the first generation, the young women in this thesis are able to listen to moments of tension and joy, for instance, from parents themselves, rather than from elsewhere, where emotions and meanings have the potential to get lost or misconstrued. Such intergenerational dialogue might help the second generation understand and emotionally connect with the histories of their parents, through oral traditions or, using Chatterjee as an example, through written accounts of their journeys.

Sometimes, the transition from feeling ‘alien’ to feeling accepted in a foreign land can take time. The change takes place *within oneself*, but often the feeling of acceptance takes a long time. However, as Chatterjee explains, ‘in spite of all this, there were also many times when I felt that I was not well accepted in that land. I began to think of coming back to my country of origin’ (1990:82/83).

Although she came to Sheffield from India, and as she later notes, she is Hindu, the emotions she describes prevailed amongst many of my respondents’ first-generation mothers and fathers. It was only after their children were born that many realized that there was more of a future for them in Britain than in India or Bangladesh and thus made the decision to stay (see Chapter 4). Mothers had to adapt to a way of life similar to that which Chatterjee describes.

In particular, for some first-generation mothers, the stress of the physical transition from India or Bangladesh is heightened by the change of *clothes*. Hence what is put onto the surface of the body necessarily has an affect upon the psyche, causing anxiety or unease. For instance, as we have seen Chatterjee talks about how changing the traditional sari for trousers caused her ‘mental unease’ (82).

However, I want to argue that if first-generation parents felt in any way distressed, they had the freedom to choose whether they wanted to continue to live in London, or, as in Chatterjee’s example, to go back to their country of origin. With the second-generation, however, if there is somehow a feeling difference, it is harder to move because Britain is the country of their birth. It makes the option of leaving much more difficult because we have become acculturated from a very early age, a process that is not always easy, as the accounts in this thesis illustrate. Indeed, there is an

amalgamation of historical cultures that have shaped a sense of self for such young women. As Puwar argues,

We find... so-called hybrid, pastiched, negotiated and ambiguous identities of young South Asian second-generation women... The mixing and matching characterised in the simultaneous donning of saris and trainers and ...as these figures are seen to project the archetypal global cultural subject, one that is beyond borders, in flux and highly syncretic. (2004: 31)

This is similar to Said's argument that no-one today is 'purely any one thing', but belong to many differing histories (2006: 98). It is necessary to further investigate the psychic dimensions involved in creating a sense of self for the young women whose accounts are considered here.

None of my respondents wear the hijab and it could be argued that they are therefore not 'visibly' Muslim. They adhere to, however, varying degrees of religiosity and, as the empirical chapters of this thesis will argue, (most notably Chapter 7), specific items of clothing might be worn for various reasons. Although religion remains an important point of focus for some of my respondents, it is not the central point of focus for this research. I argue in line with Ahmad that despite

developments and acknowledgements towards reflexivity, persistent and deterministic themes and structures such as religion, 'arranged marriages' and the hijab and veiling remain central points of focus as far as studies on British South Asian Muslim women are concerned, limiting the scope of discourse on British Asian and Muslim families. (2004:45)

Further to this, it is important to highlight that where religion and its expression becomes vital to certain second generation young women, it acts as a strength and a resource against those forms of 'orthodoxies' which she finds restrict her movement in and between different cultures. Indeed, as Takhar argues

the importance of religion, most notably Islam, in some South Asian women's struggle for equality and freedom is noticeable; a religious framework can be used to overcome oppression and to gain rights... Some Muslim women use

their religious loyalties to argue for equality within the religion, to contest religious orthodoxies. (2004:222)

It is such notions of familial discourse and histories and how they affect the second generation women's psyche which the next section will examine.

Second Generation British Bangladeshi Young Women Carrying Psychosocial Histories

I argue that relationships within the family are a crucial point of focus. This is because it is mainly through the family that a sense of Bangladeshi culture is understood and embedded within second generation young women's sense of themselves. This understanding of culture and negotiating one's position within it is a continuous process.

In order to understand the types of histories, customs and traditions that are kept alive, it is necessary to explore the psychosocial framings that might have underpinned parents' transitions through migration. It is important to investigate how these histories might be passed onto their children, and why establishing dialogue is important in the identity formation of their second generation daughters.

In order to investigate such psychic processes, it is necessary to briefly examine the work of Erikson, before specifically looking towards psychoanalytic arguments from a South Asian perspective. Erikson argues that psychic development constitutes a life long process, rather than stopping at a fixed point. This insight is critical in understanding migrant parents' struggles upon entering a new space, and how this is later understood by their second generation daughters. As Erikson argues

[T]he process of identity formation emerges as an evolving configuration – a configuration that gradually integrates constitutional givens... favoured capacities, significant identifications, effective defenses... and consistent roles. All these, however, can only emerge from a mutual adaptation of individual potentials, technological world views, and religious or political ideologies, (1997:74).

For Erikson, the process of identity formation is ‘for the most part unconscious except where inner conditions and outer circumstances combine to aggravate a painful, or elated, “identity-consciousness.”’ He insists that ‘identity is never “established” as an “achievement” in the sense of a personality armour, or of anything static and unchangeable’ (1997:20).

Erikson is important because he argues that psychic development (and developing a sense of identity and of self) is an ongoing process that does not stop until the last phase of development in old age. But it is not solely an individual process. Rather the development of one’s psyche is also dependent upon interaction with others, (this will be looked at further in speaking of the community). As Erikson argues, ‘there is the psychic process [of] organizing individual experience by ego synthesis (psyche); and there is the communal process of the cultural organization of the interdependence of persons (ethos)’ (1997:26).

Following on from the assertions above, I argue that if the individual develops psychically throughout their life, then circumstances such as migration might mean a disruption or diversion in one’s own development. For example, with relation to my sample of young women, migration can disrupt parents’ own psychic development and they can in turn experience their own lives through their children, especially if they enjoyed a relatively comfortable life prior to moving to London. We can see this embodied, as well, in Chatterjee’s experience of ‘mental unease’ upon coming to the UK. Moreover, this might be the case where immigrant parents wish their children to be brought up in a certain way or study certain subjects in order to pursue certain types of jobs (see Chapter 4). There are some limitations to Erikson’s work in relation to this thesis, however, in that theoretically it is unable to address questions of cultural histories and the movement, uprooting and regrounding of roots that constitute migration. I will discuss this in more depth momentarily.

Kakar’s focus on South Asian psychic development is also of relevance. He argues that the methods used by the parent in raising their child are reflective of the culture they have been brought up in themselves. Although this idea might ring true, I want to examine this further in the context of my second generation Bengali respondents and their parents, asking what happens when children are brought up in a culture which differs from those our parents were brought up in.

I explore how second generation young women understand their parents' histories and how these histories might be passed onto their daughters. On this question, Kakar argues that:

Cultural traditions... are internalised during childhood in the individual's superego... it becomes the vehicle of tradition and if all the age-long values which have been handed down in this way from generation to generation...mediated through persons responsible for the infant's earliest care, cultural values are, from the beginning, an intimate and inextricable part of the *ego*... The development of the ego... cannot be comprehended except in its interdependence with the society into which an individual child is born, a society represented at the beginning by the mother and other culturally-sanctioned caretakers. (1981:11)

Familial and cultural histories, are passed down through generations of the superego. As Kakar has argued, how the mother brings up her child is reflective of the culture she belongs to. Indeed, the mother represents the culture from which she, as the primary carer, comes from. With regard to the young women in my own sample, who have been brought up by immigrant mothers, they have been given a certain ethics, a certain sense of morality, which has been brought over from Bangladesh. This also includes a religious identity in some part. Indeed, there are different ways of expressing religiosity and spirituality that are not always visible. My thesis aims to bring to the fore a new way of looking at such women.

The question necessarily arises as to what happens if the child lives, or comes to live, in a space that has different cultural histories from the ones that her parents were brought up in. If one brings to the fore the notion of 'cultural navigation' (Ballard, 1994), then it might be plausible to say that *both* cultural histories are learned by the child. But this happens in different 'times,' as first the child is in the care of her Bengali mother and she then later goes to school, where she is taught things specific to the culture her parents have migrated to. I argue that the ease with which she is able to understand and navigate these different cultural contexts, and her own place within them, depends upon the relationship the young woman has had and has with her family (her parents, in particular) and later the outside world, beginning with school and latterly work. Indeed, as Kakar argues:

It is now generally accepted that the newborn infant brings with him an innate capacity or readiness to adapt to any culture into which he may be received. His innate potential for growth, for learning, for relationships, can normally be expected to unfold in culturally appropriate ways in the course of interaction with the world around him...the arc of growth in terms of the individual's reciprocity with his social environment, where, for a long time, the members of his family are the critical counterplayers. (1981:pp10-12)

In order to understand how the present day second generation living in London understand themselves from a psychosocial perspective, it is necessary to understand the history that our parents might harbour. This will give an understanding of 'culturally appropriate ways of interaction', as Kakar puts it, when they were growing up in the aftermath of the British Raj. Indeed, 'cultural navigation' might indeed be an 'older' concept that our parents might have been familiar with, rather than one that only the second (and later) generations understand. The complexities with which such histories are understood by a daughter of second generation, and notions of how such histories might indeed shape and correspond to a sense of self is highlighted by Bhabra:

[I]dentities... correspond to particular cultures and it is through the processes of defining and maintaining the boundaries of the groups to which individuals belong that cultural identities are constructed. The idea [is] of cultural identity being based on an understanding of a stable internal identity coupled with a desire to maintain difference against the 'other.' (2006:33)

In order to understand specifically what types of psychic histories the first generation have carried with them prior to migrating to an unknown space, it is necessary to explore notions of psychoanalysis in relation to colonial India and specifically the region of Bengal (later Bangladesh) through the work of Nandy.

Nandy (1995) has argued that the discipline of psychoanalysis had a profound effect upon the educated middle class in British India, by looking at the work of the first 'non-Western' psychoanalyst. Although this brings to light how psychoanalysis was adopted in a non-Western country by non-Western people, it is important to bear in mind that India at the time of description was under British colonial rule. Indeed,

Indian encounters and cultural interchanges... were without doubt governed by the power relationships of colonialism and race, but class, gender and religion were also important determining factors. The picture of their life is complex, with a diversity of experiences, reactions and responses.(Visram, 2002: 354)

This might somehow have affected how our own parents, who grew up during the aftermath of colonial rule, were brought up, the traditions and customs they harbour, and might incidentally pass onto their children.. In speaking specifically of Bengal, Nandy argues

Bengal was the region where colonial intrusion was the deepest and the most disruptive in South Asia. Calcutta was not only the capital of British India, it was the second largest city in the empire and probably the liveliest market place of ideas from the East and the West in the world... Education and law [for instance]... had entered the interstices of Bengali society and created a flourishing westernised middle class that sustained a variety of cultural forms, neither exclusively western nor Indian. (1995: 113)

If Bengal was at the heart of the interchange of 'Eastern' and 'Western' ideas, those who lived there experienced cultural interchange, similar to that which the second generation might encounter in London. For our parents' and grandparents' generations, however, the British were in India, whereas for their second generation daughters (and those who come later), the Bangladeshis are in Britain. These histories, which second generation young women carry, can be expressed through dialogue, passed from parents and grandparents through oral traditions. Such histories might come to the fore not only through dialogue, but also through bodily responses to certain events in the family, for example. Indeed, this is important because, as Brah, argues, 'effects of social relations cannot be expunged that easily, for we carry their traces in our psyche' (1996:5).

More important is the notion that different cultural understandings make up part of the parents' own histories, in a similar but paradoxically different way to their daughters. As Nandy explains,

[L]iving in two worlds is never easy, [my italics] and the new middle class in Bengal had lived for decades with deculturation, the break-down of older social ties, and disruption of traditional morality. In response to these, the class had even produced a series of highly creative social thinkers and reformers who sought to design new worldviews and new moral visions for fellow-Indians. (1995:113)

It can be argued that belonging two worlds, these parents had become transnationals, even prior to their migration. They bring with them fluid memories and particular historical cultures, that had they stayed in Bangladesh, would have moved on. Such histories are embodied and understood to varying degrees by their daughters.

It must be stressed, however, that there are shortcomings when applying solely this theory to the narratives of my respondents. It is therefore necessary to investigate some of the postcolonial trajectories that have emerged from the tensions of migration, and that, as second generation British Bangladeshi Muslim young women, we too, come to inherit. These, in part, will be examined in the following section.

Bangladeshi Diasporic Carried Histories

It is important to understand how histories they carry shape the positions from which these particular British Bangladeshi Muslim young women speak. For example, through the work of Bhabha (2006) and Spivak (2011), subjectivity is constructed through language, which allows for the second generation young woman to inhabit different positions of speaking. However, if a sense of self for these young women might be constructed through language, there is a notion of a danger of subjectivity as being or becoming dispersed if language is not spoken.

I wish to argue that the complexities my respondents face cannot all be understood through language. What happens when there is a lack of language? It suggests that positionalities exist in relation to something or something else, which cannot always be defined using language.

One of the main arguments for this thesis is Bhabha's argument for heritage as a transformative and continuous process of understanding a sense of self. To inherit

culture, constant change and transformation occurs, especially when one lives in a different place from that in which their parents grew up. I want to argue for this idea that we are constantly in a transformative process, whilst carrying differing histories (which are transforming themselves), as well as navigating in, between and through these histories.

Stuart Hall has argued that multiple identities emerge from diasporas. Indeed, Hall argues that such people who belong to more than one culture

have succeeded in remaking themselves and fashioning new kinds of cultural identity by, consciously or unconsciously, drawing on more than one cultural repertoire. They are people who belong to more than one world, speak more than one language (literally and metaphorically), inhabit more than one identity, have more than one home, who have learned to negotiate and translate between cultures, and who, because they are irrevocably the product of several interlocking histories and cultures, have learned to live with, and indeed to speak from, difference. (2006:427)

This ‘remaking of the self’ is important to investigate since differing cultural histories impact my respondents, and it could be argued that identity is malleable to different cultural situations, especially when they are divergent in history. This is particularly important in understanding the histories that are passed on from migrant first generation parents to their daughters of second generation. As Brah observes, ‘identity... is an enigma which, by its very nature, defies a precise definition’ (1996:20).

Werbner’s arguments on transnationalism are helpful in examining the ways in which migrant parents pass on these histories to their children, traversing generational and national boundaries.

[T]ransnationals are people who move... in order to create collective ‘homes’ around them wherever they happen to land. There is no question of simply replicating culture here... Transnationals are also cultural hybrids, but their hybridity is unconscious, organic and collectively negotiated in practice... Most translocals have to contend with incredible social and economic hardships, and they draw on culturally constituted resources of sociality and

mutual aid for survival. They actively construct 'community' to shield them from racist rejections, but also compete for honour, to have fun, to worship, and to celebrate – together – collective rites of passage or ceremonies of nostalgic remembrance for a lost home. (1997:12)

The notion of 'community' highlighted above is of significance for the young women who have spoken in this study. My respondents are connected to the 'community' - a skewed term as I will examine further in chapter 3 - through the family, whether they consciously want to be or not. The nostalgia associated with the coming together of the community is felt by the first generation, which has travelled vast distances to come to London, and eventually settle here to give birth to the next generation. The cultures that are given to us are also reminiscent of a specific time of their arrival. They are complex and multi-layered, having many elements of histories, and shifting boundaries. As Homi Bhabha argues, 'cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in relation of Self to Other' (2006:156).

For most of the young women in my sample of interviewees, expectations between the respective cultures of Bangladesh and Britain differ, given that each culture has distinct sets of codes that one needs to learn. Learning to operate within these codes becomes easier as one gets older. That is not to say, however, that tensions never arise in deciphering which cultural historical behaviour is appropriate for which context, as the young women in this study have pointed out.

Ballard discusses this process of 'code-switching,' as well as its possible tensions, is discussed in more depth.

Just because they do not follow a single given set of conventions, all cultural navigators must constantly decide how best to behave in any given context, while also finding some means of switching smoothly from one to the next ... A switch of arena, along with an associated switch of linguistic and cultural codes, can be quite straightforward. But problems may arise when one is known to have switched codes, and where behaviour in the second arena takes a form which is regarded as unacceptable from the perspective of the first... Thus, code-switching is much more a problem for the beholders than for the actors themselves. (1994:31)

The ways in which we learn to behave in different historical cultural settings are instilled through our parents, who themselves might have navigated complex cultural contexts, albeit in a different way to their children in a different clime, as previously discussed. This, I argue, may even make the position of their own children, as cultural navigators, easier to understand. Dialogue between generations might thus prove to be a key factor in establishing a relationship between each respective generation, in which they are able to understand one another and the positions they occupy.

Dialogue also helps to negate misunderstandings or certain hostilities that each culture may have towards the other. Ballard comments that

although most young Britons of South Asian descent have therefore become very skilled in moving back and forth between all manner of ‘English’ and ‘Asian’ arenas, they still face all sorts of dilemmas. These arise not so much because the underlying value-premises of the arenas in which they participate are different, but rather because each side has a markedly negative perception of the other. (1994:31)

This is interesting because my research has shown that this is not always the case – it might depend upon how well, or to what extent the *parents* of the young women are integrated into British culture, and how this is understood by their children. It might also depend upon how parents speak about this integration with their children inside the privacy of the home, and the types of jobs that both the young women and the parents have. My sample of young women belong to families in which the parents work in professional sectors. My research thus suggests that the choices my respondents make and the ways they fit into British culture are affected by how their first generation parents fit into this culture. .

How friends and associates of the young women view their parents also shapes the extent to which they are able to smoothly navigate their different cultural arenas. For example, one of my interviewees, Sujata, went to a private school and lived in an area where most of her friends and peers were ‘white’ and sneered at her mother’s accent and manner. It was only once she progressed through school and made other friends who were also second generation Asian with whom she shared similar experiences and histories that she felt comfortable with who she was. The relationship with her mother became less tense.

This thesis explores such experiences through Spivak's notion that we speak in a particular voice from a specific historical position. If a space for a person is written by history, she writes, it must be specific to that person (1990: 68). In my analysis, 'histories' refer to those of the family, which these young women come to carry. But at the same time, I argue that our positions are shaped specifically by the fact that we, as second generation young women, come to inhabit differing cultural spaces in ways distinct to our migrant parents. Inhabiting space unfamiliar to our parents, we thus create our own histories forged through our own lived experiences, which this thesis will explore.

As I will examine further, as they grow older the respondents come to understand their own identities in relation to the experiences they have had whilst growing up. Melucci's observations are useful here. He writes:

individuals find themselves enmeshed in multiple bonds of belonging created by the proliferations of social positions, associative networks and reference groups... [moreover]... We... find ourselves caught up by the paradox where choice becomes destiny because it is impossible not to choose among the options available. (1997: 61, 63)

The enmeshing of bonds for the young woman of second generation Bengali Islamic heritage might mean, as Melucci argues, that she is able to occupy various (historical) positions, from where she is able to speak in a number of voices, and from the various cultural and familial histories that she carries. Furthermore, the new positions she comes to occupy as she grows older, in spaces where these histories are unknown, play an important part.

In this way, for my respondents, the histories of their parents and those of the culture they live in make up different parts of themselves and shape their identities. These young women are and become 'hybrid'. Indeed, it is as Kalra et al. argue,

[h]ybridity is an evocative term for the formation of identity; it is used to describe innovations of language; it is a code for creativity and for translation... With relation to diaspora, the most conventional accounts assert hybridity as the process of cultural mixing where the diasporic arrivals adopt aspects of the host culture and rework, reform and reconfigure this in

production of a new hybrid culture or hybrid identities... Whether talk of such identities is coherent or not, hybridity is better conceived of as a process than a description. (2005: 71)

This argument that hybridity is a continuous process is similar to the arguments put forward by Erikson, which we examined earlier, that psychic development is also an ongoing process. In relation to my respondents, this study aims to understand the processes of understanding 'self-image' and identity not only in relation to oneself, but also in relation to 'interaction with others' (Papastergiadis, 2004: 14).

The spaces in which this might happen can be seen as a somewhat ambiguous space, especially when there is constant movement between them, forming an amalgamation of cultural histories and an interweaving of narratives. This amorphous space might be similar to what Bhabha calls his 'Third Space', which he describes in the following way,

it is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew. (2006:157)

This notion of 'Third Space' is important in understanding the complexities of my respondents' identities and social positioning. It is through, I argue, the notion of navigation through language and familial interactions that these young women might translate and rehistoricize cultural signs, not just reading them, as Bhabha describes, but reading them anew. This reading of cultural nuances in turn shapes the ways in which she understands herself.

To reflect on these processes further, in the next section I will explore how first generation diasporic parents have become acculturated into a space 'foreign' to those in which they grew up.

Along the lines of 'Bangladeshi Adaptability'...?

Literature on Bangladeshi women often depict them as being from particular locales in both Bangladesh and London; they are usually, if not exclusively, from a village in Sylhet and live in the East London borough of Tower Hamlets (Gardner, 2002; Gardner, 1991; Ali, 2004; Fruzzetti, 1990; Adams, 1994). My research disavows such stereotypes of Bangladeshi women, especially those of the second generation, by arguing that Bangladeshis also have divergent cultural histories and live in various parts of London. Here, I am mindful of Stuart Hall's reflection that 'diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference' (2006: 438).

Bangladesh does not only consist of Sylhet, and neither do all the Bangladeshi families who live in London reside in Tower Hamlets. As these facts are so often obscured, I have not focused my study on the area of Tower Hamlets, nor are my respondents exclusively from the region of Sylhet in Bangladesh. Rather, they are from the many districts that make up Bangladesh (see table in Chapter 3).

As discussed in Chapter 1, Bangladesh gained independence in 1971 and with this there was a new influx of Bangladeshi migrants into Britain and elsewhere, bringing a 'new diaspora which nominally arose due to the creation of [a] new nation' (Kalra et al, 2005:19). Importantly, the respondents for my study belong to families in which there is an emphasis upon gaining higher degrees and obtaining work in professional capacities, and in which most of the parents belonged to professional backgrounds prior to migration. Khondker explains this in terms of a 'bhadralok class':

It is important to understand that bhadralok is more than a class, it is a status group. Literally, it means 'the gentleman class', a category that some of the intellectually-orientated British civil servants-cum-historians coined to describe the social structure of Bengali... Migration for many Bangladeshis was seen as an escape from the economic hardships of their native land, it was also a social ladder to become a member of the 'bhadralok' class in the shortest possible time. Yet in climbing the social ladder, many of them had to work hard and manually. (2010:131)

Khondker has explored of the Bangladeshi diaspora across different countries and continents, from America to Europe to the Middle East and Asia. He has found that often, many Bengalis tend to be 'homebound.' In citing migrant Bengali, particularly Bangladeshi histories, Khondker argues that,

Bengalis, and by implication, Bangladeshis, have a reputation for being homebound. In fact, a BBC survey conducted in 2006 revealed that a very large number of Bangladeshis are happy to remain homebound. The aftermath of the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 was a trying time for many Bangladeshis as a combination of forces, the ravages of war, the unfavourable global economic situation and an inexperienced – though well-meaning – administration, led to an economic decline. A sense of hopelessness and a wide gap between the high expectations and dismal achievements created frustrations and many Bangladeshis sought an exit option... [diasporic Bengali-speaking Bangladeshis] are not all in self-exile but they have scattered – in search of a good life for some, in search of mere survival for others. (125)

Bearing the above in mind, and since it is vital to acknowledge that there is a diaspora of Bangladeshis in other places than the UK, it is important to look briefly at the diasporic experiences of first generation Bengalis in places other than England. Whether there are similar patterns in lifestyle choices, acculturation and navigation over different generations will potentially be the focus for further comparative research. It must be emphasized however, that as Mishra argues, 'constructed homes for diasporas and people actually living in the homelands are very different, for an Indian in the diaspora, for instance, India is a very different kind of homeland than for the Indian national' (2006:449). This insight into the complex relationship between homeland and migrant is also important for Bangladeshis in diaspora, as I will examine further later.

Flagstad Baluja (2003) has researched first generation Bengali immigrants to Queens, New York, where many families from fairly privileged backgrounds in Bangladesh have shifted and are hoping for a better life. Upon their arrival however, many are compelled to search for employment in areas other than in their specialisations, for instance in convenience stores. Thus in their transition from

Bangladesh to New York, there is a loss in status, which may or may not be achieved again.

Sultana (2008) discusses first generation Bangladeshi migrants to Malaysia, who, like those destined for New York, migrate to the country for purposes mainly related to employment. Similarly, a certain level of integration is required in order to survive in a new country. In Malaysia, however, it is only professionals or businessmen who are allowed by the government to bring their spouses with them into the country. Thus many first generation Bangladeshis migrating to Malaysia are developing 'inter-ethnic marital bonds', which Sultana argues is 'an advanced stage of integration' (2008:278).

As I argued earlier, it is necessary for first generation Bangladeshis migrants to integrate into the cultures and spaces they have migrated into, otherwise they are unable to make a living for themselves; it is crucial for adapting. They make a new culture for themselves, bridging together different cultures, although in a manner distinct to their second generation daughters, who carry the histories of different cultures from earliest childhood. In the case of first generation migrants hybridity is created as a tool for survival. Of this, Sultana argues,

[t]ransnational spaces can be defined as hybrid on the ground that these have been constructed by the reflection of the Bangladeshi lifestyle and its combination with local lifestyles, though migrants live geographically apart. Actually, Bangladeshi migrants not only change their residences and try to adjust to a new country, they also bring with them Bangladeshi social and cultural lifestyles and continue these through the maintenance of regular transnational contacts. Therefore, a 'mixed or hybrid migrant culture' has developed which I noticed as well in my study areas that on the one hand help Bangladeshis to adapt and survive in a foreign country and on the other, provide opportunities for a long-term stay or settlement (as they can enrich their future life)...Migrants belong to and visit these hybrid transnational spaces in order to accumulate local knowledge on the probable options for survival and upward mobility, where some of them become successful, while others remain unsuccessful. (2008: 279)

With a new residence in a 'foreign' country, with unfamiliar different languages, customs and traditions, there is a mixing of cultural histories. Furthermore, however, we can argue that the mixing of local knowledges with the histories that the migrant has brought with them also affects the migrant on a psychic level. Reminiscent of Nandy's arguments which we examined above, Sultana takes the notion of first generation Bangladeshi hybrid culture further by giving a glimpse into the realm of migrant psychology. She writes:

[The first generations'] psychological state... can be defined as 'transnational mental space'. In their mind they connect home and abroad together while emphasizing the kinship ideology of Bangladesh and practising this ideology within their networks of strong ties (in their receiving country). (2008: 280)

Parents of first generation have come to settle in an unfamiliar space but many still maintain links with the culture they have come from. Indeed, Alam's 1988 study of the Bangladeshis who settled in London's Tower Hamlets in the 1960s and 70s reflects this 'transnational mental space.' He found that these migrants' future plans and aspirations often remained tied to Bangladesh even after settling in the UK

[f]ollowing the questions on the period of arrival and status on arrival, I asked about their original reasons for coming to Britain and their future plans. [Some] said they came here to gain higher qualifications and/or experience, [very few] stated that they wanted to work here. All [of the respondents] stated that they had planned to return home after this plan had been fulfilled (when first arrived). None of them is now sure [in 1988] of return, and their reasons for staying in Britain can be summed up as 'to give the children a better education.' (1988: 35)

Migrants who came to the UK with qualifications were often able to join the professional working body in London and more widely in the UK. Entrepreneurs opened restaurants and travel agencies, whilst there were also teachers, doctors and accountants amongst others. As Eade has found, some of these migrants, whilst those working in Tower Hamlets, owned property in other, more wealthy London boroughs

(Eade, 1990). It is these 'highly skilled' first generation migrants who would become parents to the young women I have interviewed for this research.

Out of the histories our parents have brought over and given to us has emerged a sense of 'community'. And, although this is a skewed term, a sense of community might take the place of the family whom parents have left behind. As Asghar's (1996) work reflects, intergenerational dialogue can be explored through the programmes and functions of such organisations as Bengali International, originally set up by first generation immigrant parents. By coming together as a community, migrant parents have re-positioned their own voices, which allow their daughters to speak from different cultural historical positions. Indeed, as Treacher argues,

[the] lexicon of safety is... about placing oneself in a map of being and understanding the beings of others which is always by necessity in process... It is the stuff of words which keep memories, feelings and atmospheres buoyant. This is not just a private affair, for we need to keep the memories and speech of others to sustain our internal lives. (2000: 98-99)

For the young women whom I have interviewed for this research, it is their parents who have given them a sense of Bangladeshi culture and history. Associating with the Bangladeshi community has also helped to pass on a sense of cultural histories. Community organisations that host cultural events, which help foster this collective acknowledgement of culture and history help determine whether the second generation embrace or abandon such cultural traditions.

Examining the formation of community organisations in London, Asghar (1996) has argued that for many first generation Bangladeshis and north-eastern Bengali speaking Indians, there was a sense of loneliness upon arrival to London. To escape such loneliness and create a sense of solidarity and unity from the often brutal racial harassment that some of the first generation encountered in London, migrants came together to set up Bengali organisations. Such organisations, I argue, form what Benedict Anderson has termed 'imagined communities', described as such because 'the members... will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (2006:125). While it is not possible for every Bengali that is affiliated to such organisations to know each other personally, there is the common history of

migration, diaspora, war and Partition that such members carry and feel. Such histories and feelings are also transmitted to second generation women, through cultural functions, for instance. This is something that Brah also reflects upon:

home... connotes our networks of family, kin, friends, colleagues and various other 'significant others'. It signifies the social and psychic geography of space that is experienced in terms of a neighbourhood or a home town. That is, a community 'imagined' in most part through daily encounter. This 'home' is a place with which we remain intimate even in moments of intense alienation from it. It is a sense of 'feeling at home.' (1996:4)

Indeed, the notion of 'home' is a constant restructuring of what to hold onto and what to let go of. And it is through notions of the community that we sometimes establish how to do this letting go and holding onto.

In my previous research (Mia, 2004), I have asked how cultural community organisations, such as Bengali International, help second and third generation children to recognise a sense of collective 'Bengaliness'. I argue that belonging to a community through such organisations might give a sense of cultural security, like that which Brah describes. It was through, in some cases, belonging to and actively taking part in, for instance, Bengali language and music classes run by first generation parents that many such young people took an interest in Bangladeshi culture, its histories and traditions. This interest in Bangladeshi culture was also fostered through interactions with relatives in Bangladesh and the 'networks' within the family. On the other hand, I argue that the community constantly negotiates and re-negotiates its boundaries in deciding who is allowed to enter and this is in a constant state of flux. It is a contested space, the problematics of which emerge throughout my respondents' accounts. Such problematics have been succinctly outlined by Yuval-Davis:

The notion of 'the community' assumes an organic wholeness... [it] is perceived as a 'natural' social unit. It is 'out there' and one can either belong to it or not. Any notion of internal difference within the 'community', therefore is subsumed to this organic construction. It can be either a functional difference, which contributes to the smooth and efficient working of 'the community' or it is an anomaly, a pathological deviation. Moreover, the 'naturalness' of the

community assumes a given collectivity with given boundaries – it allows for internal growth and probably differentiation but not for ideological and material reconstructions of the boundaries themselves. (1994:181)

I will now give an example of how the community might indeed be wary of changes to the ‘naturalness’ of its collectivity and its assumed smooth and working order. The example is taken from a conversation between two gentlemen in their seventies who are both of first generation and fathers of second generation professionals. One is the father of a daughter who is a medical doctor (and who has married outside of the Bangladeshi community), and the other is the father of a teacher. The conversation between the two friends was about the daughter of an absent friend who had chosen to co-habit with a Swedish man. The father of the doctor was arguing that even though these were ‘changing times’, such behaviour – for a young woman to live with a man outside of marriage – was unacceptable in his understanding of Muslim Bangladeshi culture. This exemplifies Yuval-Davis’s argument that although there might be internal growth, there is not always necessarily an ‘ideological reconstruction of boundaries’ (181).

On the other hand, it is necessary to recognise that some members within a community are able to associate with different historical experiences, which others within the same community might not be able to embrace. For example, as Yuval-Davis (2006) argues, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh who might not have been friendly with each other in other circumstances, might be forced into some sort of collective upon migrating. Indeed, my respondents identify as Asian rather than just Bangladeshi and it within the South Asian collective that origins in terms of country are brought forth.

Here again, the notion of navigating through and between differing cultural histories and a multiplicity of identities becomes relevant. As Anthias argues,

you may identify but not feel that you ‘belong’ in the sense of being accepted or being a full member. Alternatively, you may feel you are accepted and ‘belong’ but may not fully identify, or your allegiances may be split. Here it is useful to bring up the issue of multiple identities... Multiple identities may exist in a number of ways, such as in the sense of co-existence of different identities within one person... e.g. being both British and Asian. (2006:19-20)

My respondents have argued for a co-existence of multiple identities. They have identified as being both British and Bengali, as well as citing influences of Islamic culture as being crucial in understanding a sense of self. This understanding has gotten easier as my respondents have grown older and have become more aware of the nuances of the historical cultures they carry.

The next section will explore the different literatures relating to intergenerational dialogue as well as the historical positions of educated young women.

The Types of Relationships and Dialogues We Might Have with our Parents as Educated Second Generation Young Women

Roy's (1975) work focuses on Bengali Hindu women living in Calcutta and the stages of their lives from childhood to old age. Although focussing on Hindu women, the study can nevertheless be considered as embodying a part of the histories of second-generation British Bangladeshi Muslim young women, in particular, the histories of our mothers. I wish to focus on her argument that the women in her study had limited contact with men outside their immediate families, and thus viewed men in a particular light prior to their marriages. As our own mothers who have grown up in Bangladesh and north-east India, experienced similar circumstances, they might have tacitly passed some of these ideas onto their second generation daughters..

For example, a particular interviewee of my own sample told me that whilst growing up in London, she remembered her mother being very strict with her in that she was not allowed to 'mix' with boys. Her mother, who herself had grown up in a very middle-class family in Bangladesh, told the interviewee that she should not make friendships with boys because, in the mother's opinion, boys were 'bad' and always up to no good. This reasoning changed as the interviewee grew older. The interviewee suspected, however, later in her life, that her mother warned her against friendships with boys because they would lead to relationships, and there was a fear that her daughter might even end up pregnant (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Sometimes it can be a question of how certain histories are passed onto the second generation. It might be a question of establishing a type of dialogue which

establishes a relationship between the first and second generation. For instance, a parent becoming involved in their child's education, such as helping with homework, can be a means of establishing dialogue. Here the parent is able to convey some history to their child, but it is also a way into a culture that is 'different' and has distinct values and traditions. Such dialogue can potentially help to ease tension where different cultures might be hostile to each other.

Bhachu (1985) highlights the importance of parental interaction with their children as the latter try to acquire suitable qualifications to obtain places at universities and eventually find suitable occupations later on in their lives. This resonates with my own sample because the young women who have partaken in my interviews have all been encouraged to earn degrees and build their careers.

The findings of a recent report carried out by the Department of Work and Pensions on the attitudes of British Bangladeshi and Pakistani women to work and family are highly relevant in considering the intergenerational dynamics with which this thesis is concerned. The report shows that there is

considerable diversity in terms [of the women's] background, education, aspirations and career paths. The great variation in life histories and attitudes which [the] research has captured demonstrates that the lives of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women do not always fit into with stereotypical assumptions. Whilst marriage and children were themes which ran through most women's lives, the variety in all other areas of these women's lives was clearly apparent, with no two women telling the same story. (Aston et al., 2007:105)

This is precisely what I wish to show in this research. There is great diversity in how second generation young women belonging to the same community view themselves and their relationships. Whilst having some sort of commonality - in sharing similar histories through parental migration or being able to speak and understand the Bengali language, for instance - the ways and locations in which these young women have been brought up, how they relate to these histories and their parents, the class their families belong to, and the peers, friends and colleagues that have touched their lives all differ (see Chapter 3)

As this report suggests, attitudes are changing as the second (and third) generations become older and have the opportunity to actively engage in a culture that

may be different from that which they experience at home. This may be an opportunity that many of their first generation parents might not have had. Indeed,

[W]omen generally felt that the influence of generational and migrational background on attitudes and expectations was very strong, regardless of their own age and background. It was often felt that many second generation and younger women held less traditional views than their older relatives in terms of education and employment. Indeed, many of the younger second generation women in [the] research thought that their own experiences bore this out. Some said that they and some of their peers were subject to fewer constraints by family and community expectations in a number of areas of their lives. Aspirations around work and education were felt to be changing, and changing fairly rapidly. (105)

The notion of parents supporting their daughters in higher education is important. In Hussain and Bagguley's important study on South Asian women in higher education, they show how young women's attendance in universities has changed. Parents play an important part in encouraging their second generation daughters to successfully obtain at least a degree. They have found,

it is now normal and expected that many if not most young women from (South Asian) communities will go onto university with the active support and encouragement of their families. This is an image which clashes with the dominant political and media representations of South Asian Muslim women...the overall growth in South Asian women graduates, is a reflection of the success of South Asian women's negotiations with their parents regarding their higher education. They are increasingly obtaining the support of their parents for their decision to go to university and for their own choice of subject. (2007:141-142)

Although notions of the psychosocial and familial histories are not focused upon, Hussain and Bagguley's study shows how young South Asian women are able to understand their sense of self through education processes and familial support.

I argue that these processes and connections with ‘family kinship ties (for educated and professional achievers) allow for a negotiating and re-negotiating of their new positioning(s) within the public sphere’, (Ramji, 2004: 232). Mirza examines the negotiation of positions within the public sphere in relation to education. She argues,

[r]esearch on black women in education shows there is much evidence to suggest black women... redefine the world, have their own values, codes and understandings, refuse (not resist) the gaze of the other...[Moreover] they are collectively opening up transformative possibilities for their community through their pragmatic recognition of the power of education to transform and change the hegemonic discourse.. (1997: 275-276)

Furthermore, Shain looks closer at how young women themselves play an important role in structuring changing aspirations. It could be argued that school and education play a vital role in the establishment of one’s identity as a young woman is growing up. Shain makes us aware of what she terms as a ‘cultural pathology discourse’ that is associated with young Asian women, depending upon which part of Asia she might be from (2003: 125). This discourse views such girls and women as caught between diametrically opposed spaces.

Asian girls are characterised as caught between the two worlds of home, where they are restricted, and school, where they experience freedom...These communities have been accused of holding onto backward and barbarous practices that prevent girls from partaking in mainstream activities. (125)

According to Shain, Asian culture has been demonised and pathologised because from the ‘outside’ it appears to be a very patriarchal culture, in which women and girls are denied a voice. As the respondents’ accounts will reflect, the idea that Bangladeshi culture is always patriarchal is untrue.

However, it may be plausible to say that this is a class issue, where because of relative affluence, there are more opportunities available to daughters. All the young women who partook in this study have attained university degrees and have or are or on the verge of obtaining highly skilled jobs. Indeed, the young women in my sample

include teachers, journalists and accountants, and some work in the finance sector, to name but a few. They have shaped not only their careers but places in their respective social classes. Thus it could be argued that it is necessarily through the schooling and education system that such young women find and resolve issues of inclusion and exclusion, which might reflect their status in life when they are older. Indeed, Shain writes that

schooling plays a central role in filtering such discourses and is a site where wider relations of power and cultural definitions are both reinforced and challenged... [offering] powerful interpretations of what it means to be British – of belonging and non-belonging and inclusion and exclusion... They illustrate some of the ways that dominant definitions and cultural assumptions are both challenged and reinforced through formal and informal relations of schooling and the range of femininities that are (re)produced and struggled over in this process..(125-126)

Following on from the above, I argue that for my own sample, education has been very highly valued. They have been actively encouraged to pursue university degrees and then have been supported in their choice of career. Furthermore, it needs to be mentioned, the wider Bangladeshi community has not hindered the choices made by the young women in my own sample, but have generally come together to encourage them in their academic and intellectual pursuits.

Describing both the perception of and potential for intergenerational conflicts among British Asians, Brah writes that

the argument is presented along the lines that young Asians growing up in Britain internalise ‘Western’ values which are at variance with the ‘traditional’ world of their parents, youth comes into conflict with the parental generation. Undoubtedly, the potential for conflict may well be there, especially when the early years of parents and their children are separated not only in time, but also by country, so that the two age groups are exposed to differing cultural and political influences during their formative years. (1996:42)

However, as Seidler (2000) has explored, if parents harbour troubled or painful histories, though such histories may be silenced and unspoken, children can often 'feel' these histories through tensions within the family. The complex feelings that came out of moving from one place, and leaving behind one's life to settle in another for our parents of first generation can be felt in our own generation.

Through the establishment of dialogue, differences and potential tensions between generations and different communities have the possibility to be resolved. Moreover, it could be, as Brah has argued, that dialogue between generations within the family helps 'the psychic investments in emotionally charged bonds with family and relations' (1996:43).

Choudhury has found that the second generation women ('first' in my study – those who have immigrated into Britain; though it is unclear why she refers to this group as the second generation) in her study, spoke frequently of Bangladesh and with fond nostalgia, arguing that life in Bangladesh was far easier than life in London. They were surrounded by friends and family in Bangladesh, and were in a position where they could afford to hire help to assist with cooking, cleaning and child-rearing. In London, these women felt very much 'alone', and so, as Choudhury suggests, the structure of the family is very much different from the structure found in the Bangladeshi town or village (2008). The third generation, ('second' in my study – those who are the children of first generation immigrants), on the other hand, 'responded with negative aspects', although we are not told as to what these 'negative aspects' refer to (61). In part there is a suggestion from the young women in her study that religion (Islam) and culture had a tendency to get intertwined, and could not, in many cases, be separated.

Importantly, through their education, Choudhury's sample of third generation young women have carved out a new sense of identity which differs from their immigrant mothers. From here they are able to speak from different historical positions, and at the same time through establishing dialogue, negotiate and re-negotiate boundaries. Indeed, as Choudhury writes

the third generation have adopted the experiences of their previous generations and have in a sense created a new culture, wherein there are elements of religion, 'Britishness' and some Bangladeshi culture. At present, third generation Bangladeshi women are at a crossroads where they are, trying to

find and create their own identity... In comparison, the second generation have not changed their cultural lifestyle in order to suit their living circumstances post-immigration. They have preserved Bangladeshi culture as best they could and did not seek to amend it despite entering a society with different social norms. (40-41)

It has to be borne in mind however, that Choudhury's study was conducted with Sylheti women living in Tower Hamlets. This differs from my own study that investigates the lives of second generation Bangladeshi women from more affluent and middle class families and from various districts in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, the changing dynamics this study captures parallel those in the lives of my respondents.

It is interesting that in incorporating a sense of 'Britishness', the third generation women in Choudhury's study, can neither said to belong to their parents' culture, nor, in adopting the 'experiences of previous generations', can they be said to solely belong to 'British' culture. Instead, they manoeuvre between the two, and it is this that establishes a new and emergent culture. This is also apparent among my own sample of young women from more affluent backgrounds and families. Such young women are 'are adopting a new culture which is a synthesis of the 'old' and the 'new''(Anwar, 1998:192). Indeed, a key aim of this thesis is to examine how these young women have become or feel they are in a process of becoming what Roxy Harris has called 'Brasian'. As he argues,

they are active participants in, and co-constructors of, communities of practice which are dominated by their British inflections at the same time as incorporating elements drawn from, cultural practices symbolically associated with the residual/traditional originating from the global South Asian diasporas. (2006:168)

I will explore these processes and their transformational effects through my respondents' relationships with their parents, their school peers and romantic partners and through an examination of their experiences of travelling to their parents' homelands and with religion.

Bangladeshi Contexts – Conclusion

This chapter has examined some of the existing literature in relation to second generation British Bengali Muslim young women, their diasporic roots, the psychosocial dynamics of their histories, and community and intergenerational relations and dialogue. It has examined how such relations are negotiated and re-negotiated as these young women navigate through and between the cultural histories they carry, using the different languages they speak and/or understand. Such literature has proved useful to situate my own arguments.

The work of Erikson, Kakar, and Nandy are important in understanding the individual's development contextualised within family relations as well as the individual's own experiences. Spivak and Bhabha insist that it is through language the subject is constituted. Mindful of such insights, we can begin to understand how my respondents speak from and navigate through various histories. Indeed, they may be able to choose which historical standpoint they wish to speak from. The narratives in my empirical chapters thus point to a merging of cultural histories into something new.

This Literature Review gives an outline of how first generation women might feel upon their arrival to England, and the pressures and strains of leaving behind a culture they are so familiar with – and the possible effects this might have on second generation young women. Over time, however, such pressures may lessen. Chatterjee, the first generation woman whose narrative we considered earlier in this chapter, admits to British culture 'seeping in' to her way of thinking when she decided to move back to Bengal, India. This example has shown how the cultures that we carry are in constant flux and malleable, indeed for both immigrant parents and for their daughters. A creative space has the potential to be formed. This flux transforms a sense of self in that creative space.

This chapter also looks at what has been written about the impact of both the Bangladeshi community and the family in establishing the identity second generation young women, their attitudes to schooling, their perception of the world, and later the establishment of their careers. Many of my respondents have argued that the support of both the community and their families have proven vital in achieving certain goals. As we have seen, the stereotypical assumptions held previously, no longer fit these young women, who are becoming (or have already become) more affluent and

educated than previous research has shown. Conversely, it is through familial support and love, through establishing dialogue, that this has become possible, as both the literature discussed and the following empirical chapters try to show.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY - FINDING VOICES

This methodology chapter examines the processes of gathering and analysing data in trying to understand how my sample of young women relate to familial (and latterly communal) histories whilst at the same time trying to understand their ‘presentness.’ Whereas Chapter 2 outlined a theoretical framing of the thesis, this chapter aims to investigate the practical methodological implications of this specific research.

Through this chapter, I argue that the interview can act as a site where emotions may be expressed viscerally as well as verbally. Moreover, interviews can potentially act as spaces where respondents can further understand a sense of self, in which tensions are highlighted. Respondents may become aware of these tensions, both through speaking and affectively, through the body. But often, especially if unrehearsed, the interview can act as an interruption for the respondent. Notions of identification and empathy prove important, especially in understanding cultural and familial histories if these are shared by both the researcher and researched. It is in such spaces of speaking, I argue in this chapter, that the narratives of my respondents were produced.

This chapter outlines framings of qualitative research, ethnography and interviews following a narratological method. The reasoning behind this research is shown partly through demographics of Bangladeshis living in London. Their ‘scatteredness’ is understood in relation to a notion of an ‘imagined’ Bangladeshi community and examines the parts of London where data collation has taken place. Intergenerational dialogue is also of relevance when describing the methods employed in finding respondents. The problematics and uses of snowballing techniques in the ‘community’ are also considered here. In analysing the stories that play a crucial part in establishing a sense of self for these young women, narrative analysis proves important and highly useful. The processes of interviewing take into account interrupted spaces of affect in conveying complex emotions and experiences, as well as suggesting how speaking may act as a therapeutic strategy in re/negotiating a platform from which to speak. Moreover, notions of trust and leakage have proved illuminating from an ethical dimension for this project. My own position as both researcher and one who is part of the ‘community’ is called into question as being

ambivalent. The types of histories ‘carried’ are called into question as are notions that such painful histories are not always verbalised, but affectively communicated, thus understanding the relevance of intergenerational dialogue in this research.

A Glimpse into London’s Bangladeshi Demographics

The narratives recorded through this thesis, show a glimpse into a certain part of London’s Bangladeshi community as it is changing. It is important here, however, to understand where the Bangladeshis in the UK have come to live, which this section will explore. Moreover, the specifics of why I have looked at particular parts of London will be examined.

I decided to conduct this study in London, within the boundaries of the M25, since according to a study conducted by the Communities Department of the British Government in 2009, London is home to 142,931 Bangladeshi Muslims who constitute 23.5% of the total Muslim population, and make up the largest concentration of Muslim Bangladeshis in the UK. The second is located in the West Midlands, home to 29,069 Bangladeshi Muslims, constituting 13.4% of the total Muslim population, and the third is the North West, home to 24,182 Bangladeshi Muslims, constituting 11.8% of the total Muslim population (Change Institute, 2009: 29). However, the meaning of the particular numbers is not necessarily examined in government’s report. For example, the quantitative data does not exemplify which parts of Bangladesh they arrived from, the conditions in which they lived, the emotions surrounding their migration, nor the degrees of religiosities such migrants identify with.

As I argued in Chapter 2, it is vital to show the multiple parts of Bangladeshi culture, as many Bangladeshis have migrated from and to different places and under diverse circumstances. My thesis offers new insights into changing Bangladeshi society by looking at the areas of Wood Green, Woodford, Ilford and Gants’ Hill, as emerging spaces in which some professional Bangladeshi immigrants have chosen to make their homes. Differences between various areas might be the impetus for further and future research. This thesis will explore how notions of belonging, identity and integration are changing in specific parts of the Bangladeshi community.

Of the 142,931 Bangladeshis living in London, 62,059 live in Tower Hamlets, constituting 86.9% of the total Muslim population (30). My access as a researcher, through cultural functions and family friends led me to investigate these previously unresearched populations of Bangladeshis living in the London boroughs of Redbridge and Haringey. Redbridge (where Ilford, Gants' Hill and Woodford are located) has a Bangladeshi Muslim population of 3,971, (constituting 13.9% of the total Muslim population) and Haringey council (where Wood Green is located) is not listed (30). It was therefore important to examine the range and diversity of experiences of second generation British Bangladeshi Muslim young women living in London. This can serve as a starting point for potential further research into understanding intergenerational dialogue and familial relationships.

The next section examines the framings of the data that was gathered for this research, in explaining the project's qualitative and ethnographical elements.

Ethnographic Framings

This piece of research is qualitative in nature, and uses one-to-one semi-structured in-depth interviews to gather data. These interviews were conducted between 2006 and 2011 and have been taped, transcribed and coded according to themes that emerged within them. I have interviewed twenty young women who are the children of first generation Bangladeshi migrants to the UK and I employ a 'narratological' method. As Plummer argues, 'narrative structures enable our respondents to speak, and the multitude of fragmenting experiences that constitute our lives come to be patterned into some seeming sense of order' (2001:185).

This research is ethnographic in nature. As Geertz argues, 'doing ethnography is establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields' (1975:6). This piece of research establishes dialogue with its specific respondents and tries to understand the places which they inhabit as they speak, carrying differing cultural and familial histories. Fetterman argues that, 'ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture' (1998:1-2). Moreover, it is from the perspective of the insider that the ethnographer aims to describe a particular group or culture, as I have tried to do. They wish to present as close an account as possible of the native's perspective – whether it be the culture within a classroom or a

tribal group. The research is open, allowing for more depth, richness and understanding into what is being investigated (1-2).

There was a need to include young women who live in the suburbs of London and Essex, and who, as the Literature Review and the figures above have tried to indicate, are often underrepresented in the research literature on Bangladeshi Londoners, especially those who are second generation and young women. As a researcher who is placed in an ambivalent position, as I will discuss below, I try to gain access into my respondents' perspectives and convey their narratives as an 'insider'. This narratological and ethnographic approach allowed space to theorise about the processes of belonging to different cultural and familial histories at the same time and about navigating between these histories. Such an approach, furthermore, allows respondents to address emotional histories and helps to realise a platform from which such young women learn to speak. The 'insider-ness' of my research led me to question notions of what the 'community' might mean to my respondents, which the next section will explore.

Researching the 'Community' and Inter-generational Relationships

As I argued in the last chapter, the notion of 'imagined communities' underpins the way I conceptualise the Bangladeshi community in this project. Those partaking in this project – particularly the parents of the young women are connected through mediums of television networks, cultural functions and newspapers, but do not necessarily know each other. The 'community' thus becomes 'imagined'. For example, Soraiya, a twenty-nine year old journalist, speaks specifically of her father as being 'obsessed' with 'all things Bengali/Bangladeshi', watching the news, reading newspapers, whilst physically residing in London. Such activities, I argue, evoke a sense of emotional nostalgia. My respondents have, in speaking about notions of 'Bengaliness,' referred to relationships with their parents and latterly, with the wider Bangladeshi – imagined – community. The experiences of my respondents, however, are positioned within a space that somehow makes the 'imagined' real.

Indeed, through the 'imagined', real experiences are brought forth. It is impossible firstly, to know everyone in the Bangladeshi diaspora living in London, but I use this word here to refer to a network within the community. Secondly, the

different locales in London are home to distinct communities of the Bangladeshi diaspora, which might have differences in religious beliefs, class, attitudes towards gender and sexualities, for example. Bearing such differences in mind, I tried to keep my sample restricted to a small part of the second generation diaspora and have explored only a specific part of London. While among my twenty respondents there are important differences in experience, their *parents* are nevertheless of a similar class and work as professionals after facing and overcoming the tensions of migration. The young women in my sample do not all work, and thus it has been difficult to focus upon their professions. Those participants who do work, however, belong to professions in the fields of dentistry, accounting and finance, journalism, law and music.

As the focus on Tower Hamlets has meant that other geographical areas remain unexplored in the literature on British Bangladeshis, a further potential project might include examining class and background differences between boroughs. For this project, I have focussed on high-achieving young women, educated to or studying for at least degree level in British universities, whose parents work as professionals and migrated to England in the 1960s and 70s. This will be the impetus for further research on first generation migrant parents, as the experiences of this migrant group remain largely unexplored in the literature. My respondents all live at home, with the exception of one who lived both at home and intermittently in her own flat. They were between the ages of 20 to 30 and were unmarried at the time of interview. My respondents identify as Muslim with various levels of religiosities and religious beliefs, as I wanted to highlight religious diversities within my sample (see Chapter 7).

All participants were interviewed formally in a relaxed atmosphere, and in line with the ethical guidelines laid out in Goldsmiths' Code of Practice On Research Ethics (2005). There was no pressure on the young women to answer any questions they did not wish to. Each of the interviews was conducted once. As many respondents had limited availability, it reduced bias if all respondents were interviewed once. Interviews lasted for a minimum of 50 minutes. The table below gives an outline of the interviewees, their ages and occupations, where they live in London, the districts their parents have come from in Bangladesh and the occupation of their parents.

| Name and age | Occupation/Studying | Region in Bangladesh | Region in London | Occupation of Mother | Occupation of Father |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Sujata (28 years) | Dentist/Music teacher | Khulna | Woodford | Social Worker | Doctor |
| Raihana (25 years) | Accountant | Rajshahi | Gants' Hill | Housewife | Doctor |
| Lamia (23 years) | Medicinal Chemist | Barisal | Wood Green | Housewife | Banker |
| Tazeen (25 years) | Finance Sector | Faridpur | Ilford | Business Owner | Engineer (retired) |
| Sushmita (24 years) | Doctor | Pabna | Gants' Hill | Teacher | Lawyer |
| Khadija (21 years) | Undergraduate: Sociology | Comilla | Ilford | Teacher | Business Owner |
| Tamanna (26 years) | Teacher | Sylhet | Wood Green | Housewife | Engineer |
| Khaleda (22 years) | Masters: Sociology | Faridpur | Bow | Housewife | Business Owner |
| Soraiya (29 years) | Journalist | Sylhet | Wood Green | Housewife | Engineer |
| Shaila (24 years) | Dentist | Rangpur | Ilford | Teacher | Accountant |
| Mariam (25 years) | Doctor | Kushtia | Woodford | Housewife | Doctor |
| Nadia (23 years) | Teacher | Comilla | Gants' Hill | Business Owner | Business Owner |
| Tasneem (26 years) | Civil Servant | Barisal | Ilford | Housewife | Accountant |
| Aalina (22 years) | Undergraduate: Law | Sylhet | Ilford | Teacher | Engineer |
| Amira (26 years) | Dentist | Bogura | Woodford | Social Worker | Finance Executive |
| Hanifa (24 years) | Lawyer | Kushtia | Wood Green | Company Executive | Barrister |
| Mina (24 years) | Masters: Sociology | Kushtia | Ilford | Teacher | Engineer (retired) |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Mitali (27 years) | Finance Sector | Kushtia | Woodford | Housewife | Barrister |
| Shefali (28 years) | Accountant | Rajshahi | Gants' Hill | Teacher | Teacher |

The table follows Aston et al.'s (2007) assertions that attitudes to work and professions are changing over generations (see Chapter 2). The young women in the table can be seen to be following career paths that more closely relate to the professions of their fathers, whilst their mothers are primarily in roles that are more nurturing and caring. However, as we will see in the empirical chapters, the young women have spoken of receiving support from both their parents. In some cases, they have specified their mothers, in particular, as having a stronger emphasis on education and in mitigating misunderstandings between them and their fathers. Soraiya, for example, has spoken about her mother's wish to have her children educated and this overruled her father's desire to live in Bangladesh. Khadija, a twenty-one year old graduate whose father owns a restaurant, speaks of the complexity of her relationship with him and her mother's important interventions (see Chapter 4). It can be argued, furthermore, that the table reflects my use of Erikson's (1997) insights on psychic development, in showing that in some cases, mothers forego their own desires of obtaining employment to encourage their daughters into professional careers and, thus, in some way, live their aspirations through their children.

As noted, even though there might be some commonality in terms of languages spoken and migrational histories, there are differences in terms of how our parents settled in London, the parts of Bangladesh they have come from (as the table shows) and how they have established themselves in a 'foreign' land, which also affects their level of integration. The high-achieving young women in my own sample have been encouraged and educated to at least degree level by their migrant parents. In many cases, and this will be the impetus for further research, migrant parents of my sample 'lost' the status as middle-class professionals upon leaving Bangladesh, only to overcome struggle and hardship to later reclaim that status as professionals in London. Thus, I argue that the second generation daughter may indeed carry the aspirations of her family to become educated and successful so that the 'traumas' and struggles that migrant parents have faced do not affect her in the same ways. Perhaps consequently, the relationships second generation daughters have with their parents

might be a means of gaining insight into such histories. I have sought to do this not only by analysing the ways in which respondents speak of the relationships they have with their parents but also in the affective communication they have with me as a researcher in the interview situation, both in terms of things they have said and non-verbal communications - expressions, silences, etc. Potential tensions arising from notions of commonality and/or difference will be looked at in more depth in the empirical chapters.

Finding Participants and Snowballing in the 'Community'

Gaining access to my respondents involved a number of methods, including directly approaching young second generation Bangladeshi women whom I knew and explaining the purpose of the project. I always explained from the outset, sometimes via phone, sometimes in person, the types of questions that they would be asked and that the interview would be taped. Gathering participants also included attending community events to approach young women in attendance and snowballing by asking some older first generation women who were interested in my project and were eager to help. This also allowed engagement at cultural events with the histories that are shared between my participants and myself.

In gaining access to some interviewees, I was assisted by the first generation – aunties in particular. These are women of my mothers' generation, and it is out of respect that I call them 'auntie', rather than by their names. Belonging to their community, perhaps I reminded them of their own children and thus somehow 'became' their daughter. It could be argued that this was a means of bonding between women of different generations – between immigrant mothers and their British national daughters. While my stance as an 'insider' in the community allowed me to have such access, I also had to bear in mind the fine line between my being a researcher and belonging at the same time to the 'community' these women ascribed to. This is an example of the difficult and doubled position that I adopted. By asking, respectfully, of any young women that might be willing to be interviewed, I became aware of my own boundaries within the 'community' I researched. How much of the research I could divulge and issues of trust and leakage came to the fore, issues which are intricately bound up with the ways in which young women's behaviour is

surveilled and evaluated within the community. For example, in finding Nadia, a 23 year old teacher living with her family in Gants' Hill, and whom I did not know prior to my interviewing her, I asked an aunt who knew her and whom I saw at a cultural event. The aunt was curious to know about my research, but there were certain things I did not tell her, such as the questions about romance and love, for example. Once I was introduced to Nadia and had direct contact with her, I did not hide the purposes of the research, nor the questions to be asked from her. I assured her that the interview would be confidential and that her name would be changed for purposes of anonymity (Lee, 1993:1).

In my position as an insider in the community, but also as a researcher outside of it, I am placed at the border between the inside and outside, allowing for reflexivity in understanding the wider social context in which my research is situated (Gunaratnam, 2003: 93). With regard to the duality of my positioning, while the method of snowballing had benefits for gathering potential participants whom I had not known previously, it necessarily had drawbacks also. For example, being aware of how I had access to them, not just as a researcher but also as a member of the same community, the participants were perhaps willing to say certain things and not others. Mindful of community norms and the 'good girl/ bad girl' dichotomy through which young women are assessed and evaluated, respondents may have wished to be seen in a certain light in the interview, reflecting a 'good girl' image.

In some ways, this is reminiscent of the young woman on the train platform, who affectively communicates an acute awareness of the same dichotomy of what is allowed and the problematics of this when encounters are unrehearsed or unexpected. In letting go of her white partner's hand when she saw me, the young woman on the train platform gave some insight into how boundaries are experienced and what this might mean for notions of 'good' girl or 'bad' girl. She gave insight into a specific trajectory of falling in love with a man who was 'outside' Bangladeshi culture. From her visible and bodily shock, which was communicated affectively, questions of familial relationships were brought forth.

Gregg and Seigworth, (2010) have described affect as intensities, forces, which pass from body to body and without conscious thought. Through affect, forces of communication are at work, which move beyond the physical, visceral body. This is important in the interview scenario, where respondents also, sometimes unknowingly, communicate with their bodies to the researcher, as I will describe

further below. These forces also work beyond conscious emotions towards movement and extension, passing from one body to another. The intensity is somehow communicated between bodies and is reciprocated. Dawney (2013) conceptualizes this intensity through interruption and explores the politics both of the feeling body and of experience. Interruption is positioned as an event that invokes critique and allows for an exploration of both affect's sociality and the bodily inflections of politics.

So, the shock that was visible on the young woman's body on the train platform showed that her body was able to react to my visible presence. It showed how the community did not necessarily need to be present in order to engage with the body of either the young woman on the train platform or myself, but showed that our mutual responses to each other somehow became the subject of the politics of the in/visible community. Neither, it could be argued, is it necessary to verbalise the politics of the community through the realm of the linguistic, as they become enmeshed in the 'affective responses of the body—the dark precursor that is revealed in the body', (Dawney, 2013:633-634).

For example, during the undertaking of this project, my family and I attended a function, hosted by the cultural community organisation, Bengali International. The event itself was hosted and organised by first generation immigrant Bengalis to pass on histories and traditions, bringing the community to come together on certain dates in order to collectively celebrate festivals and remember those lost in wars. In such events the community negotiates and re-negotiates its own boundaries and spaces on a more visible level, exercising, to an extent, power over young women of second generation.

As a researcher it was an opportunity to gain potential interviewees at the event. At such events, it is relatively easy to approach young women and ask for interviews. It is a space where it is more than likely that we will have mutual acquaintances, our parents, for instance, might know each other, or have mutual friends. Indeed in such spaces notions of belonging solidify. As Yuval Davis writes

the notion of belonging refers to patterns of trust and confidence... Within this frame we have to think about the shifting meanings of identity, family, the influence of spatial (migration)... displacement and further, the actually

confused (and diffused) longing for stable *emotional attachments* as they are articulated in national, ethnic, cultural and religious affiliations. (2006: 4)

However, as we shall see, ‘belonging’ can be complex and ambivalent. At the event, I asked two young women, whom I had seen before, and whose families my parents knew in passing, whether they would be willing to participate as interviewees in my study. I asked for their contact details and told them what I was researching in particular. Both young women gave me their email addresses.

Upon emailing the two young women, I further explained what the research would entail in more depth, but did not hear from them. I waited for a considerable amount of time, which led to frustration. Later, I discussed this frustration with my mother, which had arisen due to this lack of correspondence. My mother knew of their families and revealed tensions that I did not know about. She told me one’s father had died under peculiar circumstances, which generated a sense of secrecy, and the other’s parents were divorced. My mother argued that because of how divorce – or the break-up of a family, as she put it – was viewed in the imagined Bengali community, especially by the first generation, it was understandable as to why neither of the two young women had come forth to participate in the study, regardless of my reassuring them of privacy and anonymity.

It was in this way that I came to realise that issues of privacy and leakage within the community are also related to notions of trust and belonging. This relates to the dichotomy of ‘good girl/bad girl’, in that to disclose the family’s history is in some way to break the trust of the family, but by keeping these secrets, is to remain a ‘good girl’ both in the eyes of the family, and in the eyes of the community.

In hindsight, I realise the two young women at the event became disconcerted, unsure of how to respond, uncertain, in that space, of how to say no. Their bodies showed they were unwilling, but they could not verbalise this. In some way, the encounter with me as a researcher disrupted and interrupted the pleasure of attending the cultural event where their personal familial histories were overshadowed by communal experiences and histories. And this, perhaps, showed on their bodies.

The next section examines and outlines the questions asked in the interviews conducted in terms of a ‘topic guide’.

Questions of the Topic Guide

The questions outlined below were shown to the respondent on a note-card that I took with me to all interviews, prior to the interview, so that they were made aware of the topics to be discussed from the outset. This served as a strategic move in gaining trust and in obtaining narratives and invoking emotional affective responses (Lee, 1993). The questions within the interviews were largely thought of beforehand, whilst reading around Bangladeshi women and educational achievement, notions of diaspora and migration and psychosocial issues. However, during the interview itself, since they were semi-structured, I was able to ask further questions of how such young women felt in different spaces and in relation to various relationships. The questions were in-depth, open-ended and posed along the following lines, serving as a topic guide:

- What the young women did for a living and why they had chosen this (this was asked even to those who were students in terms of future aspirations); and what their parents thought of their choice of career/occupation
- What their relationships were like with their parents, both their mother and father – this included languages spoken at home and how they felt about this
- What kinds of friends they had in school and growing up, in terms of gender/ethnicity/historical and cultural background and how/why this changed over time as they grew older
- When they were younger, what languages they spoke and the feelings of speaking in each
- What types of people they were romantically attracted to
- Whether it is/was important to uphold cultural values for them and why
- Whether the young women found it difficult to balance being British and being Bangladeshi at the same time – and how this might have been resolved over time, if at all; and whether and how this related to notions of parents/family
- What was the impact of religion (Islam) and what they thought of religion – and whether they felt this was related to culture and how this might have impacted a sense of self

- Whether they were ever aware of notions of difference through ‘race’ and/or class at all and what this meant for them and how such issues, if any, were resolved

However, it must also be stressed, that even with briefing the respondent about the questions prior to the ‘formalised’ interview, (i.e., recording it with a tape-recorder), there was still no guarantee of respondents knowing what they would speak about; nor was it easy for me, as the researcher, to know what would be discussed in the interview, apart from the topics/questions that were written down and shown to the respondent, prior to the interview. Rather, interviewing entails a certain risk in what will be said and how the respondent and the researcher will be affected from the outset, during, and after the interview.

The next section examines some of the practical and theoretical implications of interviewing and the emotional content that were present in my respondents’ narratives.

Processes of Interviewing and Collecting Narratives

In seeking out how certain British Bangladeshi young women of second generation understood their sense of self in relation to cultural histories and various relationships, I was very interested in learning about their experiences as they entered adulthood. However, I understood that as experiences differed from person to person, it would not be useful to adhere to simply questioning without the respondent elaborating on certain topics. My own presence within the interview scenario affected the interview itself, (Poland, 1990:159) through, for instance, a more physical nodding of the head, murmuring and eye contact and therefore expressing visible interest in what my respondent said and that helped to co-produce the narratives she told (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009:155). There emerged from the interviews, narratives within narratives; that is to say, each respondent told ‘short stories’ within her ‘life story’, giving rise to a richer understanding of how she viewed her own self in relation to the various histories she carried and the spaces within which she understood her self. It was important to listen to the emotional content that laced the interviews as this gave more clarity towards this understanding and inflected sharper memories. In

order to make this clearer, I will give an example of how an emotional response gives rise to particular memories.

When I was in my late teens and applying for university, I was asked at an interview, ‘Can you tell us about how tea is served in your culture?’ (It was for a place on an Anthropology course.) I was about eighteen or so. I remember feeling surprised and slightly shocked by this question, as it was unexpected. But I answered that in large gatherings, tea was usually served to the men sitting in the main or living room, as they talked about Bangladeshi politics, for example. The women would serve it, and would later sit around in another room or in the kitchen, and sip their tea, talking about their children or gossiping. As I write this now, I am in my early thirties. Although obviously other questions were asked in the interview, I only remember that one.

It evoked certain emotions because the questions asked about ‘my’ culture – it was personal and situated me in relation to certain histories. The memory I have kept of this question was, I will argue, an emotional response to the question being asked by two professors who were from a different culture. Even though they wanted to know if I was a ‘good fit’ for their university, the question they posed gave rise to an affective response. It invoked an intense, emotive experience which ‘interrupted’ the experience of the interview.

Thus, perhaps, it can be argued that the one-to-one face-to-face interview can act as a site for interruption for the second generation British Bangladeshi young woman. By asking her to participate in this project and share her narrative with me as a researcher, it has disrupted her daily routine. The interview, although not necessarily unplanned, is unpredicted in terms of content and interrupts her day. This notion of interruption can be a platform where different respondents react differently to the same questions. Thus, the histories she may carry can potentially spill into the interview unconsciously.

Through this interruption, it is not only her linguistic narrative that tells of her histories, but her body that conveys feelings and emotions that cannot always be captured on tape. It cannot be heard like the intonation in her voice, but instead her body becomes an emotional site where subjectivity and affectivity are bound together.

Moreover, through the interruption of the interview, my respondent has a chance to tell, both verbally and affectively, through her body and emotions, how she sees her own position in the imagined Bangladeshi community she belongs to, her

willingness or unwillingness to integrate herself into it. Indeed, a sense of interruption can highlight various notions of resistances, frustrations etc and point to a ‘relational politics of affect’ (Dawney, 2013: 637). Through speaking with the young woman in the interview then, I argue that such moments might be or become visible through her body.

She is able to use interruption as a platform to communicate tensions, frustrations, emotions and experiences both verbally and through the body. Indeed, as my interviews are semi-structured and open-ended, they allow for degrees of freedom that would not occur had the interview been more rigid in structure. Through the interruption of the interview, there is a negotiating and re-negotiating of identity.

When people speak, the histories they carry potentially become more prominent. Indeed, the interview might act as the beginning of an opening up of a space of self -exploration that might otherwise remain closed (see Khadija’s extract below, in this section). And in bringing alive such histories, I wish to argue that certain emotions are evoked and memories are made active. For this reason, I argue for ‘affective’ interviewing.

The various points in the histories my respondents inhabit become prominent and are allowed to surface when she speaks. For example, she can choose from which historical position to speak. She is able to critique aspects of community or certain relationships, and re-negotiate her identity by changing positions. For example, the extract below is taken from the interview conducted with Khadija, a twenty-one year old student, living in Ilford with her family (see Chapter 4 for further explanation).

Me: ...maybe [it’s] your thing about Asian culture as a hassle

K: ...yeah... [I’ve got it]... into my head that... because I don’t want to speak it [Bengali], I’m resenting it... I’m not realising I’m resenting the whole thing...

Me: Mm hmm

K: I’m actually... I’m losing the whole thing of thinking like that

Me: You said the only person you speak to in Bengali is your father

K: Yeah

Me: Do you get on with your father?

K: [pause] half the time...

It is within the interview context that Khadija begins to realise a specific relationship with her father and its connections with her understanding of Asian/Bangladeshi culture. The extract also reveals that the relationship between father and daughter lies somehow in between languages and therefore in the spaces which Bhabha describes as 'third space' (see Chapter 4).

I wish to argue that the emotional connections attached to the memory, which can potentially be verbalised to the interviewer, make the memory more easily remembered, as in the example of the university interview. Wetherell, is useful in understanding this. Wetherell cites Reddy in arguing that people 'navigate' through their emotions. The emotions are not controlled or 'managed', but this makes emotional paths easier to follow and tension abates when people follow such emotional trajectories in following their goals (2013:70). However, at other times, Wetherell argues that emotives cannot reproduce people's affective states and the tensions between thoughts, emotions and a person's goals results in what she terms as 'emotional blisters' (70). However, in citing Reddy once more, there is a recognition of 'emotional suffering' as the individual's goals and emotional states are so closely connected (70). The tensions and conflicts that arise from this connection might lead to new spaces where parts of a person's emotional life might be played out that do not fit with the current and/or existing emotional structure (70). This is precisely what this thesis plans to do in seeking out various spaces in which young women who identify as second generation British Bangladeshi Muslim can examine their own identity and create a platform from which to speak.

There is an allowance for spaces to be opened up which allow enable young women to speak from different cultural and historical positions. They bring alive histories and verbalise their own experiences that might otherwise not be allowed to be voiced. Indeed, it can be within such spaces of the interview that an understanding of self can be further explored, and also in terms of ethnicity and the connections to an imagined 'community'. Notions of ethnicity are taken into account when gaining access to the narratives of my respondents. These 'lived experiences' (Gunaratnam, 2003: 33) contribute to an understanding of identity and are heard in their narratives. As Gunaratnam argues, lived experiences can be viewed in terms of difference, power and social location through the connections between researchers and their respondents within these spaces (96). Spaces in the interview are opened up which investigate the politics and dynamic interactions of how the researcher relates to their respondents

and vice versa; this, in turn also affects the data produced in the interviews (96). This is why my interviews are open in nature.

The next section will discuss the multiple narrative sources that support the interview material.

The Multiplicity of Narratives

My respondents' accounts contain a multiplicity of narratives. My respondents are able to tell narratives *as* second generation British Bangladeshis. But, as Denzin notes, narratives are 'temporal productions' and located within the wider social fabric and give a reflection of this fabric (2001: 59). It is thus important to give an account of the types of narratives gathered for this research and from their various sources. This, I argue, will give more depth and understanding to the analysis in the empirical chapters of this thesis. In order to gather narratives, I have adopted Denzin's approach of triangulation, in drawing from a range of narratives, which will give insight into the voices of my respondents. This method of triangulation that includes a variety of biographical methods ensures that histories and the individuals telling the narratives receive relevant deliberations (2001:62).

For this research, I have used autobiographic work that is scattered throughout this thesis and published accounts of narratives of Bangladeshi women as they relate to my respondents (see Chapter 2). This also includes an official report published by the British Government's Department of Work and Pensions, which gives insight into the changing attitudes to work and education voiced by second and third generation Pakistani and Bangladeshi young women. I have written about what I refer to 'real life' accounts of narratives, of which, for instance, the young woman on the train platform is a crucial example. There are unspoken and important narratives implicit in this encounter between her and myself and the incident raises multiple questions that are frequently addressed in this research. 'Real life' accounts help situate the research and conceptualise the women I speak about in relation to the wider narratives in which my respondents are located and thus support my interviews.

The voices of my twenty interviewees are vital. They provide the crux of the narratives for this research as they speak of their experiences, relationships and how

they understand themselves in relation to the wider debates and discourses surrounding the Bangladeshi diaspora in London.

Specific themes emerged within the respondents' narratives, which the next section shall explore. The next section will also examine the ways in which I applied narrative analysis to examine these themes.

The Uses of Narrative Analysis and Thematic Approaches to the Interviews

The narrative practices that have emerged through the interviews orientate the young woman to a place where she is able to speak in her own voice. I will argue in this section why a narratological method, as outlined by Plummer (2001), proves important and is best suited to analyse the data presented in the interviews. Each of the interviews differs as each of the young women narrate different experiences and ways of seeing the world in which they live and the spaces they inhabit. They have reached different points in their lives where they occupy different platforms for speaking. Nonetheless, each of the young women in this study tell narratives which explore positions of understanding a sense of self. The stories that are told in the semi-structured interviews prove vital in gathering information about how the young woman of second generation sees herself in relation to the various relationships she maintains.

The coding took part in two rounds. For the first part of the coding, I read through the interviews and made notes separately relating to the specific themes that emerged from the material. The second round related to highlighting the specific themes that emerged from the first round of coding. For parts of the transcript that could not be understood, or were not clear, I used '*blurb*' as a code.

The following extract exemplifies the narrative methodology used to analyse the interview material in this thesis. Tamanna is a twenty-eight year old secondary school teacher, the second daughter and lives with her family in Wood Green. This particular narrative is episodic and a short story within a greater story relating to her life, (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009:155), as has been the case with many narratives in the empirical chapters.

1 Ta: ...We were going to make this dish, this sweet dish that required something

2 called cardamoms, that was stated in the cookbook... but I've never heard of
3 the word cardamoms before, so I didn't know what it was
4 Me: Mm
5 Ta: Yeah, and I asked **my mum** if she'd ever heard of cardamoms before, because
6 **she's the one normally in the kitchen** who does most of the cooking, so I
7 **thought maybe she'll know**, but she didn't either... and I asked my sister but
8 she didn't know... none of us knew... so we were thinking, what are
9 cardamoms, and where can we get some...
10 Me: Mm, really?
11 Ta: Mm... so we went to the supermarket and we were looking everywhere for
12 cardamoms and asking the assistants because we didn't know what they
13 looked like... and finally we found them, and we were like, oh! they're *elachi*!
14 (the Bengali word for cardamoms)... we've got loads of these at home, we
15 don't need to buy anymore... and all this time we were wondering what
16 cardamoms were! **My mum buys these things all the time**, but probably
17 never looks
18 at the wording on the packet because she knows what they are...
19 Me: Mm... **she's used to the Bengali**
20 Ta: Yeah, **but so are we... we're used to the Bengali** and we didn't know the
21 English, but we never needed to know it before

The above extract is analysed in more depth in Chapter 4, but serves as a useful example in this chapter of the analysis of a narrative. In bold are the syntax referring to relationships and references to the mother. It was in this way that the codes were created, by finding 'binding words/phrases' within the narrative extracts throughout the interviews that served as the extracts presented in the empirical chapters. Bearing in mind Labov's (2008) terminology, a narrative consists of an 'abstract', (the outline of the narrative) an 'orientation' (who the 'characters' are in the narrative, where it occurs etc), an 'evaluation' (why the narrative is told) and a 'result'. Tamanna 'introduces' the scenario of shopping through the abstract of preparing a dessert, in lines 1-3. Lines 5-7 give an overview of the orientation for this specific abstract. So in other words, the people and setting are given within the first seven lines. It sets up the scenario and who is involved in the accounts that she will relate further in her 'story'.

The evaluation of her story comes in lines 13-18, where the 'reason' emerges for telling this particular narrative.

This narrative trajectory outlines how the interviews tell unexpected but important 'stories' that outside of the semi-structured interview might not have been told. However, it is important to point out that where the narrative begins and where it ends connotes a sense of 'power' of the respondent over the researcher. Although I as a researcher have directed Tamanna to speak about the topics I wish to research, the extract above is an example of an important instance which is an affective response to one of my questions but at the same time could have been withheld from me. But an advantage arising from this is that the respondent is allowed to voice her narratives and tell her stories 'in her own way' (Edwards, 2008:235).

While the respondents' narratives are central to the empirical chapters, taking these narratives as they are told as 'truth' can be problematic. For instance, there may be fabrication or exaggeration of certain events, or parts of the events as they happened might have been forgotten and do not emerge in the narratives. Indeed, I found myself as a researcher asking for clarification of events when I was unclear. However, the narratives I have documented reflect how respondents see the world and establish the platforms from which they speak. As such, the truth within their narratives shows psycho-social exploration. The extracts chosen for the empirical chapters thus also give what Edwards describes as discursive 'pictures of [the] mind':

[The narratives] take one step back from events themselves, and takes a psychological interest in the speaker. It treats people's discourse as how they 'see' things... whether as representatives of groups or cultures, or as individuals. (Edwards, 2008: 227)

For example, with reference to Tamanna's extract above, we are able to glimpse into the relationship she has with her first generation mother. In narrating the story of shopping for cardamoms, underlying issues of language and integration come to the fore. The above extract from Tamanna's interview is an example of the ways that the extracts throughout the empirical chapters have been analysed using narrative analysis.

Themes emerged from a combination of the data gathered and the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and were subsequently ordered into the analytical chapters. The data in this research has therefore been approached *thematically*.

The emerging themes were highlighted in the interview transcripts under specific codes and narratives. As Boyatzis explains, ‘A good thematic code is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon. It is usable in the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the research (1998: 31).

This also allows for a ‘bottom-up’ understanding and interpretation of theory to be generated from the interviews conducted with the young women. But it must also be argued that the literature that has helped to frame this research has influenced, to an extent, the questions asked. Hence, there is also an element of ‘top-down’ understanding of the respondents’ accounts. It is a combination of the two. The complexities of dealing with and resolving difficult experiences have also shaped an understanding of the themes explored in the interviews, and are explicated by the young women in their own voices.

The excerpts chosen for the empirical chapters are reflective of the literature (see Chapter 2), and give insight into how young South Asian women (for this research, specific second generation British Bangladeshi young women) are actively hybrid. They illustrate the ways in which these women navigate between and through cultures in choosing positions from which to speak, negotiating their complex identities in relation to such positions. Moreover, the ways in which these excerpts related and connected to each other were written up in the chapters. In this way the excerpts were put together in order to form a coherent narrative.

The next section will examine issues of sensitivity surrounding my interview data, relating to what the young women felt they could say and not say and how trust and fears of leakage were ‘felt’ in the interviews. Also, issues around empathy and identification between researcher and respondent will be explored.

Sensitivity, Research and its Ethical implications

This section will examine sensitive issues relating to trust and leakage with respondents and their underlying ethical implications. There is sometimes a sense of ‘secrecy’ that relates to how the young women might want to be portrayed by a

researcher who is from the same imagined community as them, and the spaces needed to negotiate a platform to speak. In such instances, issues of secrecy can relate to trust and leakage within the community.

The topics researched in this thesis are sensitive. This means, as Lee, through Sieber and Stanley has argued, that such research potentially involves having consequences for those who are part of the research. As Lee points out, sensitive topics can prove ‘problematic because they can present potential costs for those involved in the research, sometimes including the researcher’ (1993:4). For example, this research creates a space that allows certain topics to be opened up, which might not have been verbalised otherwise. My respondents were very aware that what they said in the interviews might potentially reach those outside academia, including those belonging to their own ‘community’. Potential risks, therefore, in speaking of sensitive issues in these interviews involve respondents being potentially viewed in a particular – negative – light. This not only involves my respondents, but may also include their family. There is the potential risk of ostracisation of the family from the community, as the worst-case scenario. This might explain the young woman on the train platform’s reaction to me, for example. One of my respondents, Sujata, as I will discuss below, requested me not to tell anyone what she said.

Thus, as Kelly notes, a key ethical issue ‘is the preservation of confidentiality and the privacy of people involved’ (2000:119). To ensure confidentiality, I have anonymised the names of my respondents in order to protect their identities. To further protect both them and their families from the aforementioned potential risks of being ostracised and/or being viewed in a negative light by the ‘community’, I have swapped around the professions of my respondents as well as those of some of their parents. This will make it harder to identify my respondents, given the networks in the community.

My respondents were thus free to express emotions and feelings they had about their families, the wider community, love and relationships, friendships, travel and religion. Indeed, the boundaries of the community are questioned through this research and I argue that dialogue is critical to the negotiation of communal boundaries. Researching issues that relate to sensitivity have proved crucial to this research in order to disavow certain stereotypes relating to the wider debates surrounding the Bangladeshi community in London (see Chapter 2).

In order to tease out experiences and identities, I had to reassure and keep reassuring particular interviewees that their experiences and thoughts would not be 'exposed' to those who knew them, and certainly their identities shall not be disclosed through their narratives. Interviewees whose families are acquainted with mine, asked repeatedly not for me to disclose any information which may put them 'in a bad light' to those who know them. This was a difficulty I had in constantly reassuring that information would not be 'leaked'. I was put into a position of ambivalence. The following scenario explores how the young woman might desire secrecy, but moreover, the relation of that desire to secrecy within the community. The respondent exemplifies notions of trust and leakage through giving a 'personal narrative' (Lee, 1993).

Sujata was twenty-eight years old at the time of the interview, a qualified dentist, and the only daughter. She lives, as she described in the interview, in a 'white' area, with very few Bengali families in her surrounding neighbourhood. She has always been surrounded by Bengali family friends, however, whilst growing up. In the interview setting, she spoke about certain aspects of her life as she was growing up, how her friendships changed over time, and how she felt about these changes. She specified a friendship with a young man, which turned into something that she perceived as being 'more than friends' but which only lasted for a very brief period of time.

Whilst conducting the interview, she was very aware of the visible presence of the tape recorder and that the interview itself was being recorded and would be transcribed afterwards. However, with regard to the instance described above, she asked me 'not to tell anyone', even though she was aware of speaking on tape. She could not have known the narratives she would tell prior to the interview, even though I had shown her my card of questions, (Lee, 1993). Also, at several points during the interview, when she was uncomfortable in disclosing certain things about her life, she asked me to pause the recording, a request I complied with, as she wished to speak of these things 'off the record.' This might reflect the awareness that her family could be affected also through the interview, as it could be argued that she is both the daughter of her family, as well as that of her community.

This brings to the fore questions around the community's dichotomy of 'good girl/bad girl' in relation to issues of trust and secrecy. While she clearly experienced anxiety about leakage due to the fact that we belonged to the same community, by

virtue of the same fact, she also clearly felt a sense of trust and empathy with me. For example, when interviewing Sujata, I was expected to know many of the references she made, or understand her when sometimes slipped into using Bengali words to explain certain things, a language she knew I am fairly fluent in. She felt, as did some other respondents that some things are better expressed in Bengali.

Methodologically, translation between languages did not prove too strenuous, since the interviews were conducted mainly in English. I asked for clarification of things I did not understand regardless of which language it was spoken in, which my respondents willingly provided me with. Indeed, at times, clarification led to further examples of what the respondent was trying to convey, giving more insight into their lives. The ease with which I could communicate with my respondents, speaking both English and Bengali, and relate to them culturally definitively shaped both the relationship between us and the project as a whole.

If trust is established, speaking can act as an ‘unburdening’ of the self and a therapeutic device. Rather than adhering to strict understanding of these concepts, it might also be worth bearing in mind the notions of *empathy* and *identification*. I am able to perhaps unburden myself also to the young women in the interviews. As Lee argues, speaking of interviewing techniques conducted by Laslett and Rapoport :

[T]he research strategy takes into account the psychodynamics of the interview situation, and the effects they have both on interviewers and interviewees and on the quality of data. A major aspect of the kind of interviewing [Laslett and Rapoport, 1975] advocate is the attempt to make interviewers aware of their feelings during the interview... In particular [they] make use of the concepts, derived from psychoanalytic theory, of transference and countertransference... With respect to interviewing, Laslett and Rapoport use the terms in a slightly looser but analogous way to refer to situations where, for example, the interviewee develops an identification with the interviewer or vice versa... these psychodynamic manifestations are regarded as data, not as a problem or a nuisance. (1993:105)

Indeed, when I interviewed my respondents, it was almost *assumed* by them that I would know the language and certain references they made without any explanation.

It was almost assumed that we would both understand these nuances in meaning, as we both shared histories. In the same way we were aware of certain tensions that were acknowledged but not necessarily spoken. These emerged, for instance, when Sujata spoke of how she would speak to first generation Bangladeshis in Bengali, or the tensions she felt when growing up in a 'white' neighbourhood.

Of the notion of empathy as a means of understanding, the Indian psychoanalyst Kakar (1981) argues that cultural backgrounds that are shared by individuals are more likely to give rise to a mutual empathic understanding. The observer is able to understand similar cultural nuances that might appear insignificant to one who does not share similar histories. There is likely to be empathetic understanding and interpretation between individuals when words, cultural references etc. are understood as the observer's own. However, Kakar also points out that this does not necessarily mean that when individuals do not share cultural histories, they will not be able to understand each other if training is given in the respondent's culture (1981:3). Indeed, gaining insight into unconscious manifestations is possible, but the degree of interpreting wrongly, argues Kakar, can be heightened (3).

The interview, it could be argued, serves to act as a strategy for a researcher with similar cultural and familial histories., which brings these subconscious histories to the fore. It allows for the researcher to understand the 'hidden' and unspoken nuances in the interview setting. This is important in thinking through notions of affective communication.

I came to question my own position as both someone of the 'community' and as a researcher, and the somewhat ambivalent nature of this, which the next section will explore.

The Ambivalence of Research

This section will examine my feelings as both researcher and a member of the researched 'community.' I often occupied a difficult and doubled position within the research context, feeling pulled (equally) in different directions, and hence I argue that my position is an ambivalent one.

The young woman on the train platform, seen in Chapter 1, saw not only me but, it could be argued, her own connections with the community and her own

position within a contested space of negotiation and navigation – by placing me in a space of ambivalence. In this instance, I became something ‘other’ than myself. This process was paralleled, in verbal form, in the interviews as I was placed in a position that allowed a questioning of my own histories in relation to those I interviewed. This makes my position as interviewer/researcher somewhat ambivalent. Ahmad’s reflections on the intricacies of the researcher’s position are highly relevant here:

[I]n those de-centred spaces where social and psychoanalytic subjectivities reside and oscillate between conscious and unconscious articulations, whilst intersecting with structural forces at critical junctures, our need to acknowledge our own points of ‘un-location’ becomes increasingly urgent. Issues of representation, history and retrospection, orientation, authenticity, power, and personal and academic responsibility, therefore, become inextricably and fundamentally intertwined when engaging with research and discourses that situate the researcher, as potentially, the researched too. (2004:50)

My own position as researcher, caught between investigating the lives of my respondents whilst myself belonging to the same community, experiencing many of the same tensions and struggles, is an emotional stance. Indeed, it is as Plummer, (2001) argues that gathering stories in the form of narratives is both personal and embodied; it is interactional and evokes emotions that give rise to meaning for the respondent as well as the researcher.

This emotional and embodied position as a researcher becomes difficult. I am both the eyes and ears of the community (the problematics of which shall be discussed in the next section) and not. The ambivalent nature of the position that I am in some ways forced to occupy means that I am also seen in a certain light by respondents. Difficulties arise where certain things can be said and certain things are not. As such, the research material that is presented in this thesis is affected because of my position; As Poland rightfully argues ‘the researcher is central to the research’ (1990:159).

When young women asked me to keep things confidential, mindful of how they might be seen in the ‘community’, for example, it is clear that I am not necessarily ‘just’ a researcher to them. Despite the difference implied in the relationship between researcher and respondent, perhaps first and foremost, in their eyes, I am the daughter of Bangladeshi migrants, and so, like them. Like the young

woman on the train platform, for my respondents, there is the possibility that they not only see me as a researcher, but as an embodiment of the community. While my ambivalent positioning might mean that my respondents were reluctant to disclose some issues, it also opened a space in which my respondents are able to voice concerns within or against the community.

Furthermore, in my position, as both an ‘other’ and not, I also came to question what ‘community’ might mean and the complexities of using this term. Through this research, I became compelled to question the boundaries the community from both a personal and scholarly perspective, interrogating the space I inhabit, through the narratives of my respondents. It was from this reflexive position that I learnt to examine narratives and to highlight potential sites of interruption and tension. It became important to identify what certain histories might mean for both the young women and for myself as the researcher. The question of ‘carried’ histories and intergenerational dialogue will be explored in the next section.

A Pleasant Evening of Horrors – Identifying Histories

This section examines notions of speaking and not speaking within the family and intergenerational dialogue, as well as the opening up of a psychosocial space in which emotions can be conveyed affectively. It tries to explore a different and yet relevant type of narrative, and so there is a shift in register.

It is a cool autumn evening. I am seated in my front living room with my father, a friend of my father’s who represents a Bangladeshi community organisation by the name of Bengali International, my supervising professor and a psychiatrist who represents the South Asian Health Foundation. We have gathered together in order to discuss potential funding for this research. But soon the talk turns to events in Bangladesh and histories of migration, in particular the histories of the uncle representing the community organisation and my own father and the ways in which they have transmitted these histories to their children.

There is an air of tension in the living room as they recollect memories of their youth and the marches, both in London and in then East Pakistan, the war of liberation, the brutalities and savagery they witnessed and the tensions of not knowing whether loved and dear ones had survived. The memories are etched in their minds

and invoke emotions and memories that course through their bodies. As Dawney (2013), argues, collective histories can affectively be inscribed onto the materiality of the body.

These were uneasy histories that my father and the uncle spoke of. Violent and troubled histories are often hidden within families, but can sometimes be felt. It might need a 'trigger' to invoke certain memories or an occasion might be needed to refer to the histories that are kept closed within a sense of self. It is different for the young women who have not lived in Bangladesh and have not felt these histories in the country. Certainly, in the British media there is no mention of the celebration of victory nor of the bloody and horrendous massacres that accompanied the creation of Bangladesh. These histories have not been forgotten but continue to be lived. In 2013 and 2014, for example, political and social violence raged over the ongoing legacy of the struggle for independence. After lengthy and complicated trials, individuals deemed war criminals, accused of violence, rape, murder and collaboration with West Pakistan in 1971, were executed. But when we, the second generation, were growing up, the Bangladeshi TV channels which now broadcast such news in London did not exist and we would rely on our parents and the larger community for historical information, provided through glimpses into their past lives, the sufferings they experienced, and the choices they were often forced to make.

The violence which erupted towards the end of 2013 emerges from the birth of Bangladesh, whom many a father, uncle, mother, and aunt fought for in their different ways, through marches, protests, through bloodshed. Perhaps there has not been enough dialogue about this. Certainly, not one of my respondents mentioned the histories of torture, murder, rape, which their parents brought with them, as their own histories. Perhaps they do not know these histories, or perhaps they are kept within the home, too painful to recollect to those outside.

Even though I have been to events commemorating the fallen, the martyrs, the dead, hosted by Bangladeshi community elders, there has been little, if any, mention of the turbulent and terrifying times which preceded the leading towards victory. Instead, at such events, often, there have been patriotic songs, women shimmering in beautiful saris, and men dressed immaculately; lived histories are too private, too painful to make public in such a gathering where such sorrow seems unwelcome. This tendency towards silence around painful histories reverberates within many family homes. Certain affluent parents have focussed their attention on urging their

daughters of second generation to become successful. In their attempts to integrate into a 'different' culture, some parents have spoken with their children primarily in English in order to learn the 'foreign' language that their children have been taught in school. As such, their children have often not learnt Bengali, which can further distance them from their parents' painful histories (this generational shift provides an impetus for further research).

That autumn evening in my front living room, I sat in awe of the histories that my father and his friend brought with them, and at the time of passing, they had lived through a notion of 'presentness'. But the memories evoked that evening suggested an emotional connection with their own histories, which were 'prodded' into life through language. Perhaps these histories were very much alive anyhow, but needed an outlet outside of the body that carried them.

Many memories invoke feelings, that is to say, they need to have emotional connections to confer meaning and thus become a memory. I argue that the stronger the emotion, perhaps the stronger the memory. Such was the situation of the evening where horrendous images of war passed before my father's and uncle's eyes.

But the question might necessarily arise as to whether such migrant parents wish to pass on such painful histories to their daughters. Sometimes, such histories need not be verbalised, but are 'felt' within the atmosphere of the home (Seidler, 2000). My respondents are silent on such topics. Instead, being born and brought up in London, they focus on their own lived experiences in a place that is both foreign and familiar. This has its own difficulties and problematics which have been highlighted in the empirical chapters. But even though dialogue might have been established between first generation parent and second generation daughter, I wish to argue that the type of dialogue established matters. Certainly, it seems, not all parents were willing to discuss their lives prior to migrating to London with their daughters, nor the struggles and difficulties they faced upon arrival.

Instead, most respondents have focused on the 'presentness' of the relationships they have with their parents and the impacts their parents have had on their choices. Most have spoken of the love and support they have received, from one, if not both parents. Sometimes the respondents speak without the awareness of the tragedies their families have had to face through the Partition and the War of 1971, even though they are often aware of the significance of specific dates.

One of my respondents, Soraiya speaks of her father and she spent once spent the day talking to him and looking at his passport. On that occasion, she learned the significance of some of the markings and stamps on his passport, and later wished that she had recorded her time with him. But she also describes him as an ‘aloof father’, and very much uninvolved in the lives of his children, (see Chapter 4). Raihana speaks of travelling to Bangladesh and being urged by her mother to touch an elderly lady’s feet as a sign of respect. But her mother did not explain the custom, and she feels awkward, (see Chapter 6). Thus it is clear that inter-generational dialogue does not solely rest with one party, but requires both first generation parent and second generation daughter to be willing to participate if she wants to learn of the histories of her parents. Perhaps parents must also encourage their daughters to ask questions and to engage in such dialogue. Perhaps a space is needed for mutual respect that in some cases, as we will see in the empirical chapters, is lacking. But it raises questions of what is allowed to be said by whom and where, around boundaries and the expectations and demands placed on young women. Such questions are posed in the empirical chapters but also warrant further exploration in future research.

Methodological Expressions in Context – Conclusion

The purpose of this methodology chapter has been to explore the practical and theoretical implications of gathering data for this piece of research. It is qualitative in nature and has employed grounded methodologies in gathering participants. It has used one-to-one face-to-face in-depth interviews.

Different types of telling stories and gathering narratives have been explored in this chapter as they apply to my respondents. Narrative analysis, in particular, has been employed to understand the interviews in more depth. I argue that that the kind of evocative storytelling which the interviews gave rise to is an emotional affair and laden with meaning for those who have participated in this research. Thus, it gives insight into the emotional landscapes through which these young women meander, as will be explored in more depth in the analytical chapters.

In investigating my participants’ sense of their own identities and social positioning in relation to the Bangladeshi community, I have highlighted how aspects of that community might be ‘imagined’. At the same time, however, I have insisted

that from this 'imagined' community, emerge real experiences and emotions. My position as both a member of such a community and a researcher proves ambivalent and a double-bind, but is nevertheless the position from which I speak and write. This position has paradoxically brought both empathy and understanding as well as wariness and anxiety to my relationship with my respondents. The multifaceted nature of our interaction has thus given insight into how the young women in my sample understand their own position as well as mine.

I have argued for affective communication, insisting that emotions can be expressed bodily as well as verbally. I suggest, moreover, that the interview - as an interruption, unplanned and unrehearsed, which disrupts the respondent's daily routine - can act as a site where such communication might be enabled. This space of interruption can also bring forth tensions and frustrations, verbally and affectively. Indeed, the respondent might not otherwise express certain tensions and emotions if it were not for the interruption of the interview. I argue that notions of empathy and identification might also be important in understanding histories and experiences when the researcher and respondent share similar cultural and family backgrounds, enabling an exploration that might not have otherwise been possible. Speaking is also therefore important in understanding the histories of the young women who have taken part in this research. The narratives that are brought forth, especially in the scenario of the interview, are the experiences of the young women as they experience them.

In the next chapter, the theoretical framework and practicalities I have laid out will be put into practice, as I explore the themes of intergenerational relationships and language.

Chapter 4: SPEAKING BANGLA WITH THE FIRST GENERATION? MOTHERS, FATHERS AND LANGUAGE

This chapter will examine the types of relationships my respondents have with their parents of first generation, the languages spoken with them and the meanings and emotions associated with this. This chapter also looks at how language is understood by young women from educated family backgrounds, and how language might also have the potential for these young women to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and identities.

In investigating relationships between first generation parents and their daughters, this chapter particularly focuses on the emotions evoked when migrant parents pass on historical cultures. It examines how migration affects respondents directly and explores notions of integration by looking at how intergenerational dialogue can influence understandings of communal boundaries and transgressions. Through its focus on relationships within the family, the chapter examines how certain young women are able to create spaces of understanding and speak from the different historical positions they inhabit.

This chapter is divided into six sections. It first discusses the relationships second generation daughters have with their mothers and how they feel about these relationships. This is followed by an instance where there is confusion between languages, between Bengali and English. Next I investigate the types of relationships second generation daughters have with their fathers. I also consider the merging of Bengali and English into a new type of hybrid language, and what this means for the self-understanding and self-expression of young women carrying Bangladeshi and British cultural histories. Finally, this chapter discusses how some young women feel it is important to hold onto the Bengali language, as part of their heritage and history.

Mother's 'Realm'?

The care of the mother for the second generation young woman is important, and is explored throughout this chapter. It is important for both the mother and the daughter, but in different ways. This section begins with an examination of how

outside the home, away from the presence of the mother, the daughter is necessarily responsible for her own 'self', and how she navigates between cultural divisions. It is within the home, in the presence of the mother, that this might change.

On entering the house of one my interviewees, I noticed that she was dressed in her nightclothes, sat on the sofa and curled under a duvet. It was in the middle of the day. I had chosen to interview her in her own house as I thought this would make her more comfortable and that therefore she would be more 'open' and willing to talk.

This interviewee is the youngest of three children, the only daughter, is twenty-seven at the time of interview and the only child to live at home. Her brothers have both married outside Bangladeshi culture. She currently works in the finance sector with a degree in Economics. For the purposes of this research, she will be called Tazeen. She lives with her family in Ilford, and her family originate from the district of Faridpur in Bangladesh.

Tazeen:

Me: How do you feel when you're at work, and how do you feel when you're at home? Do you feel any difference between the two?

T: Well yeah, because when you're at work you try and be professional, when you're at home, you're just asleep...! (laughs)

Me: What do you mean 'be professional'?

T: You have to be all business-like, don't you? You have to be responsible, you have to take things seriously, you can't be like... everything's a joke or have a laugh, relax, watch some TV, it's a completely different environment... of course you're going to be a professional

Me: Ok, so when you're at home, you're more...

T: You're more yourself

Me: You just let go and let *mum* [my italics] take care of you...?

T: Yeah! ... You don't think about work basically...

We are given a glimpse into a relationship between a working and affluent daughter of second generation and her mother. There arises a sense that Tazeen's mother acts as a site of comfort in the vicinity of the home. Tazeen is able to be 'herself' more; there is no tension, as in some sense responsibility is transferred to her mother. It is easier to be herself because there is less rigidity than in the workplace,

but moreover, the environment is more relaxed because her mother is there to care for her daughter. This also shows a change in ‘self’, a transformation in process from a professional to one who is more relaxed as there is someone else to look after her, namely her mother.

This might also question the relationship between mother of first generation and daughter of second generation, especially if the mother is unable to understand, the nuances of the culture that her daughter is fluent with. For example, Sujata is twenty-eight years old, the eldest child and only daughter. She is a dentist and also teaches music. She speaks of how she perceived her mother at a young age in front of her friends who did not share similar cultural histories with her. She lives with her family in Woodford, and her family originate from the district of Rangpur in Bangladesh.

Sujata:

Sj: ...my *English* [my italics] friends would give my mum funny looks ‘coz of her accent

Me: That must have hurt a lot

Sj: That really hurt and I wished she could speak English like *their* mums could or get the joke... my mum would tell a boring story or something and I’d think she’s embarrassing me but... that’s only because of the white friends I had...

Me: Mm

Sj: ...the *Asian* [my italics] friends, they had similar things... their parents... my mum was back to being cool again and also my mum’s a completely different person to ten years ago... she’s different. I talk about anything with my mum now and she’s completely changed. I’ve changed her a lot

Sujata’s experiences reflect that how a parent interacts with her daughter’s friends may have an impact upon how the daughter views the parent. Kakar’s (1981) argument that a mother brings up her child according to the customs and traditions in which she herself has been brought up in, raises significant questions as to what might happen when the mother is an immigrant to a place that differs in such customs and traditions. As Kakar argues,

[a]s the organizing principle of the personality, the ego is, of course, that which differentiates and mediates between 'I' and 'you', between what is 'inside' and what is 'outside'. The development of the ego... cannot be comprehended except in its' interdependence with the society into which the child is born, a society represented in the beginning by the mother. (1981:11)

Sujata's mother, then, can be seen as representing not only the home, but Bengali society. For instance, in the above extract, Sujata describes how her friends' perception of her mother made her see her mother in a certain light. Sujata was embarrassed of her mother. She wanted her mother to be like the mothers of her 'white' friends so that Sujata herself perhaps could feel that she fitted in with her friends and that, in some sense, a part of her histories would become less visible. So as Anthias points out, identities are 'empowered by their very relationality within intersubjective contexts (2006: 20). It was only when she changed her friends to those with similar cultural histories to herself, that her mother was 'back to being cool again.' Because of her change in friends, as Sujata herself argues, the relationship has changed between mother and daughter, it has been allowed to develop into a friendship, where both influence, care and protect one another.

It follows from the above, that questions arise as to what kind of relationship the young woman has with her first generation mother as she becomes older, especially if she has a job that takes her outside the home and care of the mother. Tazeen, for instance, exemplifies this.

Tazeen:

Me: Are you closer to your dad or are you closer to your mum?

T: Probably my mum

Me: Your mum? Why is that?

T: Well, I don't know... but probably because she gives me no choice in the matter... she comes over and talks to me [giggles] ugh! [laughs]

Me: Does that annoy you?

T: Yeah... the hard thing is... I've just come home and I've been talking all bloody day, I just don't wanna have another conversation now! [laughs]

Me: Do you think there's a lack of understanding there? Because she's [first-generation] Bengali?

T: No... nothing like that... I think it's just I know when I need my space that other people might not appreciate I might need my space... so I think you get to that stage of your life when you need to be on your own and I think you appreciate people a lot more when you're not with them all the time

Tazeen speaks of a specific time when she comes home from work, but later implies a general outlook of her life.

She implies that her mother's attention is sometimes unwanted when she is tired and wanting rest, but she feels her mother does not give her a choice. For this, there is an apparent feeling of guilt on behalf of the daughter, as she argues that she finds it hard to keep up a conversation with her mother after a hard days' work, which is perhaps masked by laughter. Tazeen implies that her mother does not necessarily understand this, and feels it will help to strengthen their mother-daughter relationship if she moves away from home. Indeed, perhaps by obtaining her own space, this will allow for a bonding between mother and daughter that is not forced, and is allowed to develop.

The question arises as to whether mothers enter a different cultural space through bonding with their daughters of second generation, who more readily understand this cultural space than their immigrant mothers. This is because the cultural spaces they inhabit and navigate also shape their identities. Chatterjee's (1991) experience, described in Chapter 2, is suggestive here. She writes that whilst she was living in Sheffield, she did not realise that British culture had somehow seeped into her way of thinking and behaving, but it was only after she moved back to India that she noticed changes and reacted to people differently than before she migrated. Erikson's (1997) argument that psychic development is a life-long process and my use of this in arguing that migration somehow diverts developing processes is important. It might be plausible to say that through dialogue with daughters, mothers are able to gain a more direct understanding of a cultural space that they otherwise would not be able to comprehend.

I argue that it is primarily through language that the young woman is able to navigate. In some ways, Tazeen's mother might want to unburden herself to her daughter by speaking to her after she comes home from work. Ramanujan (1991) tells a story about a mother who is unable to speak of her troubles to anyone and gets fatter and fatter. It is only once she unburdens herself to the four walls of a dilapidated

house, and the walls collapse because of the weight of her troubles, that she regains her original weight and feels relief. In this way, Tazeen's mother might find relief and comfort in unburdening the day's troubles to her daughter. It is a sort of 'bonding' session between mother and daughter – but her daughter argues that this is difficult. She is tired and perhaps cannot listen at that moment in time when her mother wants to speak. This might lead Tazeen to feel a sense of tension where she wants to move away from her mother, in part, paradoxically, in order to have a closer relationship with her.

The next extract speaks of the restrictions placed upon Sujata when she was growing up, and the loyalties she had with non-Bangladeshi friends. The extract voices a difficulty in the relationship with her first generation parents, particularly with her mother, which she later overcame.

Sujata:

Sj: When I was younger, I had a lot of issues with that...[being British and Bengali at the same time]... when I was a teenager... I had a lot of pressure from my mum and dad... I wasn't allowed this, I wasn't allowed that... and when you're growing up...

Me: You weren't allowed...?

Sj: Em... 12 to 14, I had some white friends... they were my best friends, come 14, they're going out, meeting boys and I'm not allowed to do that, I don't want to do that

Me: Mm

Sj: ...and they're all white boys anyway... and I wasn't ready and I wasn't interested... but their whole culture *became different* [my emphasis]... 14 year old girls and I wasn't allowed out with them... and *my mum* [my italics] was... first child... she was very Bengali... didn't know what to do... can't do this, can't do that... [and] I live in a very English area...

Sujata's account suggests that familial histories can affect a young woman's choice of friends (this will be explored in more depth in Chapter 5). How this changes over time and space will also help shape her concept of Bangladeshi culture. For instance, this particular account suggests there can be difficulty in navigating between differing cultural contexts if the young woman feels a lot of pressure from

her parents, on the one hand, but, on the other, lives in, as Sujata puts it, ‘a very English area’ and feels loyalties to ‘best’ friends who do not share similar cultural histories. Indeed, Anthias’s argument that spaces affect feelings and the experiences of belonging is pertinent here. She writes that ‘social place has resonances with stability of the self, or with feelings of being part of a larger whole and with the emotional and social bonds that are tied to such places’ (2006:21). It is difficult, as Sujata emphasizes, if there are further restrictions imposed. Now that she is older, however, and looks back in hindsight, she explains that her friends were going out to meet boys, something that she did not want to do. This changed the status of the friendships she had with her ‘white’ friends.

Sujata, in the extract above, describes her first generation mother as being confused in bringing up a daughter in an unfamiliar place. The difference in cultural histories is distinct, and this appears to be difficult for her mother, especially in relation to how her daughter should be brought up.

The next section looks more specifically at the confusion that can emerge between cultural historical spaces. It also looks deeper into the notion of navigation and the ‘self’ in relation to how a young woman of second generation might perceive herself speaking to something, which is unable to answer or speak back, in this case, her cat.

Of Cardamoms, Cooking and Cats

The following is taken from an interview conducted with a young woman who is a qualified teacher, and is twenty-eight years of age. She is the younger sister of Soraiya, whose voice will be heard later in this chapter. For the purposes of this research, I call this interviewee Tamanna. Her family originate from the district of Sylhet in Bangladesh.

Tamanna:

Ta: ...We were going to make this dish, this sweet dish that required something called cardamoms, that was stated in the cookbook... but I’ve never heard of the word cardamoms before, so I didn’t know what it was

Me: Mm

- Ta: Yeah, and I asked my mum if she'd ever heard of cardamoms before, because she's the one normally in the kitchen who does most of the cooking, so I thought maybe she'll know, but she didn't either... and I asked my sister but she didn't know... none of us knew... so we were thinking, what are cardamoms, and where can we get some...
- Me: Mm, really?
- Ta: Mm... so we went to the supermarket and we were looking everywhere for cardamoms and asking the assistants because we didn't know what they looked like... and finally we found them, and we were like, oh! they're *elachi*! (the Bengali word for cardamoms)... we've got loads of these at home, we don't need to buy anymore... and all this time we were wondering what cardamoms were! My mum buys these things all the time, but probably never looks at the wording on the packet because she knows what they are...
- Me: Mm... she's used to the Bengali
- Ta: Yeah, but so are we... we're used to the Bengali and we didn't know the English, but we never needed to know it before

This extract gives valuable insight into the cultural construction of 'home' and 'outside' for second generation British Bangladeshis. Home relates to the notion of the inside space as representing one language and therefore cultural and historical values, and the outside, or 'non-home' space, as representing another distinct set of cultural and historical values. So, for example, the term that Tamanna uses to refer to 'cardamoms' is language specific. She uses the Bengali 'elachi', rather than the English, which she does not know. It is within the context of the home, the 'inside space' that the thing referred to is used, and where the English is not used or perhaps it is not known.

In one space, inside the home, is where the family reside, and where their cultural histories that articulated in one language, Bengali. Outside the home, another set of cultural histories are present, and become 'visible' through a different language, English. On the other hand, however, these spaces get intertwined as individuals leave one space and move into another. From within these different spaces, there is constant movement. Indeed, as Brah argues, such spaces are contested (2006: 443-444). People travel between such cultural histories, so such histories are in constant flux and knowledges are constantly exchanged, as has been shown in the extract above.

The interface between these two separate but intertwining British and Bengali spaces, I argue is the *door*. It is the door that gives access to each of the two cultural histories that are confined by physical boundaries to particular spaces. So, for instance, going back to the example of where certain languages are spoken in which spaces, when I am inside the space of what I call ‘home’, I speak Bengali with members of my family. In the space that is ‘outside’, I speak in English, otherwise I would not be understood by many of the people whom I speak to. In this case, English could be said to be a common, ‘public’ language, whereas Bengali is ‘private’. The different spaces become intertwined through the young woman who traverses them. Indeed, there is an in-between-ness for the young woman. Choi likens this to a ‘hyphen’, which lets her act as both ‘insider and outsider, bears the weight of social and political predispositions, presents the possibility of a range of choices available to me and creates a new space as I continue a conflicting relationship with my rooted and future cultural affiliations’ (2010:71).

It is also important to understand how the young woman speaking these two languages sees herself in relation to speaking them. The following is an elaboration of this. Here, Tamanna explains how she views the two languages in relation to each other, by giving an example of her treatment of her cat, who is, of course, unable to answer back in either language.

Tamanna:

- Ta: ...I’ve got a cat... and when it’s naughty, I speak to it in English...
when it’s being good, and when I play with it, I speak to it in Bengali... and it listens to me! [laughs]... it understands Bangla
- Me: ...that’s interesting... why do you speak to it when it’s being naughty and when it’s good you speak to it in Bangla?
- Ta: ...um... I think it’s because English is quite a harsh language and Bangla sounds soft...
- Me: ...really? A little while ago you said you thought in English and that your actions were in English... does that mean you have a harsh personality...?
[laughs]
- Ta: [laughs]... hmm... that’s interesting... never thought of that before...

The question necessarily arises here as to what this means for Tamanna's understanding of herself. In relation to her parents, her mother especially, does it imply that she has a loving relationship with her mother that is reflected in how she speaks to her cat? Indeed it suggests that she experiences the relationship with her parents, with whom she speaks Bengali, as loving and relaxed. Equally, it could be inferred that Tamanna perceives the English speaking outside as a 'harsh' world. It is these spaces that she moves between.

This might thus be reminiscent of certain historical cultures that Tamanna is incorporated into. It might be argued, in other words, that each language is connotative a certain history. For example, Tamanna describes the Bengali language as 'soft'. If thought about historically, when Bangladesh was once part of British India, this might connote its subjugation to the 'harsh', colonial and disciplinarian British rule, which Tamanna has possibly associated, perhaps unconsciously, with the English language. I argue this also gives rise to 'tensions between languages' (Brennan, 2010:35). Thus, I use Nandy's (1995) argument of the amalgamation of differing cultural histories merging together in a specific place that such histories can be heard through language and that they also give rise to a historical sense of self. This also reinforces Brah's (1996) assertion that histories cannot be gotten rid of easily in the psyche (see Chapter 2).

Issues around language, tension and power also come into play when respondents speak about their fathers. The next section looks at the relationships between first generation immigrant fathers and their navigating second generation daughters in more depth.

A Tale of Three Fathers

Fathers also form part of the first generation from which daughters receive the cultural histories that shape their sense of self. In this section's exploration of the relationship between fathers and daughters, I will look specifically at the experiences of three young women. Their contrasting relationships illustrate the diverse types of parent-child relationships among respondents but also emphasize the changing nature of the relationship between generations (Brah, 1996; Modood, 1992).

Among the three respondents considered here, Khaleda's father owns a restaurant, as does Soraiya's father. Sushmita's father is a lawyer in a multi-national firm. The first extract is from Khaleda. In it, she describes the languages she speaks at home and the meanings associated with these spoken languages, and in so doing also reflects upon the relationship she has with her father.

Khaleda:

Me: Do you speak to your mum and dad in Bengali?

K: I speak to my mum in English and my dad in Bengali

Me: Why?

K: My mum's always around me and my dad's hardly home...

Me: Ok

K: ...so 'coz she's always around me, she has to suffer... 'coz I speak in English with my friends, my colleagues, my brothers... and half the time I'm always talking to her in English and when my dad comes home...I'm talking to my dad in Bengali and I get tongue-twisted and she has to help me out

Me: You can't speak Bengali very well?

Ka: No... but they kind of make out what I'm trying to say...

K: ...I'm not interested really... [in learning Bengali]... because English comes in more useful than Bengali does, in my life... the only time I use Bengali is when I'm at home with my dad...

Me: Ok

K: ...so I don't see the point of learning it 'coz I don't speak it with anyone else except for my dad [*my italics*]

Me: ...maybe [it's] your thing about Asian culture as a hassle

K: ...yeah... [I've got it]... into my head that... because I don't want to speak it [Bengali], I'm resenting it... I'm not realising I'm resenting the whole thing...

Me: Mm hmm

K: I'm actually... I'm losing the whole thing of thinking like that

Me: You said the only person you speak to in Bengali is your father

K: Yeah

Me: Do you get on with your father?

K: [pause] half the time...

- Me: Mm hmm
- K: ...hardly talk to him because he's hardly around... but... um... he loves me a lot, that's all I know
- Me: ...ok... that's interesting
- K: Yeah... um... are we close? ...when we want to be, when we actually sit down and talk but... I don't wanna talk to him like that... I know that when we have an argument he always has to say sorry... he always comes to me and goes I'm sorry... he doesn't say it in Bengali, I don't know how he would say that in Bengali, and he always says I'm sorry and I go, it's alright
- Me: So that's all in English?
- K: Yeah, that part has definitely got to be in English
- Me: Otherwise you don't accept his apology?
- K: Yeah... [I go and say to mum]... he has to say sorry to me, he upset me... and then she speaks to him when he comes home and then he'll be like, sorry... and then that's the end of it... [giggles]
- Me: ...that's interesting 'coz you forgive in English
- K: Yeah... yeah, if he said it to me in Bengali, it wouldn't mean anything to me...

Khaleda's account, I argue, gives an insight into navigation through language. This can be seen by the languages she uses to speak to her mother and her father. There is a sense of formality in language use, as the language differs for each parent, illuminating to the relationship she has with each of them. For instance, Khaleda's mother comes to act as intermediary; when Khaleda gets stuck speaking Bengali with her father, her mother comes to her aid.

The relationship between Khaleda and her father, in part, unravels slowly through the course of the extract. Khaleda explains that it is only with her father that she speaks Bengali. Indeed, there is a pause when I ask her if she gets along with her father, and when she replies that he is hardly around, but that he loves her a lot, it is almost as though she gives herself compensation for his absence. She understands that she is loved by her father, and that he might be absent due to work so that he is able to provide for her and the rest of his family.

But the question necessarily arises as to whether she wants to distance herself from Bengali cultural histories. Indeed, by speaking Bengali with only her father, does this mean that Khaleda wants somehow to distance herself from him?

For Khaleda I argue, language can come to act as a tool of power, as her father is not fluent in English and she is. She is able to use certain languages to her advantage. For example, she is able to exert some power over her father when she feels he is in the wrong or has hurt her. Language can thus come to mean a source of power. For instance, if the father is not fluent in English, his daughter might have a sense of power over him if she is able to easily use the language her father cannot master. But, conversely, in addition to being a source of power, language is also a means of understanding each other and each others' perspectives.

Here, also, Khaleda's mother acts as intermediary between father and daughter when the situation is tense between them. Khaleda obtains an apology from her father by asking her mother to speak to her father, rather than asking him herself. And it is only if he speaks to her in English that the apology is accepted, it is only in English that the father's apology denotes any meaning for his second generation daughter.

This is both similar and dissimilar to Soraiya's extract below. Indeed, as will be seen, Soraiya's father is very not often present (although at times he may be physically present in the room with her). Soraiya, at the time of interview, is twenty-nine years old, has a degree in Law and works as a Journalist. She is the eldest child, is preparing to get married at the time of interview and lives with her family in Wood Green. Extracts of her younger sister Tamanna's interview were considered earlier in this chapter.

Soraiya:

S: ...even though my dad was a never hands-on dad... he's a very aloof dad, but...

Me: ...he's a very aloof dad?

S: Yeah, he is... if he was here, he'd be sitting in that corner there now... that's it [laughs]

Me: Ok

S: ...that's my dad, seriously [laughs] um... but I actually don't think that's atypical, I think it's quite typical of dads from having spoken to my other friends as well... Bengali/Sylheti friends

Me: Ok... you're Sylheti, yeah?

S: Yeah, I'm Sylheti... that I think is quite typical of Bengali Sylheti dads to be like that and I say that because of having spoke to others... and noticing it with others... my dad's like that, my uncle's like that, the one in Manchester, my other uncle's not... this uncle, my mum's cousin isn't like that... but I'd say out of the men we do know... I'd say eight out of ten weren't you know... so it's like that... so I never saw it as anything unusual... my dad being like that...

Me: Would you sit and talk with him?

S: ... no

Me: ...and do you now?

S: ...no... no, there's nothing to talk about [giggles]

Me: ...do you... like I talk about everything with my dad...

S: No, not with my dad... I talk to my mum but not with my dad... there's nothing to talk about... one day I sat down and I asked him when he came over [to London] and I was curious and I asked him and I actually looked at his passport

Me: Yeah?

S: ...so I know that it was in 1962

Me: ...yeah? That was the same year my dad came over here

S: ...and also I saw his passport

Me: Yeah...?

S: And I think I asked my mum questions and I think one time I actually did sit down and ask my dad and that time I wish I had a tape-recorder... 'coz it was quite interesting... but that was the only time... it didn't get ...

Me: ...it didn't get very far...?

S: No, because I didn't have a tape-recorder [laughs]... and then I kept thinking that one day, I'll sit down and ask him again... but I never did... but yeah, I did ask him that one time... but most of the stuff I know about my dad, I know from *my mum* [my italics]

Me: Really? You don't ask him yourself?

S: ...well no... he's a very aloof dad... even when we were growing up he was never there because he was at work...

Me: ...ok, can I ask what he did?

S: Well, he owned his own restaurant... and because it was his own restaurant... when you're a manager you... he spent most of his time at the restaurant, it was like that... and then he went off to Bangladesh for two years... between the ages of twelve to fourteen... he went off to stay there...

Me: Why?

S: ...I don't know... yeah... he had things to sort out over there and stuff like that...

Me: Right

S: ...and then he came back when I was fourteen

Me: ...how did you feel... you didn't see him for two years?

S: It was kind of weird when my dad came back, actually it was kind of weird... because it was at that time I... [changed]... from being a child to a teenager... adolescence... so suddenly having my dad there again, did feel really weird... and we sort of never recovered from that... well, when I say never really recovered, I don't have that comfortable relationship...

Me: Do you have it now?

S: No... no... I don't ever expect it... I just think he's like that

Me: ...no, I mean, do you feel uncomfortable with him... with your dad?

S: ...not uncomfortable... I don't feel uncomfortable... but I've got nothing to talk to him about

Me: Ok

S: But I probably spend more time with my dad than my brothers and sister do...

Me: Ok

S: ...meaning that he'll sit here and I'll watch TV in here but none of my brothers and sister come in and watch TV

Me: Why?

S: ...well... that's nothing to do with my dad... it's just because they like to watch their own stuff and do their own stuff... you know, my dad likes watching Bangla TV, I'm telling you, he's obsessed with Bangladesh and Bengali culture... Bangladesh, Bangladesh, Bangladesh... that's my dad, he never tries to, you know... [giggles]... he's the typical dad who didn't really try to get involved in this [culture]... 'coz I think he always thought he'd go back

Me: ok... was there ever a plan?

- S: Yeah, there was ...I think he always thought he'd go back and I think now he realises that... really he was never...
- Me: ...going to go back...
- S: Yeah... when I was sixteen, my dad actually wanted to relocate there but my mum didn't
- Me: ...why... why didn't your mum want to relocate...?
- S: ...oh, not when I was sixteen, I was probably a bit younger... probably because her point is that the education system... if you stay here... you get a much better education... that was really important ...getting an education ...and she was like, you're disrupting their education... and she wanted us to go to university, college, and all this kind of stuff... and that was the thing... like we won't have those opportunities, if we'd moved back... and that was the reason my mum absolutely did not want to move back...

Clearly, Soraiya gives a certain image of Bangladeshi, especially Sylheti, fathers. Soraiya paints the picture that these fathers, the ones whom she has seen, as well as her own, are what she calls 'aloof', in a sense 'uninvolved' with their own children. As a result, she argues that she has nothing to speak about with her father, and that the relationship became distanced, although this was not necessarily her intention. Indeed, the one time she cites a conversation is when she regrets not having a device for recording it. This had made an impact on her, since she specifies certain dates and seeing documentary evidence in the form of her father's passport. It was a way to touch upon her own Bengali histories. But despite wanting another conversation, Soraiya has found it very difficult to sit down and talk to her father again on such an engaging level. I argue that the distance which had developed over time gave rise to this 'non-speech', in a way, a type of 'non communication' (see Chapter 3), where although his presence is very much acknowledged, his voice is not necessarily heard.

This presence/non-presence is taken further when Soraiya's father leaves during her transcendence and development from childhood to adolescence. Even more absent than Khaleda's father, Soraiya's father is out of the country for a couple of years. She believes that this gave rise to a notion of 'non-communication' between them. Though he is absent because of business he needs to attend to in Bangladesh,

interestingly, Soraiya does not come to resent the culture that took her father away from her.

Instead this pushed her toward forming a stronger bond with her mother, whom she asks for information about her father. Indeed, Soraiya explains that most of what she knows about her father 'comes from her mother'. It is her mother who appears to have a stronger voice with relation to bringing up her daughters (and sons). When her father wanted to shift permanently to Bangladesh, for instance, it is Soraiya's mother, who dissuaded him. By arguing from the standpoint that she did not want to disrupt her children's education, something which her mother valued more than the father, Soraiya's mother's voice was louder than her father's since she got her own way. Here it is useful to remember Parmar's (1982) argument that women of first generation are active agents in their children's upbringing and welfare.

This contrasts largely with the dynamics in Sushmita's family. Sushmita, at the time of interview, is twenty-three years old and is the eldest child. Her father is a lawyer. She lives with her family in Gants' Hill. The extract below begins with Sushmita describing her choice of career, and how much of an effect parental influences (especially her father's) had on this choice.

Sushmita:

Me: ...what were your influences, why did you choose Dentistry?

Su: I'm not 100% sure about that... one of the earliest career choices I could think of was wanting to be a journalist when I was really small, I think I was about 8 or 9... I don't think I had any idea of what a journalist was... but I know my dad really wanted me to be one...

Me: Mm hmm

Su: ...and then ...I started growing up and found out about it and we both decided that it wasn't really for me ...and then I think I wanted to go into Economics, when I was about 15 or 16...

Me: Mm hmm

Su: ...it just looked like a really fantastic world to be in and... I don't know, being a city high flyer seemed to appeal to me

Me: Yep...

Su: ...but my dad did try and discourage me from that because he didn't think it would be suited to the kind of person that I am...

- Me: Why not?
- Su: He seems to think that to go into that sort of field you need to be quite hard-nosed almost... and quite aggressive... and he doesn't think I have those... qualities
- Me: Ok
- Su: He thought that... you know... he was like, Sushmita, I've known you since you were born, I know what you're like and I don't think that this would be something that you'd particularly like... you'd be good at it but you wouldn't like it and that would make you unhappy
- Me: Mm hmm
- Su: Um... but they wanted me to go down the Medicine route... they didn't push me but they made it clear that they thought I would be a good doctor... but I didn't want to... I'm quite squeamish...
- Me: ...it's interesting that you keep focussing on the relationship you have with your father... throughout our talk, you've been... my father... my dad influenced me like this, my dad influenced me like that... you know... just now you've said that my dad wanted us to be independent... it's interesting... um, where do you place your mother in relation to...
- Su: ...see, the reason why I've been answering your questions with 'my father' is because I think... I think that other people think that it's always the fathers who are the problem...
- Me: The problem?
- Su: ...as in the obstacle to independence for girls or something, in that it's the father who stops them
- Me: Mm hmm
- Su: ... and the mother, you know, being female herself is the one who is going to push for independence... whereas in my family, not only does my mother push, but my father pushes as well... so it almost goes without saying my mother wants that as well...

It emerges from Sushmita's extracts that her father, unlike the other two young women in this section, is involved and influential in her life. Importantly, this is welcomed and she acknowledges that her father expressly desires her happiness. This

relationship between father and daughter has taken a long time to establish, as Sushmita herself tells us that when she was younger, she had certain aspirations that her father dissuaded her from carrying out. But at the same time, he did not want her to be unhappy. Rather, it is partly through this relationship with her father of first generation (but also with her mother) that she comes to find her own sense of independence, and she argues that it is her father who has pushed for this in a way that is not found with the other two women in this section.

I argue that by playing an active – and welcomed - role in his daughter’s life and by conversing with her in such a way as to not put ‘obstacles’ before her, Sushmita’s father made it easier for her, than Khaleda, for instance, to ‘navigate’ through and between different cultural histories. On the other hand, in light of Erikson’s (1997) theory of life-long psychic development and my own arguments about parents who experience disruption or diversion through migration, we might ask whether because of some disturbance to Sushmita’s father’s own development, he has wished to live parts of his life through his second generation daughter by encouraging or dissuading her from various career paths.

The role of inter-generational communication in the development of a sense of self for these young women will be looked at more closely in the section below. This will be considered through an examination of the merging of Bengali and English together, and the bridging of cultural histories that this entails.

What does ‘Traditional’ Histories mean to you?

This section aims to explore how certain young British Bangladeshi young women feel about carrying the ‘histories’ of their immigrant parents, who have moved from one space to another. As Seidler (2000) notes, although not all histories may be verbalised, they are still felt by the second generation. The parents of my respondents have carried certain distinct customs, memories and traditions with them that might differ from those which their daughters might have grown up in, but daughters are often aware of certain silent histories. Moreover, this section will argue that it is important to show that Bengali culture is neither static nor immovable but in a state of constant flux.

To begin this discussion, the extract from Tazeen's interview below offers insight into how this cultural change may be perceived.

Tazeen:

Me: ...so you don't follow a traditional Bengali...

T: Not at all... you know I don't! [laughs]

Me: ...um ...how does that make you feel? Does that make you feel in any way ...less Bengali, whatever that means?

T: I don't consider myself a traditional Bengali at all

Me: What does that mean to you?

T: Someone like our parents basically [laughs]

Me: ...so migration would be a factor in deciding whether you're Bengali or not? Would that be fair to say?

T: No, I think it's an individual thing... I don't know... I don't know if it's got anything to do with personality, or the way you've been brought up... I just... I've never seen myself as a traditional Bengali

Me: ...so what's your definition of a traditional Bengali?

T: ...someone who's like... um, you know, wears the national dress all the time, talks in the language, that sort of thing

Me: ...the thing with our ...with *their* culture dying out [I have used 'us' and 'their' to differentiate between consecutive generations here]... d'you think that's why ... they want us to... well, they would like us to marry into our 'home' culture rather than into a different culture... because they might be somehow in quotes 'alien' to British culture?

T: Mm... interesting question... possibly... and I think also because they're so used to that and it's their comfort zone...

Me: Yeah

T: ...they can't entertain the idea...

Me: ...of having something else?

T: Yeah, because at that age as well... I think you're so set in your ways and in your way of life that you don't want to change

In this extract, Tazeen emphasises that she does not consider herself a

‘traditional’ Bengali, which for her, specifically means engaging in particular behaviours and practices. What is interesting here, is that in expressing her identity, although she argues that she is in no way ‘traditional’, she does not leave out ‘Bengali’, which suggests that she does, in some way, embody an historical sense of Bengali cultural identity. Perhaps she does not use ‘traditional Bengali’ in reference to her identity because of the conscious awareness that Bengali culture is changing. She not only carries the culture of her parents, but also the culture of England, more specifically, London, her birthplace. Tazeen, then, embodies the kind of cultural hybridity which has been the subject of much scholarly attention (eg Kalra et al, 2005; Melucci, 1997).

Parents for Tazeen, as for the other interviewees in this chapter, are bearers of a Bengali history that is both visible and present. Tazeen, cites her parents as the quintessential ‘traditional’ Bengalis. She explains that she does not consider herself to be a ‘traditional’ Bengali, saying that she is *not* like her parents. A ‘traditional’ Bengali is for her someone who keeps the culture alive, ‘wearing the national dress, talks in the language, that sort of thing’. It might be argued however, that she does not necessarily feel comfort with the histories she carries, and perhaps she is not able to navigate between them with ease and comfort. Rather, she sees herself more of an individual. This is ambivalent because there is also parental influence in whether she sees herself as a ‘traditional’ Bengali or not, in that her parents become the yardstick as to how she views Bengali culture. At the same time, ambivalently, she carries the histories of her parents, and, as Seidler (2000) has observed of such relationships, this leads to a sense of ‘frustration’.

Histories can indeed have ‘real, material and symbolic effects’ (Loomba, 1998: 152). ‘Carried histories’ can be a form of lived nostalgia, histories that may be somehow ‘dead’ are brought alive because they are passed down to us, and we are made to feel aware of them by those who pass these histories on to us, as Seidler, (2000) argues. At the same time however, the boundaries of cultural histories that are carried change over time and space. This is voiced by Soraiya in the next extract.

Soraiya:

So: ...I didn’t know what to do, really, with my life... and thought... so I didn’t want to go straight to uni after I’d finished college, I wanted to take some time off...

- Me: Mm hmm
- So: ...and travel... is what I wanted to do... but it's quite difficult 'coz my parents didn't want me to do that, they didn't want me to take time off
- Me: Mm... why?
- So: ...well... I think it's tradition... old fashioned parents
- Me: Is it a Bengali thing?
- So: Yeah

For Soraiya, histories are both very much alive and nostalgic at the same time. She links, for example, a sense of 'old fashioned-ness' with her parents. These nostalgic and lived histories, I argue, have been made visible and present both in the family and the community, and will be explored in the next section.

Intertwining Languages and the Emergence of 'Benglish'

This section will explore how it can be that English and Bengali have the potential to be joined together and creating a new space, in order to bridge the two cultural histories carried by my respondents. It will also try to explore what this means for the young woman who joins them as she traverses between them. This is understood by looking specifically at the ways they merge Bengali and English in speaking with their parents. I argue that it is precisely through the new and emergent forms of languages in an expression of self that emphasizes Bhabha's (1994) notion of a sense of transformation through cultural heritage.

This section will begin by considering Sujata's account of how she uses language to communicate with the generation of her parents. The extract begins with a question about how she defines her identity.

Sujata:

- Me: You're more British than Bengali?
- Sj: It's really hard to decide... it's very hard to... yeah, I would say I'm more British than Bengali because I think in English... my reactions are in English, my thought processes are in English... but I have a very dominant Bengali cultural side inside me

- Me: ...is that influenced inside the home?
- Sj: ...from my parents, I suppose
- Me: Do you speak Bengali at home?
- Sj: Yeah... but I speak in English as well... to my parents I speak in Bengali... to communicate
- Me: ...so why do you speak to your parents in Bengali and... who do you speak English with?
- Sj: ...yeah... I speak to my brother in English... solely in English and my parents in Bengali if it's a serious conversation... if it's a serious serious conversation
- Me: How do you define a serious conversation?
- Sj: ...if we talk about something, a topic or something that I really want them to understand... then... obviously they're very well spoken in both languages, but my parents as most Bengali parents... Bangla... I can really get my point across to them... if I was saying the same thing in English, I don't know how much of what I was saying would be absorbed... but if I was speaking in Bengali, I know that I have got their attention one hundred per cent and I realise that that's the best way to speak with my parents or any Bengali parent... I would speak in Bengali

It emerges that Sujata has been very influenced by her parents in establishing a sense of self. Language can be viewed as a means of navigating between these cultures – it becomes a form of ‘cultural adaptive transformation’ (Liu, 2010:129). For instance, Bengali is used to get her point across to parents of first generation; it is a means of getting attention from a generation who have transferred their histories onto the next generation. At the same time it connotes a sense of ‘power’ by translating certain views across to a generation who might not listen if the language does not belong to their histories. Indeed, this might be important as Sujata points out interestingly that she speaks to her brother only in English.

Movement between cultural historical spaces is continuous, as is the language interchange as people travel between such spaces constantly. Bengali and English can cross over into each other's spaces where different cultural histories come to be represented. An example of this and where different cultural histories have the potentiality to become ‘merged’ into each other's spaces through language, is when the young woman mixes the two languages she speaks to form a new hybrid version.

This can be seen as the embodiment of different spaces onto her own body, which can be verbalised and articulated. This is reminiscent of Anwar's argument that young women are now somehow creating a new culture that is an amalgamation of the 'old' and the 'new' (1998:192) and points to a verbal amalgamation of British inflections as well as the residual traditions of the South Asian diaspora, giving rise to what Harris (2006) has termed 'Brasian'.

Indeed, one such interviewee has named this new hybrid language 'Benglish'. Lamia is, at the time of this interview, twenty-three years old, the only daughter, indeed, the only child and lives with her parents in Wood Green. Her father is a banker and her mother is a housewife. Her family originate from the district of Rajshahi in Bangladesh.

Lamia:

Me: ...can you speak Bengali?

L: Well I can actually speak Bengali fluently... um... I did a G.C.S.E. in Bengali as well... and um... when I'm at home I speak in Bengali... occasionally with my dad... I sometimes speak in what I call Benglish... [laughs]

Me: Benglish? What's that?

L: ...it's like a bit of Bengali and a bit of English here and there... [laughs]... but yeah... I speak almost always I speak in Bengali with my parents but if there are certain words in Bengali that I might not know in Bengali and then I might use the English and then I say do you understand... and they're like... yeah, we get that... [laughs]... when I say I'm fluent, I am fluent but there are obviously certain words, certain complex words which I probably don't know as well or maybe I can't pronounce well enough so I don't want to try 'coz I'm too scared...

Me: ...you're too scared? Why are you scared?

L: yeah, I'm too scared to pronounce it in front of my parents 'coz they might say oh you're so silly, you don't even know what that is or something like that... but...

Me: ...but they've taught you this Bengali culture in the first place... so why would they make fun of you if that's the case...?

L: ...I dunno! I just have this feeling that they would just be like, oh silly girl... but I do try sometimes... with certain words I'll try... and if it's wrong then it's wrong

Me: ...but where do you think this feeling comes from...?

L: ...sometimes I think that my parents are very proud of the fact that I can speak Bengali better than many other people's children and so therefore in my head I think I'm supposed to set a standard... and if I don't set a standard... and if I go a bit outside that standard, I think they might judge me... but I'm sure they don't... but that's just my theory... [in comparison to her cousins, which she speaks about later in the interview]

For Lamia, Bengali and English are merged together forming a new variant of lived histories, which have been passed down to her from her parents. She has taken from these histories and re-invented to accommodate her British histories also (see, for example, Puwar, 2004 and Kalra et al. in Chapter 2). I argue that the cultural histories that give rise to her sense of self are merged through the merging of these two languages. However, it is when she gets stuck in the pronunciation of certain words that this gives rise to a fear that she will be mocked by her parents if she does not live up to their sense of pride. It might be argued then, because of this feeling of having to live up to a certain expectation, her parents hold a sort of power over her, because it is they who have passed the Bengali language, and its associated histories, on to her.

The next section will examine this notion of taking on cultural histories through the importance of language. In relation to cultural navigation, through the voice of Soraiya, it will explore how the second generation, speak to *each other*. It raises the question of what this might mean for the navigation through differing cultural histories and the risk of these cultures 'dying' if the language is unspoken.

We Speakers of the Bengali Language?

If Bengali is a language that our parents have taught us, then what happens when we speak to *each other*, those with whom we share similar cultural histories,

becomes an interesting question. Here, Soraiya explains the potential importances of 'holding onto' the language.

Soraiya:

Me: ...do [you and your partner] talk in Bengali ever?

S: Well, he does... I actually do prefer speaking in English because I find it easier to communicate... I mean... my vocabulary is not as wide as it is in English... you know... it's quite a limited vocabulary... half the words I use are in English anyway [giggles]

Me: ...is that because you speak in English with your brothers and sisters...?

S: Yeah, yeah

Me: Do you speak in English with your mum and dad?

S: No... they can't speak English... that's the reason why I know how to speak Sylheti...

Me: Ok

S: ...because they can only speak Sylheti... my dad's English is very limited... my mum's is even more limited...

Me: Mm

S: ...but I like that again... 'coz I know with some of my cousins... their parents spoke to them in English and stuff... and I thought why... why... you know... and now they're older... they're like, oh, my children can't speak Bengali... they have that regret... and I'm thinking, well, why didn't you teach them! [laughs] ...I remember when we were younger... um... they were all speaking in English, my cousins... and I used to speak Sylheti... and now they're older and the parents are saying oh, they can't speak Sylheti, or they can't speak this... or you know... and I'm thinking, well, you didn't teach them when they were younger, who's fault is that, you know what I mean... that's what I don't like...

Me: Mm hmm

S: ...because now they actually regret it... the parents regret it 'coz they didn't do it then

Me: ...I know a few people whose parents used to speak English with them... saying that English is more important than Bengali is... and now they can't speak Bengali

- S: And do their parents wish they could?
- Me: Yeah
- S: Yeah, that's what I mean... I think, well why didn't you teach them you know... and I've got another cousin who can't speak English very well and her husband can't speak English very well and now she's got children... when I say English... I mean Bengali... I keep on saying English... the girl can't speak Bengali very well... so I'm pretty sure the children... in that family, the language is gonna disappear... and that's what's gonna happen... the more... the language is eventually gonna disappear... 'coz its happened with other communities in other parts of the world... like in the West Indies, there's a lot of Asians in the West Indies...
- Me: Mm hmm
- S: ... but they don't have their original Asian language because by the third generation, it got wiped out
- Me: But do you think it's important to have Bengali in the third generation... or in our generation, even?
- S: Yeah... I do actually... because again, it's part of our culture and our heritage and you can't throw that away

Soraiya argues, echoing Bhabha's (1994) assertions (see Chapter 2), that for her, language is a necessary part of the Bengali heritage and culture. It is something that needs to be preserved because language and the way in which it is communicated is something, a space perhaps, which helps bind the family together. It is because of her parents' limited vocabulary of English that she is able to speak the Sylheti version of Bengali. As she argues, language is part of her history and it is, for her, important to hold onto these histories that help shape a sense of self in order to express herself.

Sometimes it can be difficult for first generation parents in a different space from the one that they have been brought up in to understand their new environment, as Chatterjee (1990) argues, especially if they do not understand the language of this new space. Some first generation parents, for this reason, used to learn and converse in English through and with their children, so that parents could find suitable jobs to provide for their families. This also took them away from work in factories and restaurants for instance. Perhaps as a result, many children with whom this happened, grew up communicating in English, where Bengali became secondary. For many

parents it was taken for granted that the children would learn Bengali at some point anyway, although this was not always the case for all families. Indeed, as Soraiya points out, paradoxically, parents of first generation who mainly spoke English with their children feel a sense of regret that their children are not fluent in Bengali. Indeed, citing the work of Hoffman, Treacher argues,

language... evokes and produces membranes of connections and associations which bind one person to another and to the community... to lose a language which evokes attachments is also a loss of a living connection; it is not that the new language is empty but it does not have the same resonances and it requires effort to connect the sounds to interiority and to relationships with others. (2000: 98)

I argue that being able to speak both Bengali and English is what ‘bridges’ both cultural histories – through certain second generation young woman. It is a way of linking and understanding histories. This can be seen when Soraiya explains that for her family members who did not speak Bengali with their children, the Bengali language gradually began to vanish with the succession of each generation, to the regret of the preceding generation. This change over generation is explored in more depth in the next section.

The Change of Our Generation

This section will discuss, stemming from the above, how it is with subsequent generations that there is a shift in cultural norms and traditions – and it is with the second generation, that this might begin (see Brah, 1996). It could be argued that whilst, as Seidler (2000) observes, the second generation might embody familial and cultural histories, there is nevertheless cultural change across generation. Indeed, I argue that through obtaining ‘hereditary’ cultures, there is a merging, as Bhabha (2006) might describe it, a transformation, as one grows older. Tazeen, touches upon this in her observation that the second generation have grown up in a different way to their parents.

Tazeen:

T: ... this is gonna be strange 'coz we're the first generation who have had to grow up with a completely different way of life than they did in this country [Britain]... and they grew up in a similar life to their parents... it's the time thing...

Me: Mm

T: ...so the way we're gonna grow up as adults... well, we are grown up as adults... is gonna be completely different to them... we're not gonna see things the way they see things... we're not as constrained by culture as they are... so although we might take things that we think are positive from the culture and try and have it in our children or whatever... I don't think it's gonna be the same sort of family groups as their generation

Me: ...but the thing with wanting to hold into their culture, especially now... I think... I don't actually know what to say with that

T: I think there are a handful of people in my generation who will keep that sort of culture into the next generation... not that many though...

Me: Mm

T: ...I think a lot of people in my generation, certainly the ones that I've been exposed to are a lot more British than Bengali... and I think they will be the be what shape the next generation... I think it's gonna be more like that and I think gradually the sort of traditional Bengali way of life here is gonna change

Me: What do you mean when you said shaping the next generation... what did you mean by that?

T: As in like, you know how I was saying that our generation is completely different from theirs?

Me: Mm... but we have the same culture, the same sort of moralistic values, for example

T: Yeah, we do have that, but we don't see the world as they see the world, we don't live the way they lived and because of that obviously the way we bring up our children or the way we're gonna be in a family or in a relationship is gonna be different... you know like today, yeah?

Me: Yeah

T: We know other Bengali people because our parents knew them and we go to

each other's house because they're a family friend and stuff like that

Me: Yeah

T: ...I don't think that's gonna happen with the next generation... I might go and see some of my Bengali family friends and obviously they'll have kids by then...

Me: Mm

As Tazeen exemplifies, the 'way of seeing the world' has changed for the second generation from their parents. Arguing along the lines of Kalra et al. (2005), Harris, (2006) and Melucci, (1997), for example, (see Chapter 2), I believe that in their unique position as cultural navigators, belonging to multiple cultures, these young women are able to take elements of each 'carried' culture and mould it into something new. For instance, as Tazeen argues, we might share certain things with the generation of our parents, but this has the potential for change, for example, as who we make friendships with, will change over time.

Tazeen emphasizes that when our parents came to Britain, they did not necessarily know the culture, and tended to make friends with people of a similar cultural heritage to them. Importantly then, I argue that the trust and dialogue established between migrants and their second generation children could provide a means through which parents might explore the culture that their children are immersed in but which they are less familiar with – just as this dialogue allows children to understand the culture of their parents. Dialogue becomes critical considering that, as Seidler argues, if histories are not spoken about but are troubled and felt within the atmosphere of the home, they can cause tensions between generations, which have the potential to distance generations from each other. He refers to these feelings in terms of ambivalence in relation to the responsibilities that the second generation might bear in carrying their parents' histories. He argues that through an acknowledgement, the second generation sometimes come to realise their own emotions (Seidler, 2000:143).

Voicing Generations – Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined some of the different types of relationships first generation migrant parents have with their daughters. I have examined some of

the ways in which certain young women of second generation manoeuvre through and between the cultural histories that they carry. This is not always easy and might give rise to tension. However the ease with which the daughter of second generation manages this navigation, might necessarily depend on the relationship she has with both her parents, although, as in many of the cases in this chapter, particularly with her mother.

Changes have occurred in intergenerational relationships over time, and as I have stressed, such relationships are not static and fixed in time. I have examined the ways in which specific spaces are experienced as British and/or Bangladeshi. However, I have also emphasized that those spaces become intermixed and intertwined through the constant interchange of people and languages moving through them. An example of this might be when the father speaks in Bengali and his daughter might reply in English, for instance.

The rules and regulations that are learnt by these young women inhabiting and moving across differing cultural spaces might be very different from each other. I have argued that these are learnt through experience and interaction with parents. As we will see in the next chapter, they are also learned through interactions with friends and teachers.

Through this chapter, I have also argued that language can come to act as a means of power, for either the daughter or the parent. For example, if the daughter speaks in English, a language that the parent cannot speak as fluently as their daughter, it might mean in that instance that the daughter has power over their parent. Conversely, as the parents are the conduit through which the young woman learns their language and culture, if she is unable to pronounce certain words in front of them, it might give her a sense of unease. Moreover, sometimes, the daughter is able to 'invent' a new language, where both histories become merged together, at the same time. This can be an important means through which she is able to manoeuvre through differing historical cultures and to speak from her differing positionalities within them.

But this comfort in speaking also depends upon the daughter's experiences and associations outside the family. By looking specifically at the young women's experiences with friendship, the next chapter will examine how factors external to the home might also shape the young women's sense of self.

Chapter 5: THE FRIENDS WE MADE IN SCHOOL AND SOME LATER

Following on from the arguments made in the previous chapter, this chapter explores the friendships made by my respondents in school and beyond. Specifically, it looks at how certain friendships might have been discouraged and how certain friendships have been consciously made by my respondents to challenge the stereotypical ideas some non-Bangladeshis might have about them. Moreover how certain friendships help elucidate intergenerational relationships between respondents and their first generation parents will be explored.

This chapter looks at the impact of friendships with those who share similar cultural and familial histories as my respondents and those who do not. It will explore how such friendships impact upon respondents' understanding of their own identities. To examine the impact of intergenerational relations on friendships, it explores how attitudes influenced by migration for one generation have the potential to directly affect the integration of another. The chapter will investigate how through establishing friendships, the young women can create spaces for self-expression. I will consider how consequently this affects the ways in which they speak from different cultural and familial historical positions.

This chapter is divided into six sections. It begins with discussing how some parents have discouraged friendships made with boys. Some respondents feel that as they grew older their friendships with boys needed to be validated somehow by their parents and this will also be explored in this chapter. Following this, we hear from different respondents regarding why they have consciously chosen to make friendships with people from different cultural backgrounds, and why, in other cases, they have felt it important to make Bengali friends. The relationship between the young women and their friends, both those who shared their cultural and familial histories, and those who did not, is discussed in relation to the young women's sense of self. I will try to show how through their friendships these young women might be reflective of their *own* histories and identities. Finally, the chapter examines how, over time as the respondents grow older, relationships with both friends and to an extent, parents, change and how this can help the young women balance Bengali and British cultures.

'Being Careful' – Making Friendships with Boys

This section examines how in making friendships with boys, some respondents, as they were growing up, were cautioned to be 'wary', although this was not always verbalised. This section will begin with Soraiya. As noted in the previous chapter, Soraiya is, at the time of interview, twenty-eight years of age, the eldest child and daughter, and works as a journalist.

Soraiya:

So: Yeah... I don't know... I don't actually clearly remember him doing that... but I just got this feeling... and also... I think it must have been things they [her parents] said or... because I picked it up from somewhere... when I went into the first year of junior school...

Me: Mm

So: ...well, they might've ...they might've said you shouldn't play with boys and then I automatically stopped playing with boys... and then I started choosing friends, Bengali friends, making friends with Bengali people...

The notion that certain Bangladeshi families, parents of first generation in particular, may somehow have influenced their daughter's friendships with boys is brought to the fore in Soraiya's extract. This influence was exerted at a very early age of development, perhaps even in the first year of junior school. However, since Soraiya argues that her parents 'might have' influenced her choice of friends there is also the possibility that she does not *consciously* remember her parents asking, or even telling her that she should not make non-romantic friendships with boys. But the effect of this is very instantaneous and unquestioned. This is reflective of Kakar's argument that in an individual's psycho-social growth, and their reciprocity with their social surroundings, immediate family (in this case Soraiya's parents) form the 'critical counterplayers' (1981:2). We might view Soraiya's acquiescence with her parents' wishes in two ways: it might have entailed an unquestioning trust in her parents but it also might reflect an unquestionable authority of her parents over her. Indeed, Soraiya states that she *automatically* stopped playing with boys. She might have enjoyed playing with boys in her class in school. In this way, I argue the

histories that Soraiya carried became prominent, as she became aware of their nuances.

As she later grew older and more discerning perhaps she came to understand why her parents had vetoed such friendships. Understanding such nuances and how they relate to them becomes important for the ways in which young women might negotiate cultural boundaries. On the other hand, in junior school and at such a young age, Soraiya was not in a position to question her parents' decision, and in some way refrained from doing so. Instead, Soraiya chose friends who might have won both her parents' approval and support. Friends were chosen who were Bangladeshi and could therefore relate to her parents, in some way, and their histories. This might also have shaped her sense of belonging both to her family and to her friendships; as Yuval-Davis et al. argue, feeling safe and feeling at 'home' are vital for the emotional attachment that constitutes belonging (2006: 2).

It could be argued there is unconscious acknowledgement of this even without the use of words. This echoes Brah, who argues that the social relations we harbour penetrate into our psyche and cannot be gotten rid of so easily (1996:5). For Soraiya, her parents were not approving of certain friends and she argues that she did indeed 'pick it up from somewhere'. However, she cannot consciously remember her parents telling her explicitly not to play with certain peers or individuals. Soraiya indicates that she stopped playing with boys without direct instruction, Bangladeshi friends were chosen *consciously*. Sujata elaborates on this theme below, describing how she was not allowed to do certain things. As noted in the last chapter, Sujata is, at the time of interview, twenty-eight years of age and the eldest daughter.

Sujata:

Me: You weren't allowed?

Su: ...Twelve to fourteen, I had some white friends... they were my best friends, fourteen, come fourteen, they're going out, meeting boys and I'm not allowed to do that, I don't want to do that...

Me: Mm

Su: ...and they're all white boys anyway... and I wasn't ready and I wasn't interested... but their whole culture became different... fourteen year old girls and I wasn't allowed out with them... and my mum was, first child... she was

very Bengali... didn't know what to do... can't do this, can't do that ...I live in a very English area

Familial involvement in the choice of friendships can further be seen in Sujata's extract, where this is highlighted in terms of cultural difference. For example, Sujata describes the nature of the friendships had changed because of the other girls' romances with boys. It was a culture she was not part of, and was indeed excluded from due to her family's boundaries. She did not have access to this culture, and in some part did not understand. Sujata highlights the tension that occurred during the time whilst she was this age. She highlights the tension that her mother felt, being in a 'foreign' place. What might have added more frustration and complications to the situation was that Sujata lives, in her own words, in a very 'English' area, in which there is a lack of Bengali and/or Asian families close by. Indeed, the feeling of not knowing what to do with one's children in an unfamiliar cultural context, whilst living in such an area, might possibly have been accentuated. The tension highlighted by Sujata is reminiscent of Anthias' (2006) argument that multiple identities within one person can exist in a number of different ways. Noting the relationality and intersubjective nature of identity, Anthias also insists that 'this idea of multiple or multilayered identities, or their recognition, does not resolve the problem of identity' (p.20).

Like Anthias, Masud Khan (1974) also emphasises the relationality of identity in his argument that in order to understand a sense of self, a relation, or an 'other' is needed. From within the friendships with her white friends, then, a part of Sujata's cultural histories relating to London was more prominent, but she retains pride for her mother at the same time. This changed when her friends became romantically interested in white boys, something she was not interested in. And indeed, empathising with her mother, Sujata specifies a *choice* in relation to her friendships with these girls and their associations with boys. Sujata explains that she did not wish to associate with such boys. It could be argued that she is neither allowed, nor does she wish to make such friendships. However, it could be further argued that this choice is necessarily influenced by Sujata's family (Dunn, 2006), as she stresses that in certain cases 'she is not allowed' to do certain things, followed by the clause that she 'does not want to do' these things. Indeed, she argues that she agrees with her parents' decision to disallow her from meeting with these boys, and so to a certain

extent, these friends, even though Sujata points out that the girls in the extract were her 'best friends' at the time later in the interview.

Experiences of friendship with girls whilst at school and growing up, is also discussed by Tasneem in the extract below.

Tasneem:

T: ...when I was young, I went to a girls' school, so most of my friends were girls... school is really here, rather than Bangladesh... primary school was mixed, and yeah... most of my friends were girls, I suppose... there were boys in the class and I would speak to them...

Me: ...were they your friends?

T: ...I wouldn't say they were friends or anything no... we'd speak to the boys but they weren't my friends...one of the boys I knew in my class was a family friend and we'd walk to school together...and then I went to a girls' school and I was really glad, because at that age I didn't like boys (laughs)

Me: ...at that age?

T: Yeah, at that age, I didn't like boys... I thought, girls' school, yeah... then we had family friends... I think... probably properly had boys who I was friends with when I was about seventeen, eighteen, nineteen... now I've got lots of close male friends, but female friends as well... probably more female friends that I'm close to but one or two close male friends as well... and my mum knows and my parents have met them... it's not a problem... (laughs)... their just friends... and even white boys are my friends... like one of my friends, Sam, he's been to my house, my mum's met him, my brother knows him... you know, it's not a big deal...

Tasneem points out that at a certain age, she did not like boys, but this has changed as she has grown older. She has some friends who are male and there are even some whom she terms as 'close'. However, it is interesting that she points to 'race' as factors in these friendships, specifying that 'even *white* boys' are her friends. The legitimacy of such relationships is validated by the fact that her family (her mother and brother) have met and therefore know the one male friend whom she highlights in the extract above. Bearing in mind Harris' (2006) argument that many young South Asian people are shaped by a sense of Britishness, whilst at the same

time incorporating their diasporic roots, this shows a visible intermixing between cultural histories. Tasneem is an example of what Ramji (2004) argues of one who is able to negotiate and renegotiate her position in the public sphere (p.232). However, this position is never established, but, as Kalra et al. (2005) argue, it is an ongoing process in which different cultures are incorporated in a 'new production of a hybrid culture' (p.71).

However, mindful of Kakar's (1981) argument noted above about the importance of immediate family in the individual's psycho-social development, I suggest that perhaps Tasneem's familial involvement with her non-romantic friendships goes back to an earlier stage of her childhood. Earlier, she argues that whilst she did not necessarily like the company of male peers and colleagues, there was one friend with whom she walked to school. But it must be pointed out that this individual was a '*family friend*'. In other words, the friend was known to her family, whereas other male friends might not have been. Therefore this friendship might have been legitimised and gave the two friends the right to walk together to school. It might be argued that Tasneem is conscious of particular boundaries around friendship and community, i.e. interactions with 'family friends' are specified as being more acceptable to her parents (Papastergiadis, 2004; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Tasneem does not class the boys in her class as friends, even though she remembers that they would speak to each other. It is interesting to note that whilst she classifies the individual she used to walk to school with as a 'friend' by herself, she does not describe the male classmates in this way. I argue that this suggests the influence of Tasneem's familial ties over her friendships with male individuals whilst she was at school. The next section aims to further explore the role cultural histories play in friendships. It will explore respondents' transcultural friendships while growing up and how these were shaped by the influence of their families.

Having Non-Bengali Friends from Different Cultural Histories

To begin this examination of my respondents experience of friendships with people from different cultural and historical backgrounds than them, we will examine an extract from Soraiya's interview.

Soraiya:

S: ...because it was a really multicultural school... so in my class, it wasn't just that I had Bengali friends, I had... you know...

Me: ...everything...

S: Yeah... they were mixed... and at that age I got on with everyone... I can't say that I had this one particular friend... the only one particular friend I remember was Bengali and she wasn't even in my class, she was in the year above me

Me: Yeah

S: [describing a Bengali friend] ...that she was my one special friend and we used to argue all the time and then we stopped talking to each other... [laughs]... but in my class, I don't remember anyone being... having any one particular friend, I just remember being friends with the whole class... and these are just memories I have, you know...

Me: Yeah

Me: ...nobody else?

S: Oh no, obviously you talk to everyone in your class...

Me: Yeah

S: ...but you wouldn't necessarily call everybody you talk to a friend... but they were the two ...like you know you have your group, they were my group ...they were my group of friends and they happened to be Bengali... and the other girl that I got on with ...like I said I got on with other people ...but out of all my friends from that time, I'm in touch with a Pakistani friend and another friend... who's not English, she's Czech...

Me: Ok

S: ...she's white so... I suppose ...I'm not actually in touch with the Bengali friends ...that's the irony of it all... and d'you know what ...I think I chose them because they were Bengali, not because they were better friends... you know...

Soraiya highlights that 'age' might be a factor that influences how one learns to associate with peers. This calls to mind Erikson's (1997) stages of development as

a lifelong process, especially in an environment where there are individuals who might not be able to relate to one's cultural and familial histories. But what is interesting is that Soraiya highlights that she does indeed remember one particular individual who happened to share the same cultural histories as her. Later, she describes her Bangladeshi friend as her 'special friend'. Despite sharing cultural histories, however, Soraiya remembers that her friend used to argue with her and in the end they even stopped speaking to each other. It is interesting that despite sharing such cultural histories she remembers – consciously – what might be termed as negative points of the relationship. This is reminiscent of Anthias's assertion that even though we might feel we 'belong' to a group, we do not always necessarily feel fully accepted (2006: 20). So it might be argued that in this particular friendship, the 'special-ness' somehow disappeared into nothingness. Conversely, those friends with whom she has chosen to keep in touch with do not share these cultural and familial histories – one friend is Pakistani and one is Czech.

As Yuval-Davis et al. point out, notions of trust and confidence are important for feelings of belonging (2006:4), and in this case, perhaps, they became more important than common ethnic identity. Indeed, in describing her reasons for forming friendships with those who were Bengali, Soraiya suggests she chose them precisely because they were of Bangladeshi origin, rather than for the sake of friendship in its own right. Those relationships consequently did not satisfy her own 'needs' for the friendships. I argue that her group of friends were chosen so that she would not be 'alone' in the expression of her cultural and familial histories, at that age and at that time. Latterly, however, as she grows older, Soraiya comes to realise that for her, 'needs' in such friendships are far more important than satisfying the memories that come with carrying her own cultural and familial histories.

Tasneem furthers this and speaks about making friendships with those who were 'outside' of Bengali culture.

Tasneem:

T: ...yeah, because I went to a girls' school... (laughs)... and in terms of 'race', I think I was probably friends with everyone... I know it sounds cheesy but... I was never part of just one group... and I was friends with the Asian girls, but also white girls as well... a few black girls but mainly Asian and white girls, yeah

Me: Mm

T: ...yeah... and two of my close friends, my best friends at school were white girls who were Goths who were into piercings and things

Me: Really?

T: ...but then my other best friend who I'm still in contact with today... is Muslim, wears a hijab... and married with a child, second one on the way now... so yeah, I think if I get on with someone, I get on with them

Me: ...regardless of... cultural histories...

T: Yeah... yeah exactly

Me: Was that ever an issue that you know, you were from Bangladesh so they won't be friends with you or anything like that...?

T: ...no, not really ...um, the Asian girls in school... I never wanted to be where I was in the clique where I'm just friends with... *maybe I did that consciously, in that I didn't just want to be with Asian girls* [my italics] and hang around only with that gang or that group ...because I think, why would I want to limit myself...you know...

Me: Mm

T: ...and other people's parents... like this one family friend we know, their son brought home his white friend and they wouldn't let them go upstairs to his bedroom, they made sure they just stayed in the living room and I think, how stupid is that? ...and my parents would never say that white people are bad or black people are bad, so I think we've always been brought up to be... not to judge people by their 'race' ...I hear other family friends, Asian family friends saying, oh, black people are the reason as to why this is happening or white people are like this or that but my parents have never done that so I think... we've been brought up in a different way

[...further...]

T: ...and I have a lot of non-Bengali friends as well... [laughs]... you can't avoid them can you...?

Me: Huh?

T: *...you can't really avoid it unless you live in a bubble... it's impossible* [my italics]

Tasneem explains that whilst she made friendships with individuals who had similar histories with her, she also had friends who did not. Able to communicate *across* histories and cultures, Tasneem cites friendships with individuals ranging from ‘Goths, who [were] into piercings’ to a woman who wore the hijab. Tasneem thus embodies a striking visible hybridity in action (see Kalra et al. 2005 and Harris, 2006).

Though she says that she makes friendships with anyone she gets on with, regardless of cultural histories, Tasneem also asserts that she *consciously* chose friends in school who were culturally ‘other’. She explains that she did not want to be stereotyped as being friends with only a certain type of individual or group. Drawing again from Masud Khan’s (1974) argument that interaction with another person is needed to understand a sense of self, I argue that Tasneem’s varied friendships have helped her to develop and understand her own identity. As Tasneem has grown older and more culturally discerning, she has consciously made friends with those outside Bangladeshi culture in order to understand different aspects of her identity that might have otherwise remained unexplored. Moreover, such a conscious choice might mean that she was comfortable with her own histories and that the nuances of each culture became more recognisable and easier to understand as she grew older, again reflecting Erikson’s (1997) emphasis on the ongoing nature of psychic development. In return for her efforts to fit in with those who do not share her own Bangladeshi cultural histories, but did share those histories that can be described as ‘British’, Tasneem’s friends in turn accepted her as part of their group. Indeed, as Bhabra argues, it is through notions of ‘exclusion, inclusion and constructions of otherness’ that identities are ‘brought into being’ (2006:37). It was in this way that Tasneem was ‘free’ to choose friends.

I argue that in understanding friends and their histories, parents and families play an important part, as exemplified in Tasneem’s extract. It was her conscious choice, she argues, to make friendships with individuals from divergent backgrounds because of how she saw other families treating or thinking about non-Bangladeshi people. Moreover, she argues her parents have brought her up in a ‘different way’. She does not think individuals who belong to certain ‘races’ necessarily behave in particular ways or are responsible for certain social problems, nor does she understand the thinking behind this. This, indeed, has been reflected in the friends she has chosen to make whilst growing up, reinforced with the support of her parents.

Tasneem argues that making friends with individuals differing in cultural histories is indeed unavoidable, and in a sense, compulsory if one lives in a society where individuals share dissimilar histories. This comment reflects the multifaceted social landscape in which second generation Bangladeshi young women operate. The ability to make diverse friendships are a survival tool if one lives and works in a space in which there are not always people who share similar familial cultural histories. It becomes a necessity to make friendships ‘outside’ such cultural spheres and is consequently a method of integration (see Papastergiadis, 2004; Harris, 2006).

The next section will explore respondents’ friendships with Bangladeshi and other South Asian individuals. As such, it will aim to explore the potential needs and benefits implicit in such relationships, for example communicating thoughts, ideas and feelings with people who share similar cultural and familial histories.

Sharing Histories with Bengali Friends

This section, following on from the above, will examine how the young women feel about having friends who share the same or similar cultural histories and how such relationships relate to their own sense of identity. I begin this discussion with the voice of Tasneem.

Tasneem:

Me: ...and when you were young... in school, what kind of friends did you have...

T: Well, when I was at school, most of my friends were girls

Me: ...because you went to a girls’ school... [later] ...so what would you say now, would you say you have an eclectic range of friends or are your friends more Bengali or Asian or...

T: Mm... well I think I’ve got more Asian friends now than I had as a teenager... more Bengali friends... I don’t know... well I think I’ve got more Bengali friends because I think I missed not having Bengali friends so there wasn’t really many Bengalis at my school... there was one girl a few years below me or something...I kinda missed that because ...and it’s nice to have Bengali friends because they obviously understand certain aspects of you and your life that other friends don’t...even though you tell them about it ...[blurb]... and

they won't get it as much as other Bengali friends... so I think I'm really glad that over the last five years or so that I've made more Bengali friends...

Tasneem, in reflecting the types of friendships she has made with different individuals whilst growing up, explains that now she is older and no longer attends school, she has had made friendships with more Asian, particularly Bangladeshi individuals.

The need to understand one's histories, or certain aspects of one's cultural histories becomes important for Tasneem in her friendships. She is glad of the friendships she has made with Asian or Bangladeshi individuals as she will not have to explain her 'self' as much as to friends who do not share these cultural histories. This is reminiscent of Kakar's argument that empathetic understanding is more plausible between those sharing similar cultural histories (1981: 3). Such friendships may be able to relate to the 'private' culture that occurs in the sphere of the home, for instance. Bearing in mind Ballard's concept of 'cultural navigation', such friendships might also make it easier to 'navigate' as Tasneem does not have to explain the histories that she carries to those who are unfamiliar with them.

However, her use of the word 'obvious' with regard to the assertion Bangladeshi friends can understand one's experience more readily is interesting to consider. I am both a researcher and a friend sharing similar histories with Tasneem. It therefore also points to *my* identity. Perhaps because I am also Bengali, the word usage of 'obvious' comes into play – and is used in terms of a reference to both our histories – and so in a sense acts as something that encompasses both the histories that we carry, and the 'present', to which we belong (see Chapter 3).

However, I question whether what is being said in this instance is contradictory to what Tasneem has said previously. For instance, earlier in this chapter, Tasneem states that 'if [she] gets on with someone, [she] gets on with them,' regardless of cultural histories. However, speaking here she explains that she is glad she has more Bengali friends because they are better able to understand her histories.

Understanding histories and speaking from different historical positions is a notion that Sujata also picks up on, but in a different way to Tazeen, as she has lived in a different location within London.

Sujata:

Su: ...and I went to a private school ...and all the kids were quite spoilt and... I was as well... I guess to a certain degree... but with spoilt kids you get more and you're allowed more and I wasn't allowed ...stop... you know... I wasn't allowed to go out with my friends ...which was really tough for me... so when I changed schools when I was sixteen ...I had more Asian friends and I think we had the same balance ...with Asian friends I could balance being British and Bengali... pretty well...

The notion of friends and peers being able to understand one's own cultural histories is mirrored in Sujata's extract. Sujata takes this idea further by arguing that it was actually through her friends and peers that she was able to understand her 'self' better. This is an idea that again reflects Khan's (1974) argument that an 'other' (someone 'other' to the self) is necessary in order to understand one's own sense of 'self'. So, for example, prior to sixteen years of age, Sujata's friends were allowed certain things, which became forbidden to her. This made balancing or manoeuvring between cultural histories difficult. Later, she changed schools and because there were more students who shared familial cultural histories with her, she found a way to balance various cultural histories through her friends. This might have meant that she found it easier to navigate between divergent histories. It could also mean, borrowing from Yuval-Davis et al., that notions of trust and confidence were established in the emotional attachments of feelings of belonging (2005: 4).

Indeed, Sujata was allowed certain things, but up to a certain age, where these things were disallowed (she even uses the word 'stop' in the extract – a word that points to the 'end' of these allowances). This suggests that such allowances that she was used to previously came to a standstill. This left her in a place where she was uncomprehending as to why she was not allowed these things but her peers were. However, it might also be necessary to point to 'class' as being a factor in such instances. By this, I mean, the type of school Sujata attended (she explains that she attended a private school) contains students with a greater level of prosperity and, to a certain extent, more freedom, than elsewhere. By disallowing Sujata some of the things that her friends at that time were allowed, there was a certain curbing of this freedom that did not allow her to fully integrate herself in the activities of her friends, and thus made it difficult for her to fully identify with them. Thus, following

Anthias's arguments of belonging, Sujata might have felt somehow accepted but might not fully felt as though she belonged or felt that her allegiances were divided, (2006:19-20).

The next section furthers the discussion around friendships by exploring the notion of *consciously* choosing friends whilst at school. It aims to look at what it might mean if one makes friendships that allows for one to share, and perhaps understand, similar familial and cultural histories.

Our Choice of Friends?

This section will examine the effects of consciously choosing friends whilst in school and is a continuation of the above. This section specifically considers Soraiya's narrative, and her conscious decisions to make friendships with other Bengali young women and the possible reasons behind this decision.

Soraiya:

S: ...my dad got a place here and we came back [from Bangladesh] and this time, we'd actually moved house ...and went to a new school ...and actually all my friends were Bengali ...specifically Bengali... I hung out with all the Bengali girls...

Me: Where was this, what school?

S: It was in Tottenham... it's not far from here... and my dad actually ...and I remember then choosing Bengali friends

Me: Consciously?

S: Consciously... choosing Bengali friends

Me: ...because of their approval, or because of...

S: ...I think again it must have been my dad...

Me: ...perhaps that you lived in Bangladesh for six months, did that have any influence on...

S: No... I don't know, actually... I don't know... but I do remember choosing Bengali friends and there were three girls... they couldn't speak English 'coz they actually *were* from Bangladesh...

Me: Right

- S: ...in that they'd recently come over and I was... I'd come back from Bangladesh and I remember the teacher asking me, oh, how come... you're from Bangladesh, and I said yeah... 'coz as far as she knew, I'd just come over from Bangladesh...
- Me: Right, I see...
- S: ...but she goes, you can speak English, and they can't and I just said oh no because I'm not from... you know... I was there for six months... I can't remember what I answered her
- Me: ...what was her reaction to you?
- S: I don't remember...
- Me: ...she wasn't Bengali, was she?
- S: The teacher? No, she was English... she was a nice teacher ...I don't remember her reaction... I just remember that question ...I don't remember what I said, I don't remember anything else, but I do remember her asking me that question
- Me: ...how did you feel at that time?
- S: I was a bit surprised... I think... I was a bit surprised... the thought didn't even occur to me ...I didn't even think... but that's when it first occurred to me ...that's what I mean about choosing weaker friends because they couldn't speak any English ...it's almost like I was translating for them ...anything they wanted, I was translating for them...
- Me: Maybe they weren't weaker, maybe the language thing was just a barrier...
- S: Yeah, I suppose ...but it's almost that thing about being able to look after them though, isn't it?
- Me: ...be a kind of mother figure in that sense?
- S: Yeah, 'coz they couldn't speak English and I was the one translating for them, I was the one translating for the teacher... kind of communicating between the two... I'd even do some of their homework, seriously... I'd even do some of their classwork and all that, it was that bad...
- Me: Mm
- S: ...although at the time, you didn't realise it but in hindsight, it was like, why?... [laughs]... why did I do that...?
- Me: ...well... maybe you were kind of a big sister in looking after them... perhaps... or maybe not

S: Well, I don't know, but that was then... and then I went onto high school and again, I actually chose Bengali friends...

Me: Yeah

S: ...so ...there were three Bengali girls I used to hang out with

A number of interesting points emerge from this extract. To begin with, in describing how she specifically sought out Bengali friends, Soraiya explicitly cites the influence of her father; this is a point she iterates and re-iterates throughout her extracts. It can be highlighted then, how important this inter-generational influence is with respect to the development of her sense of 'self'. This reflects Kakar's ideas that a person's 'psycho-social growth' in developing their sense of identity and emotional self-reliance is dependent upon those who are within the immediate family. This attachment is a 'process of synthesis' between inner life and outer social reality which later manifests itself between the individual and their community (1981:2).

Another point of interest is the notion of 'difference' which arises in the extract. Soraiya points out a differentiation between herself and three other girls from Bangladesh, who 'actually *were* from Bangladesh', [here, italics have been used to symbolise voice intonation]. There is an emphasis on the word 'were', which evokes a distancing between herself and the girls who had come from Bangladesh, in that they had been born and brought up in Bangladesh, unlike Soraiya. Even though these young women might share familial and cultural histories with Soraiya, they were unable to share the cultural histories of growing up in London or Britain. They are at once like and *unlike* Soraiya. This example illustrates the complexities of navigating and belonging to differing cultural histories, where it is the constant and difficult enmeshing that brings them together (see Ballard, 1994; Harris, 2006).

This is furthered by the teacher they had at that time, who does not know or understand Soraiya's histories. However, the teacher is a person in power, and questions Soraiya as to how it is that she can speak English more fluently than the girls who have been brought up in Bangladesh. The teacher is said to be 'English'. While Soraiya does not remember exactly how she responded to her teacher's questions, it seems that an emotion was evoked that became a more powerful memory than the actual word content of the conversation, (see also Chapter 3). This is reminiscent of Wetherell's argument that new spaces are created where parts of a person's emotional life might be played out that do not fit with the current or existing

emotional structure, (2013:70). Soraiya was caught in a space of ambivalence. Specifically, the surprise she felt when her teacher failed to recognise the ‘difference’ between her and the three girls made the moment a lasting and significant memory.

Soraiya feels that because of a lack of ability to communicate fluently in English, these students were somehow ‘weaker’ than her. As a result, she became a translator, a mediator between two languages and perhaps a mediator between two cultures and their histories. The work that she has to do in order to help her friends makes her navigation between the histories that she carries visible and salient. Soraiya comes to see herself as a kind of ‘mother’ figure in relation to her Bengali friends. Her role, and perhaps one she willingly adopts, becomes that of ‘protector’ or ‘care-giver’, because of the inability of these young women to comprehend their new cultural surroundings and because of a language barrier.

However, it is also clear that in this role, Soraiya has a certain amount of *power* over the three friends. That is to say that because of the multiplicity of her identity and cultural positioning, she can operate within a culture that is foreign to her three friends and which they could not access without her.

The relationship between the young women in this chapter and their parents and parental influence will be further examined in the next section.

Parents’ influence in choosing the friends we chose...?

The final section of this chapter, following on from the above, draws upon the work of Bhabha (2006). It will argue how it might be possible to understand influences of carried histories upon the friendships that we make at a young age and in later developments, thus also drawing upon Erikson’s (1997) insights. To begin with, we will return to Soraiya’s narrative.

Soraiya:

S: ...do you know something funny... when I was... when I first started going to school, I was quite young, I started when I was about three, it was pre-school... and then it was nursery and then I went onto whatever, the normal route... when you’re at nursery, you’re just friends with whoever,

aren't you, it doesn't matter... you don't notice the 'race' or whatever... [my italics]

Me: No... no

S: ...and then you get to junior school and the same thing... you know, you're just friends with anyone... but the thing is... *my dad's* [my italics] one of those people... and again, this is subconsciously, it's not that he's ever sat down and said to me, blah, blah, blah... I dunno... I honestly can't say where I've picked it up from... but he is so into Bangladeshi culture and Bengali people...

Me: Yeah?

S: ...and Bengali this and Bengali that... so... maybe it was [blurb]... that I started noticing that he was approving of when I had Bengali friends

Me: He was approving... [and]...were you aware of this Bengali thing?

S: I don't remember... I honestly don't remember that at all

Me: Ok

S: I don't remember... but I think it was my dad, it wasn't my mum, it was my dad... it's not my mum who thinks that my friends should be Bengali, it comes from my dad... um... that's not to say... I started picking Bengali friends... but in my class, there weren't any other Bengali girls

Me: Mm

S: ...and I just remember my dad... I think my dad must have been approving of her being my friend and we used to go to Bengali school together so she was my only friend that I remember clearly...

Me: ...why Bengali? I mean...

S: I think by that time I was conscious of the fact of my dad's approval ...that he'd wanted me to hang out with Bengali people

Me: ...why did you need your dad's approval?

S: ...because ...I don't know ...even though my dad was never like a hands-on dad ...I think I always... admired my dad...

Soraiya points out that at a young age, especially when just starting out in school, the notion of 'race', or of different familial and cultural histories, does not matter when making friendships. However, it could be argued that although this is not noticed when one is young and beginning to make friendships, it *becomes* important

as one becomes older, particularly if, as in the case of Soraiya, there is parental influence in making specific friendships. She highlights her father in having an influence over her choice of friends, more so than her mother. She points to her father's approval of her friendships with Bengali individuals, whose cultural and familial histories he can relate to. Indeed, Soraiya tells us that her father is 'so into Bangladeshi culture and Bengali people.' But it might also be the history of Bangladesh that he feels so strongly about and which thus makes him approve of his daughter's friendships with Bangladeshi young women. Soraiya highlights an admiration for her father, even though he has not always been physically present whilst she has been growing up (see Chapter 4).

Soraiya's father's approval becomes apparent when she starts to make Bangladeshi friends. She cannot remember whether she was conscious of such approval at the time – but later *became* conscious of this. Even though she explains that she does not remember this approval, it can be questioned as to what extent this might be true. For instance, she argues that the idea that she should make Bengali friends comes from her father, *not* her mother, and this Soraiya is very conscious of.

Furthermore, is the assertion that there were not many Bangladeshi girls in her class. This might have given rise to a sort of tension in not being able to achieve her father's approval. At the same time, it might have been difficult for Soraiya to make friendships with those from different backgrounds because of her father's expectations, which were clearly important to her.

The question arises as to *why* she sought her father's approval of her friendships, and points to the underlying relationship between father and daughter. She explains that her father was 'never a hands-on dad.' Despite this, or perhaps because of it, her father's approval was sought. Perhaps it was a means of getting emotionally close to her father. Drawing on Erikson's argument that identity is affirmed through the 'individual's childhood identifications' (1997:72), in which parents play a significant part, might allow for the potential to understand the complex relationship between Soraiya and her father. It might suggest that Soraiya sought her father's approval in her friendships so that he did not become absent again. In his presence, she might feel a sense of continuity in her own sense of self (see Chapter 4).

Rather than speaking of how her parents perceived her friends, Sujata describes how she felt her friends viewed her parents, her mother in particular. Her

experiences also reflect upon the complex ways in which respondents' relationships with parents can shape their relationships outside the home.

Sujata:

Me: ...do you ever find it difficult to be Bengali and British at the same time?

Su: When I was younger, I had a lot issues with that... when I was a teenager... 'coz I really... I had a lot of pressure from my mum and dad ...I wasn't allowed this, I wasn't allowed that... and when you're growing up and my friends...

Me: Mm

Su: ...also my English friends would give my mum funny looks 'coz of her accent

Me: ...that must have hurt a lot...

Su: ...that really hurt and I wished she could speak English like their mums could or get the joke... my mum would tell a boring story or something and I'd think she's embarrassing me... but that's only because of the white friends I had...

Me: Mm

Su: ...the Asian friends they had similar things... their parents...my mum was back to being cool again and... also my mum's a completely different person to ten years ago when I was eighteen... she's different ...I talk about anything with my mum now and she's completely changed... I've changed her a lot

Me: Rather than she's changed you?

Su: ...she's changed me... in a way she has... she raised me, but I've really changed my mum... my dad as well... to a certain degree... but my mum definitely thinks completely differently now... she used to [think]... oh boyfriends... how terrible and can't talk to boys and boys are bad and oh... that woman, she had a boyfriend so she must be bad and you know that Bengali culture...

Me: Mm

Su: ...my mum has none of that... none of those anymore... if a girl is seeing somebody and she's been married before ...then you know ...it doesn't make her a tarnished person... oh why can't she marry again ...that's a load of rubbish ...she is completely different and I hear her educating other aunties

who have got certain ...the way they think and yeah... I have changed my mum's opinion...

Me: Hmm

Su: ...but we're struggling with her... [laughs]... through the years ...but now I can say that I can balance being British and Bengali pretty well...

In this extract we see that there were expectations on both sides for Sujata. Her friends expected certain things from her and her parents expected other things, leaving her in a space that might have been difficult to negotiate. Sujata's situation reflects what Anthias describes as split allegiances (2006:20). Importantly, the pressures that arose from these expectations did not leave a space for her to understand her own sense of 'self'. The confusion that she felt when she was a teenager therefore arose from the difficulty of having to balance both sets of cultures together – familial and cultural histories on the one hand, friendships pertaining to a different set of cultures on the other, neither understanding the other.

The difference in cultural histories becomes accentuated when Sujata points out *who* her friends at that time were. Earlier in the chapter, Sujata explains that she lives and grew up in an 'English' area. She translates this as living in a place where the majority of inhabitants did not share similar histories with her. It is not surprising then, given the type of school she attended, she had what she describes as 'English' friends. They had different familial and cultural histories to Sujata. This is apparent when Sujata describes her friends, who do not understand the cultural histories of her mother, giving her mother 'funny looks'. An emotional connection might have been made in this instance, as she describes the pain that she felt at these occurrences. In this way, the memory became an emotional one.

Emotional connections are apparent for Sujata when speaking of her mother in relation to the friendships she had made at that time, especially in comparison with the mothers of her friends. For Sujata, it was a painful time when her friends ridiculed her mother, and she blames her mother for the embarrassment she felt. Tension is apparent in this situation, where the 'inside' of the home gets confused with the 'outside'. Because of the differing cultures that her friends and her mother belong to, they did not necessarily understand each other, and the confusion that arises affects Sujata.

It is once she makes new friends, however, that she comes to realise why she felt such tension. When she made friends who belonged to similar cultures, her mother 'is back to being cool again'. A certain prestige is given to her mother that her previous friends took away, something Sujata felt helpless to do anything about, as her loyalty to her friends might be questioned. With the change of friends, and because of mutual shared histories, her mother was given an elevated status. We are reminded of Kakar's argument that empathetic understanding is more likely between those who share similar backgrounds (1981:3). Her current friends are able to understand her mother's position, as Sujata explains, because their mothers are also migrants, and they had been brought up similarly. But also, Yuval-Davis's argument for the fluidity of identities is pertinent. She writes:

Identities are narratives, stories that people tell about themselves and each other. These narratives are contested, fluid and constantly changing but are clustered around some hegemonic constructions of boundaries between 'self' and 'other' and between 'us' and 'them' and are closely related to political processes. (2006:2)

The change can be seen when Sujata speaks of her mother, as she explains how they have influenced each other's perspective as Sujata has grown older. They now have a 'stronger' relationship, in the sense that they 'talk about anything'. As Sujata also argues, the intergenerational interaction between her mother and herself is very much influenced by her Bengali cultural histories. But it must be stressed that this has occurred over time. Importantly, this was facilitated by the kinds of friends Sujata had as she was growing older. Mindful of Khan's (1974) insistence that an 'other' is important in order to understand one's own self, I argue that it is through the help of friends who share similar cultural and familial histories, and the consequent relationship she has with her mother, that Sujata is able to 'balance' being both British and Bengali. By this I mean that the tension she felt previously with her associations with certain friends no longer exists.

Comfortable Friendships, Comfortable Histories? – Conclusion

This chapter has looked at how cultural and familial histories shape friendships made by my respondents. Young women's friendships with boys, and how certain women have been discouraged from making friendships by their parents has been explored. Some friendships were made with individuals regardless of cultural and familial histories whilst respondents were in school. So in this way, young women established friendships with individuals from differing cultural histories than themselves. For example, one of the young women even argues that it is sometimes a *conscious* decision to make friendships with individuals who are culturally different. This was because she did not want to fall into the stereotypical notion that Asian girls hung around together. On the other hand, she argues that it is impossible to avoid the company of diverse individuals unless one 'lives in a bubble'. I have argued that this conscious choice illustrates an important example of the ways in which second generation British Bangladeshi Muslim young women are making an attempt at integration.

However, there is also an argument that some of the young women speaking in this chapter were glad to have established friendships with individuals who could relate to the cultural and familial histories they carried. For them, such friendships in fact made it easier to manage their multiple cultural and social positionalities. Such friends, one of the young women in this chapter argued, could understand certain aspects of her 'self' that those who did not share her histories could not.

Within these accounts there emerges the theme that cultural and familial histories played an important part in the determination of friends, particularly at school. One of the young women explained that as she grew older and more culturally aware, she noticed that her father was approving more of her Bengali friends, and as a result she *consciously chose* friends who were Bengali. These friends are somehow reflective of her *father's* histories. There could be a notion of the father as 'living' through his daughter or as a way of keeping histories alive.

In a similar way, the last young woman's voice heard in this chapter is also indicative of the relationship between her mother and herself. Through her friendships with individuals who did not know or understand her cultural and familial histories, she was hurt, as it appeared to her that her mother was mocked. But as she grew older, she made friends with individuals who were from South Asian backgrounds, and thus

shared similar familial and cultural histories with her. Through them, the young woman was able to realise that it was because of her previous friends that she became unhappy in the space she occupied. Through this change of friends, I argue that she was able to find a way to balance carrying her familiar histories and fit into a culture that was distinct from them. This is not a static process, but one that is in continuous flux.

It is through friendships, therefore, that I have argued that my respondents have been able to understand their own histories and speak from different historical positions. Indeed such friendships have helped them to better orient their sense of self in relation to their histories.

However, it might be plausible to say that it is not only through friendships that one is able to understand one's sense of self. Rather it is also important to understand the types of romantic relationships young women might have with those who share similar and/or dissimilar histories. This will be explored in the next chapter and will focus on how friendships for these women differ from romantic relationships in relation to both familial and cultural histories.

Chapter 6: DESIRES FOR A PARTNER? ON MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Following on from the previous chapter, this chapter shifts in focus to romantic relationships. I will argue that in romantic relationships, a part of the self is somehow passed onto the ‘Other’, the person whom one is in love with. As such, this chapter will explore how the young women who have participated in this thesis understand the notion of the ‘self’ in relation to an ‘Other’ person in terms of romantic inclinations.

It will thus examine their experiences and perceptions of falling in love and romantic relationships with those who share similar cultural and familial histories with my respondents and those who do not. It explores familial involvement in the young women’s decisions and the dialogue established with immigrant parents in such decisions. It will also look at understanding transgressions of familial and communal boundaries, and the emotions involved in this. The level of integration involved in understanding the diversified spaces in which the young women meet and choose partners will also be discussed. How this in turn affects how these young women are able to speak from the positions they inhabit, how spaces are created in understanding themselves, and the choices made in establishing such relationships are also investigated.

There is a projection of self onto others in romantic liaisons and encounters. We can see this, for example, in the case of the young woman on the train platform. In this instance, she projected a sense of her own histories by seeing me as the embodiment of the community that set boundaries which she may have felt that she had transgressed. Certain histories we carry have the potential – in some cases – to become confused and nuances in cultural differences might get ignored. This might happen especially if a young woman’s partner is not of a similar cultural and historical heritage and might not be able to communicate with her family in the same language that she can. I argue that this has the potential to make navigation between and through cultural histories difficult, primarily due to language difficulties. As such, familial and community expectations in relation to the concept of love will be explored.

This chapter is divided into six sections. It will re-visit the incident described in Chapter 1 in which the young woman lets go of her partner’s hand upon seeing me.

The discussion will then turn to examine the personal stories of some of the young women who have had relationships with young men from outside the Bangladeshi community and, in some cases, their decisions to terminate such relationships (although it must be stressed that not all young women find it necessary to do so). The chapter will also examine how some young women understand their relationship to the rest of the Bangladeshi (mainly first generation) community, and how this might affect their choice of partner, as well as their thoughts in relation to this. Moreover, this chapter considers the narratives of two young women who discuss the concept of ‘arranged marriage’. The final section of this chapter will explore how some of my respondents want to pass down a sense of their own histories onto their children and how their choice of partner might affect this.

Re-visiting the Young Woman on the Train Platform...

In Chapter 1, I described an incident in which a young Bangladeshi woman on a train platform let go of her non-Bangladeshi partner’s hand, upon seeing me watching her. This example is complicated but shows how young women’s choices around marriage and romantic partnership might not necessarily be bound to ‘what the community might think’, as will be seen further in this chapter. Such young women are in a position to choose from a diverse range of partners. Sometimes, ‘interaction with others’ is needed to understand a sense of self (Papastergiadis, 2004:14). This gives insight into the fluidity of carried histories and cultures. Indeed, in describing this fluidity, Bhavnani and Phoenix argue that an individual often opts for differing identities, which is useful for speaking from differing histories (1994:9). Indeed, individuals are not tied to a specific historical position but embody multiple and distinct cultural histories. This position also changes as they grow older and more discerning and as they learn to adapt to different cultural situations.

In the example of the young woman on the train platform, certain questions were brought to the fore that delve below the surface of the exchange to the deeper difficulties of manoeuvring between the histories and cultures that form part of our selves (Ballard, 1994). As such, questions in relation to the ‘self’ and how an ‘Other’ might shape this sense of ‘self’ also arise. Moreover, importantly, notions of ‘freedoms’ and ‘boundaries’, relating to this sense of ‘self’ and an ‘Other’ are also

highlighted (Khan, 1974). The incident on the platform constitutes a complicated moment in which boundaries have been transgressed. In living histories as well as carrying them, there are ‘set’ ideas of what *we*, as second-generation young women, can or cannot do, in shaping and expressing our identities. Boundaries laid down by the community enforce particular notions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’. As becomes clear in the example of the young woman surprised by my presence on the train platform as she held her partner’s hand, when the scenario is unexpected or unrehearsed, in understanding what is and what is not allowed, the meaning of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ becomes confused. Furthermore, the negotiation of boundaries and navigation between them and histories becomes messy. Indeed, as Ballard argues, one who navigates between these histories and is aware of such boundaries needs to decide how to behave in such social contexts (1994:31). However, as I also discuss in this chapter, these boundaries are constantly being shifted and remade.

With the clarity that might come from narratives and discussion, it might be easier for certain young women of second generation to explore issues of ‘freedom’ in relation to parents, the community and navigating and negotiating a space for herself.

We acquire skills for navigating between histories and also a greater freedom of movement as we grow older and more independent. This can be seen in the narrative of Tazeen, for example. Tazeen has spoken in previous chapters. In her interview she commented, “we’re not as constrained by the culture like they are”. I question why she says this.

As second generation young women, we might be *allowed* certain things. Some ‘freedoms’, though, are denied. How these limitations are negotiated will be explored through romantic relationships. Certain ‘freedoms’ are also difficult because they do not always conform to the lived histories of our first-generation parents, who have shaped our understanding of Bangladeshi – and, to an extent – British culture. Indeed, as Brah recognises, the potential for intergenerational conflict might be there, especially if parents and their children are separated by the countries in which they have grown up (1996:42). Sometimes it is difficult to reach a compromise, other times, it is not; this might depend upon the space allowed for negotiation and dialogue. It often depends upon how both cultural dimensions are understood and negotiated by the young woman through dialogue with her parents and with the wider community (Yuval-Davis, 2006). For instance, with the example of the train station, the young woman’s recognition and perception of an ‘Other’ in the form of a

symbolic marker perhaps reminded her of some part of *who she was*. The example of the young woman on the train platform demonstrates the confusion and difficulty of negotiating different cultural and temporal spaces.

Histories and who I am attracted to

In this section I focus on some of the types of romantic attractions and relationships my respondents have had in order to understand further their navigation of familial and cultural histories. I begin this section with the voice of Sujata, who tells us of a time she was attracted to someone who did not share similar cultural histories as herself, and the decision to eventually break this relationship.

Sujata's extract:

Su: ...at school... I was seeing somebody... don't tell anybody... talking on the tape! ...but umm, I was seeing someone who was not Bengali but a Punjabi boy and he was my... school's Head Boy and I was really attracted to that side...

Me: ...yeah?

Su: ... he was a really good student... pretty... gorgeous... really sweet... my best friend ...and then became more than that ...um... perfect perfect person... so I think the relationship lasted... I went to QMW, he went to LSE... we knew each other... but we always knew that this was not meant to be 'coz he's Hindu... not Muslim ...so it's not meant to be... umm... but it just carried on... [blurb]... then it had to... and the reason for the break-down was because I'm Bengali, Muslim, *parents won't accept it... it was a parent sacrifice* [my italics]... and both sides made it and I think he regrets it now... yeah, but it's not really gonna work because *for me to be completely happy is to be for my parents to be happy and for me to be happy* [my italics]... I wouldn't be happy if they were upset... I couldn't be ...I love them too much... and I think ...love and all that... yeah, I do believe in it but I think it goes after a few years and it's just more practical to have somebody (laughs)... staying with you and everyone gets on... and it's not just my happiness... it's my brother, my parents, my grandparents... I want my family

to sit down... like that guy, his mum used to come round ...we used to do homework together... all the parents came round... and my mum was speaking in English and his mum was speaking in English and all the parents sitting round the table speaking in English... barely being able... you know...

Me: ...hold a conversation

Su: Oh yes... what are you doing [exaggerated Indian accent]... you know... it's not going deeper than... and the religion... my parents are very... proud of who they are... and I wouldn't want to upset them... even though they would... come round to it if I took somebody home... then again... somebody English... I've considered lots of things but... I am always attracted to Bengali people because that's who I am

At the beginning of the extract Sujata requests me, as the researcher, not to 'tell anyone' what she is about to tell me regarding her personal life, although she is very aware that what she tells me is being recorded on tape. Who will hear the transcript becomes important for Sujata. Indeed, for her there is an anxiety about 'community awareness.' Out of sensitivity to this and following Kelly (2000) in preserving my respondents' privacy and confidentiality, I have changed her name and both her and her father's professions, making it harder to identify who she is in the community (see Chapter 3).

Sujata was attracted to someone who was not of Bengali heritage. Even though there were strong feelings between them, the relationship was fated to a break-up, the cause of which Sujata, to borrow a term from psychoanalysis, transfers to her parents. If her parents were unhappy, then ultimately, she would never be happy – for Sujata to be happy, meant for her parents to be happy, her happiness is 'transferred' (Cooper, 2010) to those who have helped, in part, to shape a sense of self for her. This can be understood in terms of inter-generational love. I argue that if there were a lack of this love and sacrifice, it would become difficult for Sujata to navigate between and through the different sets of histories that she carries. For example, when Sujata's then partner's mother visited her own mother, because of the language difference, the conversation would come to a standstill at some point - it could only go so far. The two first generation mothers were unable to hold a deep conversation in a language that was foreign to them both, though not foreign to their children. It can be argued that the mothers, though both part of the South Asian diaspora, do not belong to the

same 'community'. For example, Anthias argues that '[t]o belong is to share values, networks and practices and it is not just a question of identification' (2006:21). The two mothers are unable to share such values and networks because of the barrier of language. Sujata's experience raises questions of what being in a relationship with someone outside Bengali culture entails. Specifically for Sujata, relationships are not restricted to just the two people involved, but reaches wider to involve her family.

In Sushmita's case, the family's boundaries are conceived differently but the notion of intergenerational dialogue remains critical.

Sushmita's extract:

Me: ...I want to ask you about the type of people you're attracted to

S: Mm hmm

Me: ...what type of people are you attracted to?

S: Boys! [laughs]... just so you know... gotta be p.c. nowadays... um... based on my past, definitely non-Bengali... I'm saying that in my past I haven't been attracted to anyone Bengali... but that doesn't mean I never will be or I don't want to be... it's just that... I don't actually know many Bengali boys so... and they're all shorter than me, so that's a no-go area anyway... um... usually, they're usually white actually... it's not that I don't want them to be black, Oriental, Asian... it's just that they're the ones who make it known to me that they like me... so...

Me: Mm hmm

S: ...so I'll either act on it or I won't but... they're usually white

[...further...]

S: ...and there has been one person in the past and I told my dad about him but we hadn't told my mum because it was early days, but I just wanted one of them to know and it was just that my dad and I went for a walk in the park and I just thought I'd tell him

Me: How did he react to that?

S: ...he was surprisingly fine... he was ok with it

Me: ...what were you expecting? You said surprisingly fine...

S: ...surprisingly fine... I don't know what I was expecting... but it was, you know... just to say to your dad, by the way, I think I like someone and [blurb]... telling any parent I think would be a bit scary... um... I dunno... I

don't know what I expected from him... he was very calm about it... he just said... ok... well, think about it and if you think he's good and you're happy then fine... fine

Me: Ok... because I know from a lot of other women that I've interviewed that a lot of parents aren't ok with these kinds of things... so that's why I asked

S: That's why I maybe said surprisingly he was fine... because I know a lot of parents might not be

Me: Ok

S: ...um but I think one of the reasons why I told my... or planned on telling my mum as well... but why I told my dad was because I knew deep down I knew they would be... [break]

Me: ...ok, so you were telling me about the time you told your father about someone you were attracted to and he was non-Bengali and his reactions to this... ok... so, how did you feel?

S: Relieved that I'd told him... I didn't want to keep it a secret from my parents [blurb]... we're quite close and I don't like not telling them things... so I was pleased to have told them

Me: ...and they would have accepted him, you think?

S: Yep

At the start of her extract, when asked about her attractions, Sushmita explains that she is not very attracted to Bangladeshi young men. This emerges without my asking whether she is aware of being attracted to specific ethnicities. The question can be raised as to whether her reaction has anything to do with me as the researcher being of Bengali heritage. In some sense the exchange might be reminiscent of the young woman on the train platform who does not see 'me' sitting there, but rather, an embodiment of the Bangladeshi community. In a similar way, without my asking for ethnic specifics of the kind of men Sushmita is attracted to, she already gives the answer that she is not very attracted to Bengali men, although this attraction can change over time. She points out that it is white young men who make it known to her that they are interested in her, rather than Bangladeshi or other Asian men. Both young women, I argue, see me as representative of the wider Bangladeshi community they belong to, and understand that there may be boundaries that need to be negotiated and re-negotiated. Remembering Ahmad's (2004) reflections, I as a

researcher become somehow situated also as the researched. With the young woman on the train platform, the scene is unexpected, whereas my interview with Sushmita was scheduled in advance. However, it might be plausible to say that both interactions reflect something about the kind of relationship each young woman might have with her parents. There is possibly more dialogue and negotiation in Sushmita's relationship with her parents than in the young woman on the platform's relationship with hers, which might be seen in their reaction to me. Indeed, Sushmita verbalises this reaction and explains that she feels relief upon telling her father about a partner. It is interesting to here consider Kakar's argument that 'within a given cultural and social order, particular psychological themes become internalised in the individual psyche, later to be projected back onto the culture's institutions and social forms' (1981:182). In my interactions with these young women, their familial relationships, and, relatedly, their understandings of Bangladeshi culture, are projected onto a symbol of embodied Bangladeshi culture -- in other words, me.

The next section will look further at the issues involved with establishing romantic relationships, whether they be with those who share similar cultural histories or not, and how important the thoughts of the (mainly) first generation community are for the young women in this process.

Thoughts of the (mainly First Generation) Community

This section aims to understand why it is that some young women of second generation might harbour anxiety about establishing romantic relationships with certain young men. Relationships with men who are 'outside' Bengali culture and heritage, will be explored. This section starts begins with Sujata:

Sujata's extract:

Su: ...most of the girls who are in my community who are Bengali are not married... one or two are... and they married *foreigners* [my italics]

Me: Mm

Su: ...an English guy... there's a Dutch guy... yeah... all the weddings that we've been to recently, have been girls from our community marrying a foreign boy... so I don't think our parents want that... they'd rather you don't

marry... than marry a non-Bengali person... seeing what's the trend...[break]... I think as long as I'm young enough to have kids... even if you miss 35... but I won't leave it that long... they're all thinking you won't get a guy if you leave it too late... but I don't think that's true... I think there are people... I meet new people all the time... people don't run out... [laughs]

The notion arises that where young women have chosen to marry 'outside' the Bangladeshi community, the people whom they have married are deemed 'foreigners'. They are 'foreign' to the Bengali histories and cultures that Sujata carries (which are not static or fixed in time and space themselves). Rather than marrying outside into something that is 'foreign' and unknown, Sujata believes that her parents would rather she does not marry at all. On the other hand, this notion of merging cultures through marriage also shows negotiation between generations and how both cultural histories are changing through dialogue and negotiation of space. There is a very visible level of hybridity and transformation in a space through language and through a merging of traditions (see Kalra et al., 2005; Bhabha, 1994; Brah, 1997).

Sushmita, below, develops these thoughts further. For her, the relationship with one's parents proves important in understanding histories when establishing romantic relationships.

Sushmita extract:

Me: ...ok and I know this is going to sound a little bit funny, but do you ever feel guilty that they're not Bengali, or they're not Asian?

S: ...um... I don't think I feel guilty... I wonder if it would be accepted... I think it would be accepted here... in my close family and in my close relations... um... but I just wonder what it would be like with family friends and with the community in general

Me: Right

S: ...actually, I've been to quite a few mixed marriage family weddings

Me: Sure

S: ...and they've been well received ...but then they always are at face value but you don't know what people say when they're in their homes... so...

Me: ...do you think it's a front?

S: I think it could be, but then everything could be a front

Me: Ok

S: ...so you don't know what people are really thinking.. but with mixed couples I think... I think it's added... room for um... scathing remarks sometimes

Me: Ok... um... you say that at this moment in time you're not very attracted to Bengali/Asian boys... if you were to say, have a relationship outside...

S: ...outside Bengali...?

Me: Yeah... um how ...and you decided to stay with that one person... how do you think your parents would react... and have you ever spoken to them about this...?

S: Yeah... my parents know about my preference... sort of...as in they're not unaware of it... I haven't said yet that I only like white boys... they know the kind of person I am and the kind of interests that I have ...and with the limited contact with Bengali boys we've had around here, they know that none of them would match up to the kind of person that I am...

Me: Mm hmm

S: ...just in terms of basic interest of the stuff that I like doing... I don't like doing the kinds of things they like doing... so what common ground do we have?

Me: Like what?

S: I dunno... they like smoking sheesha and playing pool and just hanging around and not doing much... I like going... just jumping in the car and driving off somewhere and going for a walk or whatever... or I like seeing new places ... I love hanging out with my friends but doing things... I love my lazy time as well but I like reading books, I like listening to music which is not the type of music they like listening to... you know... I just think my interests are quite different from theirs... and mum and dad are quite aware of that... so it wouldn't be a surprise to them if I said to them, I've met someone and he's white...

Me: Mm hmm

[...further...]

Me: ...ok... but then you said you were a bit worried about the acceptance in the wider Bengali community ...can you elaborate on that a bit... do you think it would have been negative...?

- S: I think it would... because I find... and a lot of the young people my age who are part of the Bengali community... they think that my parents are quite liberal with the way they've let me live out my five years at university and I do my own thing... but because I'm so close to them... for some people who have that level of independence ...keep some things from their parents, whereas I include my parents... so they're fine with me doing whatever I want to do because I tell them everything...
- Me: I didn't quite follow... what you were saying about keeping things from their parents and the independence
- S: ...I dunno why I was saying that... probably got sidetracked... um... hang on... I'm trying to gather my thoughts now... I think my parents have given me a lot of independence... not that they have to give it to me... I'm old enough to be independent
- Me: Sure
- S: ...but they allow me that independence because I involve them in all parts of my life...
- Me: Ok
- S: ...and with conversations with girls and boys around here who're also Bengali, the level of independence that they have... it's not because they tell their parents and keep them included and gain their independence the way that I have, but because they do what they want anyway or without telling their parents...
- Me: Ok
- S: ...or they're not emotionally close so that they don't have to tell them things... um... and I think families like that... where there's a little mistrust between parents and children, those are the types of families that would view us more negatively... because um... I don't know why... I'm almost alluding to them being jealous of how close we are to each other...
- Me: Right
- S: ...and how accepting my parents would be of somebody different and maybe that reflects on their own intolerance of somebody who would be different... I just get the feeling here that we stick to our own almost
- Me: Mm hmm... but could it not be that they're scared if their history dying out...?
- S: What history? The Bangladeshi history?

Me: Mm hmm

S: That's up to the individual as to whether they want to retain that or not... um... if I lost my parents, I'd still know what they'd taught me about Bangladesh... I can go on the Internet or I can find a book and read about it...

Me: Ok

S: ...I don't have to be told about it specifically... if I'm interested I'll find out about it... so I don't see that as a valid argument if the elders of the community want that as an excuse to stop... or look down upon mixed relationships...

There appears to be different strategies and resistances adopted by such young women in negotiating their position within the 'community'. Indeed, it emerges that there are questions of acceptance by the wider Bengali community, which Sushmita herself brings to the interview scenario. Like Sujata, she questions what the community and specifically first generation parents might accept. Indeed, although Sushmita argues that such marriages may be accepted at 'face-value', in the presence of the wider community, one does not know what is said behind closed doors. It follows that Sushmita perceives that it is in the privacy of the home where negative comments could be made about marriage with those who are outside the Bengali community. The notion of possible intolerance is therefore also highlighted, as it is later in the extract.

Such thinking also points to the complexity of relationships within the community, in which different levels of belonging are recognised. As Anthias, mentions, belonging entails feelings of acceptance and of safety within the community (2006: 21). But it might be, as Sushmita points out, that it is within the collective community that these sentiments are shared. Once the community fragments into smaller and respective families, where there is greater privacy within the sphere of the home, negative comments might be verbalised. Thus to verbalise negative emotion and thoughts might mean to exclude one's own self and/or family from the community. However, I argue that it is primarily the family which might act as a space within which tensions might be released. If they are not released verbally, then, as Seidler (2000) argues, they are felt within the home. Kakar is useful in understanding such experiences. He argues that it is within the family space that society's values are passed down generations, altering the structure of the individual's

psyche. This might seem to change the superficial ‘behavioural’ layers of the personality, however, the deepest layers remain largely unaffected over many generations. Indeed, there is constant response by an individual’s inner self (their ego) and new external demands in a continuity of self (1981: 183-184). Hence, it could be argued that family space could be the place where negotiation of community boundaries, through intergenerational dialogue, takes place without threatening the values of the family. For instance, if daughters and parents engaged in dialogue, and through dialogue, parents learnt to accept that daughters marrying outside Bangladeshi culture is not necessarily a bad thing, so long as the individual is good for the daughter and for the family, then parents of first generation are able to speak to other parents, but core familial values might still be maintained. This, in turn, potentially might lead to less negative talk and hence change communal perceptions of what is and what is not accepted in terms of a young woman’s partner.

In speaking of attraction and romantic relationships, Sushmita points out that it is necessarily shared interests which are the main factor in determining attraction and whether it is reciprocated or not. This is reflective also of the level of independence she has with her own parents. Sushmita argues that since she involves her parents in her life, they allow her to do various things with a level of autonomy. There is a strong level of trust established between them, inter-generationally, and through dialogue. Dialogue with parents is a theme that is also important for Soraiya, below.

Soraiya’s extract:

So: You know what, I’ve always said I’m Asian

Me: Asian?

So: ...I like to see myself as part of the wider Asian community... than just part of the Bengali community

Me: Rather than just Bengali?

So: ...yeah... um... and I say my culture is Asian culture ‘coz I think Bengali culture has so much in common with other... Pakistani and Indian culture now... I mean I think less so with Indian culture now

Me: Mm hmm

So: ...and I say that because of my Indian friends... we do have a lot in common, but they have a lot more freedom, I’ve noticed... and I’m talking in particular about my Indian friends...

Me: Sure

So: ...I don't think this the case for everyone... I was shocked at some of the stuff they do... I found it really shocking because my family would never let me do these kinds of things

Me: Like what?

So: Like dating actually... 'coz you know ...dating is just a total taboo...

Me: Ok

So: ...and my Indian friends were dating ...and I found that really shocking and I was like, your parents don't mind... it took me a while to get used to the fact... well actually, their culture's different in that sense...

Me: Mm

So: ...it took me a while to realise that ...that's one of the bigger taboos, I think, in our culture... just the whole thing... I know it goes on, but it is...

Me: ...and how did your parents react to your partner? [who is Bengali]

So: They're not happy... [laughs]

Me: ...they're not happy?

So: No [giggles]

Me: Oh dear... why?

So: ...oh, just typical Bengali culture

Me: ...well because of what will people say or something else...?

So: Yeah

Me: Is that the main reason?

So: ...yeah

Me: Have they met him?

So: Yeah... and also my mum's like... he's short, he's dark

Me: ...they want someone who's tall and fair?

So: ...yeah, you know, the usual typical thing... I think I would have liked it... not for myself, but for them actually...

Me: ...what, to please them?

So: Yeah... yeah, I think I would have... just to please them, I think I would've... actually... 'coz in some respects I do wanna please them... 'coz I feel like they've sacrificed a lot... for us... and I feel that my mum, despite her values and her culture and her... everything, particular instincts... saying no, no, no, she let me do a lot of things and I mean like going to university and going and

living in America... because inside... she was not happy about letting me do those things... inside her, she was screaming no... [laughs]... but she let me do it for my own happiness... so that's why I do actually wanna please them

It emerges that Soraiya sees herself as part of the Asian community, as Bangladeshi culture, for her shares many similarities historically with other Asian cultures. But this notion of same-ness changes once Soraiya speaks of dating within the Asian community as something that is 'shocking' to her, something she understands as 'taboo' within Bangladeshi culture, but which appears normal to her friends of Indian origin. She thus attributes a certain level of 'freedom' to her friends' culture that is absent within Bangladeshi culture.

At the same time as arguing that it might be the Bangladeshi community that might not approve of particular relationships (as highlighted to some extent by Sushmita and Sujata earlier), there is a desire to 'please' her first generation parents. In a similar way to the other young women in this chapter, the notion of potential unhappiness within a relationship – by understanding that differences between herself and her partner, or even her own choice of partner, might be restricted – is somehow transferred onto the wider Bengali community. I argue that Soraiya feels that she must sacrifice a part of her happiness because she feels she somehow 'owes' her parents.

In order to give an insight as to how boundaries might or might not be negotiated, and the dialogue that might be needed, I want to narrate a story of a father and his second generation daughter. I had been invited to a wedding. The mood is a sombre one. The Imam arrives and the proceedings begin. In line with Islamic tradition, a monetary gift from the bridegroom to the bride, as a token of his appreciation for her agreeing to marry him – has been discussed between the parents. When this has been agreed upon, the Imam proceeds to enter the room where the young woman is sitting. He tells her how much the groom is willing to give her in the form of a gift and asks whether she agrees to the amount. In the room with her are her parents and witnesses. When she has agreed, she is escorted to the room where her husband-to-be is seated, awaiting her. Once they are seated next to each other, the Imam begins to recite verses of the Holy Quran, explaining the importance of marriage and its value. He asks who is giving away the young woman in marriage. Her father, with tears in his eyes, comes forward and tells the Imam that he will give away his daughter. The Imam asks the bride if she will agree to be her bridegroom's

Islamically legal wife, and whether she will accept him out of her own free will. She agrees and emotionally accepts her new husband. They are now husband and wife. The Imam blesses the newly wedded couple and congratulates them.

The young woman is of a Bangladeshi background. Her parents, like those of my respondents, are immigrants, living in a space strikingly different from that in which they were brought up. And like my respondents, the young woman has been brought up immersed in Bengali cultural and familial values.

Her husband is white. Like the young woman's partner on the train platform, he is of a different historical, cultural and familial background. It can be argued that because of this he is unable to understand many of the cultural nuances that his wife understands. Perhaps with time and if he wishes to, he will be able to understand and learn to speak in the same tongue as his wife's family. The situation could create, to use Bhabha's (2006) term, a sense of 'transformative' heritage in understanding differing histories.

There is a story behind this story. This young woman's parents were initially unhappy with her marriage to a non-Bengali. It must be stressed, however, that not all first generation parents are unhappy if their children marry 'outside' the community. Indeed, intergenerational dialogue might be crucial in disavowing negative thoughts of marrying 'outside' Bangladeshi culture.

The wedding of the young woman went smoothly. However, her parents were opposed initially to their daughter of second generation's marriage to a white non-Bengali religious convert, whom she had met through work. Her mother narrated that the relationship between the daughter and her father particularly underwent pressure and became stressful and distant, whereas previously they had shared a close bond. Erikson argues that 'the process of identity formation emerges as an evolving configuration... favoured capacities, significant identifications, effective defenses... and consistent roles. All these, however, can only emerge from a mutual adaptation of individual potential' (1997:74). The potential lack of love from her father (possibly arising from a lack of mutual empathetic understanding between generations) could have led the young woman to become somehow confused about her identity as her father's role did not remain consistent. Thus, her searching for love outside the family might have emerged as a defense. She may have been diverted from seeing her father in a particular and positive light, transferring her feelings for her father to her partner. The tension of the change in the relationship with her father meant that perhaps she

might not have been able to adapt. Rather than searching for affection that her father did not necessarily return, by not engaging in dialogue for instance, she searched elsewhere. This could be one way of understanding this relationship. There is also the possibility that she wanted to leave her father by searching for love outside the family and distancing herself from them.

However, it is striking that once the young man became the family's son-in-law, nothing was said to him that might cause him any pain. It became hidden and somehow private (Seidler, 2000). Rather, he was welcomed warmly into the family and was treated as a member of the family – not an outsider; although his inability to speak Bengali remained an audible difference marking his presence within the family. Indeed, as a result of this marriage, the language of the family has changed as they have welcomed a non-Bengali into their household. More 'foreign' (that is, non-Bengali) words are used, where previously there might not have been.

The next section will further examine the respondents' understanding of marriage. In particular we will look at the concept of 'arranged marriage', exploring how family, community and intergenerational dialogue shape respondents' perceptions of this concept. How the young woman of second generation might understand her histories and navigate between histories in relation 'arranged marriages' will also be explored.

Arranged Marriage and Who Do You Want to Marry...?

To introduce the discussion of 'arranged marriage', the narratives of two respondents will be considered in which very different understandings of the concept emerge. In these narratives, the young women speak of how they relate to the wider community and navigate between perceived communal boundaries. I begin with

Tazeen:

Me: The concept of arranged marriage is still prevalent in Bengali culture

T: Yeah... but I think it's more of the case... because what's gonna impact your family... you have to make sure that whatever family you introduce to your family is good enough... that sort of thing

Me: ...do you think it's a class thing too...?

- T: Yeah... and... I don't think it was ever a case of whether my kids will be happy when it came to arranged marriages
- Me: Yeah?
- T: ...I don't think that's ever been at the forefront of any Bengali family's mind... it's all about a status thing again, isn't it? What we were talking about like what how they're so competitive and stuff, it's kind of like, oh, my son-in-law does this or my daughter-in-law does that... so I don't think it's a case of what my kids want or what makes them happy... it's about how good does it make your family look or how bad does it make your family look...
- Me: But then... you do hear stories of divorce...
- T: ...exactly... but the reason for that is that they weren't thinking of their kids' happiness when they married them off... [blurb]... but they're so blinded by the desire to have the right son-in-law or the right daughter-in-law that they didn't think that in this day and age people aren't gonna put up with that... you know... that if I'm not happy with my marriage then what's so and so gonna think if I break off my marriage, they just can't live like that so they just won't do it... whereas you wouldn't have seen that in Bangladesh...
- Me: Mm... do you think perhaps that people feel obligated to stick it out even if they are unhappy...?
- T: ...yeah... and they are unhappy... all of them [laughs]... all the bloody time... they're such a miserable bunch of people... [laughs]

It emerges that Tazeen understands the notion of 'arranged marriage' in terms of honour and social status. She is vehement in her assertion that their children's happiness is not the main focus for parents arranging marriages. Rather it is about how 'good' a family is, in terms of social status, financial status etc. Tazeen's focus on unhappiness in such marriages, however, might be reflective of relationships within her own family that is projected onto those families in the Bangladeshi community she is familiar with.

Tazeen's view contrasts starkly with Lamia's outlook. Lamia is the only child, lives at home with her parents in Wood Green and has completed her MA in Chemistry. She gives her understanding of the concept of 'arranged marriage' in terms of dialogue, negotiation, and what she feels is best for her family, as this is something with which she is faced in her mid-twenties.

Lamia's extract:

Me: ...you say that at some point in your life you want to get married and that your parents want you to get married as well

L: ...yeah

Me: ...um... firstly I think my question would be... would you get married at the time they want you to get married

L: I'd get married at the time that's right for me

Me: Mm hmm... so what type of person would you marry... I mean would he have to be from a specific culture

L: Yeah

Me: Yeah?

L: ...he has to be Bengali and Muslim... basically, there would be.. if he was anything different, I think there would be a communication breakdown... between me and him

Me: ...why?

L: ...because he wouldn't understand my [blurb] or how I've been brought up... like cultural traditions and there would be a breakdown between him and our society... for my parents in particular

Me: ...why do you think that?

L: Because it's happened before... um... not with me personally but with one of my cousins... um she married an Irish guy...

Me: Mm hmm

L: ...and he wasn't Bengali or Muslim clearly... um... we heard that he'd apparently converted [to Islam]... but basically we heard that... obviously she was going out with him... and they got married about two years ago...

Me: Mm hmm

L: ...and I know that when the news came out... I mean, my dad for one was very shocked... we were all very shocked in fact... because it was something very different... even though we've seen it happen with many people outside of our family... it was just a bit more...

Me: ...because she was part of the family...

L: ...yeah, because she was part of the family... and I know her dad took it really hard... and so did the rest of us... in terms of uncles and aunties... we all took

it really hard because we didn't know what was going on... and like the way we've been brought up it's a case of like... it's basically been engraved in our heads that we have to marry a Bengali Muslim guy... no questions asked... nothing

Me: Ok... and how do you feel about that?

L: I feel fine about it

Me: Yeah?

L: Yeah... I mean it will probably take time for me to come across that one guy who is made especially for me

Me: Mm hmm

L: ...but like I said... yeah, if he wasn't then there would be a definite communication breakdown... definitely

Me: Mm hmm... are you attracted to Bengali guys...?

L: I don't know many Bengali guys who are of my age as such... um, the ones I do know they're all pretty much married... [laughs]... but no, I don't have any problems communicating with guys... no problems communicating with guys... I think I can get along with them

Me: Mm hmm

L: ...um... and basically I don't think it would be a problem... I mean the bottom line would be I would prefer to get married to somebody who was born and brought up here [England/London]... just because there would be an understanding... between the two cultures... um...because if I were to get married to somebody who was from Bangladesh...then they wouldn't necessarily understand the way I've been brought up and I may not understand the way they've been brought up ... so there might be certain issues that they have problems with me...

Me: Ok... and have you discussed this with your parents?

L: Yep

Me: What have their reactions been?

L: That's fine by them...

Me: Ok

L: ...and now that I've graduated... of course the next question in their heads is when do we start looking... 'coz um... obviously they've asked me before... they asked, do you like anybody... have you met somebody, do you like

anyone... that you would potentially wanna get married to and I said no... and then they've said would you like us to... so to speak... do an arranged marriage... and I said yes, I have no problems with you looking... you can start looking... um... because obviously, looking takes time...

Me: Sure

L: ...for the right person from the right family, you know, who's also a graduate like me... it would take time

Me: ...would have to be from a specific field of knowledge or anything?

L: No... just I think it would be... for example if I was a doctor, it would be that I would want to get married to someone who was a doctor because...doctors have long hours and sometimes... for example a guy who's a doctor gets married to a woman who doesn't belong to the whole doctor world thing...um... she's has a problem because he works long hours and there are ideas going through her head...like oh my God... my husband's going to go off with someone else, blah blah blah... that's why he's late, et cetera et cetera... so in that sense yes, if I was a doctor, then he would have to be a doctor... he'd have to be a doctor himself...just so that there would be that whole mutual understanding...

Me: Right

L: ...but now because I'm just a medicinal chemist, he doesn't have to be of a specific discipline... no

Me: Ok... would that raise any issues of communication of ideas or... anything do you think?

L: No... because a job is a job... and as long as you communicate in a relationship... there shouldn't be any problems at all... in any aspects...

Me: ...ok... and your parents are ok with this...?

L: Yep

Me: What have they said?

L: ...um... it's more a case of what have I said to them... well... they've asked what kind of guy would you like us to look for and stuff like that and I've said I have no preference about the status... like, as in wealth-wise or... in terms of what job they do or even if they have a job... if they're made of millions...

Me: I don't understand, made of millions...?

L: ...like, you know... um... someone who owns a company or a businessman who owns a million pounds or something so all to do with wealth... I haven't specified for that because to be honest I don't really care if he's a middle class person... because as long as he can get on with life... I don't know... all this property and all this stuff is not a big issue to me... it all comes down to the character of the guy... personality-wise

Me: Mm hmm

L: ...I'm quite a socialising person so I'd expect him to be quite socialising as well... um certain personality traits that I have I would want him to have... um... looks wise comes maybe at number four or something... the first... the foremost thing is that he has to have a great personality... and I'm not saying that mine is great either... but sort of similar... so that we'd get on... um... the second would be education... he has to be a graduate...

Me: Mm hmm

L: ...um... if he has a one up degree more than me I think that would better because I think many guys think that many guys feel a bit inferior if women are a bit more intelligent than them... in that sense

Me: Do you feel that?

L: I think that because there are certain people that I've seen... like some women maybe are a bit more intelligent than their husbands and it gets on their [husbands] nerves because maybe it's their mentality... because maybe they want to be in charge of everything... they want to be the superior one in the relationship... so I would want him to at least... if not at the same level as me, then maybe one up

Me: ...but that's not always the case

L: ...no... but what you see is what influences me to think these things... so if I saw something otherwise... then I'm sure I would think something otherwise

In contrast to Tazeen, in speaking about arranged marriage Lamia has spoken in depth about what she expects herself and what her own conditions for a partner would be, rather than focusing on those of her parents.

In contrast to Tazeen, rather than suggesting that an arranged marriage with a Bangladeshi partner might bring unhappiness and misery, Lamia argues that there is logic in having a Bengali husband. Again reflecting Kakar's (1981) arguments that

empathetic understanding is more likely between those sharing cultural histories, she explains that unless her partner is of a similar historical background as herself, there would be a 'communication breakdown.' She further asserts that this breakdown would not only affect her, but her parents, illustrating Brah's (1996) assertion that our histories cannot be alleviated psychically so easily. This might mean that it would become harder to navigate the histories she carries, because of the potential partner's not being able to communicate in Bengali, for instance.

I argue that the histories that she carries become important to the extent that she insists her future partner needs to be of the same upbringing. Similarly to Sujata, it appears that Lamia does not want to 'hurt' (or perhaps 'disappoint') her parents either emotionally or psychologically, as becomes apparent when she cites the example of her cousin marrying outside of Bengali culture. Despite her concern for her parents and wider family, it also seems clear that for Lamia having a non-Bengali partner is not necessarily worth the tension of having to deal with such differing histories and cultures. There is, furthermore, communication between Lamia and her parents with regard to what she would like in a husband, and this points to dialogue and discussion as to what is beneficial for the family rather than just for Lamia alone.

Feelings are different, says Lamia, when one's own family member marries a non-Bangladeshi partner, than when such marriages occur outside of the family (see my use of Kakar's arguments on p.10) The shock is more intensely felt when expectations 'engraved' from earliest childhood are not adhered to, and the 'norm' of the family is broken. In this sense, and although there is, as Melucci (1997) argues, constant enmeshing of cultural histories as people move between cultural spaces, I argue that the extended family and later the community (see Chapter 4), acts as a 'boundary', between the 'outside' of the family and the 'inside' of the nuclear family by encouraging certain behaviours or discouraging others, as can be seen in the above (see Chapter 7).

It can be questioned as to whether certain young women of second generation find responsibilities and expectations in their choice of partner a burden. Indeed, there is huge contrast between the perceptions of the two young women that have spoken in this section. It might be argued that the relationship the young woman has with her parents and the way in which she understands her own complex cultural positioning prove to be major factors in determining how she feels about the notion of arranged marriage and choice of partner. Intergenerational dialogue is again critical. Lamia

emphasises that parents want her happiness, regardless of whether her marriage is arranged or not. Moreover, Lamia gives her parents permission to find her a partner. It is she who describes which kind of person she wants, rather than her parents dictating to her what is best for her and her family, suggesting intergenerational negotiation.

Furthermore, it might be plausible to say that what one understands and sees in one's surroundings, influences what they think about any given subject. This might explain Lamia's and Tazeen's differing attitudes to the concept of 'arranged marriage'.

The next section follows on from the concept of 'arranged marriage' and aims to investigate of how my respondents might want to pass on the histories they carry to their own children. It will examine what this might mean in terms of choosing a partner and the effects of this.

Future Children of the Second Generation

This section will look at if and how important it is for the young women who have spoken in this chapter to pass on a sense of their own 'self' to their children (Kakar, 1981). We will begin with Sujata.

Sujata's extract:

Su: ...and that's what really matters to me... so to be able to pass that onto my kids... very important to me... 'coz I spend so much time educating young generation Bengali kids... learning who they are, learning our Bengali history... learning our [Bengali] language...

Me: Mm

Su: Umm... I learnt a lot of Bangla from the work of Nazrul Islam and Robi Tagore... if you see a poem just flat on the page and it's in Bengali... it doesn't grab you that much if you're coming from our background, born here...

Me: Mm

Su: ...if it's a song and you like the tune and you feel the lyrics

Me: ...you feel it...?

- Su: You feel it and then you take more of an interest as to what the words are and I ask a parent... my mum only knows up to a certain... she doesn't know the next bit... and I ask somebody else... and then I find out and it means more to me rather than on a page...and how is that possible if it's in *a foreign language for us*... [my italics] I can't wait 'til I've got kids and they're learning Bangla and they're doing the shows and doing the things I do
- Me: But surely... if you married someone who was not Bengali, you could teach them Bengali anyway?
- Su: Yeah... but I think the *home is the institution where you learn* [my italics] and if I married someone who was not Bengali we'd be talking in English more than anything else and you learn your language from your parents and when you look at the parents... our parents... your parents... they're speaking in Bangla to each other... and I don't think parents can converse in English
- Me: Mm
- Su: ...but none of the Bengali kids speak in Bengali to each other
- Me: Yeah... that would be our generation
- Su: Yeah... so if we can hold onto... I mean you've got very freshy parents... completely 100% Bengali and *we* don't speak in Bengali... what chance do our children have?
- Me: ...but on the other hand, if you're talking in English all the time, would the potential partner speak in English anyway, rather than Bengali?
- Su: I tend to speak in Bengali as well, I've noticed
- Me: ...really?
- Su: ...if we hung out... I would speak to you in Bengali all the time if there were a lot of English people around... like... lining up to see a movie... and there's something funny I'd say it in Bengali... I wouldn't say it in English... I end up speaking a lot of Bengali to my Pakistani friends by accident... because I'm so used to my Bengali friends... and I think... parents spend so much time training... teaching us...and... *our skin colour's not going to change*...[my italics] I think we should know our language as well
- Me: Mm
- Su: It's good to know both... so yeah... I wouldn't want to marry a non-Bengali person...and I could marry someone who's from Bangladesh...

Emerging from the above, Sujata emphasizes the importance of language in her own experience, and that she, in turn, wants to pass that onto her own children. Indeed, language becomes such an important factor for her in communicating with family and friends, as well as transmitting a sense of identity, that she is against marrying someone who is not a Bengali speaker. There is emphasis upon how much time her own parents of first generation spent teaching her the Bengali language and culture, and it is this that she does not wish to throw away but wants to pass onto her own children. Khondker's reflection about upon the Bangladeshi diasporic experience is interesting to consider here. He argues:

[M]arriage presents the ultimate metaphor to understand the future of the Bangladeshi community or for that matter any other diasporic community. This is the future, the blending of cultures, a fusion, which is sometimes sad, sometimes happy, but most of the time ambivalent. (2010:138)

Sujata is very conscious of the efforts made by her parents in teaching her Bengali culture, the language and the historical cultures she carries. It is reflective, I argue, of how she herself has been brought up, and of the relationships she has with her own parents. However, following Khondker above, and remembering Bhabha (1994), Sujata appears to be caught up in a space that is ambivalent. There is a recognition, as Kakar argues, that society's (or the community's) values are passed through generations within the family (1981: 183), but at the same time, she refers to the words of the songs she sings as 'foreign.' There is a clear emphasis on emotion, as she needs to 'feel the lyrics' of the 'foreign language' for it to have any meaning. Perhaps this emotion gives rise to a sense of Bengali-ness in an imagined community. However, in other contexts, rather than being 'foreign', Bengali becomes a private and familiar means of communicating with peers of Bangladeshi heritage when she does not want non-Bengali speakers to understand she is speaking about them with humour. In this way, spaces become blurred as she shows how she is able to negotiate and renegotiate boundaries through language use. The ambivalence characterising the British Bangladeshi experience is further reflected when Sujata articulates her fears for her future children. Though she wants them to pass them on, she expresses concern that, realistically, they may not come to understand or speak the cultural histories she carries.

Navigated Love – Conclusion

This chapter has argued that for second generation Bangladeshis the notion of falling in love and establishing romantic relationships does not necessarily always depend only on two people. Rather, as has been argued, these processes are bound up with relationships with parents and the wider community. I argue that boundaries are negotiated to both accommodate - and sometimes transgress – the ‘community’s’ understandings of love.

The persistence of such boundaries might raise questions about freedom and whether young women carrying multiple cultural histories really ‘fall in love’ with whom they choose. Certainly, this is a difficult question to answer and confusions may arise when each culture does not understand the other well.

Sometimes pressure can arise from both parents and from within the community in deciding a choice of partner. It can be verbalised as to which kind of person is ‘acceptable’ or ‘unacceptable.’ As we have seen, many parents and first generation Bangladeshis have a strong preference for their daughters to choose Bengali partners - although this may not always be acceptable to the daughter. When first generation parents do not welcome, as one interviewee put it, a ‘foreigner’ for a son-in-law, this can be verbalised. Indeed, as seen through the tense relationship between the young woman who married a white ‘convert’ and her father, it can have profound and embodied effects. On the other hand, as is also seen in the marriage between this young woman and her non-Bengali partner, what is deemed acceptable can be renegotiated both through dialogue and over time.

Some young women do not have a problem with the idea of a Bengali husband and are quite happy in choosing a partner with shared languages and similar histories. Indeed, some argued it would be easier to choose a partner who is able to speak Bengali and understand the nuances of their histories and backgrounds, as this would make communication more effective. As such, these young women would not marry from other cultures.

In establishing romantic relationships, I have argued that for certain young women the histories they carry (to varying degrees and willingly or unwillingly) become important, or become more important than they previously were. For example, one respondent was attracted and become attached to someone who was not of the same historical cultures as her. She explains later, however, that she ended

their relationship, with regret, because her parents will not be happy if she marries outside Bengali culture. She gives up the relationship for the sake of her parents and her histories. However, not all young women do so. I argue therefore, that the ease some second generation British Bangladeshi Muslim young women might have in establishing romantic relationships – regardless of their partner’s cultural backgrounds – might depend upon the relationship she has with her parents. The intergenerational dialogue that might be established can potentially also change communal perceptions of ‘foreign’ partners.

I argue that the relationship between generations affects how the young woman views the concept of marriage. For instance, the notion of ‘arranged marriage’ has come to mean different things to different young women. Again, the connotations they attach to this practice might have to do with the young woman’s relationship with her parents of first generation.

The young women in this chapter have argued that they are able to choose and interpret aspects of Bangladeshi culture and negotiate parts of the culture as it suits them, particularly living in a space that is not ‘Bangladeshi’. As second generation young women speaking multiple languages and moving within multiple cultural spheres, they can choose which aspects of Bangladeshi culture and history to pass onto their children of third and consecutive generations.

It is the experiences of literally travelling between such cultural histories that will be examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: NAVIGATING TRAVELS - EXPERIENCES OF RELIGION AND CULTURE

This chapter, following on from the previous three, will focus on how certain young women feel when visiting Bangladesh, where their familial histories emerged. As such, it will investigate the experience of visiting relatives in Bangladesh and understandings of religion, as well as how the young women feel they are perceived once they are there.

This last empirical chapter investigates how carrying histories and speaking from different historical positions is affected when my respondents physically travel to Bangladesh and the emotions evoked through this; it examines the in-between-ness of travelling between Bangladesh and Britain. Whether they are allowed to create spaces from which to articulate and understand a sense of self is explored. It explores the particular ways in which their diasporic experiences become embodied when my respondents physically travel to the spaces their parents have migrated from. The complexities between cultures may be highlighted specifically in travelling geographically between cultures. Considering such experiences, then, may give more insight into how these tensions can possibly be resolved, and whether many young women speaking here, might feel more British than Bengali (or vice versa). The chapter also considers whether through intergenerational dialogue, respondents are able to communicate experiences of lived histories with first generation parents. It will explore whether cultural diversity and integration carries the same meanings for my respondents in different geographical locales. The chapter also examines respondents' understandings of religion and how such understandings affect their sense of identity and their relationship to the cultures in which they navigate.

This chapter is divided into seven sections. It explores what some of our parents of first generation (particularly mothers) think of the culture their daughters have grown up in though examining particular situations, such as visiting British pubs for instance. This chapter examines the potential confusion that might arise when confronting a Bengali culture which differs from that which we have grown up in, especially if those who are Bangladeshi (and in Bangladesh) think of us as something 'other'. It explores how religion, Islam, has the potential to be a kind of escapism for some young women and the possibilities of what might happen if Islam and Bengali culture get 'mixed up'. This chapter explores how if, for some young women, the

cultures she carries become burdensome, there is the possibility to find solace by turning toward religion. Moreover, it will also examine how cultural circumstances might be interpreted as aspects of religion, or vice versa, and what might happen if the young woman is unaware of such cultural nuances. The final point in this chapter is an empirical argument for a merging of differing cultural histories into something ‘new’, accommodating space within which Bangladeshi and British cultural histories can be traversed and negotiated.

Some Preconceived Expectations of the First Generation

Having grown up in the aftermath of the period of liberation from the British Raj, sometimes our parents’ memories can be understood as somehow ‘visible’ in their expectations of the type of culture their second generation daughters have grown up in. As Bhavnani and Phoenix explain, identity emerges somehow in between discourses in unsettled spaces (1994:9) and indeed, as Brah (1996) observes, diasporic roots are settled in order to give rise to new narratives. Sometimes, then, the diasporic memories of immigrant parents’ shape their expectations of present day British culture as well as the discourses through which they view their daughters.

Tensions can potentially arise because the mother, for example, might not understand the perspective of her daughter because of such preconceived ideas and memories. Whether these tensions can be relieved by discussion between mother and daughter is an important question. We can explore these issues in an extract of Raihana’s interview in which she describes her mothers’ reactions upon entering a pub for the first time. Raihana is twenty-six at the time of interview. She is studying to become an accountant, after studying Law. Her mother originates from the Rajshahi district of Bangladesh.

Raihana:

R: ...my mum had all these preconceived ideas about pubs – they were these dingy, smelly places where sleazy people hung out... but there are different types...

Me: ...yeah, you have bars, which I think are a bit more posh than pubs, but you have nice pubs, right?

- R: yeah... well, I thought I gotta take my mum to a pub so she'll know what's it's like in one... she's never been before... so I took her to one, but I didn't tell her it was a pub
- Me: Why?
- R: ...because if I had told her before, then she would have had ideas already of where I was taking her inside her head... so, anyway, I took her into one and asked her how she liked it. It was about midday-ish and they were serving hot food about that time... so she looked around the place and said yeah, it was nice and cosy, and she said she like the *restaurant*... it was only then that I told her that she was sitting in a pub!
- Me: ...how did she take it?
- R: ...she was surprised at first... but then I think she understood why I didn't tell her it was a pub – so now if I tell her I hung out in the pub with my friends today, she doesn't have that picture in her head... I took her to a nice pub... but I also took her to a dingy, dirty one, so she could see the other side...
- Me: That's interesting... I had a similar experience with my mum [in that I told her about visiting a pub and she had some preconceived notions of what a 'pub' was like]... the first time I told her I was in the pub with my friends...
- R: ... you told her? What did she say?
- Me: ...well... I didn't know what to say to her at first, I thought, should I lie and tell her I'm in the library or in my office or something, but then I thought, I'm gonna tell her eventually at some point anyway, so I told her where I was and she went quiet for a few seconds... then she spoke very quietly and she asked me what I was doing in a pub, it was like, you're drinking alcohol now?!
- R: (laughs)
- Me: ...so I said to her, mum, don't worry, I'm not drinking anything, I'm just sitting here with my friends, don't worry... but I could hear something in her voice, which made me think uh oh, I've done something bad...

Raihana's first generation mother holds preconceived ideas about a culture she has migrated to and has not been brought up in. This example shows how mothers themselves can be in a transformative process, with their daughters, where they are re-negotiating spaces in order to understand the culture which their daughters are more familiar with. It is up to second generation daughters, it could be argued, to break

certain preconceived ideas. For instance, when Raihana takes her mother to a pub and later explains to her where they are sitting, she explains that her mother was surprised but understood why she had not told her earlier. Because there was good inter-generational dialogue and communication between mother and daughter, tension did not arise. Furthermore, it could be argued, as Sultana does, that migrants in transnational spaces accumulate local knowledges for survival (2008:279). Raihana's mother, therefore, could be in a space where although she is unaware of her surroundings, she trusts her daughter's knowledge of the pub space. It is through her daughter's experience that she gains access to both space and knowledge, which she might not otherwise have had.

My own experience with my mother might point to how, in a similar way to Raihana, preconceived ideas might instil a sense of 'discomfort' for a culture because they are unused to certain things (see Parmar, 1982; Chatterjee, 1990; Kakar, 1981). It is the culture, rather than the daughter, that is mistrusted since it is not known and is somehow 'foreign.'

The next section aims to investigate this notion of preconceived ideas from the reverse angle, by exploring how the young women experience Bengali culture in Bangladesh, a culture which their mothers have grown up in but which feels, in important ways, 'foreign' to the young women themselves.

Our Expectations as (Western?) daughters?

This section exemplifies through the voices of my respondents how some young women have preconceived ideas of Bangladeshi culture, in the same way that their mothers have preconceived notions of British culture. It also looks at the spaces and dialogue needed to negotiate and understand this. The first respondent heard in this section, Sujata, who has been encountered in previous chapters. Sujata speaks of a nightclub she visited in Bangladesh, and the 'shock' she experienced upon entering. It reveals associations she makes in relation to each of the cultures that have shaped her identity as she has grown up:

Sujata:

Sj: ...I was very surprised... there were about 200 people there... wearing mini-skirts, little bra-tops, [and had] vodka drinks and all of this kind of thing in Dhaka... and they're speaking Bangla... which was really funny to accept because [it's] the language my parents speak [and] is respectable... the language that my aunties and uncles speak in and they're wearing little mini-skirts!

[further]

Sj: ...afterwards I realised that all the actual girls in the club *were* prostitutes... so they'll sleep with you for money... but they'd say we're not prostitutes... but if the guy's rich... instead of spending 6 months taking us out for rich dinners... it's the same thing as your West... but your guy will spend 6 months buying you presents and taking you out to meals and stuff... and then you'll sleep with him... we just have the money up front

Me: So here the girl will say no and no-one will think anything, you know

Sj: Yeah, but *they're* saying that Western girls never say no... you know you go and pull in a club, it's just accepted... white girls they'll sleep with you just like that... if you buy a white girl a diamond... this is their argument... if you buy a white girl a diamond ring, she'll sleep with you

Me: A white girl?

Sj: Yeah

Me: So they're trying to be white girls?

Sj: They're trying to be white girls... but we're stuck in the middle because we've got both cultures... you know... and me, they've got a different perspective of me... because when I'm in Bangladesh, I look slightly different to the normal girls... when you're from London you *do* look slightly different

Expectation and understandings we might have of how Bengali culture is in Bangladesh potentially give rise to difficulties. There is the expectation that Bengali culture is a certain way, a 'respectable' culture, since this is what we as second generation daughters have been exposed to and what we experience.

Sujata points out there is a difference between the young women who have been brought up in specific parts of Dhaka, Bangladesh, and the young women who have been brought up in London. Indeed, the way 'Western' women are viewed by

women living in Dhaka is different from the way such women are viewed in London, for example. Sujata furthers this by arguing that how she is perceived by these young women is not the same as how they perceive each other, because of the concepts they have of Western white women. The notion that certain Bangladeshi women view Western women as 'easy' might come from what is shown by the media of Western women in Bangladesh, where it must be mentioned that Bangladesh is understood to be by Sujata a rather conservative Muslim country. Further, it is somehow paradoxical that it is Bangladeshi women who view Western women as 'prostitutes', and play up to such ideas in a country that is over eighty per cent Muslim. In this way, to borrow from Said, (1995), it is perhaps an Orientalist notion that has been turned on its head, where such notions are not necessarily true but appear so for the women who view this culture in a certain light and through certain media. It is as Rose argues:

Life is to imitate the images of life, the simulacra of joy, warmth and achievement presented in advertisements, television chat shows, soap operas and other public imaginings of personality, conviviality, and winning ways. These images provide the template against which the mundane dissatisfactions of our lives, the hesitations and uncertainties of our speech, the embarrassed awkwardness of our intercourse with others, the clumsy fumbblings of our loves and passions are to be judged and found wanting. According to this meta-world of images and values, more luminous and real than any other world we know, the self is to be re-shaped, remodelled so that it can succeed in emitting the signs of a skilled performance. And of this continuous performance of our lives, we each are, ourselves, to be the sternest and most constant critic. (1990: 239)

The greatest perceived 'difference' that arises from what Sujata has said relates to the notion of navigation and manoeuvring through and between cultural histories, and the negotiation that takes place in positioning a sense of self. Bringing different understandings of the cultural histories she carries, Sujata enters the nightclub. Once she is there however, she is surprised by the young women wearing mini-skirts and speaking Bengali. This does not fit with the Bangladeshi culture she is used to with the aunts and uncles of her family friends, and it is not 'respectable.' It could be argued that in her perceptions of the people in the nightclub, there is a

recognition of the language and the nightclub atmosphere in the cultural histories that Sujata carries. But unexpectedly experiencing the two, visibly and aurally, together gives rise to a sense, as Rose describes above, of awkwardness. Unlike many of the Bangladeshi women she speaks of who might only have experienced one specific culture, many of my respondents have been born and brought up in London, and are able to take from both the historical cultures they carry.

The next section will examine physical travel to Bangladesh and the experiences of 'being' in the lived histories of our parents, as well as relationships with extended family members. It will also explore what this might mean for a sense of navigation.

Geographical Closeness - or not

How these specific young women feel in relation to geographically travelling across cultural histories sheds important light on how they feel about family, navigation and the histories they carry. As such, this section focuses on being both in London and Bangladesh and the relationships such young women can maintain with relatives in Bangladesh.

To further understand the types of relationships a young woman may have with her family, I consider Tazeen's discussion of the types of relationships she has with her 'extended' family in Bangladesh. As noted previously, she was at the time of this interview twenty-six years of age, and works in the Finance sector.

Tazeen:

Me: ...do you have a relationship or relations with your cousins or your grandparents, or...

T: Not really

Me: No?

T: No, I wouldn't say so... my cousins who used to live in Blackpool, I used to love going to see them when I was a kid 'coz it used to be so much fun... but even now it's not like I phone up my cousins or we meet up for lunch or anything like that... I just don't... it works both ways and you know... I've just

never felt the need to do it and we've all got our own lives and we just get on with them...

[and later talking about the possibility of travelling to Bangladesh]

Me: What kinds of places do you like to go to?

T: Hot! [blurb]... where everything's done for you, basically... luxury! I like luxury... I don't see the point of going on holiday and then... you know..., thinking that you'd have been better staying at home [laughs] 'coz what would have been the point of that?

Me: ...ok... if I said to you, that Bangladesh, coming from Bangladesh... Bangladesh has nice, hot beaches

T: Yeah, right!

Me: No, no, hear me out... and has five star hotels, would you ever consider going there for a holiday?

T: No

Me: Why not?

T: I don't know... going to Bangladesh doesn't seem like a holiday... it seems like an obligation... and I don't do things that I feel people are obligating me to do them... I do things because I want to do them

Me: Mm hmm... why would that be an obligation to you?

T: Just because... it would be the expectation, I suppose... I can never see anyone who's got relations in Bangladesh going to Bangladesh and not staying with their family and staying in a hotel

It is very interesting here because Tazeen touches upon an important point, where she explains that there are certain expectations she feels she has to live up to, expectations that are put upon her from extended family relations. It is similar to what is expected, resisted, allowed and not within the community, (see Yuval-Davis, 2006).

It also exemplifies that for the young woman who might not share close relations with her relatives who live in Bangladesh, there is no dialogue because she might not be able to speak the language. Tazeen, for example, expressed elsewhere in the interview that she feels she is not effectively able to communicate in Bengali. Tazeen, moreover, explains that she cannot imagine second generation Bengalis (regardless of gender) not staying with or visiting relatives upon arrival to

Bangladesh. She explains that she likes convenience and luxury, where holidays, for her, mean *relaxing* on sandy beaches. I argue that the word ‘relaxing’ is significant, as she would be visiting family with whom she has little communication and this may lead to a tense situation where she cannot relax.

It may mean also that because of the lack of communication due to the language barrier, she is unable to pick up on the nuances of the culture once she is in Bangladesh and therefore, in some way, adapt. In describing her experience in adapting to the United States, Liu, for example, explains that a ‘lack of cultural experience on many occasions aggravated my frustrations in communication’, (2010:129). In Tazeen’s case, a lack of communication might give rise to tensions that do not allow for relaxation, which she associates holidays with. As a result, it becomes difficult to navigate between certain histories, as she is uncertain of how to do so. This could possibly be a factor as to why she is unwilling to travel to Bangladesh and feels it is an obligation to see her relatives. This makes language an issue in relation to travelling between Bangladesh and England.

Sushmita, on the other hand, feels differently about travelling to Bangladesh and seeing her relatives there.

Sushmita:

S: ...we didn’t manage it the last time we went, but on the first and second trips we always took a few days out to visit the village that my dad actually comes from... um... which is really in the middle of nowhere... um... you have to take a train and two rickshaws to get there...

Me: Mm hmm

S: ...and that has been amazing ...that has been really rustic and I can’t believe there are people who still live like that in the world and they’re related to me... and my life is just so different to theirs

Me: Mm hmm

S: ...it’s just ...I think in that way, I feel very Bengali ...’coz they’re my people, they’re akin to me, you know

Me: Sure

S: So when I think of my relations I think of myself as Bengali

Me: Right

S: ...but otherwise, I’m British, I guess

Me: ...so that in itself is contextualised?

S: Yeah, when I'm there I hate that people think I'm a memsahib or whatever... I don't like it when I'm in Bangladesh they look at me like I'm a foreigner... because I think of myself as one of them when I'm there... but when I'm here (in London), I think of myself as a British person

It emerges that Sushmita feels 'Bengali' only in Bangladesh and feels 'British' if she were to be elsewhere in the world. It is interesting that Sushmita explains that her relatives, who live in Bangladesh, are '*her*' family and that people should not look upon her as a foreigner, because she feels herself to be 'one of them.' Indeed, as Anthias argues, '[b]elonging ... involves an important affective dimension relating to social bonds and ties' (2006:21). Sushmita feels intense bonds with her family in Bangladesh that she does not necessarily feel with the community (see Chapters 4 and 6) whilst living in London. Hence there might be the emphasis that those residing in Bangladesh are '*her*' people and she would like to view them as such.

It is through acknowledging one's own *parental* histories, I argue that one can link, or be linked to one's geographical histories. The closeness with one's parents might allow for this to happen. If, for example, one is unable to be close with one's parents and their histories, then this perhaps automatically makes familial histories distant, and in some cases, impossible to reach.

There is a certain level of *responsibility* in keeping up to certain expectations for both the young women who have spoken in this section. So, for instance, Tazeen might not want to travel to Bangladesh and see her relatives because she might not feel able to 'live up' to these expectations that she feels are placed upon her. Sushmita feels 'akin' to her relatives when actually in Bangladesh, but it is interesting to note that it is only once in Bangladesh that she feels 'Bengali', because of the heritage given to her by her parents, and the close bond that they share. This again is reminiscent of Kakar's argument that societal [and communal] values are transmitted through the family (1981:183), and I argue that dialogue might play an important part in this transmission. Where there is little dialogue, there might be tension in relating to the wider community of family (see Tazeen's extract above), for example. Again, this might entail a sense of what is acceptable within the family and the community more broadly, the 'emotional attachment' (Yuval-Davis et al. 2006:2) this entails, and

the complexities that surround this. Indeed, it is clear that negotiating such a position is not easy.

Feeling a sense of ‘responsibility’ in living up to certain ‘ideals’ is something that has been expressed by many respondents. One of the young women wants her parents to feel they have Bengali children, by not being ostracised, and therefore to protect them, whereas the other might feel that she is unable to handle the pressure of living up to these ideals. Some young women, depending on the ease with which they identify with particular histories and the kind of relationships they have with their parents, find it easier to explore and navigate through and between historical cultures than others. This points to a questioning of who is accepted into the community and allowed to speak and who is not (Spivak, 1990). This can be further examined in Sushmita’s extract below.

Sushmita:

Me: [earlier in the interview]... you were telling me about independence and your parents want you to be independent in the big wide world

Su: Yep

Me: So what does the big world mean?

Su: Anything outside our house...

Me: ...ok... there is a clear distinction between the inside and the outside world...

Su: Mm hmm... even my flat where I am as a student, that’s part of the big world... even though it’s my other home... I didn’t like calling it home before, but now I’m used to it, it’s my fourth year there... so I just call both places home

Me: Right

Su: ...it’s still ...this is my true home [the interview is conducted at her parents house]

Me: Because your parents are in it?

Su: Yeah... and my sister... because we’re all here

Me: Ok

Su: ...anything outside of here... isn’t... actually maybe anything outside this area... and I don’t know what this area is, I can’t define it, but I know when I’m outside of it... any unfamiliar ground, yeah, unfamiliar ground whether that’s work or in terms of social circumstances

Me: Mm hmm

Su: ...if it's something I don't know, then I need to be able to cope with it

Me: Mm hmm

Su: ...and that's what mum and dad want us to be able to do

Me: Ok

Su: Um... but mostly out there is outside of this house

Me: Right... and you said you've got a flat

Su: Mm

Me: ...and you've lived there for four years

Su: ...yeah it's my fourth year

Me: Right... and so how have your parents coped with the loss of their daughter...?

Su: ...the loss of their daughter... um...I think they found it quite hard... I found it hard

Me: Mm hmm

Su: ...but I thought it was necessary ...all my friends told me it was necessary for me to make the move and stand on my own two feet and stuff and my mum and dad were always quite supportive of it... they were like, yeah you need to be able to do this... but they missed me a lot... even though I speak to them everyday and I try and come home almost every weekend, unless I've got plans or unless I've got loads of work the next week or something... I will come home... but I think they found it quite hard because of how close we are... 'coz we all depend on each other so much... um... just after my dad's heart attack... he's not as strong as he used to be, so my sister and I help a lot... but then emotionally we're all very much involved with each other... even though they can talk to me on the phone, it's not the same as having me here in person... it's not quite such an engaging conversation so um... I think they found it hard... but because I'm back so often, I think they store it up and tell me it all in one go or now they do talk to me about it on the phone

Me: Mm hmm

Su: ...so it's fine

Me: ...it's taken them some time to get used to it?

Su: Yeah... I can't say I actually enjoy it, I don't like being away from them

Me: Ok

- Su: ...I hate Sunday evenings or afternoons when I have to go back... I hate it... and during the week... I love being at my flat and I love my flatmates and I love my university life, but sometimes I just... I really miss being here as well
- Me: Mm hmm
- Su: So... I don't know whether that is because I'm so dependent on them because we are so close... a lot of my white friends... they just can't understand how we can be so close because their own relationships with their parents are such that they are close, but they don't feel the need to have half hour conversations with their families everyday
- Me: Mm
- Su: ...whereas I do... I like it... um... but that's because we've always been like that so...
- Me: Do you think that's an Asian thing or a Bengali thing... or...?
- Su: Yeah... maybe it's a Bengali thing, I definitely think it's an Asian thing
- Me: Mm
- Su: *Family is very central to your life if you're Asian* [my italics]... um... but whether it's specifically Bengali I'm not sure... 'coz I think it depends on the type of family you have, your parents and your brothers and sisters... if you're comfortable, then you want to be there... and if you're not, you don't really... I have Bengali acquaintances who don't really talk to their parents much, who don't spend much time at home... although they live at home
- Me: Mm hmm
- Su: ...but they spend less time there, at home than I do and I don't live here most of the time... so I think it depends on the type of family... whether they do share things... or not... emotionally...
- Me: Do you think um... emotional attachment is the key to a happy home...?
- Su: Mm hmm

There appears to be a clear boundary for Sushmita in the above between the 'outside' and 'inside' world. As suggested in Chapter 4, the door comes to act as an interface between these two spaces, as well as between different cultural histories that are carried by the young women. 'Inside' is Sushmita's home, where her family, her parents and sister reside, people to whom she is emotionally attached. The outside is territory that she is unfamiliar with.

Sushmita emphasises that for her the key to her comfort in these histories and the relationships she has with her family is their emotional attachment, (Yuval-Davis et al., 2006:4). She cites, for example, young people of her own generation, who, although living at home with their own parents, spend very little time with their family.

The next section examines this further through looking at how respondents may want to bring together various strands of differing cultural histories and the potential problematics of this.

'The Beauty of Both'

This section examines how it might be that manoeuvring between differing British and Bangladeshi histories, potentially gives rise to a deeper understanding of a sense of self. It tries to argue for different ways of 'being' and experiencing Bangladeshi and British cultures in different spaces and explores how these get intertwined. It is the young woman who is in a position where she is able to 'pick and choose', which allows for 'new positionings within the public sphere' (Ramji, 2004: 232; see also Puwar, 2004). This means different parts of each of the cultures that give her a sense of self are represented in different ways, signifying different things for different young women. Soraiya explains how it is important to her to hold onto Bengali culture, as it is her heritage.

Soraiya:

Me: ...but do you think it's important to have Bengali [language] in the third generation... or in our generation, even...?

So: Yeah... I do, actually... because again, it's part of our culture and our heritage and you can't throw that away

Me: ...you can't throw that away, or you don't want to throw that away?

So: ...I don't think we should throw that away... I say that even saying that... for the people who have thrown it away... I think even those who have thrown it away... they shouldn't ...so I think... it's because like I said, no matter what...you can't get away from the fact that our parents were immigrants and we will always be immigrants ...over time, people might forget... [blurb]...

over a few generations...

Me: ...neither were the first people here... they were from France... or Scandinavia or somewhere... so I mean...

So: ...yeah, but they forget that

Me: So... if you think about it that makes us the same as them...

So: ...but they don't see it like that... I think that it'll take some time... I think it'll take over a number of years... but I think it's better... I mean, what's wrong with having... doesn't that make us a richer person... because that's the beauty... I can choose... you know, what I like from the Bengali culture and what I like from the English culture...

Me: ...so yeah... in that sense, both have made you up, so you have different sides of yourself...

So: Yeah, yeah, definitely... I think that definitely... I don't think that I would've been... um... independent... and that is definitely down to the English culture and I don't think I would've been as willing to travel and go and see places and see the world... I think that definitely comes down to the English culture... and this whole thing of I can achieve whatever I want... I remember... I noticed one of the questions on your paper I looked at earlier... but I think it's true that... my parents influenced me, but so did my schooling... my schooling had a huge impact on me...

There emerges a sense of being that is somehow called into question in the above. Soraiya argues that the cultures inherited from first generation parents should not be thrown away. For her especially, and from her experiences, she emphasises that her parents are immigrants and in some way, her generation, are also immigrants, but in a very different way from her parents. Nandy's (1995) citation of the cultural interchanges between East and West might prove relevant here, however, it is important to recognise that this might have different effects for each respective generation living in different geographical locales. It seems clear that there are different ways that individuals can choose to carry the histories their parents have given them.

Indeed daughters are able to 'pick and choose' certain aspects of both of the cultures that make up a sense of 'self'. Rather than be burdensome, Soraiya argues that this is 'beautiful'. This is very much in line with Ballard (1994) and the notion of

‘navigation’. Soraiya’s statement gives critical insight into what it means to be able to navigate between, and thus ‘bridge’, cultural spaces that otherwise remain fractured and unavailable to each other. Such navigation, citing Soraiya’s experience, for example, enables a negotiation between self and culture (community and family, in particular) that creates and opens up a space to make one’s voice heard.

Soraiya emphasizes that we cannot ‘throw away’ the histories that we have been brought up in (see Chapter 2, Brah, 1996; Kakar, 1981). It is important also, as she emphasizes, that she has not only been influenced by her family and their cultural histories, but also by her schooling (see Chapter 5), where the cultural histories are different from those she carries with her from her family.

The next section questions this further and explores how religion, Islam, might figure into how a young woman feels about travelling to Bangladesh, as well as through and between the histories she carries.

‘If it gets too much’ - How Religion Can Potentially Be a Form of Escapism and the Possibilities of What Might Happen if Religion and Bengali Culture Get ‘Mixed Up’

This section examines the notion of culture and travelling between different histories in the context of religion. It asks how this might further complicate respondents’ sense of identity. It must be stressed that even though this research was conducted after the atrocious attacks of September 9/11 and during July 7/7, these events did not play a large role in how my respondents viewed religion or how they were viewed as Muslim women, since most did not wear the hijab or cover their hair, (for Western culture’s long and complex relationship with veiling, see Ahmed, 1992). Here, the first two women reflect upon, and question, the importance of religion. The last two women speak of actually being in Bangladesh, how their perceptions of religion have changed and the questions that such changes provoke.

Khaleda, for example, speaks of the importance of language in relation to religion and expresses a distinct ambivalence towards Bengali culture. She explains what religion means for her in such circumstances.

Khaleda:

Me: ...would you say that Islam as a religion would be a form of escapism from Bengali culture?

K: Yeah... it feels like it at times...

Me: It does?

K: 'Coz it doesn't consist of a certain language

Because, as she puts it, religion does not 'consist of a specific language,' it might provide an easier means for Khaleda to express a sense of self. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Khaleda does not feel comfortable speaking Bengali, and uses it primarily to communicate with her father. As Islam is based upon certain rituals and behaviours rather than any particular language, she finds solace in it.

Indeed Islam can be used, as Takhar argues, to contest religious orthodoxies (2004: 222), and for Khaleda, religion is perceived as more liberating than Bengali culture. There is more space for navigation and negotiation in understanding a sense of self.

Khaleda:

K: ...in Britain, I don't think of myself as British, I just think of myself as a Muslim

Me: Ok... so why is that different from being say, Asian or Bengali?

K: 'Coz [being] Muslim overrides all... being a strong Muslim person

Me: ...so most important cultural wise... would be Islam...

K: Islam is a culture?

Me: Would you not say that?

K: No... it's a religion... it's not a culture

Me: But surely... somewhere there is a sort of Islamic cultural...

K: If that's the case, then that's the best culture 'coz *Bengali culture sucks* [my emphasis]

Me: Why do you say that?

K: ...because I hear *my dad* [my emphasis] sometimes say that you don't do this in Bengali culture, you do that... and I'll be like, well hold on... I'm a Muslim so... in Muslim culture, it says this and it always turns out to be better than Bengali culture

[...further...]

Me: ...you wouldn't say you come from a very religious family?

K: No... not as such... semi

Me: Semi? What would your definition of 'semi' be?

K: ...my father's [a] very practising Muslim and my mother's not as much

Me: So is that more influential to you than your Bengali side?

K: No, no... yeah, that my dad's a practising Muslim?

Me: ...in establishing your identity... is Islam more [important]?

K: ...yeah

For Khaleda, her religious heritage is very important to her. She argues that religion overrides both Bangladeshi and British cultures. There arises a strong notion that Khaleda uses religion as a defence against certain practices, which her father asserts as Bangladeshi culture. It appears that she dislikes being told what to do, as some of her behaviours or preferences might contradict her parents' (especially her father's) understandings of Bengali culture. Interestingly, however, it is her father who is, she explains, more religious than her mother. This raises questions about how much dialogue exists between the generations within this family, as there seems to be a parallel between how she describes her father and the importance she herself attaches to Islam in shaping her identity. The complexities in the relationship between first generation father and second generation daughter are once more highlighted in Khaleda's extract above. In Chapter 4, Khaleda described her father as often absent but she said that she knows he loves her dearly. Perhaps her attempt to identify with her father has shaped her sense of religious identity and she possibly identifies with him in this way. I again raise Erikson's description of an individual's identifications in childhood (in this case, the father), as shaping identity (1997: 72). It could be argued that perhaps Khaleda's father's religiosity has influenced her more so than Bangladeshi culture, which she says 'sucks'. It can possibly be argued that the daughter positions her father somehow in a complex double bind, where he is representative of two things; firstly, he might represent religious identity (where she hints that there is more space for dialogue), and secondly, he might represent Bangladeshi culture. Khaleda identifies with the former more strongly than the latter.

That she feels that religion is a strong part of her identity is visibly displayed by her wearing of the hijab. Of this, she says:

Khaleda:

K: ...I only started wearing the hijab recently, like a year ago

Me: Ok

K: It wasn't as hard before because I was just the Asian British... now I'm the Asian British making the statement that I'm a Muslim... that I wear the hijab

Me: Ok... that's interesting... I mean... why a year ago? Why not before, or why not later on...?

K: Oh... because I didn't get the influence... before I got it a year ago

Me: What was your influence?

K: Oh... that's a very, very personal one... but it's more like a friend who encouraged me... guided me back then

Me: ... did it have anything to do with your family?

K: Um... my family were there all the time telling me about the hijab and teaching me about it and the importance of it... but I didn't take it on board... they never forced me... they just said it's an optional thing... whenever you're ready, put it on

Although Khaleda is not specific about the friend who guided her to wear the hijab, her explanation nevertheless reflects that friends from outside the family are often important in understanding a sense of self (see Chapter 5). Indeed, in some ways, an outside influence is needed in order to understand one's own inner sense of self (Khan 1974). Khaleda's family did not pressure her to wear a hijab. Rather she makes it clear that it is her choice, although it appears there is expectation that she should wear one. It is her friend who is outside the family who 'encourages and guides' her. There is a difference in her argument between her family's expectations and that of her friend; it appears that Khaleda emphasises the support of her friend in her choice to wear the hijab more than that of her family. However, it could further be argued that this might have more to do with her relationships *within* her family than outside it.

Khaleda's notion of religiosity contrasts with Sushmita's:

Sushmita:

Me: ...ok, we talked a little bit about your Bengali and British influences on your identity... let's talk a bit about your Muslim side... do you think you have a Muslim side?

Su: Um... I'm a little bit mixed up about religion... uh... so I'm not really sure that I do, I wouldn't say that I really do... I'm not really sure that I believe in God or not... I think I do because you know... you're like... lying in bed and praying to someone... um but... that might just be me, clearing my thoughts and telling myself that I need to do this, that I want this or I want that

Me: Mm hmm

Su: ...so I'm not sure that I have the full on stamp of faith that yes, there is God out there and He will provide and all this stuff... I just see that religion seems to complicate things in society...

Me: Mm hmm

Su: I'm not one of these people who [blurb] controversy or competition in any way, I just want a nice comfortable life and I just wish that everybody could all have that... um... they might not want to... but I think religion just seems to make things worse, sometimes...

Me: Ok

Su: ...I'm not one of those people who goes out and proclaims I'm Muslim or anything or I'm an atheist or anything... I think religion is a personal thing and you keep it to yourself

Me: Ok... can I ask if your parents are religious people?

Su: No, they're not either... they're more religious than I am... but my dad was telling me last week that I've decided that if people ask if I'm Muslim or not, I'm not going to say I'm relaxed or not practising, I'm gonna tell that I'm a... I think for myself Muslim... that's not what it was... but it was more like, I'm a questioning Muslim

Me: Mm

Su: ...I don't believe everything someone tells me just because they're an Imam... or believe everything that's written in a book because they're Muslim or Christian or something... I'm a think for myself Muslim

Me: Mm

Su: Um, and I think my mother is more religious than my dad

- Me: ...and what do you think about that?
- Su: Again, I stand by what I said before religion is a personal thing
- Me: Sure
- Su: ...if it makes her life happier and more complete... then that's fine... I have no comment on that really... she doesn't really impose it on us except when she tries to make my sister read Surahs [verses from the Quran] just because she feels that it's her duty to teach us something... and I've been taught that
- Me: Mm hmm
- Su: ...so she feels that as a parent, my sister should know something... um... other than what she's been taught at school... but that's all... she doesn't try enforcing it on us or anything

Contrary to Khaleda, Sushmita is unsure about her beliefs in religion. At the same time however, the notion arises that religion is deeply personal and should not necessarily be imposed on others. For Sushmita, the presence of religion further complicates things in society. Religion might make it difficult for certain second generation British Bangladeshi Muslim young women to negotiate their space – which is already contested - within the Bangladeshi community.

Sushmita suggests that navigation through and between different cultural histories might be made less complicated without religion. Indeed, she questions her beliefs rather than emphasising blind faith in what she is told by religious leaders. Words such as 'controversy' and 'competition' make their way into Sushmita's narrative when she argues that she wants a nice and comfortable life, assertions which are reminiscent of her reflections on falling in love and establishing relationships outside of Bengali culture (see Chapter 6).

Sushmita points out that her parents are more religious than she is, but do not enforce this religiosity upon their children. Indeed, the notion of questioning religiosity is brought forth through conversation with her father (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of Sushmita's relationship with her father). However, it is Sushmita's mother who wishes Sushmita's younger sister to know and understand certain religious texts, as these are not taught in the mainstream education system. Her mother might feel that such instruction is a parental duty, a notion that might have arisen through her own upbringing (Kakar, 1981). Although Sushmita says that she knows these texts too, she argues that her mother does not enforce such religiosity

upon her. This might be because Sushmita, although very attached to her family, does not live at home like her sister.

The notion of questioning religion is raised by Sujata in a different way.

Sujata:

Su: ...I don't pray five times a day... although I am a believer and I'm very strong about my faith and I practice it in my own way

Me: Mm

Su: ...I don't wear a hijab, I won't wear a hijab

Me: Why?

Su: It's not something that is me, I wouldn't do that personally... [though] I understand how that's supposed to protect you ...it protects you in the Bangladeshi environment... like I've had a black urna [long scarf type covering]... every time I go out in Bangladesh if I don't have somebody with me then I have a black urna in my bag in case I'm stuck somewhere I just cover my head with that... and that just keeps the attention away... so it does protect you... I can imagine if I was wearing a niqaab [face covering] ...I would consider that if I had a hit album or something or ...all my artist friends wear a niqaab... but that's to protect themselves

Me: Mm

Su: ...and that's what I think the niqaab does, it does, it protects you... like in Saudi Arabia, a maternal uncle's wife wears a niqaab, she's Christian, she's Filipino... she wears a niqaab but there everybody's doing that... and that's the only way to protect yourself and if you're wearing one then I would wear one too...

Me: Mm

Su: ...but in this country [England], if I wore a niqaab instead of feeling protected, I would feel I was being singled out... and I have a really good friend and she wears a niqaab and whenever she's driving and I'm in the car and she's waiting in the give-way or something they're always horning and no-one gives her way... and if she's in the bus lane then everybody's horning... whereas me... I'm breaking all the rules and everything and you know... they'll let you through... if I'm driving

Me: Hmm

Su: ...same situation... but because it's her and she wears a niqaab she gets a lot of...

Me: ...mm, so you think it's culturally specific rather than...?

Su: Yeah and even in university my lecturers... my niqaab friends, they've had a problem they've looked twice at them differently... so me personally if I wore a niqaab I would be bringing more attention to myself and niqaab is supposed to divert attention... that's why I wouldn't... *I wouldn't fit in...* [my italics]

It emerges that for Sujata there are different *levels* of religiosity and, in particular, religion means different things to different people. She gives a strong argument of how there are different ways of expressing religiosity, without losing one's belief and without 'looking' a specific way. It is important to understand that just because a young woman may not wear the hijab, this does not mean that she is irreligious. Rather there is choice in Sujata's expression of religion and spirituality, and, as she states above, she is strong in her faith.

I argue that articles of religious clothing can be used to hide one's physical self though the meaning of the clothing item differs from wearer to wearer, and might not always be understood by the onlooker. For instance, the niqaab, for Sujata was more of a disguise than anything else. Moreover, as Sujata indicates, how 'religiously' one dresses might indeed depend upon one's geographical location. For example, she says she dresses in a specific way to avoid feeling uncomfortable and attracting attention. Anthias is useful in understanding notions of fitting in. She argues that

[b]elonging has a number of dimensions. There is the dimension of how we feel about our location in the social world. This is generated partly through experiences of exclusion rather than being about inclusion per se; a sense of, or concern with, belonging becomes activated most strongly when there is a sense of exclusion. (2006:21)

It could be argued that it is to protect herself from exclusion that she abstains from dressing religiously in a non-Islamic location. Thus, wearing certain garments might be culturally specific, rather than always having religious connotations. As well

as attaching different meanings to the items of religious clothing that they wear, people also wear them for a variety of purposes.

The often-confusing relationship between identity and religious expression can be examined in the following extract of Raihana's interview. This confusion might particularly be pronounced in situations when different adults have conveyed contradictory expectations. In this extract, Raihana tells of an incident that occurred in Bangladesh when she and with her parents went to visit an elderly person.

Raihana's extract:

R: ...so we visited this 'elder' person in the town – the eldest or something, and I was only about ten or something, my sister was younger and my brother was even younger... we visited her and we said our 'salaams' and everything, but my mum kept telling me to say my salaams properly... me and my sister

Me: ...not your brother?

R: No... it was as though because he was a boy, even though he was younger than us, it was different for him... I don't know why... anyway, my mum kept nudging me and kept whispering for me to 'salaam' her

Me: ...what did she mean?

R: Exactly! I didn't know either at the time... but what she meant was that to go and touch the old lady's feet...

Me: Oh... that 'salaaming'... it always makes me feel really uncomfortable

R: ...yeah... I felt uncomfortable too... I've never done that before... it was really awkward, my mum told me to touch her feet, but I asked her why and she said not to argue, she would tell me later... so I went forward, not really knowing what to do... and by the way, our old Maulvi Sahib [Arabic/Islamic teacher], taught us that you should never bow your head down to anyone other than God... so I was really confused... I bent to touch her feet, not knowing how to or what to do... and I think she understood this... that this girl had never done anything like this before...

Me: ...why?

R: ...'Coz, she was laughing by this time and she just patted me on the head and told me to get up... I wasn't used to this sort of thing before... and later, my dad asked my mum why she made us touch the old lady's feet, and my mum said that all the other people's kids were doing it, so we were supposed to do it

too... it wouldn't look right if we didn't... but he said that it wouldn't have mattered because we weren't used to that part of the culture, so it seemed awkward for everybody...

In her narration of this incident, Raihana explains the complex outcomes of confusing religion and culture. Here, cultural difference also points to how, in this circumstance, boys and girls are treated differently in terms of expectations, although this is not explored. Raihana's discomfort in this situation illustrates that when one is unused to parts of Bangladeshi culture, it is harder to navigate because the nuances associated with particular aspects of certain rituals are not understood. Such confusion is even greater in 'confused' spaces.

The elder in the anecdote understood that Raihana was 'foreign' to the cultural practice her mother strongly wanted her to perform and 'patted her head.' It is Raihana's mother who was surprised to find herself sitting in a pub, discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Here then, it might be argued there is a yearning by the mother to 'fit in' with local customs, to belong; she wants to fit in through her daughter, and hence asks Raihana to touch the elderly woman's feet. Khondker explains that 'the roles of Bangladeshi women are varied. It cannot be reduced to a distinction between 'modern' versus 'traditional' (2010:134). This might explain why the situation was not made a great deal of by the other adults present. It is only her father, also confused, who raises questions about why his children were asked to touch the feet of the elderly lady that is highlighted in the extract. It could be argued that he realises that his children might not be aware of the differences in customs and is more empathetic towards them than his wife at that specific time. Raihana points out that the touching of the elderly woman's feet contradicted what she was taught by her religious teacher, further giving rise to confusion. However, for Raihana, this confusion may have led to a sense of disruption in being presented thus, both as a foreign child and as the daughter of woman with a desire to belong. As the situation is unexpected and she is therefore unsure of how to behave, the situation becomes 'awkward'.

The next section will examine the idea that differing cultural histories are continually merging and bringing about 'something new'.

Integration and Speaking into Something New?

This section explores the formation of a new type of culture that embraces, as Harris (2006) points out, elements of both South Asian and British cultures. It is therefore shaped by both the histories specific young women ‘inherit’, in a ‘synthesis of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ (Anwar 1998:192). It must be stressed, again, that though first generation parents have passed on their histories to their children, they have also tried to integrate themselves into the host culture – otherwise they would not have been able to survive, as Sultana, (2008) has also argued. Their second generation daughters negotiate spaces in their own distinct ways through which they are able to speak from different positions. In this section, I will try to show different ways some of my respondents explore ontologically ‘being’ in a space created by the marriage of two differing cultural histories.

Tazeen, the respondent in the section below, explicitly argues for the formation of a new hybridised type of culture in which their continuous enmeshing allows spaces to open for emerging voices to be heard. Tazeen explains how this new culture might shape the next generation.

Tazeen:

T: I think there’s a handful of people of my generation who will keep [traditional Bengali] culture into the next generation... not that many though

Me: Mm

T: ...I think a lot of people in my generation, certainly the ones I’ve been exposed to, are a lot more British than they are Bengali... and I think they will be what will shape the next generation... I think it’s gonna be more like that and I think gradually the sort of traditional Bengali way of life here, is gonna change

Me: What do you mean when you said shaping the next generation? What did you mean by that?

T: As in like, you know what I was saying that our generation is completely different to theirs?

Me: Mm... but we have the same culture, the same sort of moralistic values, for example

T: Yeah, we do have that, but we don't see the world as they see the world, we don't live in the same way they lived and because of that obviously the way we bring up our children or the way we're gonna be in a family or relationship is gonna be different

Me: Mm... perhaps we have a lot more freedom than they had or experienced

T: Yeah, we have a lot more freedom and a lot less tolerance... we're not gonna put up with things they put up with because we have *choice* [my emphasis]

It emerges that Tazeen does not see the first generation as having much choice, particularly in decisions involving marriage and partners, (see Chapter 6). She argues vociferously that this has changed for the second generation, as choice for this generation is heavily emphasised. She argues that many of the second generation she is acquainted with appear to her to be 'more British than Bengali'. Tazeen goes on to say that this notion of belonging to different cultural histories is what will shape the generation to come after our own, the third generation.

Tazeen:

T: ...but they're not gonna be the only people I'll see... I'm gonna have other friends, I'm gonna have white friends who will have white children and black friends that have black children or whatever... it's not gonna be like that [what it was like when she was a child] anymore... I'm not gonna go round for a curry [blurb]... or anything like that, so that's all gonna change

Me: ...so there'll be more integration for our generation than for our parents' generation perhaps

T: Exactly... in a way, that's kind of expected because when they came, they all came together and you know they all felt safe in their group with their own people...it was a massive change, whereas we in our generation are never [going] to face... what they've done, when they moved over and they were our age... I can't imagine how they did it

Me: It's quite a big...

T: Yeah, it's a *huge* change, I mean, they came over here, they didn't know the language, it's a completely different culture, it's a completely different climate... and they all settled here and they all made their lives here... that takes a hell of a lot of doing and I've not got the skills to do that, I wouldn't be

able to do that...

Tazeen argues that whereas immigrants who came to be parents of the second generation moved to a different culture, a different climate, and a different language, they made friendships with those who shared similar cultural and familial histories as themselves. As Werbner (1997) recognises, parents-as-translocals bore many hardships and found safety and collectively in actively constructing notions of community. This gave rise to a sense of security, which Tazeen admires. Yet, at the same time, Tazeen recognises that, as Kalra et al. put it, the future can be used as a 'code for creativity' (2005:71). There is the potential for the second generation (and those who will follow) to make friendships with individuals who do not share these histories. If, as Papastergiadis (2004) argues, interaction with others helps give rise to an understanding of self and identity, these new friendships and interactions give rise to the possibility of new ways of 'being' that changes over time and space.

Cultural Historical Associations – Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued through my respondents that the relationship between certain young women and her parents can prove potentially crucial in forming the young woman's relationship with her cultural histories. Some may choose to embrace this relationship, others may choose not to. It might depend upon how she understands the choices she makes to resolve tensions, for instance. This can also be explored within the dynamics of the community where first generation Bangladeshis are present. This chapter has focused on the changing nature of intergenerational relationships in different spaces, the negotiation and re-negotiation between the young woman and the community and also the young women's feelings around being in Bangladesh.

I have argued in this chapter that parents of first generation might have preconceived ideas of British culture. These ideas may stem from their lack of understanding of a culture which they find they are both used and unused to. I have argued that it is sometimes up to their second generation daughters to change such preconceived ideas, as it is they who navigate through and between both cultures.

On the other hand, some second generation young women might harbour certain understandings of Bengali culture, which also might be preconceived. Sometimes, these preconceptions can depend upon the relationships one has with her parents. The types of experiences she has once she is in Bangladesh, furthermore, can help to disavow stereotypical notions.

The relationships she establishes with her family who are in Bangladesh are also critical in shaping the way that a young woman might position herself in relation to her cultural histories. The kind of relationship she has with extended family might also depend upon the relationship she has with her immigrant parents.

I have argued that there are different ways in which not only cultural histories but religion can be perceived, as has been reflected in the narratives of my respondents. At times, it can be seen as a form of escapism, if histories become in any way burdensome, although this is not the case for all young women. Religion does not necessarily have to be 'visible' - through the hijab, for example. There are various ways in which religion and spirituality can be expressed and felt. Indeed I have argued that there are differing levels of religiosity expressed through a sense of self.

There is the possibility that the religiosity one feels might stem from the influence of one's own parents. There is also the danger however that at times religion and certain cultural practices get confused. Rather, as has been argued, some religious practices have been moulded to suit Bangladeshi culture, and this in itself is negotiated by the manoeuvring of young women through and between different cultural spaces and histories.

The next chapter will conclude this thesis and summarise its main points.

Conclusion: NAVIGATING INTO THE FUTURE

This thesis has examined some of the complexities of how specific high achieving second generation British Bangladeshi Muslim young women understand their own identities. It focuses upon how histories of migrant Bangladeshi parents, and the diasporic Bangladeshi community more generally, as moments of lived nostalgia, contribute to my respondents' understanding of themselves, while at the same time they rely on their own experiences of living in a space that is 'different' from these histories. A central aim underlying my research has been to examine how differing cultures are balanced and navigated, thus disrupting the commonplace conception that such cultures 'clash' with each other. I have considered these processes by listening carefully to my respondents' narratives on topics such as their relations with immigrant parents, schooling and peer relations, experiences of love and marriage, religion and travel to Bangladesh. Interviews were conducted between 2006 and 2012, investigating how these specific young women viewed their identities from childhood and beyond.

Through the analysis of my empirical material, I have argued that the position of Bangladeshi young women should not be seen as tied to a specific geographical point but as being defined through both physical and cultural movement. My respondents come from the diverse districts that make up Bangladesh. For example, they come from such districts as Rajshahi, Kushtia, Dhaka and they have, with their families, settled in the suburbs of London such as Wood Green, Woodford, Ilford and Gants' Hill, which constituted the main geographical locales for this study. They have contributed to newly emerging Bangladeshi communities in London. I have argued that various geographical locales in which young women live and how they relate to their families and explore their sense of self can be the impetus for further research. My research has analysed the importance of intergenerational relationships and dialogue between first generation parents and latterly a specific part of the diasporic 'imagined' Bangladeshi community. I have also considered the ways in which language is used to communicate different positionalities. I have explored the ways in which, in these families and the broader community to which they belong, boundaries are perceived, asserted, transgressed and contested. I have also investigated the levels

of comfort different young women feel in carrying certain histories. Because such emerging spaces of 'new' Bangladeshi communities have not been researched in much depth prior to this study (see Chapters 2 and 3), my thesis is of significance in that it sheds light on the experiences of a particular group of second generation young women whom are often overlooked. In this way, this thesis differs from much of the literature on second generation Bangladeshi women that already exists. It allows for an exploration of identity and the complexities of carrying differing histories by listening to the young woman as she speaks.

This chapter summarises the main methodological and theoretical points and concludes this thesis. It also suggests possible future interventions after this research.

Throughout this thesis, the family and latterly the community have remained crucial factors informing the way in which the young women both understand a sense of self and establish a platform from which to speak. As I have argued, the idea of 'community' is a skewed one. It is impossible, given the diversities within the Bangladeshi diaspora in London, let alone the diaspora in England and the rest of the UK, to personally know everyone who identifies with this community.

When I was a child, there were no satellite or television channels on which immigrant parents of first generation could watch what happened in the beloved land they had left behind or listen to the language that became largely relegated to the private sphere of the home. Instead, there were community organisations where people gathered, celebrating cultural and historical moments. These events provided food for nostalgia. People dressed up, gathered, shared food and gossip, and listened to patriotic, traditional and contemporary Bengali music. The first generation did not speak English with each other. Their children, on the other hand, almost spoke nothing but English with each other, using Bengali to communicate with those of the first generation.

It was not until recently that the use of satellite television, and more recently, social interaction through the internet has become more widespread. This has helped in shortening the gaps in distance between lands and people that have been left behind for pastures anew. The generation that came after mine became more accustomed to such media (Mia, 2004). But as my own generation grew up and faced the pressure of exams and then went away to university, their appearances at cultural events hosted by first generation Bangladeshi organisations became increasingly more rare. But parents of first generation were proud of their children who went to university; they

believed education was key and had high aspirations for their children, a fact which has been repeatedly voiced by my respondents in this thesis. As I have shown, most of the young women speaking in this thesis emphasized their parents' desire that their daughter should receive a good education, by at least obtaining a degree. In parents' eyes, the better the children did, the less likely it would be for them to suffer the problems they faced when they first arrived in England. Children's education was often a talking point for parents at the events they attended.

The incident with the young woman on the train platform discussed in Chapter 1 provided the impetus for thinking about questions of boundaries set by the family and community and what it means to transgress them. It was clear that even though they were not physically present at the time of the incident, a sense of community still hung heavy in the air. The young woman saw me as an embodiment of an 'imagined' community – I became both the audience and the spectacle. It was at that moment, as Khan (1974) argues, an other was needed to understand a sense of self. In that non-articulated space, I symbolised something for her to understand part of her identity and vice versa. In that moment, there was a nonverbal expression of her fears of being 'caught' in transgression, an affective response which could be seen running through her body. But the space that was somehow created between her and myself was unarticulated, where the beginning and outcome of this scenario was unknowable, going beyond our understandings of communal and familial boundaries. We were in an unspoken space, an unknowable space, a 'third space' (see Bhabha, 1994).

Psychoanalysis has taught that we are unable to forget our histories. The Indian psychoanalyst, Sudhir Kakar (1981) has argued that a mother brings up her child according to the customs and rituals that she herself has been brought up in. This transfers onto the child. In this thesis I have used the experiences of my respondents to explore how such histories become embodied when mothers raise their daughters in 'foreign' spaces, but nevertheless carry the place they have left behind with them. Immigrant mothers (and fathers) of first generation have, however, seemingly found different strategies of coping with such losses of place, family etc. in making sense of their own transnational identities. This does not mean that personal, familial or even national histories are forgotten with migration. Often, such histories can present themselves without being spoken about. Certainly, high-achieving young women acknowledge the histories that they carry and the difficulties and complexities

associated with negotiating boundaries and the ways their own identities and behaviours can be both shaped and proscribed by such boundaries. As the empirical research conducted in this study suggests, relationships between consecutive generations affect the degrees of ‘comfort’ these young women feel in incorporating aspects of ‘British’ or ‘Bangladeshi’ culture. This is not to say, of course, that difficulties in meeting the demands that are made of my respondents evaporate into the air. I argue it is vital for young women to be given space - within the family, in friendships, in romantic relationships and journeys through religion - in which to understand themselves.

This thesis has examined the notion of speaking in a particular voice from a specific historical position. I have drawn on the insights of Spivak (1990), who argues that one tries to ‘speak as’ something, then it is the *audience*, the listeners, those from a specific and privileged history that mould the speaker in terms of what they wish to hear. They are in a privileged position from which they are able to listen to one set of histories, whilst potentially ignoring another. However, this is precisely what this study calls into question. I have argued in this thesis that as my respondents navigate between different cultures, and through languages, there is a merging together of different carried histories and they are thus able to speak from different historical positionalities. These young women cannot be perceived as speaking from a particular point of history anymore. As Spivak argues,

the space I occupy might be explained by my history. It is a position into which I have been written. I am not privileging it, but I do want to use it. I can’t fully construct a position that is different from the one I am in...No one can quite articulate the space she herself inhabits. My attempt has been to describe this relatively ungraspable space in terms of what might be its history (1990:68).

If a space for a person is written by history, particularly, for this research, a South Asian woman researching young women in her own community, it must be specific to that person – in this instance, the histories of the family. So in this sense, certain young women of second generation (I refer to my respondents) carry specific histories that relate to their families. But at the same time, I have argued that it is specifically because we, as second generation young women live in a space that is foreign to our

immigrant parents that we come to inhabit both spaces in a way that our parents might not be able to. My research has explored the issues involved with understanding these differing cultural histories.

In Chapter 1, as I explore the incident on the train platform, questions arise about the relationships between parents of first generation and their second generation daughters. Here the parents' levels integration come to the fore, as do questions around familial and cultural histories and the impact these make upon the young women. The idea of 'navigation' between and through cultural histories is introduced. I focus, in particular, on how these young women understand their positions within the cultures they inhabit and the platforms from which they establish a position from which to speak. There is a discussion of community and communal boundaries – and the ways in which these boundaries demarcate which behaviours and desires are acceptable and which are unacceptable for 'good' Bangladeshi women, issues which are raised again and again throughout the thesis. I have argued that how and to what extent respondents incorporate cultural and familial histories - willingly or unwillingly- reflects upon the kind of relationships they have with their parents.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature relevant to my research. It charts the theoretical terrain with reference to South Asian women's struggles and understands notions of hybridity and how such ideas relate to the experiences of my respondents. This literature guides the discussion in my empirical chapters in which I investigate intergenerational relationships within the family, and the positions of first generation mothers and second generation daughters. I explore insights of psychoanalysis, in particular I examine how Erikson's (1997) work might shape our understanding of immigrant parents' aspirations that their daughters should be high-achieving. At the same time, recognising the multiplicities and multi-layeredness of identity proves crucial to understanding how my respondents perceive themselves in relation to their histories and their experiences. The chapter explores what it means to be Bengali for these young women and the historical significances of Bangladeshi migration. I have proposed Ballard's (1994) understanding of cultural navigation as a conceptual means through which the cultural and historical complexities affecting identity can be understood, especially in the merging of different cultural histories.

In Chapter 3 I have outlined the methodological framework for this thesis. By gathering and analysing the narratives of second generation British Bengali young women, I have given greater insight into these specific young women's complex and multi-layered identities. In seeking to examine how these young women understand their sense of 'self' in relation to the histories they carry, I have relied on Ballard's (1994) idea of 'navigation'. This idea is important in conceptualising how such young women are able to meander through and between historical cultures, one of the main foci of this research. Also examined in Chapter 3 are the dynamics, and potential problematics, within the relationship between the researcher and her respondent if they belong to the same community. For example, if a respondent feels as if she is speaking to the audience of the community, rather than to an individual researcher as such, she may wish to present herself, as well as her family, in a certain light. This can be exemplified not only through her words, but also through her reactions and the gestures she makes using her body. And so notions of 'affect' prove important in understanding the content of the interviews that are presented in this thesis. An awareness of affect helps illuminate the boundaries around what the young women feel they can say and what they cannot say in the interview scenario.

I will now give a description of the important theoretical insights that underlie the analysis in the empirical chapters of this thesis. These include Bhabha's (1994) idea of a 'third space' and Erikson's (1997) notions of psychological development throughout life. I have argued that these key ideas have helped to lay the foundations of my original contributions to the field of sociology.

Bhabha's idea of a 'third space' has provided a lens through which my respondents' understanding of their identities may be viewed. I have argued that the second generation young woman is positioned between the community and her parents and in part carries their histories. However, at the same time, because of her experiences, she differs from them in important ways. She is somewhere in between these two places. And from this place – a third space, an unknowable space – she learns to speak. She speaks from her experiences and from her histories, as she navigates through and between the cultural and historical arenas of family, friendships, travel, romance/love and religion. I have developed Erikson's (1997) arguments about psychic development to suggest that because of immigration, the development of first generation parents might somehow be disrupted or diverted. This

leads to many immigrant parents somehow living their lives through their daughters. These crucial theoretical points are, I argue, my key contributions to sociological knowledge.

More specifically, I believe that my focus on high-achieving second generation British Bangladeshi Muslim young women contributes to scholarship on migration, intergenerational studies, ethnicity and representation in three ways:

1) Emotional spaces are identified in this research that are interpolated through arenas of family, friendship, love, religion and travel. These emotional spaces are unnamed but are places from which the young woman of second generation is able to express a sense of self as well as understand and negotiate cultural norms and boundaries.

2) A unique approach combining psychoanalytic techniques and narrative methodologies conceptualizing emotion allows for a deeper understanding of the complex social and cultural positions of these young women and the platforms they speak from.

3) Migrants' attitudes to integration influence and shape their second generation daughters' ability to navigate their multifaceted cultural landscape. Through intergenerational dialogue, positions and spaces of speaking are negotiated and re-negotiated within familial and communal space and is understood in relation to a sense of self. This might allow migrant parents to live disrupted or diverted aspirations through their second generation daughters.

The important theoretical interventions I forward in my empirical chapters (chapters 4-7) can be recapitulated, in sequence, as follows:

i) Family, Community and Language –

I have argued, in Chapter 4, that it is within the Bangladeshi family space, particularly within the home, that 'Bengali' rules mainly apply. Here Bengali is spoken, Bengali customs and traditions are followed, and first generation parents set the agenda. Outside, in the British space, 'British' rules apply, which are different to those of the home. As we have seen, Sujata, for example, describes what it is like to grow up in what she describes as a 'white' area, while having Bengali parents who are

proud of their heritage. Bound within such experiences for such young women, and shaping their own sense of identity, is an awareness of their parents' different trajectories and transnational identities. Each of the young women speaking in this thesis has learnt to understand these complexities in distinct ways. It must be emphasised at the same time that there is an intermixing and intertwining of these spaces through the constant movement of the people who inhabit them. I have argued that such spaces are made fluid and interchangeable through the young woman – she is able to speak English at home with her parents present, and Bengali when she is outside with her family.

Language thus comes to be vital, I have argued, in establishing dialogue between generations as well as a sense of self. However, both processes are shaped by the type of relationship the young woman has with her parents and latterly with the wider Bangladeshi community. This can be seen in Khaleda's example. When emotionally hurt by her father, who is unable to speak English as fluently as she is, Khaleda demands an apology in English – an act which suggests she uses language to wield a form of power over her father. However, if, on the other hand, a young woman is unable to speak Bengali as fluently as her parents, she might feel uneasy and question her own ability and cultural capabilities, an apt example being Lamia. Moreover, I have proposed that second generation British Bengali Muslim young women are creating a new form of language, 'Benglish', which is a mixture of these two divergent cultural histories and can be described as an audible form of hybridity. As such, it gives new insight into a perception of self, one that allows for navigation and manoeuvring between these histories, rather than one which demands allegiance to one history over another.

ii) Friendships –

I have argued in Chapter 5 that her relationships with both Bangladeshi or Asian friends and non-Bengali, non-Asian friends are also seminal in shaping the young woman's sense of identity.

I have argued that some young women in this study have looked for their parents' approval in their friendships – a fact they were not always consciously aware of this until speaking about it in the interview. For example, Sujata, in Chapter 5 describes how her friends who did not belong to similar historical backgrounds as her mocked her mother, which made her very unhappy. It was once she made friendships

with those of similar familial and cultural histories as herself, friends who shared South Asian cultures with her, that she established that it was her friends, rather than her mother, who made her feel tense and uneasy. It is moreover through friendships, I have argued, that such young women are able to understand their own histories. And perhaps a better understanding of ‘self’ is also made possible through interaction with another person (Khan, 1974). Some of these young women have emphasised that their parents discouraged having friendships with boys when they were children. Indeed, the chapter argues that there are different ways of navigating through and between cultural histories through friendships. Sometimes a particular path has been verbally encouraged by parents, as was the case with Soraiya. She complied with her parents’ preferences choosing friends with similar cultural and familial histories, though she did not necessarily maintain those friendships.

Many times, however, friendships are made with peers without bearing in mind such histories, in school and later. One of the interviewees, Tasneem, even commented that she consciously avoided making friends with only Asian children, as she wanted to break from stereotypical notions – thus emphasising a conscious effort at integration. As she reflected in her interview, it is impossible, outside the home, *not* to make friendships with those from outside the Bengali community. On the other hand, however, some of my respondents have argued that sometimes it is easier to make friendships with those who share similar histories as themselves, as this makes navigating through and between histories easier.

iii) Love and Romance –

I have argued in Chapter 6 that romantic relationships are also crucial in understanding a sense of ‘self’. I have argued that parents of first generation often verbalise the partner they prefer for their daughter, in other words, who might be acceptable or unacceptable in terms of cultural histories. This, I have proposed, the daughter can accept and follow or reject and deny. For instance, many parents verbalise a choice of Bengali husband for their daughter. Often, it takes time to welcome a non-Bengali son-in-law (considered, as Sujata puts it, as a ‘foreigner’). These young women choose not to marry ‘outside’ Bengali culture, and sometime opt for ‘arranged’ marriage, which follows a pattern similar to Western matchmaking in the present sense. Potential partners are introduced to each other in an informal setting, and they decide whether to take it further.

Questions of boundaries are raised in this chapter. With regard to falling in love, questions are raised about whether the young woman feels she can or is allowed to freely love the person of her choice. Other hand, I have shown that some second generation young women have no problem in their parents' request of a Bengali partner. Indeed, some have argued that it would make the relationship less complicated if each partner understood the other's familial and cultural histories. This would make communication and dialogue easier, they argue, and so perhaps navigating histories might be easier in such relationships. For some of the young women, I have shown that cultural histories become important, or more 'visible' than before once they establish romantic relationships. Sometimes indeed, a young woman might be torn between the histories of and love for her parents, on the one hand, and her love of the romantic and her partner, on the other. For example, Sujata speaks of falling in love with a friend of hers who does not share similar familial histories and in the end makes a choice to let go of this love. She sacrifices her love for her partner for the happiness of her parents, reflecting what can be termed as an inter-generational love. She speaks of sacrificing her own romantic love and explains that feelings of love are transferred to her parents for her to be happy. The young women's relationships with immigrant parents are further illuminated in this exploration of their romantic experiences. I have argued that, often, the young woman's relationship with her family relates to her perception of her self and her identity, which, fundamentally influences the types of decisions she makes about romantic partnerships.

iv) Travel and Religion –

I have argued in Chapter 7 that preconceived perceptions of cultural histories exist both for the immigrant parent in London and for the travelling daughter in Bangladesh. At times, this can be difficult to deal with, when language might initially become a barrier in communication. It is sometimes down to second generation children of second generation to break their parents' preconceived ideas, particularly when they are high-achieving and are well integrated into the culture which is unfamiliar to their parents. Raihana, for example, speaks of taking her mother out to lunch in a pub without initially telling her where they were. It was only when she later asked her mother how she liked the atmosphere of their surroundings that Raihana revealed to her mother they were sitting in a pub. Conversely, some of the

respondents have admitted to having certain perceptions of Bangladesh and Bengali culture as it is practised there. I argue that it may be the type of relationships she has with her parents and the histories she carries that determines whether these perceptions will eventually be disavowed.

Moreover, I have argued that both Bengali and British histories make up a sense of self for these second generation young women. Indeed, they are able to pick and choose from each culture as they navigate between them. I also examined how the respondents feel upon travelling to Bangladesh, a space that might be ‘foreign’ to them in terms of certain rituals and customs that they may not be used to or do not know.

Sometimes, religion becomes entangled in this and I have argued that it is not always easy to separate cultural histories from religion. At certain moments for some respondents, religion can provide a form of escapism, when histories carried become burdensome and a cause for tension and worry. For example, Khadija asserts that she gives her religion precedence over culture. She cites the complicated relationship she has with her father, explaining that it is religion that gives her more freedom than culture in disavowing certain boundaries. Indeed, religion can help give rise to a sense of self. Moreover, I have argued that religiosity is not always visible and that there are different levels of religiosity and spirituality. As some of the young women have related, religious identity can be expressed through bodily garments. Yet, as others point out, there can be different reasons for wearing certain items of clothing which might be termed ‘religious’ but these might not be understood by those who are either outside of the family or culture.

As I have shown, there is a plethora of emotions associated with religion. Some respondents describe being spiritual rather than religious, and others place more importance on religion more than culture in defining their identity. Sometimes respondents had not thought about the impact of religion on their understanding of a sense of self until I, as a researcher, asked them. I suggest further research upon whether and how spirituality and religion can be seen as distinct for such women and the implications this might have for their self-understanding is necessary.

Navigating Further – Future Projects

This thesis has raised pertinent questions and given insight into the experiences and self-perception of high-achieving second generation British Bangladeshi Muslim young women living in the suburbs of London. However, there are still concepts that need to be explored. Below I give an outline for future research that can be developed from ideas explored in this thesis.

Although studies on first generation Bangladeshis have been conducted (for example, Gardner, 2002; Adams, 1994; Alam, 1988), there has been inadequate research conducted on the group of migrants to which the parents of my own sample of young women belong. I therefore propose a potential piece of research that focuses upon how such first generation migrants achieved their status and the struggles they faced in integrating into, and indeed becoming affluent members of, a ‘new society.’

In order to understand how the thoughts, experiences and feelings of migration (and prior) impact the first generation and how they pass such cultural histories onto their children, I propose that it would be worthwhile to conduct further research on first generation professional migrant parents. Stemming from arguments in this thesis and the literature explored, it would be worthwhile to investigate how immigrant mothers, in particular, managed to build their lives in a foreign space away from their families and friends, sometimes to join their husbands. Furthermore, I propose research examining the experiences of three consecutive generations - grandmothers (residing in Bangladesh and/or West Bengal in India), migrant mothers who came to England and the latter’s British born daughters - would be extremely fruitful. This could explore how each consecutive generation relate to each other and the possible tensions that arise in these relationships in relation to the ways that each generation of women understand their identities and carry, as well as pass on, their respective histories.

The notion of siblings, and how they relate to each other and the family for example, has not been explored because not all my respondents have siblings. I propose research that investigates young men from the professional families that have been investigated in this thesis. This will mean collecting and analysing narratives of the brothers of the young women whose narratives have been analysed in this thesis. This proposed research might shed light on any gendered differences in the ways that second generation children of immigrant Bangladeshis understand a sense of self and

perceive the social landscapes they move in. It would reflect how young men feel about the issues discussed in this thesis and whether they have different aspirations to those of their sisters. This will include more investigation into inherited histories, religion and intergenerational dialogue. It will mean also an investigation into notions of boundaries and whether the dichotomy of ‘good/bad’ holds the same meaning for sons as for daughters, and will explore the spaces from which British Bangladeshi boys learn to speak.

Furthermore, how second generation (and consecutive) young men and women relate to each other, and issues of community expectations and pressures is a further site for exploration, particularly in relation to the concept of love and romance. Here, I propose a comparative piece of research that would potentially examine notions of marriage and love in relation to integration, through young men or women marrying outside Bangladeshi culture. This might be contrasted with finding a partner whilst living within British society and marrying within Bangladeshi culture. Finally, marriage patterns in Bangladesh, community and familial involvement would be potentially explored. This potential research would examine notions of integration and change within Bangladeshi society both in Bangladesh and in England.

Moreover, a further project might take the form of a comparative study between how children learn of the histories they carry in London (and other British cities) and different cities in Bangladesh. It would potentially open up questions that relate to the emotional content of carried memories of unspoken familial and cultural tragedies, for instance. It would question whether those physically present in Bangladesh learn of such tragic histories in the same way, and with the same impact, as those who learn of them outside the places in which they occurred, It would explore how each geographical locale shapes a particular emotional awareness of these histories in those to whom they are pass on.

My study has focussed upon mainly non-Sylheti second generation Muslim young women in the boroughs of Redbridge and Haringey, where there are far fewer Muslim Bangladeshis than in Tower Hamlets (see Chapters 2 and 3). I suggest, therefore, a further study on how location within London and notions of ‘class’ affect relationships within the family and shape communal and individual cultural identities. Indeed, how British Bangladeshis in London understand the concept of class and how such understandings, as well as their location within London, affect aspirations to become ‘high-achieving’ must also be investigated.

This research has shown new insights into specific parts of the diasporic Bangladeshi community. The arguments made in this thesis, therefore, serve as a platform for further research investigating the changes in culture and the lives of the children (and later descendants) of first generation professional immigrant Bangladeshis in Britain.

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