

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

From Pioneers to New Millennials

A dynamics of identity among British Bangladeshi women in London

Thesis presented for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

Lubna Ferdowsi

School of Education and Social Sciences

The University of Hull

July 2017

Abstract

This dissertation is an ethnography about British Bangladeshi women of different age groups who live in London. In this study I explore the identity dynamics of these women. I do this through an intersectional approach, focussing on age, generation, socio-economic status, and time of migration. I argue that the term ‘generation’, which has been used in existing literature on diaspora and migration, is confusing and inappropriate to address the diversity of diaspora people in relation to their intersectional and contextual differences. Hence, a significant finding is that using ‘cohort’ can be an appropriate way to avoid generalizing diasporan, and address diversity among them and the different contexts in which they are situated. My participants have been through distinctive experiences in their process of migration, most at different and particular stages of their life cycles, and in some cases, even women in the same age groups have had different contextual or transnational upbringing in the pre and post migration phases. Therefore, arguing that the term ‘generation’ is confounding, I have preferred to categorise my participants as members of particular ‘cohorts’ from an ethnographic perspective through intersecting their age, time of migration, and contextual upbringing. I have termed them as follows: the Pioneer Cohort, the Cooked in Britain Cohort, the British-born Cohort and the New-migrant Cohort. I argue that by playing multiple, dynamic and multifaceted roles in a diaspora and transnational space, these diverse groups of women are constantly forming and reforming their positionality. This process of forming fluid and dynamic identities in context, which I call ‘contextual identity’, challenges the feminization of ethnicity in a diaspora space, and provides diaspora women of different age groups with the power of speech, prominence, belonging, demonstration and self-confidence to contribute in a changing diaspora and transnational space.

Acknowledgements

In writing this thesis, I have been privileged in being able to depend upon both official and personal support networks.

This research would not have been possible without the co-operation of all Bangladeshi immigrant women in East London, who participated in the research process. I am extremely grateful to them and their family and relatives in the UK, and Bangladesh who met me with natural hospitality and delight at being a part of my study and frankly shared their experiences with me. I also want to show my gratitude to all those who were not participants as such, but who, through occasionally prolonged and occasionally brief snatches of discussion or chat at Bangladeshi community occasions and elsewhere, helped me develop an idea of the recent account and contemporary issues concerning the Bangladeshi women in the UK.

I would like to express my profound sense of gratitude and indebtedness to my supervisors Dr Mark Johnson, now at Goldsmiths, and Dr Lisa Dikomitis, now at Keele University, who both continued to supervise me when they left the University of Hull. I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Mark Johnson, whose careful supervision and indefatigable guidance, allowed me to free myself from intellectual dilemma of my own creation. I am intensely indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Lisa Dikomitis, for her very useful guidance, valuable suggestions, constructive criticism, and incredible patience. I am obliged to them for properly arbitrating times at which I needed to be pushed to develop my research work and juncture on which I needed my own space to develop my thinking. I am forever indebted to them for their unrelenting support during my pregnancy in the third year of my PhD. My gratitude is also due to my former co-supervisor, Dr. Lucy Michael, now at University of Ulster, who supervised the first two years of my PhD, helped me in developing my research ideas, and set me thinking about the issues in terms of conducting successful ethnographic field-work in a diaspora community. I am also very grateful to my official supervisor, Dr Julia Holdsworth (University of Hull), who was always so helpful and provided me with her assistance when needed. I would also like to acknowledge Dr Suzanne Clisby (University of Hull). Her assessments, remarks, and suggestions in firming the methodological approach contributed significantly to improve the standard of the thesis. I especially thank her for organizing the *'Interdisciplinary Gender Studies Postgraduate Conference'*. The ability to talk over and

get opinions on half-formed ideas in the considerate setting this environment represented was irreplaceable in developing creative work.

I am sincerely grateful to the University of Hull for funding my study and giving me the opportunity to work on Bangladeshi diaspora in Britain. I gratefully acknowledge the financial support received from the FfWG (Funds for Women Graduates) grant. I have valued the way in which the friendly research environment within the Faculty of Arts, Cultures and Education at the University of Hull enabled the development of my thought at all phases of the PhD route. My appreciation to all those who have passed an inspiring word, paid attention and been supportive. It made all the difference.

I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to my family for their unflagging love and care throughout my PhD. My heartiest greetings go to my mother, Raihana Begum, for her unswerving moral support, inspiration and for helping me to keep on keeping on since 2011. I also thank my father, Dr. Tahir Ahmed, my husband, Muksud Mohammad and my sisters Naima Ahmed Tamanna, and Fariha Tahir, who have encouraged me to work on and have given their entire support over the years. My life in England has been in the pleasant company of my close friend Richie Shah to whom I am thankful for the support and love she has given me throughout my PhD. Last, but not least, sweet thanks to my little son, Farhan Muksud, for his love and support, and for allowing me to spend time on my research. Pursuing a PhD can be a self-indulgent experience but having my son in my writing up period opened my eyes, and built my inner strength and self-confidence to a high level.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Influences and biography	1
1.2 Situating research and research themes	2
1.3 Structure of the thesis	4
CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND METHODS	8
2.1 Key theoretical concepts	8
2.1.1 Subjectivity	8
2.1.2 Positionality	9
2.1.3 Agency	11
2.1.4 Defining, interrogating and employing ‘intersectionality’	12
2.2 Methodology	20
2.2.1 Feminist methodology	21
2.2.2 Choosing and gaining access to the field	24
2.2.3 Role and relationships: position of a female ethnographer in the politics of fieldwork	26
2.2.4 Research strategies	35
CHAPTER 3: BANGLADESHIS IN BRITAIN	48
3.1 Migration, settlement and British Bangladeshis	48
3.1.1 Post-war migration: family reunification and community formation	48
3.1.2 Changing process of migration: transnational migration	49
3.1.3 Impact of chain /transnational migration in increasing community size	50
3.1.4 Community politics, identity formation and intergenerational dynamics	50
3.1.4.1 First generation in community identity politics and formation	51
3.1.4.2 Second generation and changing community politics	53
3.1.4.3 Third generation: a shift from community identity politics to institution based religious politics	55
3.1.5 Religious identity	58
3.1.5.1 Role of religious organisations and politics of the community	58
3.2 The British-Bangladeshi community (1980 onwards)	61
3.2.1 Emergent community	61

3.3 Bangladeshi women in Britain	63
3.3.1 Transnational migration and women in the community	63
3.3.2 Feminization of the migration process	65
3.3.3 Transnational marriage in maintaining transnational link and shaping the community	66
3.3.4 Women in racialised migration	70
3.3.5 Young women and contemporary transnational marriage	72
3.3.6 Muslim identity' practice of young women	74
3.3.7 Gender and political identity	78
3.4 Concluding discussion	79
CHAPTER 4: FOUR COHORTS IN THE BANGLADESHI COMMUNITY IN LONDON	82
4.1 Cohorts and generations	82
4.1.1 Problematizing the concept of 'generation'	82
4.1.2 The use of the concept 'cohort' in my research	84
4.2 Four cohorts	85
4.2.1 Problematizing the class system	85
4.2.2 The Pioneer Cohort	88
4.2.3 The Cooked in Britain Cohort	92
4.2.4 The British-born Cohort	96
4.2.5 The New-migrant Cohort	99
4.3 Summary	101
CHAPTER 5: DIASPORA POSITIONING: MARRIAGE, CHANGING FAMILY ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS	103
5.1 Marriage and family relationships in a changing diaspora and transnational context	104
5.1.1 The Pioneer Cohort, the dedicated carers: wifhood in a diaspora family	105
5.1.2 The Cooked in Britain Cohort: the reformulation of diaspora family	110
5.1.3 The British-Born Cohort: deconstruction of ethnicity, bargaining with patriarchy	115
5.1.4 The New-migrant Cohort: the powerful decision maker within diaspora family	117
5.2 Recent migration: new challenges and changing views in the family formation	119
5.2.1 The powerful coping mechanism of the New-migrant Cohort	120
5.2.2 Multifunctional and multifaceted role –play and gender relationship in family	124
5.3 Summary	128

CHAPTER 6: TRANSNATIONAL POSITIONING: GENERATIONAL TRANSFERAL OF ETHNIC CULTURAL VALUES AND PRACTICES AND CHANGING TRANSNATIONAL LINK	130
6.1 Women across generations: transferring a collective sense of cultural identity	131
6.1.1 “She told us the story how she was grew up, so we had a visual image”	131
6.2 Transferring values: generational struggles	137
6.2.1 “I try to convince her to wear a scarf at least”	137
6.2.2 “I couldn’t share with my mother, so I make sure my children can share with me”	139
6.2.3 “My generation still repeats “do” and “don’t””	141
6.3 Changing but strong ties from long distance	142
6.3.1 “But that made our bonding even stronger”	143
6.3.2 “They can’t take any decision without asking me”	144
6.3.3 “A new space... where the emotional being dominates over the physical being”	146
6.3.4 “I feel like that’s the strongest engagement with Bangladesh... I have”	147
6.3.5 Funding support for moral reasons	149
6.3.5.1 “Because they are no longer with us; we try to keep that connection”	149
6.3.5.2 “This is, I believe, the greatest contribution I can make for my country”	151
6.3.6 Changing status quo there	152
6.4 Summary	155
CHAPTER 7: PERCEPTIONS OF HOME, BELONGING AND DIASPORA IDENTITY	156
7.1 Identifying diaspora identities	157
7.1.1 The Pioneer Cohort: identifying diaspora identities	157
7.1.1.1 “Now they give me <i>salam</i> ”	158
7.1.2 The Cooked in Britain Cohort: identifying diaspora identities	159
7.1.2.1 “It just keeps the whole idea of what sort of person I am like”	159
7.1.2.2 “I said what I believe in”	160
7.1.2.3 “It sucks when you have already been identified as an unequal being”	161
7.1.3 The British-born Cohort: identifying diaspora identities	162
7.1.3.1 “Sometimes that leads to seclusion...but sometimes it’s also bonus”	162
7.1.4 The New-migrant Cohort: identifying diaspora identities	163
7.1.4.1 “People look at you and find an ethnic element on you”	163

7.2 Sensing ‘home’	165
7.2.1 The Pioneer Cohort: sensing home	165
7.2.1.1 “I would see the castles and country roads among the clouds outside the window”	165
7.2.1.2 “I personally don’t believe home will always give you the feeling of going back”	167
7.2.2 The Cooked in Britain Cohort: sensing home	168
7.2.2.1 “We all knew then that the UK is our home”	168
7.2.2.2 “It would be better for me to develop my political career back home”	169
7.2.2.3 “You are powerless to express yourself as a Muslim in public...”	170
7.2.3 The British-born Cohort: sensing home	172
7.2.3.1 “It’s not my home but it will always be a part of my DNA”	172
7.2.4 The New-migrant Cohort: sensing home	173
7.2.4.1 “Home is where you are supported and cared for”	173
7.2.4.2 “I think I will choose peaceful sleep than rather than a longer one”	175
7.2.4.3 “My home is where my root is”	176
7.2.4.4 “These two are my homes”	177
7.3 Summary	180
CHAPTER 8: RELIGION IN INDIVIDUALS’ AND COLLECTIVE LIVES	181
8.1 Muslim identity: describing as a Muslim or Muslim <i>ummah</i>	182
8.1.1 Religious identity and practice among the Pioneer Cohort	183
8.1.1.1 “My religious identity is very much non-political I would say”	183
8.1.1.2 “But I will do it at home anyway”	185
8.1.2 Religious identity and practice among the Cooked in Britain Cohort	187
8.1.2.1 “Muslim women are gonna lead non-Muslim women”	187
8.1.2.2 Islamic representation of Muslim identity vs liberal Muslim identity	188
8.1.3 Religious identity and practice among the British-born Cohort	191
8.1.3.1 “I am a proud British Muslim, I shouldn’t consider myself Bangladeshi”	191
8.1.3.2 “I am a Muslim but that is a very private thing”	194
8.1.4 Religious identity and practice among the New-migrant Cohort	196
8.1.4.1 “I am a Muslim woman and my actions and sayings represent me in today’s world”	196
8.2 ‘Ethnic’, ‘Western’ and ‘Islamic’ cultures: dynamisim, sameness and differences across generations	199

8.2.1 “I have my own version of seeing things”	199
8.2.2 “She wore <i>sari</i> , we sang, we danced with music”	201
8.2.3 “I am Bengali inside but my western style cardigan also reflects my outside as westernized”	203
8.2.4 “The mosque does this job incredibly”	204
8.2.5 “But if the Muslim religion overtakes the culture let it be”	207
8.2.6 “This is the kind of different conscious I have been brought up with”	210
8.3 Summary	212
CHAPTER 9: COMMUNITY IDENTITY & POLITICS	214
9.1 Women and politics	215
9.1.1 “A consciousness, courage, strong feeling deriving from your particular circumstances”	215
9.1.2 “Politics is an approach to conduct your life in certain ways”	219
9.1.3 “Politics leads you to create unity, fulfil common goals, and achieve shared interests”	220
9.1.4 “Politics is a strategy that people take out for different purposes”	222
9.2 Contributions of women in community identity and politics	224
9.2.1 “Succeeding with the writ...were indeed big milestones”	224
9.2.2 “She taught me to love Bangladesh, ...respect the Bangladeshi flag”	231
9.2.3 Breaking the binary	234
9.2.5 “To help the disadvantaged groups in the community through the light of Islam”	236
9.2.5 “Their attempt was not successful as now I am successfully continuing my 14 years”	239
9.3 Community cohesion and women’s role in conflict	243
9.3.1 “But we don’t say anything to them and this is our strategy”	244
9.3.2 “We are encouraging more women from the East London Mosque”	246
9.3.3 Grassroots level integration for peace	247
9.4 Summary	250
CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION	252
10.1 Review	252
10.2 Main findings	264
10.3 Final thoughts and suggestions for further research	267
REFERENCES	269

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Rikta’s display cabinet	122
Figure 2: ‘Tescoo’ Shopping Centre, Sylhet, Bangladesh	154
Figure 3: Sraboni’s artefacts	178
Figure 4: Sraboni’s cabinet	179
Figure 5: Women took the leading role in a cultural programme at the Trafalgar Square	217
Figure 6: Women were collecting cloth for Bengali refugees in 1971	217
Figure 7: 3rd April 1971, part of a women’s demonstration	218
Figure 8: The human chain on 23rd to mark the <i>Birangona</i> Campaign (I am on the right)	225
Figure 9: Keya’s campaign in Bangladesh (photo from social media)	230
Figure 10: Protest against War Criminals by the community women (photo from social media)	236

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Influences and biography

I moved to England in 2010 to pursue a Master's degree and since then I have been living here. My initial interest in the British Bangladeshi women in Britain as a topic of research came from my very own experience as a migrant student from Bangladesh living in the UK. Spending time abroad has given me a new understanding of my subjectivity and collective identity as a Bangladeshi. In my country, I never had to explain myself as a Bangladeshi middle class heterosexual woman, but now, for the first time, I became aware of my subject position and of how that identity is changing in this new context. From that personal experience, I felt affinity both for the British Bangladeshi people who immigrated decades ago and the subsequent generations who now live and work in the UK as citizens and diasporans. During my experience of living in London and Hull, I observed the diverse ways that Bangladeshi people talked about living in the United Kingdom. It acted as a motivator to work on the matter, first through my Master's dissertation and subsequently through the doctoral research that forms the basis of this thesis.

Broadly, this thesis explores British Bangladeshi women's experiences of migration, their responses to various social barriers encountered, and examines their identities, family dynamics, day-to-day living and community formation within different social situations in the UK. I attend not only to gender and race/ethnicity but also to age and class differences: a significant feature of my work is to think about changes over the life course and different relations between women from different class backgrounds and who belong to four different migrant cohorts. The aim is to bring to light the importance of studying women's different subjective experiences of migration and diaspora in relation to the various subject positions they occupy as British Bangladeshi women within and across 'home' and 'host' societies.

In this thesis I explore how these women deal with notions of identity and belonging. I do so through an intersectional lens. I have drawn on feminist poststructuralist theory on diaspora and intersectionality, particularly Avtar Brah's theoretical and empirical

research, *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996). Brah emphasizes multilocationality, and approaches diaspora space as shaped by the politics of power and the intersections of race, gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, generation, and nationalism. This is played out in economic, political, cultural, and psychic spheres. Brah (2007) treats ‘identity’ and ‘difference’ as fluid and changing processes over time. Building on Brah, I focus on the multiple positioning (Phoenix, 2006: 187) of British Bangladeshi women through analysing their experiences and practices of domestic and social life in diaspora and transnational space. I employ the notion of ‘translocational positionality’ (Anthias, 2002; 2008) in the analysis of the multiplicity of social categorical differences in relation to subject positioning to examine the intersection of migration, gender, and diaspora context, and find out if diaspora women as an individual can be marginalised on a dimension in a particular context, while being privileged on the same dimension but in a different context.

1.2 Situating research and research themes

Before presenting and explaining on the research themes that run through the thesis, it is worthwhile to take a moment to describe how I am engaging the three key terms, ‘British Bangladeshi women’, ‘diaspora context’, and ‘positionality’. Throughout the thesis I do not conceptualise British Bangladeshi women as a homogenous migrant ethnic group or category that is dependent on native land or origin. Rather, I describe them by focusing on their multiple positioning in changing diaspora and transnational contexts. My thesis provides also a subjective analysis of how women in a specific context create such positionality. ‘British Bangladeshi women’ therefore refers to a variety of differently identified women in Britain who create their positionality in a diaspora and transnational context through dealing with situations in relation to their intersectional differentiation.

The hegemonic discourse of diasporan identity or generalization of ethnic identity will be challenged in particular through the multiple positioning of Bangladeshi women in London. This thesis specifically concerns British Bangladeshi women in London, as opposed to Bangladeshi men in London, and highlights the qualitatively different experience of women in Britain to that of men in Britain. From an early stage in the research, I decided to focus my attention on feminist ethnographic observation, descriptions, interviews and personal life stories in relation to British Bangladeshi

women in London. This was not just because of methodological convenience and I refer also in places to the accounts of Bangladeshi men in my research and describe their relationship with women in the community. However, I privilege women's accounts in the thesis because despite the intersectional barriers women face in day to day living compared to men, British Bangladeshi women are challenging and deconstructing the dominance of British Bangladeshi men in diaspora and transnational contexts. Therefore, I differentiate between the Bangladeshi men and women in Britain so as to avoid the common pitfall of picturing 'British Bangladeshis' as solely 'the representation of Bangladeshi men in Britain'.

Finally, where I refer to 'positionality' and 'diaspora context' both should be engaged as having a specific 'social situational' meaning. I correlate both the terms by referring to 'positionality' as the place of the 'empowered self' in a 'diaspora context'. I choose the term 'positionality' over 'identity' to describe British Bangladeshi women in Britain in transnational and diaspora space. Doing so helps us to think about people outside the conventional boundary of identity and helps avoid the risk of generalizing women by ignoring their contextually contingent differences.

In examining how British Bangladeshi women are positioned and position themselves in a diaspora and transnational space, I highlight five key areas which emerged over the course of the research and form the basis of the six empirical chapters: **a) marriage, changing family roles in relation to diaspora positioning of women; b) generational transferal of ethnic cultural values and practices, and changing transnational link in relation to transnational positioning of women; c) perceptions of home, belonging and diaspora identity; d) religion in individuals' and collective lives and e) women's role in community identity and politics.**

From in-depth analysis of these five subject areas, I argue that women's positioning in context refers to pragmatic endeavours to counter and deconstruct essentialist discourses of identity. I suggest also that women's individual experiences of being diaspora women in London are frequently overlooked and thus positioned within the established narrative of the collective experiences of the Bangladeshis in diaspora community in Britain. As this thesis demonstrates, this more dynamic and subjective account of British Bangladeshi women is predicated on ethnographic depth and sensitivity.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis paper is comprised of ten chapters and is organised in two parts. The first part provides the theoretical background to the research and gives a historical account and critical review of existing literature about British Bangladeshis. The second part draws together a series of ethnographic descriptions and analyses that moves from an overview of the four migrant cohorts to detailed consideration of the five subject areas described above.

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 sets out the theoretical and methodological background of the thesis. It discusses the concept of 'intersectionality' and its importance in the research. It gives an idea of intersectional analysis in relation to feminist and diaspora studies, and describes how it may be used to challenge hegemonic, conformist discourses about migrant groups and diasporan identities. The chapter also explains the specific methodological approach and framework of the research. It discusses why the research is given significance as a feminist intersectional and ethnographic research. It outlines both methodological concepts and the methods employed in practice (for example: gathering data, selecting locations and participants, formulating interview and observation and ethical issues that arose) and in the analysis of the data.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of some previous scholarly work on British Bangladeshis. It articulates some brief historical, geographical and situational background about the migration process of the British Bangladeshis to the UK, and by giving an overview of the diasporic status of the Bangladeshi community in Britain it shows how the British Bangladeshi community has been placed in discourses around ethnicity, minority, class and race relations. It reviews critically the male-focused diaspora community identity within this literature, with a particular focus on previous literature on Bangladeshis in Britain across generational changes. The chapter also provides a short background on the works of previous researchers on women of South Asian and Bangladeshi diaspora to take us through different segments in diaspora identity in relation to transnational and intersectional discourses, which is helpful in terms of understanding the significance of the present research on women in a diaspora space. The chapter argues that overall, previous scholarship not only privileges men but also ignores the differences based on contextual lived experience of differently positioned women.

Chapter 4 is the first of the empirical chapters and sets the scene for studies in the following chapters of the way British Bangladeshi women are positioned in a diaspora and transnational context. The chapter discusses the socio-demographic status along with the personal and socio-cultural life experiences of the participants before and after migration to the UK. The chapter criticises the usage of the term ‘generation’, which ignores the differences not only between diasporan men and women but also among women. The chapter then applies the term ‘cohort’, indicates the significance of the term in diaspora studies and shows how it is useful in conveying the differences in relation to Bangladeshi women in Britain. That is followed by a description of the four cohorts referred to in this thesis; the Pioneer Cohort, the Cooked in Britain Cohort, the British-born Cohort and the New-migrant Cohort.

Chapter 5 focuses on different life stages of the British Bangladeshi women of different cohorts, which are interrelated with their migration process and living experiences in a diaspora and transnational context. It shows the different impact of translocational context on newly migrated and old Bangladeshi migrant women and Bangladeshi women that were either born or brought up in the UK. The chapter examines how a particular life stage, ‘marriage’ impacts differently on the British Bangladeshi women of different cohorts and how it influences women’s dynamic positioning in changing family and social contexts in a diaspora space. The chapter discusses the coping mechanisms that new migrant women apply, showing how they are positioning themselves in the diaspora context by engaging in intersectional discourse and/or adjusting with diaspora elements within the family and community.

Chapter 6 explores the ways British Bangladeshi women of different cohorts challenge the patriarchal image of migrant women as submissive, and develop their agency in a diaspora and transnational context, and transfer this to their next generation in the family. The chapter also examines the relationship, differences and conflicts across generation in diaspora families and how women negotiate these effects. The chapter shows how the experiences of transnational relations help diaspora women to reconceive their positionality in a diaspora and transnational context.

Chapter 7 describes how British Bangladeshi women of different cohorts recognise subjectivity and identity by signifying particular contexts rather than being predisposed by the hegemonic and essentialist discourse of diaspora identity. The chapter also discusses how the Bangladeshi immigrant women in London deconstruct ‘the myth of

return'. It shows the ways in which these women in relation to their differences identify and conceptualise 'home' based on their upbringing, living and contextual experiences in the UK.

Chapter 8 explores how British Bangladeshi women of different cohorts consider religion in their individual or collective lives in a diaspora space in relation to their differences, locational and contextual settings. The chapter examines how religion, culture and ethnicity are interrelated in diasporan lives and how the interrelation of these three influences diaspora women's lives differently based on their differences. It looks at the way in which women of different generational groups from the same diaspora family, who have different views in terms of practising religion and considering religion as a mark of 'identity', share the common ground in relation to their ethnic cultural background. The chapter examines the various contexts in which religion is invoked in diaspora women's lives is invoked and what sort of discursive effort this might be taking, particularly in relation to their positioning in their community and British society.

Chapter 9 explores how British Bangladeshi women in relation to their differences internalize politics in different ways through their living experience in a diaspora and transnational context. It examines the ways in which women from different cohorts create their positionality in the community and British society through direct and indirect involvement in local, national, ethno-local, ethno-national and British mainstream politics. The chapter reveals the contributions of old migrant women in community identity formation, which has been ignored in the articulation of community identity politics identified in existing academic research. The chapter gives ethnographic descriptions of some current ethno-nationalist political campaign and movements in the Bangladeshi community in London and explores the dynamic roles and contributions of women in terms of generational continuity in community identity politics, maintaining trans-local and transnational political links and uniting women from different cohorts in a transnational political platform. The chapter also explores the significant and dynamic roles of women who are involved in institution-based religious politics, in which they have successfully created a social-political space for grassroots women and women from different ethnic, social and class backgrounds, through building up networking and social reciprocity among them. It also discusses how ethno-nationalist and global Islamic politics have existed peacefully and/or equally in the ways women internalise and practise politics, compared to the men in the community.

The final chapter, Chapter 10, is the conclusion. It reviews the main outcomes of the research and discusses women's positionality in Bangladeshi diaspora, which emerges in further detail. The chapter closes by identifying some conclusive findings and explanations, based on the five key areas that emerged over the course of the research referred to previously. As a final point, it proposes some directions for future research that this research could inform.

Chapter 2: Theory and methods

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework and research methods of my study. In the first section of this chapter, I describe the key theoretical concepts that have been used in this research. These concepts are (i) Subjectivity, (ii) Positionality, (iii) Agency and iv) Intersectionality. I particularly highlight the significance of intersectionality in my research in relation to subjectivity and subject positions. In the second section, I discuss my epistemological stances and methods for data collection and analysis.

2.1 Key theoretical concepts

2.1.1 Subjectivity

Subjectivity is the condition of being an individual and the process of becoming individual. It describes the ways in which individuals are constituted as cultural subjects and the way they experience as individuals. The term subjectivity comes from postmodern and post structuralist discourse, which focuses an inner stable core. By repudiating the western rationalist tradition, postmodernists define the notion of subjectivity from two epistemological grounds. First, the subjectivity of the human object argues that the human sciences cannot and indeed must not-be a science. Second, the subjectivity argues that it is no way possible to identify objective or inter-subjective truth (Spiro, 1996: 765). Subjectivity reflects the social process in which individuals are considered as subjects. In cultural studies subjectivity refers to as cultural construction rather than static and, universal and everlasting object (Foucault, 1972). Current theories of subjectivity give emphasis to the constructed nature of the self. Poststructuralist thinkers Foucault, Lacan, and Derrida have defined the subject less in the form of the autonomous, and constituted self that produced the enlightenment modern project and more as a lack, a process, an effect, formed and moulded by several forces at work in the world: language, ideology and political power. The theories of subjectivity that developed in the 20th century challenged ferociously the autonomy and rationality of the human subject. Foucault (1972), considers subjectivity as a discursive production. Subject position is that viewpoint or set of regulated discursive senses from which discourse creates sensibility. Foucault describes a subject is the creation of power by the

individualization of those subject to it. Foucault (1972:22) argues that “The researches of psychoanalysis, of linguistics, of anthropology have “decentered” the subject in relation to the laws of its desire, the forms of its language, the rules of its actions, or the play of its mythical and imaginative discourse.”

Considering subjectivity as a process, Kristeva (1982) defied orthodox ideas of identity by her concept of the abject. She theorizes subjectivity as sporadic and perpetually in process. Kristeva (1982) describes the abject as a process, which diminishes all structures and hierarchies of meaning, truth, law and order. Subjectivity with the entry into the symbolic order condemned the subject to the indefinable but oppressive domination of language and concurrently to a degree of nostalgia after the pre-oedipal stage called desire (Lacan, 1974). Kristeva (1982) adopts the Freudian theory of the development of the conscious, rational subject by the repression of desire in the unconscious and argues that there may be a rational attempt to suppress the contents of the unconscious, yet unconscious material is not put away in a closed box, but remains on the marginal of the subject’s self-definition. Subjectivization is therefore certainly not complete. According to Kristeva (1982:7), “ The unconscious contents remain here excluded but in strange fashion: not radically enough to allow for a secure differentiation between subject and object, and yet clearly enough for a defensive position to be established... As if the fundamental opposition were between I and Other or, in more archaic fashion, between Inside and Outside. As if such an opposition subsumed the one between Conscious and Unconscious.” There is no clear separation between subject and object, between the position of the ‘I’ and the outer sphere. The subject is not static, with a clear border between conscious and unconscious and occasional outbursts of irrational dislocations. The boundary is never completely established and so the subject is never shaped. “The subject does not perceive itself to be systematic and identifiable. It is continually under threat, interrupted, in a state which is “as tempting as it is condemned” (1982:1).

2.1.2 Positionality

The term, positionality describes the way in which an individual is positioned in regard to another in space and time with relation to political power, economic position and social status. Positionality reflects the historical conditions that support amplification to and strengthen an individual’s location within social structures. According to Maher and

Tetreault (1994: 22), positionality describes “knower’s specific position in any context as defined by race, gender, class, and other socially significant dimensions”. They argue that positionality can be better used to identify how people are defined, “not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location within shifting networks of relationships, which can be analyzed and changed” (Maher & Tetreault, 1994: 164). In my research, I use positionality from a feminist theoretical perspective, in which it defines situated positions of subjects. Clare Madge (1993: 296) argues that the role of the self is very important in situating knowledge that describes how a researcher's positionality (researcher’s social categorical differences such as religion, ethnicity, race, nationality, age, gender, social and economic class and status, sexuality and so on) may influence the data gathered and therefore the evidence that becomes coded as knowledge. The work of Donna Haraway has been particularly significant in defining the idea of position. She describes, positioning as – “the key practice grounding knowledge” (Haraway, 1991: 193), since position signifies the power, which enabled a certain kind of knowledge. Knowledge thus positioned, or situated, can no longer claim universality. Haraway discusses situated as visual metaphors. She typifies dominant knowledges , as knowledges that claim to see everything from nowhere. In her words, “ the eyes have been used to signify a perverse capacity honed to perfection in the history of science tied to militarism, capitalism, colonialism, and male supremacy to distance the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power . . . but of course that view of infinite vision is an illusion, a godtrick (Haraway, 1991: 188-89). On the other hand, subjugated knowledges give focus on situatedness to produce partial perspectives on the world by seeing the world from particular locations, embodied, and never acquitted.

Thus, in feminist standpoint theory, the positionality of researchers is given significance both to encounter the presumption that there is objective knowledge and to inform researchers how their exploration is shaped and influenced through their “social situatedness ... in terms of gender, race, class, sexuality and other axes of social difference” (Nagar & Geiger, 2000). This way, positionality helps us to understand researchers’ social location by analyzing the subjectivity of the researcher in and through their connection to knowledge production. In a research, a researcher is asked to position him or herself, as communicators, in relation to the process of knowledge production. In this way a researcher reflects on his or her research work as an interactive turn, which is equally a product of relations of power and a kind of interaction with the

social world. Madison (2005) defines positionality as a scope to focus on how researchers's works are a creation of their location within a field of epistemic power, and also a substantively ethical endeavour. I value the critical element of positionality, which inspires researchers to think cautiously about the power of our representations and voice (Takacs, 2002). Nast (1994: 58) suggests, the researcher 'holds' power, she can also give it away; power remains something separate from her. She is positioned in power rather than constituted by it; power becomes her 'context', which she can survey at a distance, with 'some level of detachment' in order to 'admit to the power we bring to bear as multiply-positioned authors of research projects' (Nast, 1994: 59).

2.1.3 Agency

Women's agency operates towards an underlying change in views and understandings, or "inner transformation" so that women can express their self-regard and choice, and identify them as not only able, but enabled to make choices (A Sen 1999; G Sen 1993; Kabeer 2001; Rowlands 1995; Nussbaum 2000). Kabeer (1999) describes agency as the "ability to define one's goals and act on them." She (2001) strengthens her argument later on by defining this process in terms of "thinking outside the system" and challenging the status quo. Sen's (1985) capabilities approach describes "agency freedom' as the freedom to achieve whatever the person, as a responsible agent, decides he or she should achieve." A person may not certainly act, or generate a fundamental shift in power relations, but is able, through direct decision-making processes or indirect means, to go out of routine activities in order to transform one's situation. Sen (1990) contends that for women, agency is socially shaped by notions of responsibilities and acceptability and as such is founded on ethical judgment.

According to the World Development Report (WDR) (2012) "agency is an individual's (or group's) ability to make effective choices and to transform those choices into desired outcomes"; World Bank Voice and Agency (2014) report describes agency as "the capacity to make decisions about one's own life and act on them to achieve a desired outcome, free of violence, retribution, or fear". According to Trommlerová, Klasen and Lessmann (2015), "agency is having the freedom to act in line with one's own values and to pursue one's goals.", or non-transformative (the ability to make one's own choices within existing decision-making hierarchies). Williams (2010) defines agency as "the interaction between our self-conscious self and the social context we find ourselves in. It is embodied in that individuals may be more or less aware of how their

environment, social context and upbringing affect their lives and their decision-making” (Williams, 2010: 39) In my research, there are varying levels of agency a Bangladeshi migrant woman possess that leads her to her diaspora status in the British Bangladeshi diaspora community in London. Bangladeshi migrant women in London are able to make their own decisions within their diaspora family settings encompassed by home culture. At the same time some of them are involved in decisions making level in the community or in mainstream British society. This group of women take agency as a creative process in their diaspora lives, which involves novelty and dynamics. Agency involves decisions related to Bangladeshi migrant women’s own activities in their families, community or in mainstream British society, such as deciding to marry transnational husband and maintain transnational family, nurture ethnic culture and traditions in their diaspora home and transfer it to their children, work outside, engage in social welfare activities, involve into, mainstream British politics, or institution based religious politics, or ethno-national, transnational, and/or trans-local politics. Mahmood (2006:38) argues that “agency is understood as the capacity to realize one’s own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles (whether individual or collective)”. In my research, the act and/or the stance of British Bangladeshi young women against forced marriage supports Mahmood’s argument.

2.1.4 Defining, interrogating and employing ‘intersectionality’

In this section, I discuss the importance of intersectionality for my research from the perspective of feminist political theory and social action (practice). I give a brief outline of the background of the term ‘intersectionality’. I focus in particular on the notion of ‘translocational positionality’ (Anthias, 2002) in order to find out how the intersection of social difference produces lived experiences in relation to the construction of the positionality of subject, how the subjective experience relates to the historical and cultural context within which a diaspora woman exists, and whether these experiences are a source of oppression or privilege.

Since intersectionality has become gradually significant to feminist discussions, several viewpoints of critique have been raised. These include for instance, whether effective application of intersectionality has led to an articulation of the concept (Davis, 2008; Knapp, 2005); whether it has become a way to influence the disruptive outcomes of difference (Puar, 2011); and whether it refers to the comparative sense of balance

between joint constitution of identities/positions (Brown, 1997) on the one hand, and particular positional histories, on the other (Nash, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2006). In my argument, I articulate the term by signifying a range of thoughts, ‘complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects’ that proceed by the intersection of multiple axes of differentiation – ‘economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – in historically specific contexts’ (Brah & Phoenix, 2004: 76). On an ontological basis, I give emphasis on the term ‘positionality’ in relation to contextual specificity in the intersectional analysis of social differences and inequality, and argue that it can be a possible way to address both multiple positioning of subject and its particular positionality in a historical context. Hence, in my research, I define intersectionality as a feminist approach of analysis, which provides the means to focus analytically on the complexity of subjectivity, subject positions and the indivisibly bound vectors of power that describe both oppression and privilege simultaneously to instigate social change in a particular context.

The concept ‘intersectionality’ emerged from the struggles of second wave feminism as a crucial black feminist intervention (Puar, 2011), which would confront a dominant practice of feminist analysis that essentialises women’s knowledge and experience. Intersectionality was coined and elaborated by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991). She highlighted the concept in her powerful criticism of US anti-discrimination laws against black women and the ‘difference-blindness’ of identity politics (1989). Crenshaw (1991) identified three forms of intersectional analysis that she deemed as crucial: structural (addressing the intersection of racism and patriarchy in relation to battering and rape of women); political (addressing the intersection of anti-racist organizing and feminist organizing); and representational (addressing the intersection of racial stereotypes and gender stereotypes). Crenshaw argued that a single-axis framework continued emphasis on either race or gender, thus misrepresenting and disengaging the experiences of black women by failing to address the ‘multidimensionality’ (1989:139) that underlines the lives of marginalized subjects. Crenshaw (1989) addressed ‘normalized racism’ within the context of class dimensions (Crenshaw, 1991), considering the interest of underprivileged coloured people. The restricted attention on one identity at the expense of another, Crenshaw (1991:1242) argued, “works to exclude or marginalize those who are different”, and consequently, “contemporary feminist and anti-racist discourses have failed to consider intersectional identities such as women of colour” (Crenshaw, 1991:1243). Considering gender and race as equally

exclusive analytical categories renders imperceptible “the simultaneous experience of gendered racism” (Carastathis, 2014:306). Crenshaw’s metaphor of crossroads therefore helped to define the twofold, three-layered, and manifold oppression, which marginalized groups go through at the intersections of patriarchy, racism, sexism, hetero-sexism and colonialism, to name a few (in Dhamoon, 2011).

While Crenshaw’s (1989, 1991) exploration has been enormously important for the development of intersectionality, the idea has a long history in black feminism. Black feminists of late 19th century, such as Sojourner Truth, Ida Well Barnett, Anna Julia Cooper and Fannie Lou Hamer (Collins, 1989) were well known for their struggles and contestation concerning the inter-connections between racism, sexuality, gender, and social class (Brah and Phoenix, 2004). Further, political alliances such as the Combahee River Collective (1977), a black lesbian feminist organisation in the US, and Organisation for Women of Asian and African Descent [OWAAD] (1978) in the UK, were influential in addressing black women’s needs, supporting the advancement of cohesive analysis and practice by criticising the main systems of oppression as intertwining, and emphasising cultural differences to recognise the heterogeneity inherent both within groups and among women (in Brah and Phoenix, 2004). Nonetheless, the conceptualisation of the term ‘intersectionality’ by Crenshaw (1989; 1991) was the basis for creating a conceptual space in feminist scholarship to examine the previously under-examined individualities of marginalized subjects, and the ‘multiple interlocking oppressions’ (Collins, 1989: 2000) at the place of intersection (Walby et al., 2012; Dhamoon, 2011; Sigle-Rushton et al., 2013).

Intersectionality has ever since been identified in many ways. Various terms, including theory, framework, lens, perspective, heuristic device and paradigm have been employed to evaluate and categorize the concept (Hulko, 2009: 44). As “the primary theoretical tool” (Nash, 2008: 2), intersectionality has been developed to examine the various and co-constituting courses of difference and the resulting power relations that describe subjectivity (Dhamoon, 2011). Staunæs (2003) uses the term as a methodical tool to investigate the becoming of ‘otherness’ of the nomadic being. Brah (1996) and Brah and Phoenix (2004) articulate the intersectional approach as a methodological approach that encounters the ontological pre-eminence based on categorization of differences. In the theory of post-colonial feminism, intersectionality is a way to explore power structures in socio-cultural categories and ensure the deconstruction of the binary opposition of those categories. According to Yuval-Davis (2005), intersectionality can

be better defined through the construction of power and its processes among race, ethnicity, gender, class and so on. Since the intersectional categories are interconnected through reinforcement of power structure and power relations in a society, therefore intersectional analysis can be biased in subjective analysis (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Collins, 1998). Considering intersectionality as a dynamic and continuous process, I now focus on four aspects of intersectionality: “simultaneity, complexity, irreducibility and inclusivity” (Carastathis, 2014: 307).

Simultaneity- One of the significant aspects of intersectional analysis is that it should be analysed simultaneously from the notion that identities and categories of difference are co-constitutive and mutually reinforcing. According to Yuval–Davis (2006:198), “Social divisions are about macro axes of social power but also involve actual, concrete people”. Intersectionality allows theorization of the connection between systems of oppression in accordance with capturing experiences of oppressions as simultaneous. Dhamoon (2011: 235) stresses the importance of simultaneity in intersectional analysis: “An intersectional-type framework starts from the premise that each process of differentiation and system of domination needs each other to function”. While theoretically, it may be possible to separate one social division from another, in practical life, various intersecting identities and categories of difference interlock and have an inseparable effect on the way individuals experience their daily lives. Intersectionality as a paradigm enables identification of the simultaneity of the ways oppressions are experienced without disintegrating, and by extension categorically excluding, those experiences. For instance, intersectionality addresses gendered racism (experiences of an ethnic diasporan woman).

Irreducibility- Intersectionality suggests for feminist theory the irreducibility of the categories of difference (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Caratathis, 2014). In intersectional analysis, both oppression and privilege are formed through the inter-connection of various, co-constitutive and mutually reproducing social categories and therefore cannot be described by ‘a process of accretion’ (Anthias, 2013: 8). For example, a diasporan woman of brown skin with low socio-economic status cannot be identified completely in terms of class, just as an upper-middle class diasporan man cannot be identified completely in terms of gender. To analyse the specific process of oppression, or system of privilege positioned within different spatial or historical contexts, focus should be given to the ways various categories of difference intertwine with each other in different sets of social relations. Yuval-Davis (2006: 200) thinks that “the ontological basis of

each of these divisions is autonomous, and each prioritizes different spheres of social relations”.

Complexity- One of the theoretical benefits of intersectionality is what McCall (2005: 1772) describes as “a defining characteristic of research in this area: the complexity that arises when the subject of analysis expands to include multiple dimensions of social life and categories of analyses”. Unquestionably, this kind of demand for complexity is challenging and difficult to achieve completely. Yet, taking into account the complexity of intersectionality, McCall (2005:1773) explores three methodological approaches that attempt to capture this complexity: the anti-categorical approach, the intra-categorical approach and the inter-categorical approach. In her view, intersectionality makes the connection between different extents and modalities of social relations and subject formations.

The, inter-categorical approach, “provisionally adopts existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality among multiple and conflicting dimensions” (McCall, 2005:1773). McCall (2005:1785) argues that inter-categorical analysis of the relationship between the categories and inequality is understood to reflect actual categories of individuals. Thus, prioritizing the quantitative over the qualitative, inter-categorical complexity selects categories purposefully to identify the structural interactions among various social groups rather than within a single group.

The intra-categorical approach is applied through qualitative examination. It mostly focuses on the complexity of the lived experiences of hitherto under-theorised and multiplies marginalized subjects, black women, for example (McCall, 2005:1774, Nash, 2008; Walby et al., 2012). The approach represents Crenshaw’s (1991) view, as she thinks the important thing is to identify the place through the identity of politics, where categories intersect; rather than challenging the probability of taking categories in the least.

The anti-categorical approach, “...is based on a methodology that deconstructs analytical categories” (McCall, 2005:1773), since the fixity of categories is regarded as problematic and essentialist because of their too simplistic nature, which is incapable of encompassing the ‘complexity of lived experience’ (McCall, 2005:1776). This approach stresses that the engagement of categories only functions to “express the systems of

oppression and exclusion that the investigator may be expect to disrupt” (Nash, 2008:5). Thus anti-categorical complexity rejects the categorization of gender, race, class, and sexuality; following through the idea of deconstruction, to escape static and normative construction of subjects that leads to demarcation, which ultimately results in inequality and exclusion. On the basis of the Foucauldian concept of power (1980), McCall emphasizes the approach in highlighting the relation between power and intersectionality by using exclusion and inclusion that rejects the idea of fixity. This power works in the discourses or in the connections between discourses rather than subjects. Exclusion includes discourses of antagonism and creative power by making debates on the connotation of gender, race, ethnicity etc.

Underlying all three approaches, however, is the assertion that one-dimensional, single-axis frameworks fail to capture the inherent complexity of subjective experiences and the social power structure in which they are embedded.

Inclusivity - Intersectionality focuses on “the most pressing problem facing contemporary feminism” (Davis, 2008: 70), that is inclusivity. The need for a critical understanding of the differences between women has become a specifically leading issue in the current context, since the activism of western feminism and its dependence on liberal moulds gradually comes into tension with other feminist methods and practices. Carastathis (2014:309) argues, “Intersectionality can act as a corrective against the white solipsism, heteronormativity, elitism, and ableism of dominant power and hegemonic feminist theory by making social locations and experiences visible that are occluded in essentialist and exclusionary constructions of the category ‘woman’”. By addressing the experiences of black women, intersectional thinkers were able to reveal traditional feminism’s methodical exclusion of women of colour, thus signifying ‘the necessity of deepening feminist and anti-racist conversations’ (Nash, 2008:8).

Yuval-Davis (2006) suggests that intersectional analysis needs to focus on the historical conditions that produce social differences. According to Phoenix, “the concept of intersectionality provided a conceptual language for recognising that everybody is simultaneously positioned within social categories” (Phoenix, 2006:4). In her view, analysing the interconnection of social categories is the core of intersectional analysis, since addressing one social category will not enable understanding of that category in isolation. To have a comprehensive understanding of any social categories, it is

important to focus on differences and commonalities within groups (Phoenix, 2006). For example, women's experiences in accordance with their 'race', ethnicity, sexuality and social class – i.e. gender and sexuality are class-based and racialised social relations (e.g. Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983; Brah, 1996; Lewis, 2000; Lykke, 2003 in Phoenix, 2006). The correlation of ethnicity and gender and their connection with other social categories reflect the complexity of intersectionality within the national and transnational context. Anthias and Yuval Davis (1989) and Yuval Davis (1997) reveal the intersection among gender, ethnicity, class, and life cycle. They identify how diaspora and transnational migrant women play different and active roles as 'ethnic actors' by reproducing and transmitting ethnic culture to retain, and reconstruct nationhood and belongingness in a diaspora space compared to ethnic men.

Translocational positionality-

The above discussions unfold the dynamic, shifting and amalgamated nature of intersectionality, which addresses and analyses the complexity and multidimensionality of subjectivity, recognises difference simultaneously, and includes excluded voices. However, Puar (2011) disputes the concept of intersectionality as fundamentally insufficient and shows her concern about lack of inclusivity in intersectional analysis. Intersectionality could describe 'other' by differentiating itself from white women, whereby the supremacy of white women through their subject positioning is re-secured. She discusses how intersectional analyses fall short in addressing geopolitical problems; since 'the categories privileged by intersectional analysis do not necessarily cross national and regional boundaries nor genealogical demands, presuming and producing fixed epistemological renderings of categories themselves across historical and geopolitical locations' (Puar, 2011:376). Based on notions of intersectionality, I now discuss the concept of translocational positionality, which supports Puar's argument in terms of inclusivity. I argue the possible use of the term to address differences and positionality of diaspora women in my research. Anthias (2002, 2008) developed the concept, 'translocational positionality'. Translocational positionality emphasizes both geographical and social displacements, and enriches intersectional analysis. It identifies the specificity of individual positions in relation to intersectional difference and social division. The word 'trans-location' relates to social spaces explained by the "intersections of gender, ethnicity and class and other important social boundaries and hierarchies" (Anthias, 2009:15). The word 'positionality' indicates what Giddens (2008) called the duality of structure and agency, emphasizing the correlation of social position

as a consequence and social positioning as a set of practices and movements, a process. According to Anthias (2008:15), “The notion of ‘location’ recognises the importance of context, the situated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales. It also recognises variability with some processes leading to more complex, contradictory and at times dialogical positionalities than others”.

Translocational positionality considers social categorical differences as complex and fluid, while at the same time giving significance to the various and influential social structures, which impact on people’s lives and identifications in complex and often very inconsistent ways. Anthias disputes the notion of ‘fixed and given location’, and refers to translocationality to describe “the multiplicity of locations involved in time and space, and in terms of connections between the past, the present and the future” (Anthias, 2008:15). Anthias (2012) asserts that “it points to the existence of contradictory and shifting social locations where one might be in a position of dominance and subordination simultaneously on the one hand or at different times or spaces on the other”.

Hence, my research highlights the notion of translocational positionality in the analysis of the multiplicity of social locations and categorical difference in relation to subject positioning and how these differences are interconnected to social structure and relations. The significant aim of my research is to examine the intersection of agency, context, social relation, and structure and find out if an individual can be marginalised on a dimension in a particular context, while being privileged on the same dimension but in a different context.

My concern is whether the positioning of new migrant women in the process of shifting location or the socially produced positionality of old migrant women can be described through the lens of translocational positionality. In my research, the new migrant women share commonality with earlier migrant women in terms of migration and British-born women in terms of age, while, they may have different experiences in terms of cultural and religious practices. At this point, it is important to identify if their differences can enable them to set up unique values and perspectives in a translocational context. Similarly, it is significant to look at the interconnection of the changing times and socio-historical context in relation to the role of old migrant women agency processes. Also, I explore in what ways the British-born group are positioning

themselves in the intersection of time and space connecting with past, present and future.

I highlight the context in order to explore the interaction of different social locations in relation to subject positioning. Since subject positions are simultaneously positioned through everyday life experiences, therefore, it is important to look at the interconnection of historical and present context of diaspora and transnational space with various social categories (I focus on gender, age, class, religion, generation and ethnicity) to identify complex commonalities and differences as well as individual agency. In my research, for some young, British-born, Bangladeshi women, their self-identification as a part of global Muslim *ummah* and involvement with religious based organisations may influence their decisions in a particular community space (Maryam Centre, East London Mosque), while being young British-born Muslims may not enable them to exercise such power in their everyday life practices in the family, where ethnic tradition and culture might be stronger than global Muslim identity. Similarly, the old migrant housewives who have low socio-economic and educational status may experience exclusion and deprivation in the community and mainstream British society; however, they may be privileged by being British citizens in transnational space.

Following Yuval-Davis (2006), Anthias (2002, 2008, 2012) and Phoenix (2006), I consider intersectionality as ‘constructionist’ (Prins, 2006) and a process to identify the interconnection among political, cultural, economic, geographical, subjective, cognitive and pragmatic aspects in a particular context. I look at whether the intersection of these aspects creates complex, diverse and varying influences concerning the positionality of an individual, and challenges the criticism of failing to deal with agency and the fluidity of structural inequalities concurrently. Hence, I focus on subject positions taken by women through everyday life experience in the country of displacement and settlement.

2.2 Methodology

Apnake kintu meyetar kaaje help korte hobe, bujhlen na amader desheri meye, tar upore valo ekta kaaj korche, amader k nie PhD korche’ (You must have to help this girl. As you know she is our hometown girl and beside this, she is doing a good job, she is doing a PhD about us.)

This was the phone conversation of one of my participants who was trying to introduce me to a community member. These few words show how my identity as a *deshar meye* was a privileged one in gaining access to the community I have worked on. However, this was not as simple as it looks. In this section I reflect on my ethnographic engagement in the Bangladeshi community in East London, where most of my fieldwork was done. By doing so, I as a female ethnographer elaborate on my own position in the community and address some ethical dilemmas I encountered throughout the field study process, which reveal the deep-rooted problems of essentialising the positionality (i.e.insider/outsider) of an ethnographic researcher. Prior to that I focus on my methodological approach, define the basis for the methodology applied, and explain the ways the data were initiated and collected.

2.2.1 Feminist methodology

As ‘feminist research consists of no single set of agreed upon research guidelines or methods, nor have feminists agreed upon one definition of feminist research.’ (Maguire, 1987:74), I have chosen my methodological principles from various epistemological and theoretical standpoints. My epistemological standpoint is inspired by intersectional, post-modern, post-structuralist and post-colonial feminism. Below I set out the epistemological stands that have guided my research practice.

The first epistemological standpoint is a strong social-constructionist view of knowledge, which focuses on the relationship between knowledge and power. It highlights the ways in which women construct knowledge from their personal experience and different social locations, such as their race, gender, class, and global location (Harding, 1986). This stance rejects the idea of exploration of pure knowledge by challenging objectivity (Letherby, 2003) or by ignoring the myth of ‘value free’, and emphasizing ‘situated knowledge’ (Haraway, 1988). Bettie’s (2003, 2014) experience reveals that ethnographers do not present a ‘view from nowhere’ or what other critical researchers refer to as the ‘God trick’—pretending to be a detached, neutral observer who sees from everywhere and nowhere (Bettie, 2003: 22).

Hence, feminist research focuses on the researcher’s subjective, historical and contextual position considering the researcher as a part of the research process (Harding, 1987; Stanley & Wise, 1993; Mies, 1991; Duelli Klien, 1983). In the research process the relationship between researched and researcher is interactive, in which the

researcher's beliefs, ideology, emotion, and feelings are connected to the research process and have direct or indirect influence on the researched. Hence, the researcher must ensure reflexivity or a 'co-constructionist view of knowledge' (Harding, 1998:4) by focusing on her relationship to the researched and analysing how power dynamics might have influenced the research.

The second epistemological standpoint is to highlight the 'partial perspective' (Collins, 1991), which recognizes that each individual is in the best position to produce knowledge about his/her own reality, and one should be cautious when speaking for others. This epistemological principle may be useful to find an alternative way to avoid the debate around the insider/ outsider position of a researcher. Being guided by these principles, throughout the research, I have relied on the practice of reflexivity (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Buch & Staller, 2007; Behar, 1996; Kondo, 1986, 1990; Frankenberg, 1993; Roseneil, 1993) by sharing the experience from both sides. I shared my social and family background, history, stories and own experiences with my participants in an effort to be critically self-reflective and understand 'the impact of my position, perspective, and presence' (Finlay, 2002: 532) in my research. As a part of the reflexive process, the initial research outcomes have been shared, confirmed and endorsed by the participants (Collins, 1991) through making a follow up visit to the participants and the community. By considering the post-colonial feminist concerns of representation and positionality, as a reflexive ethnographer, I recognised the context of diaspora women and their knowledge and cultural experience. By signifying the problem of the muted subaltern subject (Spivak, 1988), I consciously avoided the epistemological assumptions of Western feminist thoughts based on positions of power, which helped me to understand my relationship with my participants in relation to intersectional differences. I could relate my positionality as a Bangladeshi Muslim married migrant woman from an urban-based middle class family with a group of my participants who recently migrated to the UK. At this point my position as a feminist ethnographer was comfortable. In contrast, my differences from the British-born women group who are strongly involved in faith-based organisations, were visible, but were not an obstacle to rapport building and knowledge sharing.

A third epistemological standpoint is a concern to excavate and retrieve "naïve knowledge" (Foucault, 1984:81) of subordinate groups that have been suppressed, overlooked, and silenced by dominant groups in society. As knowledge is socially situated and produced from a partial perspective, marginalized groups are positioned to

ask questions, and are aware of and have a strong and rich understanding of what is happening around them. Thus, research on power relations should come from the lives of the marginalized (Collins, 1990; Haraway, 1991, 2013; Harding, 1991; Hartsock, 2004; Smith, 1974).

My research explores diaspora women's complex lived experiences of subjugation along with the agency they exercise in their family and social lives in a specific local and historical context of a diaspora space. I consider how the various marginalizations and positionalities of diaspora women intersect in order to create unique situations. I give importance to listening to the voices of different groups of women on their own terms by providing the space for those, which voices were previously unheard.

A fourth epistemological standpoint is that the research values women's 'wisdom' (Collins, 1990: 208) from everyday life experience, because it believes that to deeply understand the everyday life of women in the private sphere, their day-to-day experiences should come within the research arena. Whereas positivist research considers research as apolitical, feminist research identifies it as essentially political, since the main goal of the feminist research is to take a position against women's oppression and subjugation. By highlighting the concept 'Personal is Political' (Stanley & Wise, 1993), feminist research focuses on women's personal and everyday life experiences (Hanisch, 1970, 2006), and analyses the masculine power structure of society through connecting reproduction of women with production.

In this spirit, my ethnography was aimed at studying diaspora women's situation and position on the basis of their subjectivity by looking at their personal life and day-to-day experiences in a diaspora family and social context. I adopt an intersectional perspective in my research to have a better understanding of diaspora women's everyday life experiences in relation to their positionality, and to find out whether they are a source of oppression or privilege (Smooth, 2013). According to Yuval-Davis (2007) women's experiences are a consequence of the intersection between multiple social categories as well as the socio-cultural context in which this interaction occurs. As my research focuses on the issue of difference in relation to diaspora women's positionality, I therefore explore the ways in which intersection of social difference generates lived experiences. These experiences are connected to or dependent on the historical and cultural context of diaspora within which diaspora women exist.

A fifth epistemological standpoint is research by and for women. According to Moore (1988), western knowledge, philosophy, and culture, are all male oriented and ethnocentric, where women remain silent. If a positivist research goes through the patriarchal society than the gender gap is further reflected and men are shown as valuable and important informer because of their active visibility in the society. As a result, women are systematically excluded from the position of ‘legitimate knower’ (Harding, 1987). Thus, feminist research conducts research ‘for women’ (Letherby, 2003) to change society according to the interest of women.

A feminist researcher holds different positionalities; she may be a mother, a researcher, and altogether she is performing her gender role in a male-dominated society, a position described by Mies as ‘double consciousness’ (Mies, 1991). Because of her ‘double consciousness’ she will better understand the research perspective from her own context. That is why, ‘women studying women’ is preferable in feminist research (Stanley and Wise, 1993, 1983, 2002; Westkott, 1979; Mies, 1991). According to WestKott (1979) women studying women reveals the complex way in which women as objects of knowledge reflect that upon women as subjects of knowledge. Knowledge of the other and knowledge of the self are mutually informing, because self and the other share common conditions of being (WestKott, 1979).

My research adheres firmly to this strand of feminist research. By employing a feminist ethnographic approach, I focus on knowledge production about women's lives in a diaspora and transnational cultural context. I address the representation of diaspora women in western research and discourse (Mohanty, 1988; Ozkazanc-Pan, 2012). From an ethical responsibility, as a feminist ethnographer, towards the community and its women I worked with, I highlight women’s dynamic positionality in diaspora and transnational space, by bringing them to the forefront in my writing and raising concerns that need to be addressed in diaspora, ethnic and migrant scholarship. Moreover, my research focuses on women’s roles and positions in Bangladeshi diaspora in community development and gives some indication to feminist activists to fight for an inclusive leadership.

2.2.2 Choosing and gaining access to the field

The fieldwork upon which this thesis is based was mainly conducted in East London, among the British Bangladeshi community. However, a significant portion of my field

research was also conducted in Bangladesh. Motivated by a noticeable feature of the ‘*Birangona* (war heroin) Campaign’, which shows the transnational and trans-local connection among the grass-root women in rural areas, activists in the capital, Dhaka and actors in the community of East London, I have chosen a multi-sited approach. Hence, my aim was to explore how movements on ethno-national and feminist issues are shaped at and within trans-local and transnational levels. Moreover, my purpose is researching more than one area was to observe both migrant women’s points of departure and their points of arrival (Watson, 1977) by challenging the idea of considering field as a particular set of social relations (Falzon, 2009, 2016). My idea of conducting multi-sited ethnography also came from the intention of exploring the complex nature of positionality confronted by diaspora women who are at the intersection of a range of locations and dislocations with regard to gender, ethnicity, national belonging, class and racialization (Anthias, 1998a, 2002).

My methodological direction using multi-sited ethnography was inspired by Kanwal Mand’s (2011) experience. In her research on the members of transnational Shikh households Mand (2011) employed a multi-sited approach to identify how the mobility across locations intersects with gendered identities and stages in the life course. She constructed her field through tracing people, recording the movement of objects, and collecting biographies and narratives to explore transnational Shikh women’s journey through Tanzania, Indian Punjab, and London in their life stages. Through her personal experiences, she admitted the advantages of multi-sited investigation in giving emphasis to subjects, who are also learners of the significance of intersection among locations.

My research focuses on situated emotions and experiences of diaspora and transnational women in building network and agency in relation to time, space and context. I engaged with my participants’ daily life and society in East London and their place of origin to understand how their emotions and experiences are shaped and influenced in different locations. Engaging in more than one location was also successful in the way it helped me to understand the differences and commonalities between locations in relation to subject positioning and positionality.

The first criteria as that influenced my selection of the field was to focus on the question: ‘Where can I go to see the phenomena in which I am interested?’ (Buch & Staller, 2007:197). As my interest is in the positionality of women in a diaspora and transnational community, it made great sense to select the East London Bangladeshi

community and my participants' places of origin. The community in East London is the largest Bangladeshi community in the UK (Eade & Garbin, 2005) and socially very active. Besides, most published research on the Bangladeshi community have focused on the identity politics of the community in relation to ethno-nationalism and the 'imagined global Muslim identity', which has described as male centred (Eade, 1989, 2005)¹. Hence, considering women's positionality and status (Buch & Staller, 2007:198) as one of the most significant issues, I focus on the power dynamics and oppression (Nader, 1988; Spivak, 1988) in the community identity of East London. Thus, I situate my study in East London in order to "reconceptualize power and place women's agency and resistance at the forefront" (De Welde, 2003:249).

The quotation from a participant at the start of my methodology section demonstrates how my nationality as a Bangladeshi gave me an advantage in access to the Bangladeshi community. Besides, during my field study, I found that my language and understanding of ethnic family values, social life, customs, traditions, culture and religion considerably assisted my integration and acceptance within the community and with my participants. Besides, my religious, migrant, gender and marital status certainly put me at ease while conducting my interviews with different groups of women in the community. I will discuss further my privilege and challenging positions in terms of gaining access to the field throughout this section.

2.2.3 Role and relationships: position of a female ethnographer in the politics of fieldwork

I have used a feminist, ethnographic approach to document the lives and activities of the community women and understand their experience from their subjective point of view (Reinharz, 1992:51) during my six-months fieldwork in the Bangladeshi community in East London and three-months fieldwork in different parts of Bangladesh (mostly in Sylhet, where the majority of my participants come from).

In planning for this ethnographic fieldwork, I was conscious about barriers and facilitators to conducting robust ethnographic fieldwork. Although as a Bangladeshi migrant and living close to my field sites, I was recognised as a Bangladeshi researcher or 'indigenous ethnographer' (Clifford, 1986) by the community I interviewed, my gender identity was a source of perplexity when I entered the field. Going into more

¹I give extensive evidence to this account in the next chapter.

than one field site across border for such a long time and doing fieldwork there was, in fact, challenging. I will talk about some of the advantages and encounters I experienced during my fieldwork in the 'East London Bangladeshi community' because of being considered as '*deshar meye*' (hometown girl) in this section. Before that, I will discuss meanings in ethnography, which will guide to those arguments.

Ethnography is a form of qualitative research about people, groups or communities of people in naturally occurring settings prolonged over a period of time using observation (Bryman, 2008; Brewer, 2005), where the purpose is to give a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) or in-depth narrative of everyday life and practice. Craven and Davis (2013) and Schrock (2013) describe feminist ethnography as a project seeking to document lived experience as it is impacted by gender, race, class, sexuality, and other aspects of participants' lives.

Sherry Ortner (1995:173) suggests that "minimally [ethnography] has always meant the attempt to understand another life world using the self - as much as possible - as the instrument of knowing". Buch and Staller (2007) analyse Ortner's minimal definition of ethnography by highlighting two important parts of it. In their explanation, 'another life world' is to study life experiences and the social context of everyday life from the perspective of research the subject. This view is an echo of Hesse-Biber and Leavy's (2006:230) assertion that "ethnographic research aims to get an in-depth understanding of how individuals in different cultures and subcultures make sense of their lived reality."

In ethnographic research, the role of the ethnographer's insider/outsider positions has been debated in relation to the politics around fieldwork. Rabinow (1986) argues that an ethnographer needs to concentrate on his or her own society rather than 'exotic other'. According to Clifford (1986:9), "Insiders study their own cultures offering new angles of vision and depths of understanding, their accounts are empowered and restricted in many ways". However, Young (2004) criticises the insider position for its potential tendency to inhibit conversations. Young thinks that by building rapport, an insider is in a position of knowing particular issues, such as social and cultural knowledge stocks; in that case 'there is risk of taking them for granted as "shared knowledge"' (Hesse-Biber, 2007:142). Therefore they are not worth discerning. Young argues that an outsider has the opportunity to enable a detailed and intellectual endeavour by bringing more analytical and in-depth understanding of the social phenomena being observed.

However, there are several ethnographers, who problematize the dichotomous notion of insider/outsider arguing that there are often multifaceted shades between the two positions and its positionality is not as straightforward and as dichotomous as one supposes (Al-Ali, 2000; Narayan, 1997). For example, Nancy A. Naples (2004:373) challenges the rigid and bipolar construction of insider/outsider, by considering the fluidity of insiderness and outsidership that suggests a need to 're-examine taken for granted assumptions about what constitutes 'indigenous knowledge' (Clifford, 1986^[1]) and how researchers draw on their commonalities and differences to heighten sensitivity to others' complex and shifting world views. She argues that insider and outsider is a 'false separation', which creates 'power differentials and experiential differences' between ethnographer and participants, and 'neglects the interactive processes through which insiderness and outsidership are constructed' (2004:373). This raises the question of how influential the insider and outsider fluidity is in relation to an ethnographer's positionality. In my research, my insiderness and outsidership were shifting through specific experiences I gathered from particular situations in the field. I will now return to my fieldwork and discuss the impact of my field experiences as insider/outsider on my positionality as a feminist and female ethnographer; also, how the two positions 'blurred' (Gardner, 1999) one another in relation to different locations.

I mentioned earlier that my experience to gaining access, entry and rapport building to most of my field sites were stress-free and comfortable. However, in a particular site this process was much more challenging and lengthy than I had imagined. For example, when I asked to the East London Muslim Centre for access to the ELM network, I was told this was not possible without permission from the respective authority. After making several efforts, I was not able to reach the relevant authority. I was struggling to figure out a way to gain access to the centre. Suddenly I thought that my uncovered head might be a reason for not getting a positive response for my purpose. I then took the strategy of veiling. This reflects Page's (1988:165) observation that "ethnographers may have to correct, negotiate, even alter their role in interacting with their subjects. These modifications lead an ethnographer into an interactive process, representing a newly established relationship".

I therefore covered my head with a scarf and asked an unknown woman (who was entering the centre) about ELM women. She told me to follow her and I did so. She took me to the women's prayer hall and helped me by introducing me to some volunteers of the ELM network. The lady then asked me to perform prayer in *jamaat*

(assembly). Although I was not in a proper religious dress to do so, I joined them so that they would be comfortable in speaking to me. When I introduced myself as a researcher working on diaspora women, one of the members (British-Pakistani, not my interviewee) of ELM, came and asked me,

You are not working on Muslim women? Are you? Who are you working for? Show me your identity now.

At that point, I had to show my identity documents, which was quite humiliating and uncomfortable. One of the members (Mahin, age 43) explained why researchers are not allowed to do interview with the ELM network without the permission of respectable authority. Mahin said,

One day two ladies came to our centre. They said they wanted to do interview for their research purpose. We allowed them to do interview and take notes. But after several months, our manager informed us that the local newspaper recently printed something about our centre that isn't true. We didn't know much about the local politics at that time. If we hadn't permitted them to do interview with our sisters, it would have been difficult for them to falsify our activities. Now we are very cautious about that.

However, I was able to gain trust among my participants over a month of regular visits to the centre. According to Buch and Staller (2007:200), "Often ethnographers will have to work very hard to establish trust among those they wish to study, for ethnographers' motives and intentions may be unclear and communities sometimes suspect ethnographers of acting as spies or informants for more powerful interests."

In the following months, my positionality was continuously challenged and negotiated as I was exposed to the complications of the relations between my participants and myself. The notions of the insider/outsider were challenged. My academic background as a graduate in gender studies influenced the dimensions of my relations with my participants. Ria (40) migrated to the UK in 2011 as a new-migrant wife. She graduated from Bangladesh and did her MBA in the UK. I had informal conversation with her husband, Riaz (44) who is a self employed Bangladeshi migrant. During my third visit to Ria's home, she shared her memory of Bangladesh, recalling that she was much

thinner and health conscious and used to take morning and evening walks every day before her migration to the UK. However, now her life is very busy in London, so she does not get enough time for herself. She said,

I wish I could go to the gym, at least twice a week!

I was trying to encourage her, saying, ‘Wow, that would be a very good idea, please find some time for yourself. It is important not only for your physical health but also for your mental health as well’. All of a sudden, her husband, Riaz (who had been in the bedroom) came in and shouted,

You are a feminist. Your so-called western study is crazy. I knew that something wrong would happen to my wife. I request you not to make any further contact with us.

However, Ria contacted me a few days after the incident and advised me not to disclose my academic background, as the husbands’ group in their circle would be very suspicious about someone coming from the feminist and women activist group to misguide their wives. I felt very much an outsider in that situation. Ria and I both have UK degrees in different subjects, but Riaz viewed my subject as western and problematic. Although I tried to clarify my intention, my Bangladeshi migrant status did not help in any way to ease the worries attached to his view of me as an ‘outsider’. In spite of being a Bangladeshi new-migrant female student, I was considered as an outsider to them. The anti-essentialist understanding of ‘self’ in ethnographic writing in relation to subjective experience became blurred at this point (Gardner, 1999).

On the other hand, because of my insider position as a *deshar meye* (hometown girl), the difficulty I faced was being ‘expected to marry’. In her ethnography of the refugee experience in Cyprus, Dikomitis (2012) encountered a similar situation when her informants expected her to marry a Cypriot man. In my case, an elderly Sylheti man, Rahman (55) whom I met at a community event, asked me to visit his home, and interview his family. I visited Rahman’s home after a few days. I was waiting to meet his family in the living room, but Rahman returned with his adult son only. I had expected to meet his wife and daughter to do interviews with them, but Rahman was not interested in this. He was more interested to talk about his son and ask about my family background. He showed his interest by telling me that he wanted someone like me as his

daughter-in-law. Despite my telling him that I was married, he tried to persuade me, as he thought I was lying. Suddenly he left the room and closed the door, saying,

You can spend some private time, and ask my son if there is anything you need to discuss before I contact your parents.

This incident shocked me. On the one hand, it gave me an idea of the patriarchal attitudes of men towards women in the community in terms of forced marriage. On the other, I could feel the awkwardness and ambivalence of being categorised as a submissive Bangladeshi woman. The above experiences show how I, as a native researcher, faced difficulties in relation to my role as an ethnographer and insider, and the power relations between my participants and myself (Abu-Lughod, 1988; Al-Ali, 2000; Altorki, 1988; Narayan, 1997). However, these multiple identities were also helpful in the ways they ‘unsettled the boundary’ between me and my participants (Abu-Lughod, 2006:153). Besides, the above experiences in the field reveal how the insider /outsider position of a researcher shifts and interchanges in different social places through the intersectional elements attached to her multiple identities, such as gender, cultural capital and educational background etc. These are beyond her control. As Clifford (1986:7) says, “Even the best ethnographic texts-serious, true fictions- are systems, or economies of truth. Power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control”.

According to Wolf (1996), female ethnographers may be treated as androgynous, as honorary males, as children or as unintelligent beings that require protection, when entering the field. They are more under pressure than men ‘to fit in to local gender norms and values, regardless of race’ (Wolf, 1996:8). In my case the issue of how I ‘dressed’, was a case in point. For example, during my first visit to the East London Mosque's Maryam Centre I was criticised by one of the ELM members (British-Indian) for not covering my head. Moreover, I was told to wear proper Islamic dress and the member spoke for more than an hour about the importance of covering the body in Islam. I therefore decided to cover my head with a scarf and wear long tops for further communication with the centre or with the participants of the centre. I confronted some ethical dilemmas in relation to self-presentation and mistaken identity during the course of my interviews and observation.

An embarrassing incident occurred with a participant Chonda (27), an ELM volunteer in the Maryam Centre of the East London Mosque. She migrated to the UK in 2012 from Portugal. At our first meeting Chonda saw me with a headscarf and she liked the way I wore my scarf. After that I noticed that she started treating me as a friend. She started phoning me regularly, sharing many personal stories of her life, bringing food for me at the centre, inviting me to her home and introducing me to her parents. After a month, when I was at Heathrow airport and about to board with the aim for conducting field study in Bangladesh, I was wearing my usual clothing (long top, jacket, jeans, and a scarf, without covering my head). All of a sudden, someone called me from behind and when I turned round I saw it was none other than my participant Chonda! She and her whole family had come to see off her mother, who was travelling Bangladesh for holiday. She was shocked by seeing me in my usual outfit and said,

‘Is that you? I don’t think you are the same person who I met in the mosque. How could you show off your hair now! You must know it is a great sin! Don’t you?’

I was not ready for this kind of situation. I immediately put my scarf on and told her that I believe and practise religion in a way, in which covering the head is not the foremost thing in relation to sin and good deeds! Despite this, I had to cover my head to become comfortable with the environment. I then quickly left the place. On the other hand, I was not well accepted by some of my participants from the secular groups of the community, who saw me passing in the street wearing *hijab*.

In these circumstances, I was concerned about my role as a feminist ethnographer. In carrying out the research in religiously sensitive zones, I, as a researcher, unavoidably came to wonder whether I was playing a dual role. However, Davies (1999) thinks that social knowledge of general interest is produced in the process of interaction between two selves of the ethnographer. In her view, when ethnographers consider themselves as participants they “commonly find their ethnographic self engaged in a process of othering their social self” (1999:189).

The above challenges I faced complicated my ethical position. However, although the most obvious, but these were not the most difficult issues in terms of adapting to gender norms in the field in relation to religious and cultural perspectives. By keeping these

difficulties in my mind, while conducting my research and writings, I made sure that such dilemmas were not significant enough to have an impact on my research outcomes. According to Buch and Staller (2007:205), “The role of the researchers in the field is always bound to a constant awareness of ethics and ethical practice. For feminists these issues are particularly salient.”

According to Rosaldo (1986); Narayan (1997); and Abu-Lughod (1991), an investigator’s multifaceted subjectivity rising from intersecting identities might also influence their relationship with the subject of research. Although, my positionality as a Bangladeshi migrant female student afforded me the easy access into the community, it became a complex one when it came to writing my thesis. At a seminar related to the *Birangona* Campaign, one of the leaders of the campaign asked me in a round table discussion whether my research could address their campaign and make any positive impact towards the community and on the policy level in Bangladesh. They further asked me whether I could write articles on their concerns, particularly on the campaign, and get them published.

Similarly, I met some groups of women from the Maryam Centre, the East London Mosque. Because of my regular visits to the centre, I gradually developed friendly relations with some of them. As a consequence, they slowly developed the idea that I was there for the betterment of the Muslim world and my research would address their needs, rights and struggles as Muslim women. They said they were very happy to be of help to a Muslim female researcher. The trust I gained in the relationships with my participants created dilemmas in terms of detaching realities from emotions. Such dilemmas raise concern about the role of a feminist researcher from a social anthropological background.

Starn (1994) and Scheper-Hughes (1995) think that community people should be benefitted rather than obstructed through any research conducted in the community. Although I am writing about the diaspora positionality of those women, I certainly do not position myself taking one side and I am unable to address their issues as solely being one of them. As a feminist social anthropologist, I write for my school and social community, yet at the same time, the women from two different groups with whom I have developed a bonding of sisterhood or social relations over the period of my field study, claim my accountability. According to Schrock (2013), ‘Feminist ethnographers produce knowledge about women's lives in specific cultural contexts, recognize the

potential detriments and benefits of representation, are interested in exploring women's experiences of oppression along with the agency women exercise in their own lives, and feel an ethical responsibility towards the communities in which they work.'

Although my adjustment to the environment of secular activists was much easier than to the environment of the Muslim women's group, I always made sure to address each group's issues in a balanced way in my writing. I always made sure to be aware of the sensitivity of the issue of religion and religious identity during my conversations with participants. Besides dressing in the way my participants of the centre do (which was different from my regular attire) always made me cautious while I was with them. It made my adjustment process more invented than habitual. Here, I as a feminist ethnographer and having at the same time interconnection with both secular and Islamist groups faced me with the challenge of being positioned with regard to multiple groups (Abu-Lughod, 1991). I must say it was a very complex situation from my subjective point of view, to share some values and ideologies of the secular group on the one hand, and share the emotions and belief, and agree upon rationalisations on some points of facts of the Islamist group on the other.

As I mentioned earlier, gaining access into community political spaces was not a big challenge for me because of my close connection with some of the community's political campaigners. However, the problem arose when both the religious and political groups started counting me as one of them. By clearly clarifying my research purpose and probable outcomes, I tried my best to minimize the risk of any misconception. On the other hand being positioned as an ethnographer, it was almost impossible to obtain informed consent, particularly as I was looking to engage in formal and informal ways. For example, whenever I attended any community event, I observed the audience from a distance; or I observed without face-to-face contact. In that situation, it was not possible to explain my research purpose to the audience I observed. Even after discussing my project in suitable situations, I faced some other difficulties with informed consent. In my research, the most significant challenge was the participants' consent to be involved in my research project, while questioning the purpose of the research. For instance, during a discussion with a participant about 'the struggle and conflict between Islamists and secularists for socio-political control of public space', I was asked to clarify the purpose of my research. My participant thought it was an irrelevant issue in terms of women's positionality and status in the community and was reluctant to talk about it.

Apparently I was misunderstood as an Islamist feminist researcher² by my participant group of the Maryam Centre. However, I did not always go out of my way to correct such misconception during encounters in the field. For example, when a woman of the Maryam Centre (who helped me to enter the centre) introduced me to others saying that I was working for the benefit of British Muslim women groups, and I was there for them, I did not tell them that this was not my main purpose. As my research is to explore diverse women's contribution to the Bangladeshi diaspora and transnational identity, it might cover the interest of Islamist women as well. Therefore, whilst I certainly did not misrepresent myself in a direct way, I did not keenly correct all misinterpretations about who I was and why I was there. This dilemma certainly influenced my insider/outsider position, and reveals how a feminist ethnographer can concurrently be positioned both as insider and outsider in 'the interaction between shifting power relation' (Naples, 2004:380) in a particular context.

2.2.4 Research strategies

According to Brah and Phoenix (2004: 83), "The concept of 'diaspora space' embraces the intersection of 'difference' in its variable forms, placing emphasis upon emotional and psychic dynamics as much as socio-economic, political and cultural differences. Difference is thus conceptualised as social relation; experience; subjectivity; and, identity". It was mentioned before that the aim of my research was to investigate the influence and effect of intersectional difference on the social positioning of women in transnational and diaspora space. Hence, I made a conscious decision to select my fifty-six participants from the East London Bangladeshi community, who are diversified in terms of their social categorical difference, such as:

Bangladeshi Muslim women in London from different social and class backgrounds:

- who migrated at different stages, in different contexts and time frames in Britain,
- who were either born or raised in Britain,

² My participant chonda shared her feelings that she was very proud to be part of my reseaech, and considered herself lucky in a way she met someone like me who, according to her term was 'Islamist feminist researcher'. She introduced me to her family and other fellows in the Mariyam Centre mentioning that I am an Islamist feminist researcher, representing Muslim women and working for them.

-and who were born and brought up in Britain.

Overall, fifty-six British Bangladeshi women in London, and ten relatives and seven friends and neighbours of the participants in different parts of Bangladesh participated in my research and agreed to individual interviews. A guide to the demographic information of my participants, as well as the pseudonym given to each, is presented in Chapter 4 and the appendix.

After categorising them based on intersectional differences, I selected my participants based on snowball sampling, spreading out from a network of pre-existing contacts. For example, in 2013 at a big Muslim festival 'Eid-ul-Fitr', I was invited into a community programme arranged by a Bangladeshi family in Hull. In the programme I met Tinni who had come from London to celebrate Eid with a family friend in Hull. We became very good friends after that. This was before my fieldwork officially started.

Having agreed to participate in the study, Tinni then referred me on to her mother-in-law Asha, residing in London, who in turn referred me on to Tania, Sraboni, Bithi and Shongita. Before that I discussed my particular focus on diversities among participants based on their time of migration, birthplace, and British-born and brought up status. It helped them to refer me to the kinds of participants I was looking for. While much of the snowballing was conducted by these kinds of friendship networks, in other cases it was carried out through more institutional networks. For example, many of the participants were involved with different community organisations, forums and networks, mainly based on political, cultural, religious and women's issues, such as:

- ***Nari Diganta***: Based in the East End of London, *Nari Diganta* is an association for women's progress, formed in 2012. The aim of the organisation is to achieve equal rights and opportunities for women as enshrined in the United Nations 'Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women' (CEDAW). The main activities of the association are networking, awareness raising among women through information sharing and consultation, advocacy and lobbying in favour of women's equal rights and opportunities with the relevant institutions/organisations and individuals and cultural and recreational activities. By attending the first conference of *Nari Diganta* on 4th January 2014, I established contact with network members for further interview, and was also able to observe their network's activities.

- **ELM Women's Link:** ELM Women's Link is a project of the East London Mosque and the London Muslim Centre. Its main objectives are to support women and their families with generic services and partnership initiatives from within their community. The project aims to provide services that support and foster the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical well-being of Muslim women.
- **Jago Nari (Women's Educational Resource Centre):** *Jago Nari* is an inclusive women's organisation providing a wide range of services to the changing needs of women in the community. The Centre was founded in 1987 by a group of Bangladeshi women.

This research was planned and accomplished with reference to the ethical guidelines outlined by the University of Hull. In my ethnographic study, I have tried my best to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of my research participants considering it as a crucial ethical responsibility in feminist ethnographic research. I have chosen to secure the anonymity of the participants by using their names nowhere in the thesis, except for those who willingly wanted to be recognised by their original name and individuality.

Before starting interviews, I assured my participants that their identity would be kept confidential (mainly, their names were replaced with pseudonyms). In some cases, it was difficult to secure the anonymity of notable persons and places in the community; the leaders of the activist group, who are actively engaged in social and electronic media were examples, where it was impossible to maintain anonymity; some necessary accounts in relation to introducing participants through ethnographic description would inescapably disclose some of my participants' identity. In this case, I discussed the issue with those participants and was assured by them that they would be comfortable and have no complaints if their identities were exposed. I made sure that I was able to create trust while communicating with my participants. I have taken care to represent participants' views in my writings. I have applied direct quotation of my participants in my thesis in most cases, as following James (2001), to avoid the possible risk of misinterpreting their statements and therefore disengaging from ethnographic guidelines. However, in some cases I have chosen to describe their experiences using relevant terms of diaspora and identity studies to create possible points of argument and critical analysis in relation to existing literature. On this point, a description about how their statements would be described and analysed in my thesis was given to my

participants in order to making sure that they were aware of the process of data analysis and fully approved it.

By using snowball sampling and following analysis of the network members' data, my ethnographic field data were gathered through 'multi-method research' (Reinharz, 1992:46), such as in-depth interview and intensive participant observation. According to Reinharz (1992:19), "Interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words rather than in the words of researcher. This asset is particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether". In London, the interviews were mainly carried out in a semi-structured format 'to achieve the active involvement of my participants in the construction about their lives' (Graham, 1984 in Reinharz, 1992:18). This ensured all the topics (socio-demographic profile of the participants, their everyday life practices and experiences, perception on socio/cultural and political circumstances in Bangladesh and Britain and so on) were covered, while following the lead of the participants rather than the interviewer. For instance, the semi-structured questionnaire guideline did not restrict the participants' opinions, as I, as an investigator always ensured and encouraged participants' choice and independence on the issues they wanted to talk about most (Hesse-Biber, 2007). In examining the data, at the outset I familiarised myself with the corpus by reading and re-reading the interview transcriptions, re-listening to the audio files and reviewing the visual records of the interviews. While doing this I started to select some topics and points of interest, based on my own experiences as part of the participant observation phase of my ethnographic study.

In common with Ní Laoire (2007) my question-set was developed with the purpose of guiding participants' conversation about their experiences of migration and living as Bangladeshis in Britain. In the question-set, I categorized topics I wanted to address in the interview under subject headings, and organized some possible questions to ask, to encourage conversation on that theme. Since my participant groups are diverse in relation to their time of migration and British or Bangladeshi born status, I made sure that my question-set was different for each, to match their likely experiences. For instance, in terms of time of migration, I asked the old and new migrant groups when they migrated to the UK and how did they coped with the new setting immediately after migration.

Instead of asking those questions, my questions to British-born participants were about their upbringing and childhood memories around being from a Bangladeshi family in Britain. Therefore, the two methods invited chronologically-based narratives of Bangladeshi women living in London, but fitted to the experiences of the individual participant. Broadly, the topics I tried to focus on over the course of the interview were along these lines. For interviews with migrants, I emphasised the issues of migration experience, the reason for migration, life before and after migration, the influence of migration pattern in maintaining transnational connection, the role and contribution in a diaspora family, religion in individual and collective lives, their sense, experience and contribution in community identity politics, their involvement (or non-involvement) in Bangladeshi communities, their personal sense of British-Bangladeshi identity, Muslim identity, their relationship with the next generations, and their aspirations. For interviews with British-born participants, I started the interview by asking them about their upbringing and their childhood memories of ‘being British-Bangladeshi’ and belonging to an Bangladeshi family in Britain, before going on to include many of the same topics as listed above, but more tailored to British-born experiences.

These issues were influential in the way they made my insider and outsider positions fluid, even in a single interview with different groups of my participants (Hesse-Biber, 2007:143). Weiss (1994) and Edwards (1990) identify that the fluidity of the insider/outsider position can shift based on ‘the given research topic and the individual current of the actual interview’ (in Hesse-Biber, 2007:144). I felt more like an insider when my conversation with my participants concerned the issues of migration experience, reason for migration, life before and after migration, and influence of migration pattern in maintaining transnational connection. In contrast the issues like upbringing and childhood memories of being British-Bangladeshi and belonging to a Bangladeshi family in Britain gave me the feeling of an outsider.

In London, some of my research data were also collected through informal interviews in order to collect four oral histories from the old migrant women group, whose experience and voice have not always been included and heard in research agendas (Leavy, 2007). According to Leavy (2007:154) “it [oral history] is a tool for accessing silenced or excluded knowledge, for unearthing and preserving this ‘missing’ knowledge”. The method was employed to give significance to old migrant women’s life courses and life stages in relation to diaspora and transnational life, life before and after migration, community identity politics, struggles and changes. The method was useful in that it

gave me the ability to document old migrant women's experience, agency, and contribution in relation to the history of community identity formation and its connection to the present context of the community. According to Comaroff and Comaroff (1991), narrative is spontaneous depiction of both history and the present, which has a predominant role in complex relations. By collecting narratives, I was able to understand the 'relationship between agency and structure' (Leavy, 2007:154) in relation to historical and present context that influenced migrant women's positionality in the community. Hence, oral history weakens post-modern criticism concerned with the fixity of text and authority, since it is recurrently changing and shifting (Singer, 1998:7).

Since my research focuses on the positionality of British Bangladeshi women in family dynamics and community space; I had conversations with members of the participants' family and relatives in Bangladesh and the UK, as well as the members of their wider community. Besides these, I got the opportunity for discussion with some other British Bangladeshi people during social events, such as religious festivals (*Eid ul Fitr* and *Eid ul Ajha*). These interviews were mostly short and informal conversations, even though the conversations contributed salient facts to my research.

I made initial contact with my participants either in person, by phone or via e-mail and asked whether they would be interested in participating in my PhD research on British Bangladeshi women. When they consented to participate in my research project, I arranged a time and location for interview, with the primary concern that the time of the interview would be convenient for my participants. Most of the interviews occurred at the participants' own home. However, some interviews were conducted at the participants' workplace, at their request. For instance, I made second contact with the manager of the Maryam Centre through my participation at one of their events based on 'International Women's Day'. After that I got access to attend a few informal group discussion meeting of the ELM network in the centre. In this way I was able to obtain consent of some of the group members for an individual in-depth interview, after explaining the nature of my research project (Hesse-Biber, 2007). The individual interviews were more of pleasant conversations, or 'speech events' (Spradley, 1979) between my participants and myself, than a simple question and answer session or a formal discussion (Hesse-Biber, 2007).

On the whole, all of my participants talked with me about their life in a pleasant mood. Throughout the interview process, I made sure their stories were heard and played the role of a reflexive researcher to reduce any hierarchy between my participant and myself (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Most of my participants expressed that they were honoured and extremely happy to contribute to my research. They were also quite concerned about the recording and noting. Sometimes they (especially those who were talking in local ‘Sylheti’ language^{3,4}) repeated their words while I was taking notes, to make sure that I understood their words properly. I took time to identify if there was any contradiction of between the previous conversations and arranged follow-up meetings to get more detailed evidence. After the interview, most participants invited me to their homes for a dinner. Even now, some of them keep in touch with me online or on the phone. However, initially I found that two of my participants were uneasy to share their personal experiences. Therefore I tried to make friendly relationships with them. Because I knew the community well, I met them several times at social events where I got the opportunity to talk with them in a friendly environment. I used the ‘participatory model’ (Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1983) by sharing my biography and life experiences with them. After that, we gradually developed close relationships with each other, which helped me in the sense that they freely shared their personal experiences relating to their diaspora life. According to Hesse-Biber (2007:128) “the idea of sharing identities and stories with one another is thought to increase reciprocity and rapport in the interview process, and ‘level the field between the researcher and researched (Al-Hindi & Kawabata, 2002:104)’, thus breaking down the notions of power and authority invested in the role of researcher)”. Before conducting interviews, I made sure that my participants were familiarized with my research and the interview process. I wrote down most of the comments and statements made by them during the discussions.

In my fieldwork, a significant concern was contradiction between ethnographic interview and observation. For instance, in some cases I discovered more and different particulars by observing the environment and surroundings my participants were encompassed by, than by interviewing them. The contradiction was even more

³Sylheti is the language of Sylhet, a North Eastern region of Bangladesh. The language is also spoken by a great number of the Sylheti migrants within the British Bangladeshi community living in the UK, mostly concentrated in the East London area.

⁴ Lawson and Sachdev (2004)

pronounced when those observations were given through my writing as dependable and participants' accounts were signified as undependable. In this respect, I have gone through some ethical dilemmas through my writing.

I conducted participant observation in the Bangladeshi community of East London and some areas of four districts of Bangladesh, (Sylhet, Tangail, Narayangong, and Dhaka) considering it as a way of knowledge production of social relations through social relationships (Buch & Staller, 2011). My purpose in conducting participant observation in different parts of Bangladesh was to find out the ethnographic specificities and realities that developed the transnational connection between locals and migrants. I observed the villages, mostly in Sylhet, from which most of my participants had originated, in order to have a practical sense about their ways of maintaining transnational connection to their family and relatives in their place of origin. I conducted interview with relatives and neighbours of my participants in some areas of Tangail, Narayangong, and Dhaka, where my participants came from. I selected ten participants to conduct research on their family and relatives in Bangladesh.

The Bangladeshi community in East London have their own cultural, religious and social organisations. Through these organisations, they celebrate the Bengali New Year, religious festivals, national festivals and so on. I significantly observed how the location has a powerful impact on the community identity or the individual's subjective position. In the area, the relations between Islamist and secularist Bangladeshis are varied due to their struggle with present circumstances or locations. Accordingly, I observed the diverse and distinctive nature of the British Bangladeshi community in terms of changes across gender, age, generations and differences in the politics of trans-nationalism, religion, place and power. During my six months of staying in East London I became involved in a wide range of everyday activities, in order to find out the realms of community relations and private spheres and women's positioning within it. I engaged as a participant, in the everyday life of my participants. This included events of the different political, social, cultural, religious, and women's networking groups in the community. By being closely involved, I could collect data on the perceptions of the different migrant groups in the community regarding the positionality of women in British Bangladeshi diaspora. My pilot study on some recent campaigns and movements in the community reveals, on the one hand, how women in the community make their strong positionality in the community identity, which is moulded through their varied practicalities and dissimilar experiences in relation to contextual specificities and, on the

other, how diaspora women share common transnational interests and work collectively from a common platform by valuing difference among them in relation to their diaspora specificities and realities.

I attended different community organisations (i.e. formal meetings of *Nari Diganta* and group discussion of ELM), gatherings, social, religious and cultural events (e.g. *Eid ul Fitr* 2014, Bengali New Year 2014, Bangladeshi Victory day 2013, Bangladeshi Independent Day 2014, International Mother's Language Day 2014), evening *adda* (idle chat) at restaurants⁵, sisters' get-togethers and meetings at the East London Mosque Maryam centre⁶, birthday parties, and marriage ceremonies. These are some examples of social events in which I participated on a regular basis and observed participants' socio-cultural/ political practices and individual roles in them, so that I could have an all-inclusive and comprehensive understanding of collective data. I observed their private and public places, such as their living standard, conversation with other family and community members, their food and clothing style, their cultural and religious organisations and their activities or meetings.

By and large, I became aware of these events through Facebook networks of the different political, cultural, and women's groups of the community, subscribing to the mailing lists of Bangladeshi community associations and invitation by the friends of the community who are actively engaged in such organisations. Attending these events from the initial stage of the study helped me to develop an understanding of contemporary discourses around women's representation in the Bangladeshi community in Britain. This process had the twofold influence of informing my overall research question and the issues I wanted to focus on in the interviews as well as informing my subsequent analysis of the data.

⁵There are several community restaurants that I found as a space of reproduction of trans-local and trans-cultural practices. People from the community, particularly those are involved with ethno-nationalist politics, come into a small group and discuss various issues, which are related not only to their political activities but also to their personal and social lives. After several meetings, with different groups of participants in three different community restaurants, I realised how a restaurant can be an important ethnographic site to explore the connection between diaspora place and diasporan through trans-cultural practices. Spending time in a community restaurant by making it a free, flexible and comfortable zone out of the many other community places was possible for the community people because of the trans-local cultural attitudes of the owners and staff of these restaurants. For example, these are the restaurants where community people can go, eat and chat even after closing time. By keeping the main door close, they can stay inside as long as they want. This is the culture of local Bangladeshi restaurants. I would call it a diaspora version of a local ethnic place.

⁶Whereas restaurants were found to be a space for ethno cultural practices, a religious centre in the community (in my ethnographic field I chose the Maryam Centre) gave the sense of global Islamic cultural practices. It connects a group of the community women with other women from different ethnic and religious communities, but separates them from groups in their own community that are involved in trans-cultural practices.

Although I was invited by the friends or participants of the community to attend these events, they were all open to the public and access was not a concern. Here I would like to say that as a Bangladeshi, I was very comfortable and felt quite culturally ‘at home’ (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997) at these occasions and my attendance was also unlikely to be interrogated; here, my position can be seen as an ‘insider’. Based on Hesse-Biber and Leavy’s (2010) typology of the extents of participation of researchers conducting observational research, at those events, I put myself into a position where I was involved in ‘Participant-as-Observer’ (2011:206) by being a participant of the group that I was simultaneously studying. However, my insider position in particular situations gave me privileged access to certain data, but also prevented access to some other, for example the situation when I was put in a typical gendered role (being perceived as an ideal daughter-in-law).

I attended a Bengali cultural night to celebrate International Women’s Day organised by a Bangladeshi channel ‘ATN’ in London with a group of community friends and participants. At the show, I participated in the Bengali dance show with other community people, who requested me to join the dance floor, while simultaneously maintaining an interest in how the event was equally performed as a representation of Bengali culture in London. However, in my research this process of being insider is ‘fluid’ (Naples, 2003, 2004; Hesse-Biber, 2007) rather than static, since, at some of the events, I was at ease taking an onlooker position. DeWalt and DeWalt’s call it ‘passive participation’. In the process, the researcher “does not interact with people” but rather “uses the site as an observation post” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002:19). However, my continued insider position was much stronger to deconstruct this passivity.

During my fieldwork, I participated in the *Birangona* Campaign on an ethno-nationalist feminist issue, through joining a human chain, which deepened my understanding about the women who led and organised the campaign. I observed how the newly migrant women, the women who were brought up and/or were born and brought up in the UK made social and political connection with older migrants on ethno-nationalist and feminist issues through engaging with the campaign, Initially I associated with some leading campaigners of the *Birangona* project. However, I would consider it as ‘being there’, which involves much more than just hanging out (Buch & Staller, 2007: 213). By being there I gained enough of their trust to let me to take part in the network activities. When I started spending more time with them our relationship became more accepted and less formal. This was the successful way I got access into the spaces of the

network's formal and informal group discussions. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that researchers cannot control how participants perceive their participation. However, my noticeable manner of being friendly and continuous reminders to my participants and myself about my research purposes assisted me to maintain the sense of balance between my position as a researcher and a participant in the campaign and escape any undue hopes concerning my contribution in the campaign. I maintained an acceptable and comfortable distance within our relationships in order to enable the space for dialogue (Frank, 2004, 2005). As Frank (2004, 2005) thinks, it might be difficult for researchers to keep their balance on an edge, in where they can fall back into themselves or forward into the other. During my engagement with the *Birangona* Campaign, one of my participants (Keya, age 36) asked me to post some photos and network activities through my Facebook account so that my Facebook friends could learn about it and join the campaign. It was not an easy job; first of all, I do not use Facebook for such activities and secondly, I have some participants as my Facebook friends who have opposite views in relation to ethno-national politics. Also, there is always a risk of conflict if both groups come into one space. To handle the situation, I met Keya, ate dinner at another network friend's house. When we were both in a relaxed mood, I told her frankly about my reluctance to spread network activities through Facebook. I was successful in managing such dilemmas. I believe that challenging and understanding the multiple and often conflicting ambiguities within is helpful as it enables a researcher to take a significant step in managing her study with a political awareness and consciousness that will not be exhausted when such difficulties arise (Wolf, 1996).

I applied walking interviews considering it as an ideal ethnographic practice for discovering diaspora women's views and their relationships with community places and spaces. Carpiano (2009) and Kusenbach (2003) describe the approach as a 'natural go-along' (the hybrid of interviewing and participant observation). According to Kusenbach (2003), 'This process can capture the sometimes hidden or unnoticed habitual relations with place and the environment because it has a tendency to highlight environmental perception, spatial practices, biographies, social architecture and social realms in the data gathered'. However, she argues that 'contrived go-along', 'might produce appealing data, but not of the kind that would greatly enhance our understanding of the subjects' authentic practices and interpretations' (Kusenbach, 2003: 464).

Jones et al. (2008) argue that researchers should be cautious about what kinds of data they want to produce when determining which method to employ. In my research, employing the walk and talk method was successful, as I could explore how women in a diaspora community develop a relationship with a particular place of the community over the period of time after migration. I also saw how women from different backgrounds, who migrated at different time of migration, or who were either born or brought up in Britain, give different or opposite accounts of the same place in the community. It is mentionable that in the process of walking interview, I never imposed my decision on my participants in order to make them agree to be part in a walking interview. And it was they, who had chose the time and place for walk and talk. According to Evans and Jones (2011:850), “the most important choice that researchers must make when designing walking interviews is whether the route is set by the interviewer or the interviewee”. While giving full freedom to my participants, I found out their exploration of routes was mostly connected to their personal life experiences. As I did not impose the method on my participants, eight out of my fifty-six participants from old and new migrants, and British-born or brought up were willing to walk with me on the routes they had chosen and allowed me to ask them questions along the way.

On this basis, I walked with one of my participants of the ELM network on the Whitechapel road near to the East London Mosque. Her name is Mahin (43) and she migrated to the UK in 2003 as a dependant of a skilled worker. While walking, I asked her about some random buildings located in that area but she did not show much interest in talking about them. I could see the pleasure in her face when she showed me the East London Mosque and talked about the history of the mosque. She showed me the Maryam Centre and said,

This place is the safest place in the UK. If you enter the centre you will find peace. *Ami bole bojhate parbo na ajk ami amr life nie kotota secure kotota stable* (I cannot express how secure and stable I feel today with my life). It happened to me when I started coming here.

On the other hand, my participant Rita (age 40+) was brought up in the UK. She is actively involved with ethno-nationalist politics in the community. Rita asked me to do

a walking interview when she planned to go to the *Bishwo Shahitto Kendro*⁷ (World-Literature Centre), Ideal Store, Whitechapel to join an event on ‘International Women’s Day’. We met at Aldgate tube station and then started walking towards Whitechapel. Rita took the same routes as Mahin but talked more about the Bengali martyrs’ monument and street shops near to the East London Mosque. She did not want me to stop in front of the mosque. When I asked about the mosque and the Maryam centre she told me -

This place is now very much political rather than religious, I don’t want to talk about them, *oder shathe amar jay na* (I cannot relate myself with them).

The above two examples show how the process of walking interview helped me to understand the notion of a diaspora place from participants’ points of view in an ethnographic research field. It also gives insight into how the same diaspora location can be described distinctively based on women’s diasporan backgrounds in relation to their intersectional differences in a diaspora space and their connection with the transnational space.

⁷<http://www.bsklondon.co.uk/about-us.html>

Chapter 3: Bangladeshis In Britain

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I concentrate on the history of the Bangladeshi migration to the UK. In the second section, I focus on the literature on Bangladeshi women in Britain.

3.1 Migration, settlement and British Bangladeshis

In terms of the Bangladeshi migration process and their settlement in the UK, Gardner (2002) notes that the notion of migration needs to be seen within the history of colonialism and global capital, within the history of processes of integration and segregation in Britain, the political and economic environments of Bangladesh, the growth of the Bangladeshi community in the UK, and the specific situations of families and individuals. The main focus of this section is to give an outline of the history of migration of Bangladeshis in Britain. The section also highlights the experiences and struggles of the Bangladeshi migrants in Britain based on existing literature. I will use the term ‘generation’ for now in the articulation of the Bangladeshi migrants in Britain, as it has been used in the existing literature. However, I will come back to the term ‘generation’ later, in Chapter 4.

3.1.1 Post-war migration: family reunification and community formation

As a consequence of the labour migration policy (Siddiqui, 2004) after the Second World War, which required cheap, unskilled labour, and the job depletion after ‘the partition of India-Pakistan in 1947’ (Adam, 1987), a large number of Bengali men migrated and settled down in Britain (Choudhury, 1995).

The process further helped to increase the Muslim population in Britain, which was seen by the end of the 1950s (Adams, 1987). Gardner and Shakur (1994) note that many Sylhetis migrated to Britain by those established routes, and depended on the assistance of kin networks in searching for jobs and accommodation. Hence, most of the migrants Sylhetis followed the footsteps of early settlers. For instance, in 1946 there were 20 Indian restaurants or coffee shops in London, whereas this figure had enlarged to 300 by

1960 and by 1980 it was greater still, as the number reached over 3000 across the country (Adams, 1987).

As stated by Adams (1987), the British post-war labour policy encouraged around 5,000 Bengalis to migrate to Britain by 1962. Kabeer (2000) notes that most of the Bengali migrants of this time worked as tailors or pressers in the garment manufacturing industry in East London. Some of them, especially young men, stayed in Birmingham and Oldham in that period, working as labourer, in the heavy industry or garment trade of those areas (Choudhury, 1993, 1995)

Unfortunately two decades after World War II, many Bangladeshi labourers lost their jobs, which drove them into intraregional-migration due to the deterioration of the industrial sector in the 1970 (Siddiqui, 2004). However, considering themselves as sojourners' rather than 'settlers', the Bengali labour migrants sustained the 'myth of return' (Anwar, 1979) for a long time. It has been observed that their family reunification processes were very slow compared to other South Asian communities (Ballard, 1994; Gardner & Shakur, 1994). According to Gardner and Shakur (1994) due to the lengthy process of permanent settlement, Bangladeshi migrants maintained strong ties with their family of origin by frequently visiting, investing in property and sending remittances to Sylhet.

Meanwhile a small number of highly educated and skilled migrants from upper and middle class groups of Bangladesh, who had previously migrated to Europe, moved to Britain with the intention of pursuing higher studies and later on entered into highly skilled jobs and settled down all over England (Siddiqui, 2004). When Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan (known until then as East Pakistan) (BBC 27th May, 2005), it was 'the liberation War of Bangladesh 1971', which caused a large number of Bangladeshis, mostly from the Sylhet region to migrate to the UK. For instance, in 1971 the increase in the Bangladeshi Population in Britain were almost four times greater than in 1961, – an increase from 6000 to 22,000; among them only 1000 were British born Bangladeshi (Peach, 1990).

3.1.2 Changing process of migration: transnational migration

According to Gardner (2002), 1950 – 1960 was 'the golden age' of migration to Britain from the Indian subcontinent. This new policy, the first Commonwealth Immigrants Act

1962 opened the migration routes for people from the subcontinent by defining the categories of migrants. Thus, if people had certain jobs, or had recognised qualifications and experiences to make up for the short supply in Britain, or had unique recognition (for example, people who had served in the British forces in World War II) they could easily settle in Britain under the new migration policy (Solomos, 2003). This law allowed the early settlers to bring their family (wives and children) and relatives. This process was described by Garbin (2008:2) as ‘chain migration’ and was the reason behind the prosperity of the Sylhet region and the development of the Bangladeshi community over Britain.

3.1.3 Impact of chain /transnational migration in increasing community size

According to Gardner and Shakur (1994), the routes of chain migration inspired Sylheti immigrants to seek permits for friends and kinfolks (Eade & Garbin, 2005; Kabeer, 2000), leading to a growing number of Sylheti migrants in the UK, particularly in East London. For instance, during the 1980s, the number of migrant Sylhetis reached around 200,000, with about 35,000 in East London (Adams, 1987). The influence of chain migration in the 1980s, not only caused particular area-based migration, for example 11 sub-districts of Sylhet had run to a tremendously localised geography of prosperity in Sylhet region (Gardner, 1995); but also led the Bangladeshi migrants to develop their community in the UK by supporting area-specific migration from Sylhet (Eade & Garbin, 2005). For instance, people from Beani Bazar settled down in Tower Hamlets, Spitalfields and Brick Lane are occupied mostly by migrants from Jaggonathpur and Bishwhanath, while in Camden; the Bangladeshi migrants came from the Maulvi Bazar district. In the same way, migrants from the Bishwhanath and Hobiganj districts are settled in Oldham, particularly in the areas of Glodwick and Westwood (recognised as ‘Bangla Para’). Also Birmingham is mostly dominated by migrants from Hobiganj, with substantial concentrations in Smethwick, Handsworth, Lozell, Saltley, Aston and Small Heath (Eade & Garbin, 2005).

3.1.4 Community politics, identity formation and intergenerational dynamics

There is little research specifically on Britain’s Bangladeshi communities, and much of what exists inclines to be policy/problem-oriented. However, the works of John Eade, Katy Gardner, David Garbin, Alexander, amid others, critically address the issue of

identity formation, continuity and change in relation to community politics, generational and gender differences within the Bangladeshi Diaspora, within the larger arena of ethnic and racial scholarship in Britain.

3.1.4.1 First generation in community identity politics and formation

The identity of first generation British Bangladeshis was influenced by the nationalist ideology and the idea of Bangladeshi nationhood. After the division of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan and it secured independence in 1971. In the liberated Bangladesh, two ideas developed about the identity of the country's nationhood, i.e. 'Hinduism' and 'Islamism' (Kabeer, 1991). However, the constitution of Bangladesh changed the identity of nationalism three times, on the basis of 'secularism' and 'Islamism' (Constitution of Bangladesh, 1972). This shifting process of national identity was dominated by the views of the ruling party of the country at that time. The country is divided into two groups in practising their national identity. The well-educated people of Bangladesh identify themselves as 'moderate Muslim' (Benkin, 2015:80). This representation of Bangladeshi national identity is reinterpreted through the people of first-generation British Bangladeshis. Here, education and social class status have close interaction with the religious views of the British Bangladeshis.

Thus, at a political level, the first generation who migrated to Britain in the 1960s, tried to restructure their ethno-national identity, grounded in long-distance nationalism (Garbin, 2008), secularist ideology and embedded social values (Eade, 1989, 1990, 1991). As it has been identified in the work of Eade (1989, 1990, 1991, and 1994) and Garbin (2008), during the 1960s and into the early 1970s, the first generation of Bengali migrants were enthusiastically involved in the politics of the subcontinent through the confrontation leading to the '1971 Liberation War' of Bangladesh. They particularly organised support for the freedom fighters through fundraising, verbal transmission of information, public demonstrations and lobbying of the British government and mass media.

Siddiqui (2004) notes that during the 1960s, Bangladeshi migrants in Britain were found in four categories: students, migrant labourers, entrepreneurs and professionals. The labour migrants were the largest amongst this group; most of them were either settled or long-term migrants. They played a glorious role in the Independence war of Bangladesh

in 1971 by direct involvement in fund-raising activities for refugees and freedom fighters (Ullah & Eversley, 2010: 51; Siddiqui, 2004:45). All categories of Bangladeshi migrant groups formed action committees in several regions and cities in Britain to unite the public voice and views in support of the movement for Bangladeshi Independence, to raise funds, lobby local MPs and parliamentary political leaders' both in Europe and in North America to support independence and inform the BBC of the massacres of the war.

By forming the Bangladesh Medical Association, Bangladeshi migrant doctors played important roles in support of the war. Also two cultural fronts: the Bangladesh Cultural Association and the Bangladesh *Ganashangkriti Shangsad* were formed in Britain to support the independence of Bangladesh. By organizing cultural shows and exhibitions, first generation Bangladeshi migrants in Britain played a crucial role in winning British public opinion in support of the Liberation of Bangladesh. Also, the first eight stamps of Bangladesh were printed from England (Siddiqui, 2004). Thus by mobilising political support for their country of origin from a distance, first generation migrants developed a strong sense of nationalist and secularist ideology and identity in the Bengali community in Britain, emphasising a shared and pure Bengali identity, which transcended social background, class, and religious frontiers (Eade, 1989, 1990, 1991; Garbin, 2008).

Additionally, the first generation British Bangladeshi cohort played a crucial role as mediators between British local authorities and the Bangladeshi community, which resulted in the formation of the Bangladeshi Welfare Association in Tower Hamlets (Eade, 1990; Ullah & Eversley, 2010:50). The role of first generation migrants in shaping the identity of the community was influential and significant even after the liberation of Bangladesh. It has been noted by Garbin (2008) that since the 1980s, most of the major political parties of Bangladesh have established spaces in Britain, which represents the transnational politics of the British Bangladeshi community (2008:3). In particular, small organisations of British Bangladeshis across the UK frequently maintain connections between the rural community (Sylhet) in Bangladesh and kin in Britain (and across which remittances are sent, and marriages arranged). These transnational links continued to be involved in arranging platforms for political parties from Bangladesh to come to Britain so as to promote campaigning for funds. Additionally, a number of UK-based elder community agents related to trade and businesses both in Britain and Bangladesh have been founded through the networks

(Eade & Garbin, 2005). According to Garbin (2008), these links are internalised by the first generation cohort as implanting a sense of shared memory and belonging to the native land of their descendants, crossing the public/private boundary of this political ground.

The emerging separations between Sylheti and non-Sylheti migrants through first generation Sylhetis, show a controversy in the community identity formation, which remains to this day (as demonstrated in the furore over Monica Ali's book *Brick Lane*, 2004).

Through my present ethnographic investigation, I will argue that the role of earlier migrant women as 'pioneers' is significant and needs to be taken into account in the community identity formation in Britain rather than ignoring them as being totally superseded by later advancements.

3.1.4.2 Second generation and changing community politics

The second generation (either born or primarily raised in Britain or else migrated to Britain in the mid-1970s), were equally visible by the 'Liberation war of Bangladesh' based on secular ideology and the youth movements of the late 1970s, partially in reaction to extensive harassment and racism in Britain (Eade & Garbin, 2002; Garbin, 2008). From the more common labour-based migration in the 1960s, the migration process shifted to more family-based migration in the 1970s, producing a new 'second generation' in the community. This new generation changed the identity pattern and politics of the community, for instance, a movement from ethno-nationalism to anti-racialism was visible throughout the 1970s (Eade & Garbin, 2002; Garbin, 2008).

The demonstration against racial violence of the second generation during the 1970s had a huge impact on the political identity of this cohort. The historical account shows that racial tensions in London had been simmering for 40 years, since Oswald Mosley provoked attacks on the older Jewish communities during the 1930s (Sandhu, 2003). Bengali children were used to being attacked and the properties of British Bangladeshi migrants were destroyed by White power skinhead gangs in Brick Lane. The situation became so severe that Bengali children were allowed to leave school early, with their mothers walking in groups to protect them from possible racial attacks.

The situation prompted British Bangladeshi families to restrict the mobility of their children for their safety (Sandhu, 2003).

The seriousness of the situation was identified by the council flats strategy, for instance, Tower Hamlets council equipped their flats with fire-proof mailboxes to secure Bangladeshi occupants from racially driven incineration (Bangladeshi London, n.d.). In these circumstances, a number of youth groups were formed by the young second-generation cohort to confront racial violence. Among these, ‘the Bangladesh Youth Movement’ (led by Shajahan Lutfur) was prominent (Barry & Carrington, 1990, 2012). Subsequently, the murder of a young British Bangladeshi, Altab Ali, in a racist attack on the 4th of May 1978 (Barry & Carrington, 1990), fuelled the youth movement and motivated 7,000 British Bangladeshis, including migrants from different countries, to become involved in a protest against racist violence and marched behind Altab Ali’s coffin to Number 10 Downing Street (Panayi, 1996; Bowling, 1998). The murder of Altab Ali triggered the first substantial political organisation against racism by the second-generation British Bangladeshi cohort and it remains linked with the struggle for human rights to this day (Keith, 2005). The remarkable distinctiveness in organisations of British Bangladeshis within Tower Hamlets today remains indebted to this movement, with a park on Whitechapel Road being named after Altab Ali and an arch established as a monument to Altab Ali and other victims of racist attacks in Altab Ali Park.

The successful movement against racial violence and the following formation of local youth organisations motivated the second generation to fight against discrimination and racism from the platform of local government. The vibrant participation of second generation migrants in mainstream British politics in a local context gradually moved them away from the concerns of first generation migrants regarding trans-local activities, for instance, direct and indirect involvement in village politics in Sylhet (Garbin, 2008). By creating alliances with the political left, anti-racist and wider black political movements throughout the end of the 1970s, the second generation British Bangladeshis confronted local issues of racism and discrimination in housing, education, employment, police-community relations and so on (Begum & Eade, 2005; Eade & Garbin, 2002; Garbin, 2008).

Since the 1980s, the active involvement of the second generation cohort in local Labour and Social Democratic parties, and the presence of a number of Bangladeshi local

council members in Tower Hamlets and Oldham, has given a solid basis for continuous participation in local politics to date (Garbin, 2008). According to Garbin (2008), two decades on, most of the second-generation campaigners have gradually become councillors or white-collar workers in local government bodies, or in the public sector dealing with housing, health, education, and employment. Garbin (2008) further notes that the anti-discrimination struggle and community development strategies of the second generation were, to a large extent, driven by the inability of earlier generations to organise their political resources and the strength of their social links to the social development of the local Bangladeshi community in Britain.

3.1.4.3 Third generation: a shift from community identity politics to institution based religious politics

From the late 1980s until the 1990s, the secular positioning of second generation British Bangladeshis was confronted by the increasing institutionalization of religion. This was primarily strengthened by the new Labour government policies promoting faith-based organisations as a key agent in urban regeneration after the ‘General Election of 1997’ (Begum & Eade, 2005:186; Garbin, 2008). The institutionalization of religion had an impact on the motivation of the third generation cohort (who were born and bred in Britain) to uphold a British Muslim identity as ‘pure’/‘authentic’ with an ethical obligation to Islamic ideologies, and to reject the secularist ethno-nationalist values of their earlier generations, the ‘Bengali cultural identity’, as ‘impure’/‘syncretic’ (influenced by western secular values and Sikh/Hindu practices) (Eade & Garbin, 2002:141; Garbin, 2008:6).

On the one hand, inability to speak the language of their parents made the third generation British Bangladeshis feel isolated and fail to connect with the culture and place of origin of their parents. On the other, being excluded by and thus not completely assimilating into the British culture, the group was suffering from an identity crisis (Ali, 2008). Hence, the interest in and crisis of identity led to faith-based organisations influencing third-generation Bangladeshi Muslims (Eade & Garbin, 2002; Glynn, 2002). According to Glynn (2002), the religious identity of Islamism suggests an alternative way to separate the young generation from criminal activities or drug addiction, which occurs as a response to frustration, isolation, poverty and racism. Thus, the frustration of amalgamation, for instance, alienation from the mainstream society, linked to problems

of housing, unemployment, violence and drug addiction, triggered the young generation of British Bangladeshis to be more involved directly in 'pure Islamism' than the older generation (Ali, 2008; Glynn, 2002). This generational shift in terms of religious identity was reflected in the growing significance of the East London Mosque, which hosted community functions and the Young Muslim Organisation (YMO) (Eade & Garbin, 2002). Young women were significantly associated with faith-based organisations that prioritized 'Muslim', rather than 'Bengali', as an identity of the British Bangladeshi (Eade & Garbin, 2002). However, the varying degrees of Islamisation in British Bangladeshi identity and the stresses between Islamists and secularists have been identified based on contextual and local differences (Garbin, 2008).

In consequence, after some world and local events, (starting with the Iranian revolution of 1979, the burning of the *Satanic Verses* in Bradford in 1989, and the 1991 war in Iraq, and continuing to the events of 11 September 2001, followed by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq) (Begum & Eade, 2005; Ali, 2008; Werbner, 2004; Rozario, 2005), Muslim identity was turned into to the very political identity, 'global Muslim *ummah*' (Ali, 2008). This attracted third generation Muslim British Bangladeshi men and women to a greater commitment to represent Islam in attitude, behaviour and practice (Rozario, 2004). At this time, the activities of the young Muslim Organisation at the local level and their silent reaction to the global 'war on terror' disclose the Muslim identity politics in a shifting form, which reconstructs 'Islamphobia' as normal and benign (Begum & Eade, 2005), whereas the earlier activists were invisible as Muslim representatives at a national level. Hence, Islam in Britain has been integrated to form a legitimate locational identity, while the politicisation and racialization debates of Islamic identity have obstructed the process of integration into the British mainstream (Werbner, 2004). While Asians are perceived to be integrating in Britain, 'contributing a welcome spiciness and novelty to British culture, Muslims are viewed as an alienated, problematic minority' (Werbner, 2004:899). This alienation through Islamized political representation creates anxiety in Muslim women, who wear the '*hijab*' and thereby experience as Islamphobic response in public areas at times (Begum & Eade, 2005). Nevertheless, there has been a positive generational shifting of women's participation at the community level or in public space. For instance, third generation women, who are ideologically alienated from earlier generations, have created their own space by focusing concern on community development issues and 'curbing nascent

confrontational tendencies' through faith-based organisations (Begum & Eade, 2005:189).

According to Hussain (2007), the rise of new radical forms of Islamic identities of young generation British Bangladeshis has united them in a common goal, for instance to challenge the process of racialization (Keith, 2005). A sense of struggle amongst young generation Bangladeshi Muslims living in Britain has caused a societal dynamic of 'assimilation' versus 'segregation', which has forced young Muslims to redefine their identities as either 'moderates' or 'radical'. In consequence, the Muslim identity has been identified by third generation British Bangladeshi men not as a chosen one but rather one which has been ascribed to them.

However, the representation of the Islamist construction of an imagined global community by the young generation has been identified as challenging to secularist first generations. The two opposite political standpoints led generations involved in a process of competition and struggle for the adoption of community space (Eade & Garbin, 2002; Garbin, 2008). Examples include the expansion of the East London Mosque and the amplification of the Bengali New Year celebrations, which in some cases caused unexpected community violence (Eade & Garbin, 2002:147). Hence, it is important to focus on the gender role in community violence. It needs to be taken into account whether women as peacekeepers can contribute to conflict resolution.

The conflict between secularists and Islamists has been identified as a concern for collective memory and the process of transmitting nationalist ideology. Thus, diverse and changing political and ideological trends directly influence community life and the realm of personal belief and practices.

Nevertheless, the radical form of religious identity does not rule out a strong sense of Bengali ethno-nationalist identity (Gardner & Shakur, 1994), which indicates that intergenerational grouping and encounter is not as accurate a story of Bangladeshi communities as is often proposed, mainly in policy areas (Mac an Ghail & Haywood, 2005).

However, regardless of visible differences between 'British Muslim' and 'South-Asian popular' culture, they have some shared ideologies, such as a critical stance toward oppositional discourses, which attack culture, custom and tradition (Werbner, 2004). In being focused on family politics, they open up spaces for young people to assert agency

and autonomy, whether they draw on liberal discourses or Islamic ones (Werbner, 2004). However, the tension between the two discourses, pure and impure, is unavoidably a basis of conflict in British South Asian Muslim internal politics between those taking on realistic amalgamation and those articulating a more oppositional, exclusionary politics. This has led to the pluralisation of the public sphere in Britain (Werbner, 2004).

3.1.5 Religious identity

According to Eade (1996), by tradition, Muslims of the Bangladeshi community are Sunnis, associated to the syncretic Bareilvi custom, which highlighted the role of rituals, monuments and pir [a Muslim saint] (Garbin, 2005, Glynn, 2002). Although the religious identity of the community was less significant because of the strong presence of secularism and ethno-nationalism during the 1960s and 1970s, it became a major issue of community or public identity from the 1980s onward, due to the arrival of families and dependants (mentioned earlier) and a wider process of Islamisation (Eade, 2005; Eade, Fremeaux & Garbin 2001). Along with this changing process, a controversy over interpretations of Islam arose, which emphasized a 'pure' Islamism, through 'Deobandi' teachings (Eade, 1996; Glynn, 2002).

3.1.5.1 Role of religious organisations and politics of the community

During the 1980s, religious commitment was acknowledged in Tower Hamlets through a number of established amenities, replacing the more private prayer places of the older generation. The strong commitment to religion resulted in the creation of more than 40 mosques in Tower Hamlets with diverse directions, the most important being the East London Mosque, Brick Lane Mosque (Jamme Masjid), Bigland Street and Christian Street (Eade & Garbin, 2005), East London Mosque, which was established in the 1940s, is described as the oldest mosque in London. The mosque maintains a close connection with the Islamic political party Jamaat-e-Islami [through the YMO (Young Muslim Organisation)]. It is also linked with social welfare services, particularly dealing with local youth, building effective coalitions with local government and most importantly engaging women through the Maryam centre. Because of its reformist views on Islamic values, the mosque successfully manages to achieve funding from the Middle East and Pakistan (Eade, 1997a; Glynn, 2002; Garbin, 2005).

Islamic counselling service offered to the community women is one of the critical services provided since the non-profit umbrella organisation Muslim Women's Collective (MWC), established in 2007, moved to the Maryam Centre. It works to support both its members and the community in Tower Hamlets, both Muslims and non-Muslim families, by dealing with unemployment, domestic abuse, mental illness and improvement in the environment.

Brick Lane Mosque, formerly both a synagogue and a Huguenot chapel, is the main competitor of East London Mosque in the UK (Garbin, 2005). This mosque, having connections with the Bareilvi tradition, maintains a close link with local organisations of the Bangladeshi community, particularly the Bangladesh Welfare Association, situated next door and the Bangladesh government and High Commission in London. The mosque has been termed as the 'Bangladesh community mosque' by secular groups of community people (Garbin, 2005).

The shift of community politics from secular to religious has been noticeable in Tower Hamlet because of the rising significance of the East London Mosque (Eade & Garbin, 2002). The mosque actively directs the community function in maintaining links with the Youth Muslim Organisation (YMO). According to Garbin (2008), the East London Mosque works in partnership with local government organisations to deal with problems around health, housing, education, employment, drug addiction, family breakdown, and most importantly they are concerned about issues and initiatives relating with youth, aimed at the young generation of Bangladeshi descent, perceived as being at risk from drug and gang culture.

The East London Mosque is inspired by global Muslim politics in maintaining a close connection with the Islamic organisations Da'wat Ul Islam and the recently formed Islamic Forum Europe (IFE) in Oldham and Birmingham after a split in 1988 (Eade & Garbin, 2005, 2006; and Eade, 2005). Although religious organisations have played a significant role in encouraging unity and cohesion among social and communal groups, tension and conflicts among secular and religious organisations are still a serious concern in East London, which has been observed by the role of religious organisations during the Bengali-cultural festival (Eade, 2005; Eade & Garbin, 2005, 2006; Keith, 2005; Bhatt, 2006).

It has been observed that other parts of the Bangladeshi community in the UK have different forms of political involvement. For instance, a significant absence of local political organisations, as well as the practice of traditional ethno-nationalist and donor-consumer political affairs, have created barriers to the Bangladeshi organisation in Oldham (a major place of the 2001 riots) to access regeneration funding (Eade & Garbin, 2002, 2006; Kundnani, 2002).

The symbol of solid nationalist and cultural identity, the *Shahid Minar* (martyrs monument) was built in Oldham in 1997 and in Tower Hamlets in 1998. The significant thing is that conflict or tension between secular and faith based ideologies is less visible in Oldham and Birmingham compared to Tower Hamlets. The current acquisition in Oldham (Westwood) of a plot to construct Oldham Muslim Centre, along the lines of the East London Mosque in Whitechapel, appears to be an influential factor for a possible move, as does the growing presence of the Tablighi Jamaat group and the Political Islamic party Jamaat-e-Islami (through links with IFE and YMO) in Oldham and Birmingham (Eade & Garbin, 2005, 2006).

Islamist groups with radical values have not successfully created a strong space in the Bangladeshi communities (Eade & Garbin, 2005, 2006). A significant observation in generational politics is the unified voice against racism (Keith, 2005), which indicates that the new generational politics in some way continue earlier political trends. Rather than clear-cut ideological divergences and conflicts between pure Islamism and secular nationalism (the debate on Bengali New Year celebration, for instance), difference values exist at the level of the daily lives, informal and personal interactions of Bangladeshi community people (Keith, 2005; Eade, 1997a; Eade & Garbin, 2006; Husain, 2007). Besides, the effect of racist and Islamophobic attitudes around practices of traditional or religious communication and mobilisation has been noticeable (Eade, 1997a, 2005; Keith, 2005).

To sum up this section, I would like to say that the diverse and distinctive nature of the British Bangladeshi community has been characterised by changes across the generations and differences in the politics of trans-nationalism, place and power since the 1970s. A large group of second-generation migrants has emerged since that period. Hence, the strategies of diaspora identification and practices have been challenged through the debate of two generational ideologies, self-determination vis à vis mainstream British politics. However, gender issues in relation to identity formation

within the community were not discussed considerably in the second phase of migration, due to the significant absence of women migrants in the community before the 1980s. Significant changes have been observed in the community after the arrival of women, for example, the establishment of a number of religious institutions, halal shops, Islamic-Bengali-English schooling for children and so on, indicating the process of ethno-culturalization in the community beginning during the 1980s.

3.2 The British-Bangladeshi community (1980 onwards)

3.2.1 Emergent community

In the 1980s, the number of Bengali migrants in East London increased from 200,000, to 350,000 (Adams, 1987). According to the census of 1981, around 64,561, Bangladeshis were living in Britain (census, 1981 in Owen, 1995). Among those, around 16,000 were the British-born Bangladeshis recognized as second generation. A reference by Peace (1990) mentions that the growth of Bangladeshi people in Britain in 1987 was around 116,000. Almost 52% to 56% were born in Bangladesh and the British-born population who are recognised as third generation increased from 25% in 1981 to 40% in 1985-87 (Peach, 1990). Kabeer (2000) notes the changing gendered migration process; for instance, in the 1960s the ratio of migrant men to migrant women was 40:1 which dramatically shifted after the 80s to the 2:1 ratio recorded in the 1981 census (Kabeer, 2000).

These changing patterns of migration are caused by several reasons, such as anxiety about further legal restrictions regarding bringing family to Britain (Ali, 2000; Gardner & Shakur, 1994). Bangladesh's struggle before independence; the liberation war in 1971 and later on the economic crisis, political conflict and unpredictability of Independent Bangladesh, all made the migrant population feel insecure and led them to bring their families to Britain (Ansari, 2004). Because of the high unemployment rate of Bangladeshi migrants in Britain, it was not always possible to save enough money or resources to get back to Bangladesh (Carey & Shakur, 1985; Kabeer, 2000). The concern about the violation of Muslim culture and values through the influence of western culture (mostly in the case of women and children) led the Muslim Bangladeshi migrants to expand their community (Carey & Shakur, 1985; Kabeer, 2000). This cultural anxiety also influenced them to establish a significant number of religious and cultural organisations (Carey & Shakur, 1985; Ali, 2000), which has supported strong

religious sentiments in the community (Begum & Eade, 2005). On the other hand, the large group of young wives (the migrant husbands of the first generation are much older than their wives) and their Bangladeshi-born but British-brought up or British born and bred children have gradually represented the community (Ullah, 2007). Hence, from 1990 to 2004, the migration pattern of Bangladeshis to Britain was clearly dominated by youth groups and was slightly gendered. For instance, among the 900 migrant Bangladeshis at that time, 90 % were under the age of 45. Of those, 60% were between the age of 25-44, and 53% were male (Kyambi, 2005). Geographically, the community in East London was marked by the fear of reported violence in other areas. Therefore, Bangladeshi ethnic groups tend to find solidarity within their own communities to avoid racial harassment, which also reveals the slow social progression of the British-Bangladeshi community. Hence, the huge flow of ‘chain’ and family migration has created the internal drive for community formation strategies through which the British Bangladeshis secure their ethnic culture. Also, the gendering of migration is a significant feature for community formation and examination of Bangladeshi diaspora. To speed up migration and settlement, the practice of maintaining networks in Bangladesh and the UK has been continued, and this is actually a core mechanism for community formation and conservation.

With reference to the above discussion on the history of Bangladeshi migration to the UK I argue that the key indicators that influence Bangladeshi migration, including external structural, political and social aspects, should be taken into account, which perhaps challenges current overly culturalist views of migration and settlement.

To sum up this section, the early migration of a small number of Bangladeshi people to Britain created scope for further migration. Hence, the remarkable story of the distant past of earlier Bengali migrants draws the picture of the global migration of Bangladeshis to different parts of the world, rather than a migration to one particular area. Another significant issue is the historical predicament of empire that paved the way for a huge range of migration and created scope to enable and reproduce certain practices and places of settlement in the UK. This challenges the common discourse that presents Bengalis in the UK as latecomers (Dench et al., 2006) and the prevailing notions of ‘self-isolation’ and alienation; which control political and policy discourses in relation to Muslim communities in the UK. The most important issue, which has been identified from the second phase of migration, is the early imperial trade business and subsequent global foreign trade business that made a huge impact on the class-based

migration of the Bangladeshi migrants. For instance, the practice of overseas migration through labour work was very frequent until the 1970s. That is why a big working class Bangladeshi Sylheti community has gradually developed in Britain, particularly in Tower Hamlets. It also gives an indication about the established mechanisms for present-day migration through marriage or restaurant business.

It has been observed that community politics and identity shift over time. In the 1960s, community politics was dominated by ethno-nationalism. After a decade, in the 1970s, community identity witnessed a clash between the ethno-nationalist ideology of the first generation and the anti-racist ideology of the emerging second generation. In a similar way, since the end of 1980s, an imagined 'religious identity' has been developed in the process of the politicization and structuralization of religion among the British born third generation in the Bangladeshi community in Britain. Hence, conflict has been going on amongst three generations in terms of ideological differences (Eade & Garbin, 2002).

3.3 Bangladeshi women in Britain

The aim of this section is to present the women-related issues that have been given significance in the existing literature in terms of the identity formation of British Bangladeshi women in Britain. Consequently, the section will focus on some emerging issues in relation to women in the community, which have been ignored but need to be taken into account to understand the intersection of gender in diaspora studies. Hence, my present research is important in addressing these gaps.

3.3.1 Transnational migration and women in the community

In the mid-1980s, first and second generation women formally started their migration in Britain as transnational migrants (Phillipson et al., 2003; Gardner, 2006). According to Phillipson et al. (2003) of the Bangladeshi migrants who have arrived since the mid-1980s, 3 out of 10 are women and adult children of migrant parents. Their initial adjustment or formation of diaspora families without support networks in Britain was far more challenging for them than for their male counterparts (Phillipson et al., 2003; Gardner, 2006; Ullah, 2007). Coming to an unfamiliar environment and facing often conflicting cultures affected women in such a way they detached themselves from the British culture to a significant degree, which to some extent indicates the static nature of

diaspora identity (Phillipson et al., 2003). However, by developing social support and family care networks, gradually the first generation women were able to form transnational families after experiencing a complex period of transition (Phillipson et al., 2003; Gardner, 2006), which shows the process of changing social identities through transnational migration (Phillipson et al., 2003; Gardner, 2006). Thus, it has been argued that although first generation men were the central characters in formation of the Bangladeshi community in Britain, the first generation women, also played a significant role in developing the community through social networks of visiting and reciprocity (Khanum, 1994) and therefore changed the community identities (Gardner, 2006).

According to Platt (2007) British Bangladeshi people are considered as the poorest, diasporic community among all ethnic groups, of whom they constitute 65%. The community has a homogenous image as a 'poor and disadvantaged ethnic group' in the UK. Nevertheless, the successful maintenance of transnational links and families of the first generation of migrant women, despite living with poor household income and status, could be considered as showing the positive and strong role of women in the families. However, this is an unexplored area and needs to be taken into account from a heterogenic point of view.

In her research interview on Bengali Muslim migrant wives in the period after 1947, under the project 'The Bengal Diaspora', Alexander (2013) reveals that having developed strong family ties in Britain, first generation migrant wives neither wished to return nor to visit Bangladesh. Thus, notions of family, home and belonging have been transformed into the process of transnational connection. Hence, wider cultural linkage and values have been formed trans-nationally by reason of the Bangladeshi migrant wives (Gardner, 2006). According to Alexander (2013), this transformation process has helped to cushion their individual experiences of displacement and also has influenced the situations of the earlier male migrants, establishing the grounds for religious and ethnic organisations and familial networks. Consequently, women have established themselves as transformative agents in breaking 'traditional' gendered relationships in the migration process and reducing the divisions between 'home' and 'abroad', a contribution which has been overlooked till now (Kabeer, 2000; Lievens, 1999 in Alexander, 2013). By symbolising stereotypical ideas of culture and differences that assume women are passive spreaders of ethnic culture and want to remain fixed within

their [own] cultural boundary, the strategy of ‘immigration control 2011’⁸ effects transnational marriages and isolates non-EU brides from the process of amalgamation into multicultural Britain (Alexander, 2013). Consequently, the strategy ignores the roles of migrant women as dynamic mediators and contributors to wider processes of communal and social transformation.

In her research on Bangladeshis in Manchester, Khanum (2001) argues the effect of racist immigration policies in shattering the route of family reunification in the UK. According to Khanum, migration has caused complex household formations and decline of traditional kin support networks, which has seriously affected women, particularly older migrant women and widows in Britain.

3.3.2 Feminization of the migration process

The religious and cultural ideological discourses in Bangladesh idealize the good wife as ‘caring’ (Gardner, 2006). Based on that notion, the vast majority of the first generation women came to Britain to continue the role of caring for sick and elderly husbands and children that they used to perform in Bangladesh. Community activities through day care centres, welfare organisations or NGOs in Britain further strengthened and formalized Bangladeshi women’s cultural identities as ‘the carers’ (Gardner, 2006). Therefore, the role of gender in Bangladeshi migration has brought out profoundly concerning social policy discussions already mentioned, for instance, regarding the processes of ageing and social care (Phillipson et al., 2000; Phillipson et al., 2003; Gardner, 2002). Women’s roles as caregivers to husbands, children and older family members or relatives also show the complete distinctions in the gendered motivations for and practices of migration.

In her research on Bengali elders in Tower Hamlets, Gardner (2002) shows that the argument of migration has always reflected a highly gendered account. Bangladeshi migrant men have always been identified as dynamic and mobile breadwinners (2002:94), concentrating on matters of labour and the capability to overcome difficulties despite the homesickness of initial settlement. On the other hand, women have been

⁸ “On 10 October 2011, Prime Minister David Cameron announced a range of new measures to control immigration to Britain. Seen by many as an ‘immigration crackdown’ (Travis 2011a), the speech targeted four areas: work visas, ‘bogus’ international students, ‘forced’ and ‘sham’ marriages and illegal immigration. Insisting that ‘excessive immigration brings pressures, real pressures, on our communities up and down the country’, Cameron proposed a system ‘that . . . doesn’t just sound tough, but is tough’, monitoring the borders and, internally, tightening up the requirements for citizenship to place ‘British history and culture at the heart of it’”(Cameron, 2011 in Alexander 2013:333).

seen within their household as wives, mothers and daughters-in-law, who are always performing a femininity that is reproduced through culturalization (Anthias & Yuval Davis, 1992). According to Gardner (2002), Bangladeshi migrant women are recognised formally as ‘dependants’ due to their migrant status, which is marked by passiveness and often reflected in their own and their husbands’ accounts (Gardner, 2002).

Similarly, Phillipson et al. (2003) note that the feminization of migration has been recognised in a dominating way, in which men have been over represented as central and active migrants due to their involvement in the labour industry in Britain, and women have been symbolised as passive. Therefore women’s contribution in shaping the community and developing transnational networks has been overlooked.

In the second phase of migration (1980 to the late 1990s), transnational marriage was identified as a way to reunite wives and families with their husbands in Britain. Contemporary migration is mainly led by transnational marriage (Gardner, 2006). Most of the family members of transnational families nowadays stay together in Britain (Gardner, 2006; Rozario, 2004), which has influenced the changing nature of transnationalism and the concept of home and belonging.

3.3.3 Transnational marriage in maintaining transnational link and shaping the community

Transnational marriage is one vital way, by which migration from Bangladesh to Britain has happened. The route of transnational migration has had huge impacts on the household formation of Bangladeshis, both in the UK and in Bangladesh (Phillipson et al., 2003). According to Gardner (2002), although the transnational migration of women is often tied to marriage, there are different reasons, concerns and forms of power behind the migration in relation to their differences.

Due to the transnational division of conjugal labour, first generation men were privileged to migrate to Britain during the 1950s and 1960s, while women also participated in the migration project of their husbands by remaining and managing ‘households’ in Sylhet (Gardner, 2006). Their practices of maintaining transnational links revealed the fluid nature of transnational migration. Long term separation from migrant husbands, segregation and loneliness instigated the first generation Bangladeshi migrant wives to create space for control and a sense of agency, to enjoy freedom, to

empower themselves and prove their positive management of households in two places (Sylhet and London) and reject dependence on their husbands (Gardner, 2006).

On the other hand, a few wives of migrants, were able to migrate during that period. However they had to go through a difficult struggle in Britain too. According to Ullah (2007), during the earlier stages of settlement, particularly in the 1960s, the very first Bengali migrant women faced severe loneliness and lived in extreme isolation. The small number of Bangladeshi neighbours resulted in self-segregation and migrant women being stuck at home all day, which created barriers to their socialization and active public engagement.

However, Bangladeshi women mostly started to migrate from Bangladesh at a critical stage of British economic development. Gardner (1998) states, “Over the 1970s and into the 1980s conditions started to change. Britain’s industrial sector was in decline, and after losing their jobs in the North, many Sylheti men moved down to London to seek employment in the garment or restaurant trades” (1998:509). According to Ahmed (2005), these numbers were supplemented by the new influx and the seeds of a ghetto were sown. A ‘functional underclass’ emerged (2005:104). Galbraith (1992) suggests that a ‘functional underclass’ indicates a group which is marginalised in three interconnected ways: socially through poor education and vulnerability to drugs, criminality and housing deprivation; economically through joblessness or insecure work; and politically in powerlessness to influence decisions (in Ahmed 2005:104). The Bangladeshi community in the 1970s experienced all the three factors, which remain to a large degree relevant today. The situation of first generation migrant women in that particular context was influenced not only by the functional underclass positioning of the community but also by gender stereotyping. These had a significant effect on the positionality of women. Bangladeshi women who migrated entered into a social environment where there was a significant Bangladeshi community that had hitherto been controlled by men. By transferring cultural tradition and custom to some degree from Sylhet, Bangladeshi migrant men had already developed a social code of ideals in their community in Britain. Hence, these sorts of customs, structural issues of racism and ghettoization created barriers for women in getting engaged with the broader host community, and laid down the rules of conduct. Furthermore, the class position that women entered, with their husbands working as low wage earners in relatively unskilled works living and working in deprived inner-city areas, had a serious impact on the range of options available to the newly-arrived women (Ahmed, 2005:104).

Confronted with segregation and in efforts to achieve more or less unity in their diaspora settings, Bangladeshi migrant men and women tried to reconstruct their native land inside their homes, in all possible ways. Women started using attractive ornaments, portraits, and photographs, upholding customs and traditions, and so on. Through creating their space in such a solid and constant way, they were also defining their own selves and validating their own sets of ideals and principles (Ahmed, 2005). Thus by trying to upholding their home away from home (Werbner, 2004), Bangladeshi migrant women were able, to some extent, to make a shield from the territory they had come to through migration. As Bangladeshi migrant men stayed away from home for long hours due to their participation in outside work, women of their household, who had less scope and opportunities outside, had played the major role in decorating their homes with artefacts that they carried with them from Bangladesh and cooked similar food. Additionally, they transmitted the rituals of prayer to other women in the community in socialising with community women to achieve a sense of community and village life (Ahmed, 2005).

The necessities of migration oblige women to reappraise their perceptions of self and to take on both social and economic roles, which may be rejected at home (Bujis 1993:2 in Ahmed, 2005). Meanwhile, Gardner (2002) reveals that gender, culture and age play curtain roles in terms of women's perceived quality of learning English. There were many practicalities that restricted women in learning language skills. For instance, the long distances of language-learning centres from home posed a major obstacle for the first generation women whose mobility was restricted by the cultural and *pardah* taboos. Moreover, they considered themselves as already too old to learn English. Thus, the first generation women lacked the power of self-motivation. Additionally, work as a crucial element, had influenced both the comparative mobility of women and men and their necessity to learn English (Gardner, 2002).

Although first generation women maintained the traditional female roles that they had held in Bangladesh, they expanded their responsibilities in daily life routines based on new socio-cultural settings (Ahmed, 2005). This could be seen as adaptability without drastic changes. Their usual duties towards families in Bangladesh, of cooking, feeding, washing, cleaning, rearing and teaching Islamic education to children, could successfully be repeated in Britain. Women who came from Sylhet, where there was no electricity, met the challenge of adapting to the English life, with washing machine, microwave, heater, vacuum cleaner etc. and then reproduce their traditional style of

house, food and wears. Then again, women who learned the English language started taking their children to and from English schools and Bengali language learning centres and attending parents' meetings at their children's school, which would have been the role of men in the household in Bangladesh.

Here it is significant to find out whether there is any influence of traditional religious practice of first generation migrant women on the identity formation of second and third generation women. This is an unfocused area to date. Besides, the adaptation strategies of first generation of migrant women through maintaining transnational links, reconstructing 'home' within family and expanding it in the community, can be viewed as sustaining the power or agency of these women. It is also important to consider whether there is any influence of sustaining power on second or third generation women in terms of the roles played and their identity formation process in the community.

According to Ahmed (2005) some of the first generation women were able to achieve and reconstruct their roles to their benefit and get the most out of opportunities, for instance, for education and employment that had previously been unobtainable to them in Bangladesh. These struggles for changes not only created positive effects in their lives in terms of enjoying self-determination and empowerment, but also had a ripple effect through the community, with others following their lead and therefore shifting the nature of the community (Ahmed, 2005). Expanding their language skills, first generation migrant women had several choices available to them. Even a basic knowledge of English language liberated women from their dependence on others to help with, for example, doctors' appointments and shopping. This boosted their self-confidence in venturing outside the home on their own for their own purposes. For those who were able to acquire more than a basic knowledge of English, the formal labour market became a possibility (Ahmed, 2005). However, these contributions of women in sustaining the Bangladeshi community and generations in the UK are still unacknowledged and little known. It is important to consider the role of first generation women in family dynamics and how it subsequently shapes the role of second and third generation women.

The process of transnational migration between Bangladesh and Britain is not only centred solely on the individual; rather it is a process of household, connections of groups of people, which intersects places (Gardner, 2006). Transnational wives were recognised as nurturing weavers in creating and maintaining links between neighbours

and relatives of the in-laws family (Gardner, 2006). It has been observed that during the first phase of movement to Britain (1950 to 1980), a split in the relationship between wives and immigrant husbands was maintained due to traditional cultural practices and their influence on transnational marriages of the Sylheti Bangladeshis (Gardner, 2006). In the process of changing migration pattern, first generation women played a dynamic role in community formation and maintenance of transnational migration. Without wives' contribution to the maintenance of transnational families, it would not have been possible for men to go through the process of migration in Britain, a point which has been ignored in accounts of migration (Gardner, 2006). Hence it is important to consider the role of first generation women behind the success of the first generation men in the public realm.

3.3.4 Women in racialised migration

The situations of Bangladeshi Muslim migrant brides reveal the construction of the process of racialization, ethnicization and gendering migration in politics, strategies and practices in Britain. According to Gardner (2002) and Samad and Eade (2002), the formal immigration procedure had a serious effect on women. Bangladeshi migrant women trying to enter Britain were placed under inspection, both physically and legally. For instance, during the 1970s and 1980s many Asian women were subjected to virginity tests, lately foul of primary purpose legislation and the present forced marriage.

In the case of the 'virginity testing' controversy, this scrutiny took the form of a physical examination aimed at determining the sexual integrity of the migrant woman's body. The inspection procedure of immigration was intended to identify whether Asian women entering as dependent migrants were genuine wives or fiancées, based on traditional cultural and medical categorises of female morality and sexuality. According to Levine (2006) and Parmar (1982), the targeting of family migration, and particularly female migration from South Asia to Britain, has a long and oppressed history (Levine, 2006; Parmar, 1982). A report by the *Guardian* in May 2011 reveals the practice of the 'virginity testing' of wives from the Indian Sub-continent migrating to Britain in the late 1970s, which Home Office records have shown to be more extensive than had been formerly recognised, concerning at least 80 women (Travis, 2011). Also the report highlights the statements of Australian legal academics, Dr Marinella Marmo and Dr

Evan Smith that, ‘immigration officers justified the use of the tests on the stereotype of South Asian women as ‘submissive, meek and tradition bound’ and on the ‘absurd generalisation’ that they were always virgins before they married’ (Travis, 2011).

Thus, South Asian migrant women had to admit their subordination before entering Britain legally, as well as comply with the presumed notions and predispositions of the British society. This legal practice proves ‘a desire for order’ (Doty, 2003:12) that immigration control shaped through the repetition of the stratification of society based on colonialist-racist attitudes. In her statement for the *Guardian*, the director of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Hina Majid, says, “Whilst this is a practice of the past, it is demonstrative of a wider and indeed on-going tendency to side-line women in immigration policy making...many migrant women continue to be denied equal treatment and the full enjoyment of their human rights” (Travis, 2011). At this point, the gendering of immigration rules, and the intersection of racist, culturist and sexist constructions of the position of migrant women within these policies, remains of significance in the existing legislation in relation to marriage migration.

Nevertheless, the constriction of immigration law during the 1970s to which I referred earlier influenced British Bangladeshi men to bring their families in Britain, which resulted in a significant number of women, particularly wives migrating to Britain. Although immigrant men were reluctant to bring their wives in Britain due to fear of imagined effects of English culture, the persuasive strategies of wives encouraged husbands to change their minds, and not to live at a distance from their wives, which allowed the unfolding of the role of women as change agents in the migration history of British Bangladeshis (Alexander, 2013).

However, the socio-cultural taboos or cultural backwardness in Bangladesh caused restrictions on women’s migration for independent labour (Kabeer, 2000), which promoted and supported the process of chain migration and reinforced the process and idea of women as ‘dependent migrants’ (Alexander, 2013:339). The culture and ritual of marriages in Bangladesh was changed (marriage over the phone) through the process of transnational marriage (Alexander, 2013). Concurrently, the environment of the British Bangladeshi community was transformed into an ethno-Islamic one by the establishment of Islamic institutions such as mosque, school, halal shops etc. that could free the community men from anxiety about the influence of western culture on their Muslim Bangladeshi wives and children (Begum & Eade, 2005; Gardner, 2006;

Alexander, 2013). Hence, the shifting family migration had been shaped by varying situations in both Bangladesh and Britain.

Moreover, the role of the nation-state influenced the experiences of transnational migration, transnational linkage, the process of settlement and the ways in which gendered and ethnicised discourses and practices made an impact on the lives of women migrants, their families and communities, in both Bangladesh and Britain (Alexander, 2013). In terms of the migration process, the state attempts to change the cultural practices regarding marriage and family creation, simultaneously positioning these cultural practices as outside of, and in contradiction to the modern nation. However, women's changing sense of self as Bengali Muslim women in British context, and their resilience, agency, and engagement across social and cultural boundaries, challenge the dominant symbolization of Bangladeshi Muslim women as passive victims (Alexander, 2013).

3.3.5 Young women and contemporary transnational marriage

It has been discussed earlier that the British Bangladeshi community is one of the UK's most underprivileged ethnic groups, with poor economic, education and health status. The conditions of the women among them are even worse. The community itself has been unsupportive regarding this disadvantaged situation, particularly on health matters (Rozario, 2004). The prevention of genetic illness or genetic counselling must be addressed from the British Bangladeshi Muslim societal context, their views, tradition and practice regarding consanguineous marriage rather than in purely biomedical terms (Rozario, 2004). Chain migration through transnational marriage leads to cousins marrying as a means of bringing relatives to Britain. The assumption is that this kind of marriage relationship is likely to be much happier and longer lasting, as kin members will have the same values and therefore will be more understanding of each other (Rozario, 2004). It has been observed that gradually, however younger generations are becoming reluctant to continue this pattern of marriage. They prefer to marry partners from the community in Britain (Gardner, 2006; Rozario, 2004).

The tradition of polygamous marriages and the structure of transnational families of older generation influence the status of women in these families and the attitude of family members toward genetic diseases and genetic counselling (Rozario, 2004). The distance and hierarchical distinction between educated, well-off non Sylheti British

Bangladeshis and less educated, less well-off Sylheti Bangladeshis in relation to social class creates barriers to access to proper health care, especially due to the dominance of non-Sylheti British Bangladeshis as translators and social or health workers (Rozario, 2004). The traditional Bangladeshi cultural values and customs that have been identified as equally central in Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi community in Britain are very influential in encouraging consanguineous marriage and increasing the risk of genetic illness (Rozario, 2004).

For example, the kinship system of marriage leads Bangladeshi brides to leave their parents' home and join with their husbands' single or extended families. From the 1960s to 1980s, Bangladeshi wives joined their migrant husbands and their families, leaving behind their parental home and relatives in Bangladesh (Rozario, 2004). A contemporary transnational marriage means that not only do wives join their husbands to Britain but also husbands join their British Bangladeshi wives, as a way of maintaining transnational households in Britain. This is also a process of settlement of Bangladeshi men in Britain (Gardner, 2006; Rozario, 2004). The maintenance of transnational links thus has been changed but not declined. Nowadays to marry Bangladeshi based cousins gives more space and freedom to British born Bangladeshi women, due to the fact of their 'UK born and brought up' status (Rozario, 2004). In contrast, the first generation of migrant women, who were from male dominated culture and came to Britain as housewives (Ferdowsi, 2012), had little scope to enjoy freedom, due to their role as dedicated and submissive housewives in their husband's families in the UK (Phillipson et al., 2003).

Similarly, it is now easier for third generation women to achieve economic and political empowerment, since they have better education and language skills (Phillipson et al., 2003; Ferdowsi, 2012), whereas women in the 1970s, who came to Britain from rural villages of Bangladesh with little Bengali literacy, and after that, had to struggle tremendously to adjust in an alien environment with the lack of family and community support networks (Ullah, 2007). For them, to get access to public life and access to decision-making power within family or community in terms of women's empowerment was very challenging. At these instants, intersection of context, gender, generation and migration pattern can be seen as an influential factor, which shapes diaspora people's life differently. However, a majority of woman still depend on their husbands due to their poor educational qualification, unemployment, and even lack of control over their own resources (Rozario, 2004). Thus the primary role of women is reproduction and

many British Bangladeshi families consist of more than three children, which is even higher than current scenario of urban Bangladesh (Rozario, 2004).

However, the crucial thing is the significant impact of global Muslim identity on young British Bangladeshis, which encourages young Bangladeshis to view and respond to every aspect of their lives more Islamically. It also affects attitudes towards issues arising in relation to genetic disorders (Rozario, 2004). The standpoints of British-born Bangladeshi women are more restrictive than existing Islamic fatwas would require on issues such as termination of pregnancy and contraception (Rozario, 2004). Since many British Bangladeshi imams migrated from rural areas of Bangladesh and had limited exposure to international Islamic doctrines and legal opinions, thus caused lack of awareness on genetic problems among the community peoples. However, some young British-born Bangladeshi women confront consanguineous and arranged marriage, knowing the possibility of genetic disorders (Rozario, 2004). Although the older generation of Bangladeshi migrant women may be disinclined to share information relating to genetic problems, British-born Bangladeshi women are often more positive towards children with genetic disabilities (Rozario, 2005).

3.3.6 Muslim identity' practice of young women

Amongst the ethnic groups in the UK, Bangladeshi women represent the highest unemployment rate and differences in employment patterns (Platt, 2007). This has been identified as resulting from poor levels of language and educational capabilities, the structure of the labour market, and, most importantly, the purposes and timing of migration, which reveal that the women's backgrounds hinder their positioning at different times and in different contexts in Britain (Ahmed, 2007). For instance, the women migrants of earlier generations did not become skilled and educated in English due to traditional cultural drawbacks, while it was easier for their next generation British-born daughters to have the opportunity to acquire the language. Even if some older generation women had certain skills and the opportunity to become involved in employment sector, their responsibility for house-work and family members and stereotypical cultural norms (women are primarily responsible for household caring activities) obstructed women's economic empowerment (Ahmed, 2007).

In the current context, the ambitious education and employment careers of young daughters indicate that their roles and career plans are completely different from those

of their mothers. Although families of Bangladeshi Muslim women are encouraging their daughters' educational achievements in the hope that they will bring respectable status for the families, it is also essential to attain these achievements without endangering the family honour. If a girl stays at home longer under the observation of her family, there is a less likelihood that she will become involved in activities, which could damage the family's reputation (Ahmed, 2007). Yet again, some parents fear that permitting daughters to continue education post-16 could damage their marriage chances (Dale et al., 2010). These scenarios show how the process of migration and the formation of diaspora identities reinforce gender hierarchical relations and masculine power through the intersection of generations with the processes of gendering, racialization and ethnicization.

According to Ali (2008), by conceptualizing themselves as Muslim rather than English, South Asian Muslims challenge the current setting of national belonging more of metaphorical boundary of British identity (Ali, 2008). These formations of complex identities are in contrast to their parents' identities and affirmed against exclusionary, racialised or essentialised constructions of 'Britishness' or 'whiteness'. These complex identities produce defensive discourses that reinforce gender roles and masculine power over young South Asian Muslim women by controlling their mobility and dress code (Dwyer, 2000). The rebelliousness embodied in wearing English clothes seen as a symbol of sexuality, has been considered a threat to ethnic or religious 'purity'. Thus dress has been recognised as a very important factor in making distinction between pure Muslim and English (Dwyer, 2000:478).

However, confining gender identities have been challenged through a new form of 'Muslim' identity (dress-code, long, concealing western dress) of young South Asian Muslim women, which represents 'alternative Islamic diaspora' (Dwyer, 2000). However, the donning of full Islamic dress remains complicit with the dominant patriarchal rhetoric of the veil (Dwyer, 2000). While according to the young generation of Muslim women, the consciousness of 'Islam' is enlightening rather than repressive; it is a traditional culture, which oppresses women (Ahmed, 2007; Dwyer, 2000).

Besides, the positive experiences of a large group of South Asian (mostly Bangladeshi and Pakistani) Muslim women relating to university education oppose the perception that is given to university as dis-locating them from their religion and culture (Ahmed, 2007). Muslim female students who live in university accommodation have been able to

rationalize their thoughts on their religion and culture in a positive sense that challenges their parents' fear about their living far from home, due to concern about the 'westernizing influence' of universities (Ahmed, 2007). Acquiring higher education has been identified by Muslim women as a way of gaining self-confidence, exploring self-consciousness, maintaining their religious values, enhancing their marriage prospects and making friends from diverse backgrounds (Ahmed, 2007). These successes of South Asian Muslim women provide a sense of social responsibility that breaks the stereotypical images of them.

Subsequently, the great presence of Bangladeshi young women in higher education compared to boys, gives an indication that young generation Bangladeshi women of the community are narrowing the gender gap in pursuing higher education (Dale et al., 2010). As representatives of an ethnic group, higher qualification is necessary for British Bangladeshi women, who are very conscious about their supposed struggle in competing with white candidates in the employment sector. Traditional cultural attitudes in the family and community constrain Muslim women's paths to economic empowerment, especially when these women are married but trying to enter into the employment sector after completing higher education. At this point, educated Muslim women must apply a negotiating strategy to convince both their husbands and mothers-in-laws of their need for higher education (Dale et al., 2010). As the primary party responsible for rearing and caring activities, young working Muslim women try to pursue both domestic and public roles; hence they prefer part time job rather than full time office hours, in order to balance the private and public roles equally (Dale et al., 2010). While they feel traditional culture in many ways constructs obstacles, they perceive there is no incompatibility between being a devout Muslim and being involved in employment sector (Dale et al., 2010). Although young South Asian women value Muslim identity rather than ethno-national identity in sustaining their commitment to Islamic morals (Ahmed, 2007; Dwyer, 2000) and upholding family reputations, they successfully manage traditional cultural demands as well (Dale et al., 2010).

On the other hand, the categorization and hegemonic conceptualization of British Muslim women also influence the participation level and experiences of young British Muslim women in higher education and have further impacts on their identity construction and negotiating mechanism (Ahmed, 2007). A series of recent studies reveal that the poor status of women in education and employment are the result of a number of factors, for instance, racism and discrimination, social deprivation and

poverty, timing of migration, and the changing process of diaspora society (Ahmed, 2007). The stereotypical discourses around the imagined threat of extremism and Islamic fundamentalism to institutions of higher education show that fears concerning the influence of certain radical groups are often exaggerated and configured around racialized referents, which represent Muslim political identities as aggressive toward non-Muslims (Ahmed, 2007). British Muslim men are the major group suspected in these forms of discourse. However, the highly publicised debate on the banning of *niqab* (a veil worn by some Muslim women that is made of lightweight fabric, covers most of the face, and leaves only the eyes uncovered) in London University after the London 2005 bombings indicates that Muslim women are also categorised by such discourses (Ahmed, 2007). Unwillingness to take part in western culture by, for instance, joining in drinking and clubbing activities, in addition to white middle-class students' lack of any effort to learn about Muslim culture and practice, create clear-cut distinctions between South Asian Muslims and white British students. This has caused Muslim women to be identified as 'other' by fellow students (Ahmed, 2007). Besides, wearing *hijab* has been considered a form of gauging assimilation or exclusion by the university drinking culture (Ahmed, 2007). Fear of 'Islamophobia' and therefore racist attitudes and behaviour towards Muslim women in higher education has been revealed as a concern to progressive and ambitious students who are Muslim women. Besides, colonial bias in reading lists for arts related courses, including Islamic or South Asian content, defines the constricted views towards Muslim or ethnic cultures, which disappoints women studying arts, religion, politics or culture (Ahmed, 2007).

Moreover, the stereotypical representation of traditional culture by others imposes oppressions on young Bangladeshi Muslim women in many different ways in their everyday lives. For instance, the arranged marriage system of the British Bangladeshi Muslim community is commonly depicted as a form of domination over women, while many young British Bangladeshi Muslim women want to rely on their parents' choice about their grooms from the country of origin and therefore prefer arranged marriages (Dwyer, 2000). On this point, 'imaginary home' through the continuous process of migration creates ambivalence as well as resistance for young Muslim women, who are connected to the country of origin metaphorically and practically, particularly through intermarriage connections (Dwyer, 2000).

On the other hand, Alexander (2013) notes that nowadays, British-born Bangladeshi women are more interested in higher education than in marriage. The boundaries of

marriage for Bengalis in the UK are therefore more absorbent at present, reflecting changing approaches towards women's status, education and religion. Earlier, Bangladeshi migrant parents were very strict in terms of arranging marriages to block threats or prevent anxiety regarding cultural and religious mixing in the diaspora family and community. However, parents are more positive and liberal today, as Indian, Pakistani, and Turkish are seen as acceptable if they are Muslims. However, it has not been investigated to date whether parents' domination and control over young daughter's choices and options in terms of marriage in earlier days has had intersectional effects on young daughters' process of identity formation, rather than only posing a barrier to achieving higher education.

However, alternative Islamic identities that young Muslim women practise open up opportunities to confront these trivial representations (Dwyer, 2000). Thus, religion has been identified as a crucial element affecting women across generations (Samad & Eade, 1992). The young generation of Muslim women has redefined their new form of Muslim identity by donning Islamized western dresses as a contextual demand. In this instance, religion has been recognised as a positive marker of identity over ethnicity or citizenship by the young generation Muslim women, in which they explore solidarity collectively, by breaking away from the repressive identity that is continuously recognised as deleterious. Now, the important thing is, whether this new identity can be a concern for inclusive development and justice, whether the new Muslim identity could transcend the controversy of 'integration'/'exclusion' for inclusive development in multicultural Britain.

However, the Bangladeshi community, which is three generations old, is still considered to be struggling with conflicting values and traditions. Particularly, the on-going controversy is that that the young generation British-born women are experiencing the pressure of extremist values, which can make them feel that they themselves are a product of a clash of two cultures (Ullah, 2007).

3.3.7 Gender and political identity

Although a number of research projects have explored the formation of the political identity of British Bangladeshis in relation to community formation, the role of women (particularly first generation) behind the development of community identity and politics remains an unexplored area. The existing works on the process of formation of

the ethno-nationalist identity of the first generation have ignored the gender and intersection issues. In particular, historical accounts of the role and contribution of first generation women for the independence of Bangladesh completely neglected women's role, whether the direct or indirect support of first generation women or transnational wives in forming the ethno-nationalist identity in context.

Several studies on this group of women have described their initial struggle and adjustment process in the UK. For example, the works of Gardner (1993), Phillipson et al. (2003), Ullah (2007), Alexander (2013) and others have critically explored the role of first generation women in maintaining transnational ties, family formation and re-forming the ethno-cultural identity (Ahmed, 2005) in the community. The majority of the works of Eade and Garbin on the British Bangladeshi community unfold the process of generational shifting in the political identity and community, in which women of the earlier generation have been identified as invisible in local government and nationalist politics or community level participation.

In particular, Begum and Eade (2005) and Garbin (2008) focus on the successful contribution of second generation women in developing their position at the decision making level within local Council bodies. The second generation as 'women' has been discussed by social researchers (mentioned earlier) who have argued that their changing political views from ethno-nationalist to mainstream and anti-racist is because of the failure of the first generation in utilising community resources. Nevertheless, there is still a gap in identifying the driving force of these women to engage in local politics. Gender and intersectional exploration in relation to political identity may suggest diverse experiences in terms of involvement in mainstream politics.

3.4 Concluding discussion

From the literature discussed above, the issues of generation, gender, and religion have been identified as influential and pertinent in the experience of Bangladeshi migration and settlement. It has been observed that there is a lack of work on women's issues such as individual life, family transformation and daily purposes of community formation, religious influence in identity formation (although previous works on religion focus on cultural identity), current forms of maintenance of transnational networks, political participation and the decision-making process in the family and community, which focus on generations, new migrants and local specificities

concerning intersectional discourse in the Bangladeshi Diaspora in the UK. Again, the experiences of first generation women in relation to intersectional discourses has been identified as an issue that has generated less research, although the empirical work of Gardner (2002) on older generation Bangladeshis considers the migration narratives of older men and women (Phillipson et al., 2003). According to Gardner (2002) the experiences of first generation elder migrants might have been more transnational than those of the younger generation.

Although the process of gendering migration is crucial for community formation as well as for the examination of diaspora, particularities, memory, belonging and so on, this is a much ignored issue in existing works (except Kabeer, 2000; Gardner, 2002). There is literally no work done on present migration practice, although statistics show that there is still considerable immigration to the Bangladeshi community. Thus a concern needs to be raised regarding the issue of gendering migration (brides).

However, there are some attempts to discuss Muslim women as a common group and create a history of works on South Asian women (Brah, 1996; Puwar & Raghuram, 2003). Mainstream research on the Bangladeshi diaspora is very much dominated by Tower Hamlets, London (as a symbolic representation of the Bangladeshi community).

Besides, mainstream works on the Bangladeshi community in the UK have largely prioritized issues relating to the public sector, which is practically entirely male-centric. Very little is known about the role of women who are contemporary migrants, their adaptation strategy and maintenance of transnational linkage in the changing social, cultural and political context of the British Bangladeshi Muslim community. Very little is known about the maintenance of transnational political links, experiences, and the identifications of third generation British born Bangladeshi women. The nature of transnational marriage relationships between Bangladeshi-based husbands and UK-based wives, and their impact on the formation of British–Bangladeshi transnationalism and community in Britain, are still under-researched themes. Yet again, it is necessary to know more about the intersection of religion, class, and generation and its influences on women in their day-to-day lives, community formation and their relationships within the wider Bangladeshi community. Moreover, the areas of migration, for instance, masculine dimensions of initial migration patterns, and the prevalence of young generation women in the current process of migration, of the

private sphere, of religion, and of space have clear gendered elements, which have been under-researched up to now. Hence my present research focuses on these gaps.

Chapter 4: Four Cohorts in the Bangladeshi community in London

In this chapter I present my rationale for classifying my research participants in four *cohorts*, rather than referring to first, second and third *generation* of Bangladeshi migrants. I will outline the particular set of characteristics of each cohort. My aim here is to explain, with ethnographic vignettes, the different ways in which the women's multiple identities in each intersect in terms of social class, occupation, family biography, socio-economic status, relationships, and sense of belonging.

4.1 Cohorts and generations

4.1.1 Problematizing the concept of 'generation'

I mentioned (in Chapter 3) that the diverse and distinctive nature of the British Bangladeshi community is characterised by changes across the generations and differences in the politics of trans-nationalism, place and power in work by Eade (1989, 1990, 1991 and 1994) Garbin (2008) and, Eade & Garbin (2001, 2002, 2005, and 2006). However, in their work, the male and females migrants have commonly been described by the 'generation' term. While, the term 'generation' is problematic. It is unable to address the different aspects of Bangladeshi migrants in relation to their age, sex, gender, marriage and time of migration. Since, my current research is focused on areas such as intersectionality, identity, migration, and diaspora, I give particular significance to the issue of 'differentiation'.

Kertzer (1983) conceptualizes the term 'generation' into four categories: 1) "generation as a principle of kinship descent; 2) generation as cohort; 3) generation as life stage; and 4) generation as historical period" (1983:126). Here, the simultaneous use of the term in multiple senses is confusing as it can muddle one category with another. I have used the term in a similar manner to Ryder (1965) by restricting it to mean kinship for example, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren. The term is particularly useful analyse intergenerational relationships and struggles in relation to parents and their children within families.

According to Alwin and McCammon (2007: 234), “Generation as a location within the kinship structure of families is clearly an essential component for understanding the unfolding of the life cycle, the progression of biological development (ontogeny), and the succession of roles and relationships. This concept of generation permits the understanding of the critical socialization function performed by the parental generation in all known societies”. Elder et al. (2003: 8–9) describe generations as a group of people who ‘are linked through the life cycle. As with all species, this usage rests on the presumption that evolution and survival of the human species is furthered by reproduction—within families each new generation completes the cycle of life and another one takes over, that is, “one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh.”’

Kertzer (1983), Eade and Garbin (2001, 2002, 2005, and 2006) and Gardner (1993), categorise a ‘generation’ cohort as individuals born and living at around the same time, most of whom are around the same age and have similar thoughts, difficulties, and approaches. In their research, the idea of generation has been used to analyse the struggle for recognition that began with an older generation, and is then reconstructed in a new social context in order to motivate the new generation to strive for the ideals of the earlier one. According to their interpretation, in the 1950s and 1960s, a large number of migrants from Sylhet came to the UK as labour migrants. Those people are known as the ‘first generation’ and most of them were men. Meanwhile, the wives of this ‘first generation group’ mainly came to the UK with their children during the 1980s through the family reunification process. Hence, the subsequent second generation has been described as those who were either born or were primarily raised in Britain, and the third generation are those who were born and bred solely in Britain (Eade & Begum, 2005; Eade & Garbin, 2002; Garbin, 2005, 2008). Loizos (2007) argues that migrants at different and particular stages of the life cycle might have distinctive experiences of migration. If the term ‘generation’ is applied for diasporan based solely on kinship, the new migrants, who have no biological connection with the earlier generations, disappear in this category. For instance, a 29-year-old stepmother, who moved to the UK in 2013 as a married dependant of a 65-year-old ‘first generation’ man, certainly does not represent the first generation in terms of social generation; therefore she is also a member of the missing group in the characterisation of Bangladeshi diaspora people across generations.

4.1.2 The use of the concept ‘cohort’ in my research

Cohort is frequently used inter-changeably with generation (Edmunds and Turner 2002; Muller 1997; Fullerton and Tossi 2001; Cooperman 1995; Nichols 1990). The complexity with cohort arises if it is described through other non-generational meanings rather than merely as a synonym for generation. Cohorts is also used to describe the group of people who shared the same experience, like being migrated over the same period of time, experiencing a natural calamity or man-made disaster or war.

The term ‘generation’ has also been used in some existing literature as a synonym for ‘cohort,’ which is even more confusing. Marshall (1980) articulates the term ‘generation’ as a sociological reality, consisting of a cohort in which the majority of its members share common experiences in relation to historical events. Here, neither term gives any clear signpost to the reader that one nor the other meaning is being used. However, cohort is also applied to make linkage between multiple generations who share certain connections. Cohort can also be used to categorize migrant people based on their social categorical differences, for instance, women who experienced transnational marriage or women who got married to transnational husbands, or new migrant women of young age group who share the age group of third generation (based on kinship) but are married to first generation earlier migrant men of old age group and have children with them, who are second generation by kinship system. On other hand generation can not be used to solely describe different cohorts who are categorized through their intersectional differences, such as age, time of migration, context, marriage status and so on.

Loizos (2007) chooses the demographer’s concept of ‘cohort’ in his analysis of health issues of refugees, in which he categorises a cohort as those born within a specified period of years. I follow Loizos’ use of the concept ‘cohort’. In my study some of the participants who recently migrated to the UK, and the participants who were brought up in the UK, were born in the same period of years but grew up in different parts of world, which led them to have different experiences in relation to diaspora and transnational migration. Therefore, rather than categorizing them commonly or simply as a ‘generation’ or as an ‘age-specific group’, I have chosen to describe them by classifying them as a particular ‘cohort’. I aim to bring together, in that concept ‘cohort’, the

intersections of different aspects of my participants' identity: their age, time of migration and upbringing in different contexts. These are the four cohorts:

- 1) The Pioneer Cohort: women who came to the UK before or during the 60s to the 80s are the 'Pioneer Cohort'.
- 2) The Cooked in Britain Cohort: women who were brought up in the UK from the 70s to the 90s are the 'Cooked in Britain Cohort'.
- 3) The British-born Cohort: women who were born in the UK (mostly after the 90s), I choose to call them the 'British-born Cohort'.
- 4) The New-migrant Cohort- women who came after 2000 at a mature stage of life are classified in my research as the 'New-migrant Cohort'.

4.2 Four cohorts

I have used three sources of information while describing my participants in my research. First, being born and brought up in Bangladesh, I have used my own experiences in some of the discussions. Second, I have explored available secondary resources on the British Bangladeshi community (please see the Chapter 3). Third, I have combined the data and insights, which I directly collected from my participants followed by an ethnographic study.

Please see the four cohort tables in the appendix (also as a laminated insert in the print version of this dissertation). Each table contains information, for each research participant, about age, socio-economic status before migration, current socio-economic or socio-political status, educational background, occupation, migration pattern, and marital status.

Before introducing my four cohorts, I give an account of how the socio-economic status has been termed in my participants' cases in my research.

4.2.1 Problematizing the class system

I have chosen the term 'socio-economic status' to describe solely my participants' socio-economic background. However, I will analyse their social positioning in diaspora space by making intersection of their socio-economic, cultural and political statuses.

I have found difficulties in using a specific class model to describe the differences among the four cohorts. I argue that the ‘class model’ based on ‘The Great British Class Survey 2013’ (Savage et al., 2013) falls short in describing ethnic social class positioning in relation to diaspora and transnational context. The traditional class system, which is an exposed form of stratification established mainly on economic measures has been rendered out-dated by this new model of social class, which shows a modernized way of mapping contemporary class divisions in the UK by measuring ‘economic, cultural and social capital’ (Bourdieu, 1984). Nevertheless the model still needs a more culturally sensitive mode of analysis of stratification considering ‘multi-dimensional approaches’ (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Although the model took a constructive attempt by considering Bourdieu’s concept of ‘capital’ in the class analysis that might offer ‘an effectively elaborate conceptual framework for comprehending the role of gender in the social relations of modern capitalist society’ (McCall, 1992: 837), it fails to address certain cultural forms and transferable habitus in ethnic and religious settings which are inextricably linked with certain social statuses. Moreover, the social and cultural capital can be criticised for a way their combination shapes a ‘gendered habitus’, which constructs men’s and women’s choices, behaviour and opportunities.

I will give a specific example in connecting my participants’ cases. Before that I would like to refer to Bourdieu’s model, which will also link up my example. Bourdieu’s way of understanding class through comprising many intersecting aspects such as class, gender, sexuality, age and race suggests a more multifaceted multidimensional supply of power that breaks down the stratified vertical range of the traditional class system, in which, an individual’s social positioning is understood and defined through both quantitative and qualitative variables such as lifestyle choices, art preferences, clothes, education and tastes (Reay, 1998). However, both Bourdieu’s analysis of class theory and the new model of class system of Savage et al. (2013) fail to grasp the historical and contextual changes in culture in a diaspora space. For example, many of my participants from the British-born Cohort, who represent themselves in public by highlighting their religious identity, are not interested in ‘emerging cultural activities’ (e.g. going to gigs) or ‘highbrow cultural activities’ (e.g. listening to classical music and going to the theatre) (Savage et al., 2013). By intersecting their religious practices with English and ethnic cultures, they make transferable form of cultural habitus that helps them to belong in a collectively bound together by a shared culture, which has been ignored in the recent model of class system. For example, many of the British-born Cohort

celebrate Christmas by cooking turkey and ethnic dishes, inviting friends and relatives but remembering the day in the name of the prophet Isaiah instead of Jesus. If their religious obligations prohibit them from adopting certain cultural habitus, which are not embodied in their cases, for example, watching a dance show, or if a member of an ethnic who has the maximum level of economic capital to belong to the 'Elite' group or the 'Established Middle Class' group chooses popular culture over highbrow culture, this does not mean they have a low level of cultural capital. It is more about preference rather than ability.

In this paragraph, I give an overview of Bangladeshi class identity, which is significant in understanding class relation and formation with historical and cultural events and their connections with local reality. In Bangladesh, class identity is intertwined with the concept of culture and legitimate political power (Rahman, 2007). According to post-colonial scholars, (Pandey, 1988; Mohanty, 1991; Nandy, 1983; Guha, 1983; Ghosh, 1989; Chowdhury, 2005 in Rahman, 2007) social class identity was shaped and reshaped with regard to interactions and conflicts of power, movement and class interests in colonial and post-colonial contexts. According to Rahman (2007), five historical events under the British colony and afterward influenced the construction of Bengali class identity and Bangladeshi nationhood. These were:

- 1) Land reform by the British colony in 1853- produced Muslim agricultural labourers and city based working class through a huge proletariat class group and Hindu elite landlords.
- 2) Educational policy in the end of 19th century-produced a hegemonic cultural and economic class: 'upper class English educated Hindus (who belong to the bourgeois class) or the *Bengali Bhordolok* class and a rural poor class (who were not offered any education opportunities) or the *Abhodrolok* class.
- 3) The Bengal partition of 1905, - Upper class Hindus kept continuing domination over proletariat groups of Hindus and Muslims.
- 4) The separation between India and Pakistan in 1947- produced a Pakistani ruling class.

- 5) The emergence of Bangladesh 1971- the shift from Muslim nationalism to secular nationalism to 'Muslim nationalism' (focusing on two sets of ideological constructions: language and religion).

Thus, Bangladeshi class identity has been forming and reforming as elite, middle class and proletariat or working class based on class and caste based hierarchy. I will describe my participants' social class status at migration based on this class identity. In his book '*Reproduction of urban classes in Bangladesh in the context of globalization*', Rahman (2007) shows how cultural capital changed in urban Bangladesh due to the effects of globalization and how it is related to the production and reproduction of urban social classes. His ethnographic exploration shows that globalization as a powerful influence produces discrimination in access to social, economic and cultural capital and thus reproduces the hierarchal social structure in Bangladesh.

4.2.2 The Pioneer Cohort

The Pioneer Cohort is the first group of migrant women who migrated to the UK from the 1960s to the 1980s. They migrated commonly as dependent wives with a low socio-economic and educational status, accompanied by children through the 'process of family reunification' (Gardner, 2006) mostly from rural Sylhet. According to Phillipson et al. (2003) among the Bangladeshi migrants who have arrived since the mid-1980s, three out of ten are women and mature children. In the account of Gardner (2006), the majority of women of earlier migrant group formally started their migration to Britain with children in the mid-80s. Ullah (2007) defines the 1960s as the earlier stage of settlement of the very first group of Bengali migrant women in the UK. In my group of research participants of the Pioneer Cohort, I have found almost the similar scenario. For example, a large group of my participants of this cohort had migrated during the 80s and a significant number of them arrived in the UK during the 70s. The age range at migration and the current age range of the cohort are respectively from 18 to 35 and 50 to 70 years. The average migration timeframe of the cohort is seen as early 60s to late 80s.

Since all of my participants of the cohort migrated as dependent wives, the employment status of their husbands is crucial at this point to identify their socio-economic background at the time of migration. Here, a common feature was found in the case of the husbands. For instance, a majority of the husbands came to Britain predominately as

labour migrants. However, some of them came as diplomats, skilled or educated migrants, although they are not significant in number.

Although the majority of the cohort are now housewives, as they were before, their effort and contribution to their families through the effective management of households and rearing-caring roles have brought them achievements in terms of the economic growth of the families, and all the academic and professional successes of their children, and thereby changing the socio-economic status of the family from working class to middle class. On the other hand, some of my participants of the same cohort, who migrated as dependants of skilled migrants during the 70s, are identified as educated and came from middle class backgrounds from urban areas of Bangladesh. Although their family status has not changed much, unlike that of the rural-Sylhetis', the self and community identities they have developed throughout their post migration have positioned them as highly educated, skilled and actively engaged in community development, and social welfare activities or mainstream politics. The participants of this cohort were commonly seen to have migrated after marriage, however, the participants from rural Sylhet have generally been seen as migrated along with two/three/four children and they have extended their families with more children in the post migration phase. A significant finding is that the participants from rural Sylhet who came as dependent migrants with a low level of education or skills are now able to lead their life freely and responsibly after being divorced or widowed. They have not yet remarried.

I mentioned in the chapter-'Bangladeshis in Britain' how the first 'Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962' triggered the earlier migrant men to bring their families (wives and children) and relatives to the United Kingdom through the process of 'chain migration'. However, there is another side to the story. It was not only those migrant men and their migration status, which influenced the family migration, but also the wives of those migrants and their situations in the context of postcolonial Bangladeshi society. Below, I will define this context from socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic perspective, accentuating the life stages the migrants had reached in Bangladesh before migration but also their migration experiences as part of the Pioneer Cohort.

First of all, Bangladesh as a traditionally male dominated society was addressed in many pieces of literature during the 70s and 80s (Papanek, 1973; Boserup, 1982;

Kabeer, 1988, 2000; Cain et al., 1979; Lindenbaum, 1981). In these works, the concern was raised that women's positions in a patriarchal rural based Bangladesh were framed through subjugation, victims of domestic violence, *purdah* taboo, child marriage, dowry, lack of access to education, lack of inheritance rights, lack of access to mobility in public, lack of economic, political and cognitive empowerment in private and public and so on.

Secondly, the time period (from the 1970s to the 1980s) when the cohort migrated to the UK was mainly the pre and post-liberation period of Bangladesh. Their uphill struggle due to the liberation war context of 1971 not only led them to leave Bangladesh and come to the UK for a secure and better life; but also gave them the strength to face challenges in their diaspora life and play a significant role in the formation of a community identity formation.

Thirdly, after the devastation of the liberation war in 1971, Bangladesh experienced a dreadful famine in 1974 (Grada, 2009). The famine brought indescribable devastation, and was the reason for the loss of much of the country's population. Its causes and consequences resulted in the poor socio-economic status of Bangladesh during and after the famine period. For instance, at the time, 90% of the Bangladeshi population were rurally based. 76% of the rural population were unable to consume enough calories during the early 1980s; and in 1984 an average rural household spent around 80% of its budget on food alone (Osmani, 1991). Therefore, the socio-economic deterioration was also a very definite reason for a number of the Pioneer Cohort to migrate to the UK with their husbands or to join their migrant husbands in the UK, along with their children.

In my research, these situations also appeared as particular reasons for the Pioneer Cohort to maintain transnational connection through giving economic support to impoverished kin members who stayed behind in Bangladesh. Hence, coming from a rural a Sylhet lower socio-economic and educational background, the social class and status of the women in the Pioneer Cohort did not change greatly after their migration, but there was a huge difference the context they left through the migration and their new surroundings in the UK.

In her research, by using a historical approach to the analysis of transnational Sylheti marriage in Bangladesh, Gardner (2006) also describes how the earlier women participated in the project of their husbands' migration to Britain (during the 1950s and

1960s) by remaining and managing the 'households' in Sylhet. This form of participation shows their practice of transnational migration and the process of maintaining transnational link with neighbours and relatives before and after the migration. This is also apparent in the majority of my participants of the Pioneer Cohort. However, not all the Pioneer Cohort women migrated through the process of 'chain migration' (Gardner & Shakur, 1994; Eade & Garbin, 2002; Gardner, 2006); even here there are differences among the migrants. For example, some of them migrated as newly married wives through the practice of transnational marriage, some of them had been married for years and came with a number of young children, whilst very few migrated along with skilled migrant husbands.

Immediately after arrival, the Pioneer Cohort experienced cultural shock in the new environment. At the same time, a few of them were practising 'transnational motherhood' (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Gardner, 2006) being separated from their children, whom migrant women had to leave in Bangladesh due to 'age restrictions preventing entry to the UK' (Immigration Rules part 8: family members, 2015). Gardner (2006) found this group of women to be dedicated carers of their husbands, even though their husbands got married for a second time and did not give them any priority as wives. On the other hand, bringing up the children of co-wives during the 1970s, UK-based wives practised transnational motherhood with no separation from their own children, but caring for another women's children. These unique experiences of this cohort as 'Pioneers' have made an important contribution to the development of the transnational connection and the shape of the community, despite their low socio-economic and socio-political positioning in the pre-migration and initial post-migration phases.

Nevertheless, the struggle of the Pioneer Cohort in searching for a place in the community was immense during their period of new immigrant status in the 60s, 70s and 80s. According to Ahmed (2005), the circumstances were due not only to their low occupational status in the community, but also because of gender stereotyping. In terms of coping mechanism and community identity formation, I have found that there are many similarities between my participants of the Pioneer Cohort and the group of earlier migrant women with whom Ahmed worked. Here I provide details about the cohort based on these similarities. This cohort ventured into a social environment where there was a significant Bangladeshi community that had hitherto been controlled by their husbands. By transferring cultural traditions and customs mainly from Sylhet,

migrant Bangladeshi men had already transplanted a social code of ideals into their community in Britain, making it difficult for women to engage with the broader host community. Furthermore, the socio-economic status or class position that the cohort had reached along with their husbands working as low wage earners in relatively unskilled jobs, living and working in the deprived inner-city areas, had a serious impact on the range of options available to the newly arrived women. While confronted with segregation, they made an effort to maintain a home life unaffected by diaspora; they tried to reconstruct their native land in their homes, decorating their homes with artefacts that they had brought with them from Bangladesh and cooking similar food. Additionally, they transmitted the rituals of prayer to other women in the community in socialising with community women to achieve a sense of community and village life. Through creating their space in such a homogenous way, their awareness of their own identities was shaped and their own sets of ideals and principles were validated. Although the cohort maintained the traditional female roles that they had had in Bangladesh, they could adapt to English life as well, and expanded their responsibilities in daily life routines based on the new socio-cultural setting.

In addition, my investigation suggests that by concurrently practising and sharing ethnic culture, language, religious faith, and secular beliefs of ethno-nationalism the cohort contributed to a distinctive form of identity politics. This not only breaks the oppositional binary, such as ethno-nationalism/ Islamism, but also challenges existing findings on the male centred political identity of the community. Despite their migrant status as ‘dependants’ or submissive feminine character, they are strong enough in raising their voice in the platform of ethno-nationalist politics.

4.2.3 The Cooked in Britain Cohort

The Cooked in Britain Cohort is the group of British Bangladeshi women who commonly migrated in the company of the Pioneer Cohort while they were in the age ranges from six months to four years, five to nine years, and ten to twelve years. As a consequence, the cohort was mostly or entirely brought up in the UK in the 70s, 80s or even 90s. Another group were those who migrated as adolescents or teenagers at the age of 15 or 16, and who also had a part of their socialization occur in the UK through schooling. Largely, this cohort migrated to the UK along with their mothers and siblings in the 70s to the 90s from rural Sylhet to join their fathers, who had migrated a decade

before, mostly as labourers. Here the age range of the cohort during migration was from 3 months old to 16 years old and therefore the current age range of the cohort is from 38 to 57. It can also be noticed that the average migration timeframe of the cohort is 1971-1990, which reveals that both cohorts share the common context of pre, during and post migration and settlement processes, even though there are differences among them in terms of age, relationships, life stages, and life course experiences.

I have chosen the term ‘Cooked in Britain’ after the cookbook, *‘Made in India, Cooked in Britain’* by Meera Sodha. The book is a collection of food recipes that the author collected from three generations of her family who are originally from Gujarat, India, but that later on migrated to Uganda, before finally settling down in Lincolnshire, UK. After settling down in the UK, the author’s migrant mother had continued cooking Gujarati food, with some Kenyan and Ugandan influences, but with British ingredients available in the North of England, and so Meera grew up eating those foods. In a similar fashion, the participants I interviewed from this cohort were born in Bangladesh, but grew up in Britain and are thus a mixture of Bangladeshi cultural ingredients and British socialization influences. Therefore, I chose the symbolic meaning of the term ‘Cooked in Britain’ to represent those among my participants that “were made in Bangladesh, but cooked in Britain”.

Significant changes have been observed in the community between the arrivals of the Pioneer and the Cooked in Britain Cohorts, for example, the establishment of a number of religious institutions, halal shops, Islamic-Bengali-English schooling for children and so on, which indicates that the process of ethno-culturalization in the community started during that period. It has been described by Alexander (2013) as the transformation of the British Bangladeshi community into an ethno-Islamic one by the establishment of Islamic institutions that could leave the male community free from the anxiety caused by the influence of western culture on their Muslim Bangladeshi wives and children.

As a consequence, even though some of the Cooked in Britain Cohort (migrated before one year of age) were completely brought up in the UK, the context in which they were raised, was strongly influenced by the ethno-culturalization process that had been initiated in the community with the aim of retaining the Bangladeshi community’s ethno-cultural and ethno-religious essence and spirit (Carey & Shakur, 1985; Kabeer, 2000; Begum & Eade, 2005). At this point, the context played a more influential role than the age of migration in the identity formation process of the cohort. The women

born during that period were in the same situation. Besides, they were raised by their mothers, who are from the Pioneer Cohort. Thus, their diaspora experience is more similar to that of their siblings (who migrated at the age of 5 to 12) but significantly different from that of the British-born Cohort who were born in the 90s and mostly raised by mothers, from the Cooked in Britain Cohort.

According to Ahmed (2007), women's backgrounds hinder their social positioning at different times and contexts in Britain. Contemporary transnational marriage means not only do the wives join their husbands in Britain, but also the husbands join their British Bangladeshi wives (in my research they are the Cooked in Britain Cohort) as a way of maintaining transnational households in Britain. This practice was seen among my entire participants of the Cooked in Britain Cohort. Unlike the women of the Pioneer Cohort who were diversified in terms of marriage status during migration through the process of transnational marriage, Bangladeshi men who migrated to the UK by marrying British based women of the Cooked in Britain Cohort share common features through their migration status. For instance, all of them migrated as newly married husbands. Although their contribution in maintaining transnational connection was insignificant before migration, I call them 'transnational husbands'. I base this on my interviews and the ensuing observations with the Cooked in Britain Cohort, from which I have found out that, although, they were raised in Britain, they could adopt the Bangladeshi culture and traditions in terms of dress-code, music, food etc. up to date, and that they are successful in maintaining transnational connections with relatives and in-laws back home through regular communication and frequent visiting, which did not significantly happen in their lives before marriage. Here, it was the group of transnational husbands who motivated their wives to adopt this transnational cultural process, transnational relationships and connections. In these cases, these sorts of actions on the part of the transnational husbands were encouraging rather than dominating, as they were not influenced by traditional masculine practices.

In my informal conversations and observations with this group of husbands, I came to know that the context after migration led them to have more liberal ideas about gender roles and relationships in the diaspora context. I have discussed earlier Ahmed's (2005) exploration in relation to the process of initial adjustment of the Pioneer Cohort in diaspora settings. She reveals that by instigating traditional cultural, religious and ethnic practices, thereby controlling the culture and space in the community, the earlier migrant men had already developed their patriarchal rules of conduct, which appeared

as a stumbling block for the Pioneer Cohort to create their space in the community immediately after migration. In contrast, in my own research, I have found that the situation was not the same for the later cohort. For instance, by migrating as transnational husbands, they had to adjust to the fact that their wives had the status of citizens of a developed country, better education and higher living standards compared to the Bangladeshi women that they would have married during that time, had they decided to migrate. Thus, their adjustment process was controlled more by the status of their migration and wives rather than the traditional patriarchal settings of the community. Even though some of them were well educated and skilled in comparison to their wives, they were unable to hold a strong position over their wives in the family and community. Positively, they were more supportive and encouraging towards their British based wives. Therefore, the traditional gender roles of men and women in the Bangladeshi household and the relationships between husband and wife were dramatically inverted by this group of transnational husbands. They were seen to be more comfortable doing household activities in the UK, while they thought that if they had been in Bangladesh, they would have never been thought of this. At this point, Gardner (2006) and Rozario (2004) argue that the process of transnational migration of husbands through consanguineous marriage challenges the traditional cultural hierarchical relationship between husband and wife, and results in more space and freedom for the British Bangladeshi wives.

In my research, all my participants from the Cooked in Britain Cohort, who are now in the age group of 40-45 years and migrated to the UK during the 80s, are practising transnational marriage by getting married to Bangladeshi-based husbands and bringing them to the UK. However, these were not all consanguineous marriages. At this point, a significant difference can be observed between the Pioneer cohort and the Cooked in Britain Cohort in terms of practising transnational marriage. While the Pioneer Cohort had migrated as transnational wives, the later cohort inverted this pattern this by changing the practice of feminization of migration through bringing their transnational husbands to the UK. This feature of the cohort shows more differences from the Pioneer Cohort, for example, gaining decision making power in the family; changing family patterns in bringing more gender equality or a gender friendly environment; having better communication skills with their children. Unlike the Pioneer Cohort, members of the Cooked in Britain Cohort were seen to get married for a second time after the breakdown of their first marriages, which also makes the cohort significantly different

from their earlier cohort. However, both the cohorts share a common feature in having a number of children.

Despite being brought up in working class families from rural Sylheti background, the Cooked in Britain Cohort has been competent, well-educated, professionally engaged, and visibly active in the community and mainstream politics by having their upbringing and schooling in the UK. These have increased their social and family status as well. However, there are a few non-Sylheti participants of this cohort who migrated in the same time frame as dependent children of skilled migrant fathers or as students from urban middle class background; they are also now playing important roles in the decision making level of the community activities and/or mainstream politics.

4.2.4 The British-born Cohort

The British-born Cohort comprises participants born in the UK, mostly in the 90s and in the late 80s, who are now in the age group of 19 to 27 and predominantly unmarried. However, there was one participant born in 1974, whom I would like to consider as the Cooked in Britain Cohort. The Cooked in Britain Cohort has commonly been seen as mothers, and Bangladeshi-based men as fathers of this cohort. Some of them are the children of the Pioneer Cohort.

Most of these participants migrated at younger than one year of age, in the 70s. Since the historical narrative, which I developed earlier on the Bangladeshi migrants in Britain, reveals context as an influential factor in the identity formation process of my participants, I therefore prioritize the British ones born since the 90s. The context of the 90s changed drastically due to the process of Islamization of the ‘global Muslim *ummah*’ (Begum & Eade, 2005) and the institutionalization of religion (Garbin, 2008). Thus, most of the participants of the British-born Cohort were identified as directly or indirectly involved with the activities of ‘the East London Mosque Women’s Link’, and the socio-economic status of their families during migration was commonly found to be as working class.

The historical accounts of the Bangladeshi community by the prominent researchers (see details in Chapter 3) show that from the late 1980s, the ethno-national and ethno-cultural environment of the community was gradually being challenged by the institutionalization of religion through the influence of local government promoting

faith based organisations as a key agent in urban regeneration (Garbin, 2008). In addition, there was an increase in Islam phobia throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, particularly after the *Satanic Verses* affair in 1989, the first Gulf War, and the 11 September 2001 attacks (Begum & Eade, 2005). Hence the shift of the ethno-religious environment towards growing and stimulating the global Islamic cultural environment in the community had a huge impact on the upbringing and motivation of the majority of my participants of the British-born Cohort to uphold a British Muslim identity rather than a Bangladeshi Muslim or 'Bengali' identity (Eade & Garbin, 2002; Garbin, 2008).

Thus, a large portion of my participants of this cohort identified themselves under the banner of the 'global Muslim *ummah*'. They saw themselves as having a common identity in the spirit of 'Muslim sisterhood'. Based on my review of the literature on the British Bangladeshi community, I have found that much research has been done predominantly on this group. It is worth mentioning that their politically conscious, imagined self-identity, and its 'much more fluid' (Werbner, 2002) nature have brought them into recent scholarship on diaspora and identity.

However, they do not entirely represent the British-born Cohort. There is also a group of participants within the cohort who are not connected to institutional-based religious politics and are, thus, more integrated into mainstream British social life. Unlike the participants who consciously represent themselves as a part of the global Muslim community, they give preference to an individual way of being. There is another group of participants in the cohort who inherited the ethnic cultural values and sense of ethno-nationalism from their parents, the Cooked in Britain Cohort, alongside British mainstream culture. Thus, they were seen as to be more inclined to practise multiculturalism, while keeping ethnic cultural values and ethno-nationalism to the fore. To shed light on the dynamics of the British-born Cohort, I have included all three groups of the British-born Cohort in my research and focused on their identity formation process in relation to a diaspora and transnational context, which is less talked about to date.

In my group of research participants of the British-born Cohort, particularly the religious group, I have found that their religious identity is empowering rather than dominating in terms of handling cultural and racial attacks, attaining educational successes and achieving economic and political empowerment.

Socio-economic status was also seen as a crucial for my participants' in this cohort. The status of the cohort has gradually been improved in the process of settlement, as we saw earlier from the case of the Pioneer cohort to the Cooked in Britain Cohort. This changing socio-economic status of the participant families has had significant impact in the lives and career paths of the British-born Cohort. The cohort has a wider range of life experiences compared to any other cohorts, since they now have the privilege of being within an established Bangladeshi community, and an enabling environment at home in terms of taking their own decisions on education, marriage and employment. Based on their empirical research on Pakistani migrant women in Britain, Evans and Bowlby (2000) explore how social class acted as a major factor in the education and career paths that has been undertaken by the Pakistani migrant women they interviewed.

This distinctiveness of the British-born Cohort significantly differentiates them from the other cohorts in terms of having the freedom to make their own life choices, for example by getting actively involved with faith based organisations in a large number, unlike the earlier cohorts. Besides, the differences between the contexts that the Pioneer and the Cooked in Britain Cohorts experienced after migration and the context that the British-born Cohort experienced are also, significant, in terms of choosing different career paths, holding different social status and having a different type of social life, even within the same family. The Pioneer Cohort or the Cooked in Britain Cohort are mostly the mothers of the British-born Cohort. Similar to the Cooked in Britain Cohort, the British-born Cohort are a privileged group who have had access to better education and employment opportunities in comparison to the Pioneer Cohort. The transnational housewives from the Pioneer Cohort who came from the rural areas of Bangladesh to the UK to join their husbands, who had migrated before them as labourers, are now living in families that can be classified as middle class. Due to the fact that they have been living in Britain for a long time (more than four or five decades), the men of the Pioneer Cohort, who once migrated as labourers and worked in the labour industry or in the catering and services business, are now owners of restaurants; some, also, owners of more than one property in the UK, with huge bank balances and fixed assets in Bangladesh. Similarly, the class status of the Cooked in Britain Cohort has changed. However, the difference between the Pioneer and the Cooked in Britain Cohorts and the British-born Cohort is that the earlier two cohorts were not fortunate enough to enjoy the prosperity of their families immediately after their migration. Most of them had to wait for a long time to enjoy this, while the British-born Cohort, who were mostly born

in the late 80s or early 90s, were able to enjoy the prosperity and better socio-economic status of their families directly from birth and/or as they were growing up. Since the negotiation power of women is strongly affected by their class position (Evans & Bowlby, 2000), this class difference has had an impact on their freedom to make choices of their own, which can also be seen as an influential factor in terms of joining religion based organisations, and having different career plans, unlike the earlier cohorts within the same family. Besides, my comparative depiction shows that the Pioneer Cohort are the spreaders and aerials of ethnic religious morals and practices, whereas the British-born Cohort practise religion to open up new identities by making their identity as stronger 'other' or blending in with the mainstream western cultures and ethno-Islamic religious practices. A common feature can be identified in the case of the Cooked in Britain and the British-born Cohorts in terms of forming female-headed households and practicing single motherhood followed by divorce.

4.2.5 The New-migrant Cohort

It is worth mentioning that due to the continuous process of 'chain migration', female migrants have been coming to the UK formally since the 80s. These earlier migrants are the women of the Pioneer Cohort who were in the process of migration from then until the 90s (Gardner, 2006). However, there is a group of women who have been migrating since 2000, not predominately through chain migration, as they have different reasons for migration. Since the context is important in my way of organizing cohorts, I focus on the context that the participants (who migrated mainly after 2000) were in during their pro-migration phase. By doing so, I have found that due to the impacts of globalization, the process of urbanization of Bangladesh led to a large number of participants with middle or working class backgrounds migrating from urban Dhaka to London. In some cases, this process of migration lowered the socio-economic status of the new migrant participants from middle class to lower middle or working class. Unlike the family reunification process of migration of the rural Sylheti migrants, the participants of the New-migrant Cohort migrated as students or dependents of students, or else dependents of skilled workers, in their 20s and 30s. The age range of the cohort during migration was from 14 to 40 and the current age range of the cohort is from 20 to 53 years.

Unlike the majority of the Pioneer Cohort, who migrated as transnational wives and mothers with a low socio-economic and educational status from rural Sylhet, most of the participants of the New-migrant Cohort migrated as students or as educated and highly skilled dependants and mainly from non-Sylheti or urban-based backgrounds. In my research, I include both categories in the New-migrant Cohort. For that reason, this cohort is full of mature married and unmarried women.

From my past experiences of short-term field research in various parts of rural Bangladesh as a development activist, I found that people in Bangladesh migrate from rural to urban areas in order to improve their financial situation rather than their basic social needs or services. The impact of globalization and development influences the migration not only from one country to another, but also within Bangladesh from urban to rural locaters, which has created a large group of working class in the urban society. Concurrently the proportion of women in higher education has increased and competitive job markets have also been developed in urban areas. For these reasons, prosperous people in the area are now more interested in educating their children abroad to maintain their status quo or to ensure better opportunities for their children in a competitive job market. In so doing, they are commonly practising student migration, which increases the literacy rate and decreases the marriage ratio among the migrant women at the present time.

However, for women living in Bangladesh, freedom of choice, decision-making power and access to resources are still controlled by the customs and rules of the male-controlled society (Sebstad & Cohen, 2000). Despite this fact, the context has since seen a significant change in terms of women's participation in formal and informal society due to the impacts of globalization and modernization, which have had an impact on the status of women in the current migration process.

Presently a significant number of educated middle-class women come to the UK for study, and settle down afterwards by marrying native English /European citizens, or by getting a sponsored job. In my research, I call them the New-migrant Cohort. They make their career plan before entering the UK. This cohort is now joining the well-established and divergent Bangladeshi community enriched by ethno-cultural, ethno-religious, ethno-political and global Islamic identity practices, which give them more scope to engage in. As a Bangladeshi migrant student in the UK, I might not represent the Bangladeshi women of the diaspora community in Britain, but the experience of

displacement and the situations that treat migrants as alien are perhaps common both to me and my participants in the community. Besides, I have found that I, as a young married Muslim woman of the urban-based middle class, am going through similar experiences within the structural, social and cultural context of Bangladesh and Britain that the majority of my new migrant participants have also experienced.

The participants who migrated as students have already settled down in the UK by marrying native English or EU citizens, or by being promoted into the skilled migrant or skilled worker categories. Rather than being stuck merely within the household, the participants who migrated as married dependants are now engaging in community activities or local politics. Unlike the Pioneer and the Cooked in Britain Cohorts, they have no more than two children. Thus the cohort is diverse in terms of age of migration, relationship status, process of migration, educational qualification and professional engagements. For instance, the cohort includes diverse participants, some of them are representing their politically conscious religious identity ‘global Muslim *ummah*’, some of whom are strongly involved in ethno-nationalist politics, some of them are trying to get involved in the economic sector in Britain, and some of them are carrying female headed households and playing the role of single mothers after divorcing their husbands. These dissimilar practices relate them in some cases with the Pioneer cohort, in others with the Cooked in Britain Cohort and/or with the British-born Cohort. Thus, it is important to identify the identity practice of each cohort by considering not only the inter-cohort dissimilarities, but also the intra-cohort ones.

4.3 Summary

From the above discussion, we can see that the diversity and distinctiveness of the British Bangladeshi women’s cohorts have been characterised by changes in the migration process, time and context of migration and diaspora space. This diversity and distinctiveness among the diaspora also gives us an indication of why problematic uses of the term ‘generation’ in characterizing diasporas should be avoided in migration and diaspora studies and why ‘cohort’ can be a more useful, clearer term to explore the intersectional and contextual elements in this categorization, rather than using the simplified, generalised or synonymised term ‘generation’. The similarities and differences among the women of the four cohorts in relation to intersectional and contextual differences in the Bangladeshi diaspora, also indicate the importance of

studying the ethnic and diaspora community; considering these differences can add value to the theory of diaspora identity.

In the subsequent chapters, I will discuss some significant issues relating to the four cohorts, such as individual life; family transformation and daily purposes of community formation; the religious influence in identity formation; the current form of maintenance of transnational network; political participation and the decision making process in the family and community, which focus on local specificities concerning intersectional discourse in the Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK.

Chapter 5: Diaspora positioning: marriage, changing family roles and relationships

In this chapter I will discuss the dynamic roles women of different age-groups and cohorts play in the transnational context. I will also explore how changing family formations in the diaspora space affect their social positions. I will contextualise their experiences and stories by focusing on the different ways in which they are positioning themselves. I will do so by presenting ethnographic vignettes of the different participants in the four cohorts.

In the first section, I will focus on a particular life course transition - 'marriage' of the four cohorts in relation to intersectional identities in order to define their forms of positioning in a diaspora and transnational context. Through the analysis of interviews I will focus on women's experiences about 'marriage', which reflects the intersection of social and historical factors with their personal life stories within which their family lives and social changes happen. This will help us identify how 'life course articulates with place and space' (Gardner, 2002:18), and where my participants are in life cycle transition terms, what is expected of them socially and culturally in terms of supporting others and the degree of social freedom and obligation they hold (Loizos, 2007).

The second section of this chapter focuses on the changing patterns of adaptation strategies of the New-migrant Cohort in a diaspora family and community context. I will show how the socio-economic and socio-cultural context of Bangladesh, the establishment of the Bangladeshi community, and women's changing perception about individual and family life in a diaspora context have influenced the coping strategies of the New-migrant Cohort, which directs them to interact with the diaspora environment after migration in ways that differ from those of the Pioneer Cohort.

5.1 Marriage and family relationships in a changing diaspora and transnational context

While talking about the diaspora lives of Bangladeshi women in the UK, it is important to know about their life cycle transitions in relation to the socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic context of Bangladesh, which directly or indirectly influence their migration status or transnational positioning. In her research on elderly Bangladeshi women in the UK, Gardner (2002) significantly defines the interrelation between life course and transnational connection of elderly women and how their inter-phases of life before migration play a very important role in shaping their ideas of place and space. Along the same lines, I wish to give substantial accounts about the life course of Bangladeshi women in relation to age and migration background. I define the life course as ‘an age graded sequence of socially defined roles and events that are enacted over historical time and place’ (Elder et al., 2003:15). I focus on the significance of time, context, process, family life (Bengtson & Allen, 1993) and linked life of diaspora women in their life course to reflect the intersection of social and historical factors with family life and social change (Elder, 1985; Hareven, 1996).

I have described the contexts of Bangladesh and Britain in relation to social structure and gender positioning above. Indeed, some of my participants in the four different cohorts might not have direct experience of migration but have migrant backgrounds, or might be born or brought up in the UK. Such individuals might inconsequence have different understandings through their life courses than, for instance, myself as a Bangladeshi student migrant. Also, those who migrated to the UK that I have grouped in the Pioneer Cohort have, again, different life experiences.

I will now focus on ‘marriage’ as this has been identified as the most important transition in my participants’ life courses. The Bangladeshi diaspora, transnational marriage and migration are the cores of the establishment of the Bangladeshi community and formation of its identity. They are also the factors that led to the feminizing or gendering of the migration process. According to Kibria (2012), transnational marriage is dynamic and diverse; it indicates the flow that organizes diaspora communities and their bonding with the country of origin. She mentions various forms of transnational marriage in relation to the Bangladeshi diaspora. One form is the migration of married workers without their spouses, which is temporary, but can last for extended periods of time. Kibria (2012:3) argues that ‘under these

conditions, the marriage itself becomes a transnational node and conduit, organising movements of money and goods as well as honour and emotions between the diaspora community and the homeland'. She further mentions a second form of transnational marriage, which she defines as being structured in 'the dynamics of settlement' and 'reunification abroad' in which the diasporan men go to their country of origin to marry and return with their new spouses to the country of settlement. Here, the idea of settlement through transnational marriage has been seen as a main strategy in terms of coping and forming community identity. This form of transnational marriage is favoured in diaspora communities as it continues the practice of marriage in the country of origin.

5.1.1 The Pioneer Cohort, the dedicated carers: wifhood in a diaspora family

Women in the Pioneer Cohort migrated to the UK through family reunification process between the 1960s and 1980s, mainly from rural Sylhet. Most of them migrated in their twenties, with two or three children. They came as housewives and had received little to no education; some were illiterate. It is important to mention that the socio-cultural structure of rural Bangladesh values women mostly in their role as mothers and wives. These ideals are implanted from a young age, as are the roles they are to carry as adults (e.g., Cain, 1977). The women in the Pioneer Cohort tried their best to regenerate these roles in the UK. There are some commonalities between the experience of migration and the experience of marriage for these women. Both entail a repositioning of place and space. For example:

I met Jahanara during the 2014 Eid-ul-fitr (a Muslim religious festival); she is a 66-year-old divorced woman who is now living with her third daughter in Whitechapel as a single mother. Jahanara, who has only completed primary school education, came to the UK in 1973 when she was 25, along with her three daughters and a son of her brother-in-law (his mother was unable to join her husband due to her 'caring' role and responsibilities to in-laws)⁹. Jahanara migrated to join her husband, who worked in a restaurant in the UK. At the time she migrated she was certain that she was going to join her husband, who would bear the maintenance of the family. She had nothing to worry

⁹Due to the household circumstances and responsibilities on elder relatives within extended families, many first generation women were unavailable to join their husbands, therefore; children were sent to the husbands with their co-wives or other female relatives (Choudhury, 1993:301 in Gardner, 2006). According to Gardner, bringing up the children of co-wives during the 1970s, British based wives practised 'transnational motherhood' (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997) with no separation from their own children, but caring for other women's children (2006:9).

about, at least financially, as she would not be responsible for earning money. When I asked her whether I could know more about her life in Bangladesh and the UK, she smiled at me and replied,

'Ma' (a Bengali term of address to someone equivalent to daughter)
you will not feel good; my life stories are full of pain and sadness!

The years before Jahanara's migration, the early 1970s, were difficult because of the 1971 Liberation War. The severe situation scared Jahanara and she was stuck at home, along with her children and in-laws. This was the case for many vulnerable families in those days in Bangladesh. This difficult situation actually helped Jahanara to convince her husband to bring them to the UK. At the time of her arrival in the UK Jahanara was suffering from the fear and trauma brought by the war. The early days of her life in Britain were worse than in Bangladesh. She could not sleep properly, could not eat until her daughters returned from school, and she could not open the door if someone knocked the door while she was alone at home. She felt lonely and was socially isolated. Ahmed (2005) notes that Bangladeshi women migrating to Britain in the late 1970s were challenged with an unaccustomed and unfriendly atmosphere, which was entirely different from the Bangladeshi situation (in terms of climate, clothing, customs and manners). Kabeer (2000:282) described it as the move from 'a rural peasant society to a hostile urban culture' (2000:282). Although Jahanara struggled to create her own space for her family, her main preoccupation was whether her daughter would get married in time (i.e. by the time she was twenty). In the cultural context of Bangladesh, a man is still viewed as 'young' in his late twenties, while Jahanara belongs to a time when women were said to be '*kuritei buri*' (old at twenty-one). She said,

I could not sleep at night thinking how would I get them married in time, if they don't listen to us!

With time she learned basic English and obtained information about local care supports from English and South-Asian neighbours during her first years. She then started sewing at home and made some money by making clothes for the neighbours. She felt more confident to live in the UK, even with a low level of education. Jahanara gives herself credit for her effective management of her big family, composed of nine

members. She used to teach her children the Holy Quran, Islamic principles, Bengali education, and the local Bengali lifestyle, and was very enthusiastic in attending parents' meetings at her children's school. These were the reasons she thinks her children are well aware of their ethno-cultural and ethno-religious values. According to Ahmed (2005) 'by being the creators of their own role, devoid from having to fit into an established community norm, they [Bangladeshi migrant women] could be as creative as they wanted to be, and chose only aspects of their culture that they found favourable' (2005:104-105). Here significance can be given to women's contribution in raising their children in Islamic and Bengali ways in accordance with local English language and education. Jahanara's practice of promoting diverse education and skills can be seen as a positive approach to becoming accustomed to multicultural Britain. Besides, her experiences reflect the success stories of these 'Pioneer' migrant women in shaping their family life, to their choice, without having the support of joined families and in-laws. As I have shown here, transnational migration created both opportunities and challenges for the women in the Pioneer Cohort. Ten years after moving to the UK, Jahanara found out about her husband's adultery, and divorced him. Ever since, Jahanara has been living alone with her children. The interesting part is that after telling her story, while sitting beside me, Jahanara suddenly looked at me and said, *bia koro nai 'Ma'* (Aren't you married yet? Are you?). I said I was. Then she gave me the advice that I need to give more attention to my husband than my studies. She said, *prothom bia, prothom shamir moto kichu nai go Ma!* (There is no comparison to the first marriage, the first husband). Distance ruined my relationship; it is all about distance! She had depth in her words and I noticed tears in her eyes, but her voice and facial expression were very normal.

Jahanara's ex-husband died a few months ago. Although I did not meet her at that time, a month ago I had a sudden meeting with her younger daughter, who told me that her mother was with her father before he died and had promised him that she would look after his current wife and children until her death. Although her promise to her ex-husband shows the strong positioning a diaspora woman has in terms of taking responsibilities, it reminds me of the Bengali female expression *potibrota stri* (devoted wife), which means sacrificing and implies a sense of subordination as well. This sexist characterisation has been prominent as a part of Bengali women's family life interactions and transferred into transnational families in daily discourse. Gardner notes that the first generation women had been seen as dedicated carers (taking care of the

husband is meant to satisfy *Allah* (God) even if the husbands got married for a second time and did not give them priority as wives (Gardner, 2006).

From Jahanara's story, we can observe that marriage was a crucial point in her life before and after migration. She also put emphasis on the importance of marriage for her daughters' lives. Even an unsuccessful marriage was important to her, since her ethnic cultural values taught her that marriage not only retains a sense of bonding between family members, but also acts as a protector in women's lives. Although she could not save her marriage, the ethnic values concerning marriage that she took with her into the diaspora life helped her to maintain and manage a big family successfully and strongly. On this point, Ahmed (2005) argues that women who were divorced or widowed showed their ability in maintaining female-headed households and single parenthood in Britain, with full household responsibilities. Rather than returning to their home country, single first-generation mothers showed their courage to sustain the family in Britain and a community network by breaking the ideology of *purdah*, although it would have been easier for them to maintain families in Bangladesh with the practical help and mental support of the kin or maid-servants.

Similar to Jahanara, Banu was underprivileged at the initial stage of her settlement process, due to traditional cultural drawbacks. According to Ullah (1970) this was the case for most of the Bangladeshi women who migrated in 1970s. However, in my research I have found that being a wife has had a significant role in the socio-cultural background of Bangladeshi people, which is also true for all my participants. For the women in the Pioneer, Cooked in Britain and British-born Cohorts, it is particularly crucial to cook and prepare food for their husband and families. They think it is the women who should be primarily responsible for the caring and rearing of children, although men can help them in a supporting role. The way my participants described their significance in their own families shows that having children was one of the most prominent roles for them. They stated that they enjoyed motherhood, no matter how many burdens they had and what their practical situation was. This fact is prominent among the Pioneer Cohort, who had certain skills and the opportunity to get involved in the employment sector, but whose accountability for housework and family members imposed by stereotypical cultural norms obstructed their economic empowerment (Ahmed, 2007). This was the case for Banu, who is now 63 and lives in Whitechapel.

Banu migrated to the UK in 1972 as the dependant of her diplomat husband, along with their two daughters. Banu is now a very prominent member in the community and plays an active, leading role in local community politics. This was not always the case; she has had to struggle to get involved in the community politics due to the restricted mobility and role expectations that her husband imposed upon her. For instance, in spite of her interest and effort to do something in order to become more self-reliant, she had to stop due to typical family pressures. Banu expressed her emotion in this way:

I used to design clothes with a sewing machine back home and when I came here, it all was a very lonely process, I felt like I was locked in my house like a prisoner, so I very much wanted to sew here again, but my husband didn't like it. People used to come to my home to place orders, which my husband found very much as invading one's privacy. So I quit. My husband died 10 years into our migration, and then I was left to take responsibility for my family and my daughters. I was lucky that my husband left a huge amount of property and a bank balance for us, but as I said before, I had always wanted to do something, so I started getting involved in social and political activities.

In her research work on Bangladeshi women in Manchester, Khanum (1994) argues that in a diaspora household, money is handled by men. Migrant women are alienated from the household money, they fail to bring economic freedom and self-confidence and experience a sense of isolation, despite their secure economic life in the UK (1994: 109). In my research, Banu's experience is a case in point. At the beginning of her diaspora life Banu was unable to hold power within the male-controlled household in terms of having freedom to make minor economic decisions on her own. However, after her husband died, she could not only hold the power of a decision maker in her family, but also evolved into a strong, powerful and leading figure in the political space of the community. She took up high positions in a community political organisation. Her disappointment with not being able to control family decision making and gain economic empowerment did not confine her ability, but rather it acted as an extreme urge which grew stronger than ever before in a changing diaspora context, as she could successively achieve the ultimate power that is political empowerment.

5.1.2 The Cooked in Britain Cohort: the reformulation of diaspora family

Although both the Pioneer Cohorts and the Cooked in Britain Cohort had similar experiences in terms of age of marriage (between fifteen and twenty-four), the pattern of transnational marriage was different for the Cooked in Britain Cohort. Transnational marriage from the 1970s to the early 1990s predominantly involved the practice in which transnational brides joined their migrant husbands in the UK. During the 1990s this changed and transnational marriage meant bringing Bangladeshi-based husbands to the UK. This shows how the culture and ritual of marriages in Bangladesh had changed through the process of transnational marriage. For instance, a number of women in the Cooked in Britain Cohort got married to Bangladeshi based husbands over the phone during the 1990s. The Cooked in Britain Cohort have changed not only the marriage culture but also the migration pattern through discontinuing the process of feminization of migration. Hasina (43) migrated to the UK in 1982 as a transnational child along with her mother, who was joining her husband, Hasina's father, who had migrated 10 years earlier and worked as a labourer. Hasina married a Bangladeshi-based husband, chosen by her parents, in 1993, when she was 21. Although she was raised in a working class family, slowly, after going through the process of settlement, her family improved their economic status. Hasina got married to a well-educated husband, a lawyer, and politician, with a middle class family background.

When I asked her to tell me more about her marriage relationship, Hasina explained:

We had adjustment and understanding problems at the beginning of our married life, you know we both were young at that time but now we understand each other, even when we astound each other. To me, a husband-wife relationship is a process of give and take by respecting each other backgrounds, especially when you both are alien to each other and there is no room to rule over.

However, Hasina thought that her cultural and daily life style had become more Bangladeshi since she married her husband. When I saw her personal album, I noticed that in the pictures with her sisters that they were all wearing *hijabs* and long *kurtas* (Arab style dresses). On the other hand, in the pictures with her husband, she was more colourful, with traditional ethnic clothing and makeup. Hasina said,

I love *sari* and he likes me to dress like this. A few years before, I used to wear a *hijab* but he asked me not to cover my head. So I quit. But then again it was not only me but also my husband who tried to adjust to a new lifestyle here. You see him wearing trousers today, but at the beginning of our marriage he hated that and he used to wear *lungi* (a traditional Bangladeshi garment worn around the waist by men). As soon as he realised that I don't like *lungi* at all, he tried hard to get used to trousers, and now this is his daily wear.

In Hasina's case, traditional arranged marriage worked, although her early married life was a bit complicated due to the difficulty of adjustment with her husband, who was from a different social and cultural background. However, she was able to successfully overcome the problem and maintain a happy conjugal life. She thought a husband and wife from different social and cultural backgrounds should respect each others' culture, especially when they live in a multicultural society; sharing, she believed, is more important than exercising dominance over one another; only then can a marriage relationship in a diaspora context be successful, she added.

Charsley and Shaw (2006: 332) observed that 'marriage emerges as an important mechanism for the production and transformation of transnational networks, but marriage practices and affinal relationships are themselves transformed in the process, underlining the dynamic nature of trans-nationalism'. In my research, I have found that the common feature of having a transnational husband for the women in the Cooked in Britain Cohort had twofold impacts in their life. Firstly they could create more space to enjoy freedom and empowerment in their life, although they had to struggle with adjustment issues at an initial stage. Secondly, even though they were brought up in England, they could adopt Bangladeshi culture and politics in sharing each others' ideas, values and practices, and also by frequently visiting in-laws in Bangladesh.

To join her father, who was a migrant labourer, Nafisa (41) migrated to the UK as a transnational child with her mother in 1985 at the age of 1. She grew up in a working class family in the UK, followed by marriage to a Bangladeshi based husband in 1992. Ever since then she has been playing the role of head of the household as a mother of three children and CEO at a private company. I asked her whether she could describe her role in household management, to which she replied,

I am the main decision maker in my family, and my husband is always supportive. I don't cook every day; I usually spend much of my weekend time cooking, shopping and doing household stuff. Otherwise it is my husband who takes care of all of these issues. Although he has some fixed business in Bangladesh, here he is very much involved with some community cultural organisations, rather than the economic sector. But I have my daily job and social engagements, so we have swapped our roles in our household.

Nafisa's husband, Hasan (age 46) is a well-educated non-Sylheti, he obtained a post-graduate degree from the top university of Bangladesh and worked for a renowned company in the capital city of Bangladesh before migration. I had an informal conversation with Hasan, where we discussed more about migration and diaspora life, for example, the impact migration has had on his life, how he describes his positionality in a diaspora context, how he sees himself in a diaspora and transnational context etc. What I have been able to gather from our conversation is that Hasan had high ambitions for his life and career, so he thought marrying a British Bangladeshi would be a big opportunity for him to fulfil his goal of developing his career as a prominent economist. Once he got married and migrated to the UK, he realised that his education and experience back home were not enough to enable him to get involved in the mainstream job market and so he tried to pursue higher education in Britain, but slowly became demotivated, as he was already struggling with his post-migration setting and adjusting to married life with his British Bangladeshi Sylheti wife. Unlike the traditional family roles and responsibilities in Bangladesh, the family roles and structure in Britain (where the concept of maid-servants is unthought-of), helped Hasan gradually to become more supportive in fulfilling household activities and playing the role of a homemaker, whereas back home he had never thought of doing household jobs before marriage or during marriage. On this point, Hasan thought that the changed context of his life and the changing role of a wife in a diaspora space acted as crucial factors in terms of breaking the gender stereotype of roles in the household.

During my interview with Nafisa at her home, Hasan served me some traditional Bangladeshi appetizers (very well decorated Bangladeshi cultural ready-made foods). Although Hasan did not prepare the food himself, serving one's wife's guest not only raises issues of tradition but in Bangladeshi culture, it is seen as a question of

emasculatation (as a Bangladeshi, I have come across this in Bangladesh). Hence, the role of the transnational husband breaks the traditional gendered role, which has been redefined by the dynamics of family in the diaspora space. Thus the shifting family migration had been shaped by marriage in both Bangladesh and Britain; the formation of wider cultural linkage and values, at this point had been instigated trans-nationally by or by reason of the British Bangladeshi wives.

I interviewed Dalia (age 50, the Cooked in Britain Cohort) in her kitchen. She asked me over the phone whether I would happy to speak 'informally'. When I went to her house I realised why she said informally. I saw her continuously doing household chores. Dalia migrated to the UK in 1977 when she was an 11-year-old girl. She divorced her first husband because of his adultery and had recently got married for the second time to a person with whom she fell in love at the age of 48 while being the mother of three children and grandmother of two. Now she lives in her own flat with her daughter and husband. Her flat was decorated with cultural and religious artefacts and she showed me many awards she had received for 'best mother' and 'best mother-in-law' and also for her dedication to social activities, from various community organisations and a Bengali media channel.

I conducted a three-hour interview at her home sometimes in the kitchen, sometimes in her living room or garden. At one point in our discussion, she bit her tongue and asked me whether I felt awkward taking the interview in the kitchen. Even after my confirmation that I was happy with this, she said,

Ohh your cloths will get kitchen smells, [it's] not any good, but what can I do '*ma*'? The kitchen is my permanent place.

Dalia's warm approach to me, family roles and household decor visibly reflected her ideal of 'Bengali womanhood', On the other hand, her strong position by taking a stand against her disloyal husband and marrying again when she was already a grandmother shows huge courage considering she is a woman and represents the transformation of womanhood, while also being recognised as the best mother and mother-in-law by the community. However, traditional gender role discourse still appears as influential and hegemonic to Daila.

Dalia's decision to divorce marks the changing positionality of community women and can be identified as very enlightening and encouraging. Further to her story, Bushra's experience completely shows how a specific context leads migrant women to reconceive their gender-specific roles in certain circumstances. Although the reconceptualization of their roles adds the burden of multiple other roles, it can also be argued that it is encouraging in that it gives women more freedom. Bushra (age 27, the British-born Cohort) was born in the UK from a mother who is part of the Cooked in Britain Cohort and was raised in a working class family. After being in a relationship for three years with a Bangladeshi man who migrated to the UK for higher education, in 2011, Bushra got married to him; together they have twin sons, born in 2012. Although her parents were positive about her relationship and marriage, her relationship ended after two years of marriage, when her ex-husband wanted to go back to Bangladesh because he felt that his children should be brought up there, but Bushra had the opposite stand. Finally she won, her husband left the country after divorcing her. Hence, Bushra takes all responsibility for her family as a single mother at the age of 27. She is a banker and she also looks after her two children. In her words:

Because I am a woman, I am a mother, a divorcee, a professional, a British Bangladeshi, a bread winner and a Muslim; I am taking all the responsibilities and playing every kind of role in my family and in the community, and all these shape who I am.

Bushra's example reveals that women, who are divorced or widowed, now show their courage to run a female-headed household in the community. According to Ahmed (2005), the necessities of migration oblige women to reappraise their perceptions of self and to take on both social and economic roles which may be rejected at home (Bujis 1993:2 in Ahmed, 2005).

However, I have a different account to Ahmed's concerning divorce. My interview with Amina (age 21, the New-migrant Cohort) an asylum seeker, who came to the UK as a student's dependant in 2011, now divorced and mother of an 18 month old son, reveals, how much she is under pressure not to leave the UK. Her parents threatened her that if she returned back to Bangladesh, they would commit suicide, as it would be a huge shame for them, if people knew that their daughter had been abandoned by her husband.

She asked me to help her with necessary information about donor organisations, who give shelter to helpless refugees. She said,

I tried several times to go back, but right after I did remember my parents saying, 'Don't come, please don't. If you come you will see nothing but our dead bodies'.

Amina's experience shows the extent to which cultural taboos, stigmatization or social backwardness are entrenched, deeply-rooted and still practised by the people of rural Bangladesh, so that it would be very difficult for migrants who are divorced to adjust to the circumstances and they would experience continued mental trauma. In my participants' case, divorced and widowed women enjoy a level of freedom in the context of the UK, which for some of them would have been unthought-of in the context of Bangladesh.

5.1.3 The British-Born Cohort: deconstruction of ethnicity, bargaining with patriarchy

In the Bangladeshi religio-cultural context, women who have their own boyfriend or choose their marriage partner by themselves are seen as not a *vodro meye* (decent girl), while for men it is considered as *boyosher dosh* (a matter of young age). This view has been prominent in the rural context of Bangladesh. Although the situation is changing gradually particularly in the urban areas of Bangladesh, it is still a cultural taboo or a kind of authority over women by patriarchal men. In my view, marriage and most importantly freedom to choose one's partner is a huge changing effect in the life cycle of any Bangladeshi women and Bangladeshi diasporan women. By breaking the cultural domination, a daughter, a woman enters into a life as a wife where she already knows that she is powerful enough to play the role of decision maker within her new family, even in her migrant life. The women born and bred in Britain are also affected by the traditional idea of the marriage system. Transnational marriage, which includes rigid or traditional cultural practices (marriage without the bride's consent or forced marriage with Bangladeshi-based Sylhetis, or with cousins) in the Sylheti Bangladeshi community in the UK has been seen as a process of formation of the British Bangladeshi community in Britain mostly from the 90s. The Cooked in Britain Cohort are the main victims of such practices among my participants. The significance is that

the practice has been highly influenced by the context, as migrated males had already set up traditional cultural values and practices (Ahmed, 2005) and this has affected the particular life course transition of migrant women. Conversely, my argument in the previous section shows that by practising ‘new transnational marriage’ (Kibria, 2012) through marrying Bangladeshi-based husbands of their own choice, some women are experiencing more power, which is completely opposite to the experience of those who married through forced marriage.

However, the practice has been challenged by the stance of Bangladeshi migrant women (particularly those in the British-born Cohort) towards transnational migration and their negotiation with gendered norms ‘bargaining with patriarchy’ (Kandiyoti, 1988 in Alexander, 2013: 346) in relation to marriage, in the present diaspora community (Alexander, 2013). The power exercise of the Cooked in Britain Cohort in new transnational marriage and the negotiation with gendered ethnic practice of the British-born Cohort can be related to what Barot et al. (1999) called the reconceptualising or deconstructing of ethnicity by the second generation in Britain.

The factor that has been enabled women to gain bargaining power over patriarchy has not been much discussed in earlier studies. However, the insight of this study into the marriage experience and its impact on earlier women’s life course reveal how they played an important life changing role to support the next generations (in my research, generation is used as a structural term designating the parent-child relationship). Here, I will again discuss a story from the Pioneer Cohort, that of Jahanara and her daughter born in Britain, Ashfia. Her story regarding marriage and forced marriage certainly shows the contribution made by the Pioneer Cohort to the changing positioning of the British-born Cohort. Regarding my question about how does she described her contribution in her daughters’ lives, Jahanara said,

I could not be of help to my elder three daughters (who are the Cooked in Britain Cohort), my husband got them married with *deshar fua* (Bangladeshi men) before they knew what was going to happen to them and even before they reached 20. The same thing happened to me when I was only 14. I came to the UK in 1983 when they were only 12, 10 and 8. Although I didn’t want them to go through the same situation that I went through, I was helpless as my

husband never counted me in while taking decisions. After marriage, none of my daughters were happy (*tara shukher mukh dehe nai*- they did not find happiness in their married life). One of them got divorced shortly. In Ashfia's case (the youngest daughter, who is British born), my husband had chosen his nephew as a groom, but this time I wasn't going to be silent, I told her to choose her own way, not to care about her father and I helped her to leave the house and get married to a British Bangladeshi man whom she loved.

After being a migrant and diasporan for a very long time, Jahanara (age 66) developed a strong sense of self and challenged male dominance over her family; by doing so, she broke the traditional rigid practice of arranged marriage that happened to her and her daughters from the Cooked in Britain Cohort. Once she was the victim of it and could not resist, but her experiences throughout her life course in the UK helped her find a voice for herself and her British-born daughter. Even her divorce from her husband could not break her strong positionality in the family, but rather it taught her how to play the role of a single-mother in a changing diaspora context. Indeed, the role of the Pioneer Cohort and their British-born generation in the 21st century challenges the concern of sustainability of the close trans-national link maintained in relation to marriage patterns and relationships, which Mann (2009) argues, is a barrier to moving towards 'modern individualism' (Berthoud, 2000: 13-14), and assimilating to the norms and values of the host society. Analysing the positioning of Bangladeshi women through a gender lens, my research shows what Alexander (2013) argues that the formation of the British Bangladeshi community in Britain through transnational marriage involving rigid or traditional cultural practices, has been detoured by the stance of Bangladeshi migrant women in the act of migration and their negotiation with gendered norms, bargaining with patriarchy in relation to marriage, in context.

5.1.4 The New-migrant Cohort: the powerful decision maker within diaspora family

In December 2013, I conducted my first interview with my friend's mother-in-law, Asha. At the age of 39, Asha (age 50) migrated to the UK accompanied by her husband in 2005. In the migration process, Asha was the dependant of her husband, who came through a business visa and settled down in the UK. Asha is an urban educated woman

from an educated middle class family. After graduation in 1987, she married her university classmate, whom she loved. To establish her choice in her family she had to struggle a lot and she thinks this was the first breakthrough of her life.

After all the agreement and disagreement, finally my family accepted my decision, it was such a brave part of me, a new me, I realised for the first time!

Asha's success with regard to her marriage in Bangladesh gave her confidence, which is still a source of power and is reflected in her strong decision making role in her family in the UK. Asha had a luxurious life back home, since her husband was the owner of two garment factories in Bangladesh. Although her husband was reluctant, migration was her decision, as she wanted to give care and support to both of her sons who were studying in the UK as student migrants. When she and her husband migrated to the UK in 2005, Asha tried not to stay in the Bengali community, as she wanted to be recognised as multicultural, rather than being stuck in ethnic culture.

You know Marlene (an old English lady, neighbour of Asha) is like my grandma, how I could develop this relation if I would stay in *Bangla para* (the Bengali area)!

I found Asha very smart in the way that she was acting as head of the household, a working woman and maintaining her social life so well. Both of her sons are now living their separate lives, while her trans-national husband, who returned to Bangladesh after getting a British passport, now runs an educational institution in Bangladesh and mainly lives there. However, while I saw her maintaining a very ordinary life at home, her manner is the complete opposite when she is in public or at social gatherings. Although her husband leads a very luxurious life in Bangladesh, she chooses to live her own way. I saw her spending a huge amount of money on buying expensive New Year gifts for a New Year party when I accompanied her, yet the house where she is living is a three-bedroom rented house. Her husband asked her to join him in Bangladesh, but she is reluctant to do so. They have arguments on the issue every time Asha's husband comes to visit her, but Asha always wins. She works in a day care centre, which does not earn

her a lucrative salary. However, she chooses an ordinary life in the UK over the luxurious life style in Bangladesh. On this point she said,

I am very much content in this country, I feel great when I visit Bangladesh with so many gifts; everybody cares about me, I enjoy my British status then. That is the thing you will never get if you have to stay there, even after maintaining a luxurious living standard.

Taking one's own decisions, particularly choosing a life partner, has been seen as a strong feature in Asha's case and has helped her develop her strong positionality in her later life in diaspora context.

5.2 Recent migration: new challenges and changing views in the family formation

From the experience of the Pioneer Cohort, we have seen that migration not only created opportunity for them but also posed challenges. According to Gardner (2002) gender, culture, purdah taboo, and age play certain roles in terms of migrant women's perceived quality of learning English. Additionally, work as a crucial element, influenced both the comparative mobility of women and men and their need to learn English (Gardner, 2002). Although Jahanara and Banu maintained the traditional female roles that they had in Bangladesh, they could adapt to English life as well, and expanded their responsibilities in daily life routines based on their new socio-cultural settings. Such experiences are commonly seen in Ahmed's (2005) account.

In the case of the New-migrant Cohort, I have seen that the participants who are newly migrant young brides from urban areas of Bangladesh, and who have come to Britain with a better education and/or professional qualifications compared to earlier migrants, are still going through a variety of complications or challenges to re-enter the professional life that they desire. Since the level of English they have attained is not sufficient in the UK job market to get a relevant job comparable to what they used to do back home, it makes their initial adjustment more challenging compared to earlier migrants.

5.2.1 The powerful coping mechanism of the New-migrant Cohort

I interviewed Rikta (42) at her home in East London. Her house was beautifully decorated with famous paintings by Bangladeshi artists, some of which portray Bangladeshi women's performance in a cultural festival, women workers, and indigenous women in Bangladesh. This choice of art gives the sense that Rikta identifies as a feminist personality. Rikta migrated as a transnational wife of a British-born husband in 2000. Currently she is a freelance writer and works as an actress in a theatre in London.

I asked Rikta whether she could tell me about the coping strategies that she applied in her new setting in the UK and how she dealt with cultural shock. Rikta shared her difficult experience after migration. Although she was very satisfied with the position she had in a multinational company back home, she had to sacrifice her career to promote her husband's career in the UK. Due to her low level of English, she suffered peer pressure and mental trauma for not getting a highly skilled job in the UK and losing her financial freedom. Her present job in a community organisation does not offer much in terms of career development and remuneration, but in her view, this is the reality newly migrant women have to face in diaspora communities. In her words:

When I first arrived in the UK, I had to leave a very good job that I did for years in Dhaka where I got increments a few times and got promoted accordingly. I didn't want to come here at all, but I had to due to the kind of job my husband does, which was not easy for him in Dhaka. When we came to London, everything was very difficult for me. I didn't find a job initially, which made my situation more complex. My friends, who studied here, got their dream jobs; whereas the level of English I had wasn't enough for the type of highly skilled job that I was searching for. I lost my financial freedom. As I said, I had a satisfying job back home and hence the circumstance I was in was very frustrating for me.

Such experiences were common to most of my New-migrant Cohort, who had had mostly middle or upper middle class up-bringing in the urban area of Bangladesh, and also an established or prospective career in Bangladesh, dropping careers as a

consequence of migration was a common phenomenon among them. However, they did not find adapting to the English living standard a major concern, due to the enhancement of globalization and the fact that they had already been familiarized with household technology and advancement to a certain extent in Bangladesh. Indeed, sometimes, the old-fashioned housing in England did not meet their expectations, as these types of migrants come from middle class urban families, who have newly-built, modern houses in Bangladesh. Another significant point in Rikta's migrant experience is that the myth of luxury in England or the idea of the British living standard was rejected by newly migrant women and therefore no longer a case to cope with. Rikta said,

I thought the houses in England would be modern and nice or nicer than my house in Dhaka but the reality was heart breaking and shocking indeed. The worst, I felt was the fact that there wasn't any privacy as the wall between rooms and toilet are very thin. I remember I came to the UK in July and the temperature was really high but I was kind of traumatized when I realized there was no fan or air cooler inbuilt in the house of a first world country. Yes it was shocking for me as I was used to living in an air-conditioned house back in Dhaka.

However, the typical British socio-cultural environment was recognised by my newly migrants participants as a big challenge to them, especially for those, who initially came and settled down mostly in English areas, which are different from the areas where Bangladeshi communities are established.

Immediately after her migration to the UK, Rikta resided in West-Wales. The dissimilar culture and surroundings that Rikta experienced initially led to her internalizing a sense of alienation, while being surprised by the fact that there might not be a way for her to go back. She expressed her worry in this way,

It was a horrible feeling, I can tell you when I first came here I had a huge cultural shock. There are too many coffee shops here which smelled different, people felt different, trees were different, my windows were different and I had a feeling I left my entire lifestyle,

a whole part of my life remained 6000 miles away and I might never go back.

While conducting this interview, I noticed some books and Bangladeshi artefacts in the sitting room, symbolising local traditions and culture. Surprisingly in a corner of her wall cabinet, there was a small nameplate, which had ‘*Wales*’ written on it. It was almost hidden, as it was placed behind a showpiece. I tried to get her attention, saying: ohh it’s so beautiful! With the intention of finding out what she could tell me about it. She was silent for a while, and then said,

It reminds me of my past days in Wales, which I don’t want to recall usually but sometimes I want to see it when I need to gear myself up to take up the challenge of life.



Figure 1: Rikta’s display cabinet

According to Rikta, she had to struggle not only to fit into the British society but also to create a place in the community that is already dominated by the Sylheti Bangladeshi.

It was not the English families but I would say the Bangladeshi that I found here were very different than my circle. Most of the Bangladeshis in London are Sylheti; they speak Sylheti, which I don't understand, because I speak standard Bengali. So, there is a lot of diversity among the community people. In Bangladesh we were not used to speaking to people from different communities; there is no diversity in our social groups, which was another thing I had to struggle with right after my migration.

Here, Rikta's experience shows that the established Sylheti community makes the adaptation process harder for non-Sylheti migrant brides as there is a huge cultural and language gap between Sylheti and non-Sylheti. According to Rozario (2004), social class is a crucial factor in making the distinction among the community people in relation to their educational status. For instance, less well-off and less educated Sylheti and well-off non-Sylhetis or Bangladeshis always maintain distance from each other (Khanum, 2002) and this shapes their different identity formations in the community. Hence, their challenge is therefore not only the restructuring of family in Britain, but also positioning themselves into the community and professional sector.

Before her migration Rikta used to work in a Bangladeshi theatre as an actress alongside her regular job. When she came to the UK as a transnational wife, leaving her job behind, she had a huge shock, as initially she was not able to continue with her theatre career. Although she was a renowned actress in Bangladesh, the language difference between Bangladeshi and English theatres appeared as a major obstacle for her. However, by learning the English language and adopting the accent, in 2010, Rikta was able to play a part at an English theatre. Since then, she has been actively involved in theatre work, and now she even runs some projects in which Bengali and English collaborate together in dual language plays. She shared her experience in this way,

I was missing home like nothing before, especially because of my job, I used to love my job and also the theatre where I was a regular performer. For the longest time I didn't done theatre and I don't want to recall those days. Ohh, how it used to feel! You know, theatre is such a great thing, it goes into your blood, you can't just not do it, so that was most challenging for me, to be able to find my

ground in British theatre, to learn their language and the way they talk and I am so happy to see myself make it happen here; and happier even when I see my contribution in our collaboration projects with Bengali theatre.

Rikta's story shows the powerful coping mechanism of diaspora women. Unlike the Pioneer Cohort, Rikta, from the New-migrant Cohort, forms a new kind of nuclear family without children but with disappointment or with a low life-style in a diaspora household. However, such women become successful in the coping processes through contemplation, communication, memory, and thoughts. By adopting mainstream culture, developing her own ground within it and then amalgamating it with ethnic culture, Rikta, as a newly migrant woman, clearly defines her powerful strong cognitive autonomous self in relation to her positionality in diaspora space.

5.2.2 Multifunctional and multifaceted role –play and gender relationship in family

In previous chapter, I have described the major of my research aspects (generation, context, time and pattern of marriage and migration) in terms of characterizing four cohorts and their influence on changing gender relationship within family. In the first section of this chapter I have described how the arranged but non-forced transnational marriage of the Cooked in Britain Cohort has had positive impact on gender role and relationship within their family. Although there are still traditional, and hierarchical gender role and relationship have been found in the case of many Pioneer Cohort and some of the New-migrant Cohort, a significant number of the New-migrant Cohort practise dynamic, modern, and non-hierarchical gender role in changing diaspora context. I will discuss this changing practice of the New-migrant Cohort in detail below.

Sraboni (age 33, the New-migrant Cohort) migrated as a highly skilled dependant and newly migrant bride from a middle class family in 2009 at age 27. Sraboni was well - educated and urban-based social and development activist before her migration. She graduated in English from a renowned university in Bangladesh and worked as a development activist in a well-known international organisation. After a year she married her boyfriend, who later on migrated to the UK as a skilled worker. Sraboni

migrated to the UK not only to join her husband, but also in order to take her educational and professional career to a higher level. After migration she did another Masters degree and is now working as a civil servant in London and involved with news media in a Bangladeshi channel. Now she is the mother of a one-year-old girl.

When I asked her about the importance of migration in her life, Sraboni replied,

Migration wasn't a necessity for me; it was something that I wanted to explore. My husband was there; he came here for his education and then later on switched on to tier1. Initially I never had this idea of settling abroad, I was happy with my job in Bangladesh and he was still working here. A time came when I felt like there is no point for us to live separately from one another in two different parts of the world. I also had the inspiration within me to study further. Therefore, coming here was to pursue my higher education besides [being] a migrant wife and this was indeed an added opportunity for me. I was happy in my new exploring and seeking out of new boundaries and looking at it gave me a sense of adventure, which I was very thrilled about. I can still recall my father who travelled a lot within Dhaka, and from Dhaka to abroad. I felt good undertaking a similar errand and thought exploration is very helpful and beneficial.

Thus, by taking their own decisions about migration, looking at the opportunities, rather than the difficulties that migration may offer, and pursuing higher education in the country of establishment, we can clearly observe the changing views on migration of the New-migrant Cohort, which is encouraging and empowering in the case of migrants that are making this step as dependants of their husbands.

While Asha's role in her family was authoritative, a non-hierarchical relationship in the family has been observed among the young participants, who have recently migrated to the UK as transnational wives with better educational qualifications and professional skills. By playing multiple roles in their family as context demands they break the idea of fixity of traditional gendered roles and relations and redefine them in a shifting form in the diaspora space. Although family migration is still continuing from rural Sylhet, in

my study the current phase of migration focuses on a large group of urban based educated middle class skilled women or wives, who nowadays see student migration or family migration as a way to seek for new opportunity in their life. Due to the impact of globalization and urbanization, women in Bangladesh are now entering more into public life, which changes their mind set as dependants and helps them to take new challenges and responsibilities in life. Thus migration with multiple responsibilities is well accepted by them, which certainly changes their positioning.

Besides, rather than being stuck with the challenges of Englishness, they initiate child-free family (with minimum responsibility) immediately after migration and create their own space by representing and utilising their expertise in the family, community and mainstream British society. Sraboni defines the adjustment process and family formation in a diaspora setting as a contextual reality for a migrant and therefore needs to deal with it by facing it rather than fearing it:

Forming a diaspora family is taking up the changes and not changing entirely as a member of a Bengali family but to change according to the environment, the challenges and to meet them, and to overcome these challenges is the main thing. I think life is at the moments has become more packages of challenges, sometimes they are big, sometimes they are small. It's just overcoming those hurdles, passing them one by one, so that is something I feel. And when you settle to a new country to a new beginning, it is something that the challenges you have it is something very different. So for me it was like opening up and [being] ready to accept whatever its coming.

In Sraboni's view, there is no fixed role in a family. It is a changing process in relation to the context. Thus, every role can be played by both husband and wife, if it is a single family. I asked her how she would describe her role in her family. She replied,

It's a multifunctional and multifaceted role I play. Me and my husband, we are like best friends. We do everything together, there is no space in our conjugal life or our family life that we would say this is your territory and that is mine. I am in a very democratic position where we discuss everything that we are going to decide for

the welfare of the family or for the extended family and then in the decision making process my opinion does come sometimes. You know in this country, in this part of the world fathers do play a significant role in taking care of their children. So my husband does that, he does cooking as well, so sometimes if I don't have time he will cook. If I am busy with something, like today, I am very busy with my work and he is looking after the baby. In the afternoon, he will go and I will take up that role. So that's kind of sharing and the role is not a kind of fixed one. The role changes, so I play the role of mother, father, friend, and wife, so there are different roles.

Willis and Yeoh (2000) think that after migration the position of women in families and in the diaspora community often experiences significant transformation. This is very prominent among the participants from the Pioneer and New-migrant Cohorts. As a migrant student from Bangladesh I am viewing migration in my life with the same connotation. As I was content with my job as a development worker and happy with my positionality as an urban based, married, middle class, educated, working woman, the only urge I felt to migrate to the UK was for higher education. So I left my job and my beautiful family and moved abroad alone for the first time when I had only been married for one month. I have sacrificed my career, and comfortable life and chosen a new but struggling one, as my education is my first priority. Migration has changed my way of life. My husband shortly joined me in the UK, and we have started our life within a new setting. The way we lead our everyday life is completely dissimilar to those of our parents, as we do not follow a fixed structure, we do not consider family as an institution with fixed gender roles and responsibilities as my parents do. We give priority to our needs that come through contextual settings. Similarly, the New-migrant women have been established themselves as transformative agents, in breaking 'traditional' gendered relations in the migration process and reducing the divisions between 'home' and 'abroad'. I will discuss this further in the subsequent chapters.

Overall, the ideas of family formation, structure, role, relationships and women's agency have been changed in the shifting process of diaspora identity. Previously, women (all my Sylheti participants from the Pioneer Cohort) from rural backgrounds migrated with the intention that they would play the role of care-givers (Gardner, 2006) for their immigrant husbands, whilst currently, rather than this being the obvious

intention of their husband bringing them to the UK, in the process of transnational migration, the educated middle class urban based transnational housewives now make their own choice, arguing that the reason for migrating is not living apart from their husbands. Thus rather than solely being a care giver support system for the family, they make their own positionality by taking on the challenges of uncertainty of settlement, enhancing their knowledge and skills through higher education and training, and expanding their role in the broader community.

5.3 Summary

This chapter has focused upon the status of British Bangladeshi women in relation to their changing family positions. By discussing the findings relevant to the issue, the research has highlighted the different impacts of translocational context on Bangladeshi old and new migrant women and Bangladeshi women that were either born or brought up in England.

By experiencing transformation in their lives, for example, by taking on challenges in order to adjust to a new context and new settings, they have successfully positioned themselves in specific contexts. Furthermore, by dealing with various intersectional identities or by adjusting to diaspora elements, women of different cohorts have been identified as change makers.

The process of migration and the timing of life course transition in the diaspora context enable women of the Pioneer Cohort to reach a critical level of understanding of diaspora life. The cohort therefore is dynamic in terms of adapting to the ever changing phenomenon of the diaspora context and playing a stronger role as decision makers in the family, community and political development.

Decision-making roles in the family in terms of household management are changing for participants who were born and/or brought up in Britain and for new migrants. Although most of the participants of the Cooked in Britain Cohort now have a triple role burden (productive roles, reproductive roles or domestic role and community management roles for instance volunteering and roles in local politics [Moser, 1993]), they consider these multiple roles to bring positive impact in their personal and public life by increasing their social class and status. All the participants of this Cohort are married with transnational husbands. It was identified that transnational husbands

influenced their choosing political standpoint and practising transnational culture. Besides; they share a more amicable relationship with their husbands than did their mothers. Thus, the transnational marriage relationships between Bangladeshi based husbands and UK based wives, have resulted in strong transnational ties and growing ethno-cultural practice among the wives, which has impacted on the formation of British–Bangladeshi trans-nationalism and community in Britain.

The stance of the British-born Cohort on arranged or forced marriage and support of the Pioneer Cohort towards abolishing these customs reveal that they are now able to challenge the stereotypization of Muslim ethnic women as submissive. Nonetheless, this image persists in mainstream British society and still impacts on gendered positionality in the context of the ethnic traditional rigid cultural practice of the established and expanded Bangladeshi community.

In the case of the New-migrant Cohort, the effect of globalization on the socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects of Bangladesh and women's positioning in it has led to changing attitudes and adaptation in the changing pattern of the migration and settlement process. Moreover, the establishment of British society as a multicultural society has also helped them create an equal space in the household and break the gendered barrier to position themselves in the community and society.

The transformation of rural Sylheti women and progression of newly migrant urban women in the diaspora space have occurred by gaining knowledge and education, learning new skills, forming new relationships, challenging stereotypical gendered norms, taking a stand against discrimination and breaking down barriers in both the private and public spheres. Moreover, by bringing a transnational husband to the UK and/or creating a sense of resilience and agency, engaging across social and cultural boundaries, assimilating into the English environment and adapting to English culture (in the case of women married to English men) they have challenged the stereotype of the Muslim woman as a submissive woman.

Chapter 6: Transnational positioning: generational transfer of ethnic cultural values and practices and changing transnational link

In the first section of this chapter, I will focus on the accomplishments of the Pioneer Cohort in terms of transferring cultural values and ideals to the next generations (particularly the Cooked in Britain Cohort), which they have developed throughout their diaspora life. I will show how, in turn, the very same process helped the Cooked in Britain Cohort create their own identity by reforming what was passed down to them based on their contextual preference.

The second section of this chapter is concerned with the generational struggles between the Cooked in Britain and British-born cohorts within the same diaspora families. The chapter discusses the challenges that the women in the Pioneer and the Cooked in Britain cohorts are facing in the changing diaspora context in terms of transferring inherited ethnic values to the next generation, the British-born Cohort.

I will discuss, in the last section, how diaspora women from different cohorts see and maintain transnational links in a changing diaspora context in relation to their intersectional differences and how this way of maintenance is connected to their social status in both the country of origin and the country of settlement. In addition to the personal rewards and benefits this provides, it also changes the status quo in a trans-local space.

The women in the Pioneer Cohort have been seen as progressively adapting to mainstream British culture at the same time as successfully transmitting a collective sense of ethno- and trans-cultural identity to their next generations.

Although the Pioneer Cohort was successful in transferring ethno-cultural values to their next generations, significant generational changes and struggles have been observed between the Cooked in Britain and the British-born Cohorts, due to the dual socialisation process or conflicting ethnic and western upbringing of the British-born Cohort.

The web based communication to the country of origin shows the changing pattern of the transnational connection, in which emotional being dominates over physical being and allows a little space for exchanging goods, people or frequent visiting.

Almost every participant (except the British born cohort) has close connection to their relatives in Bangladesh.

By sending money to their birthplace and local villages for religious purposes, the Pioneer and the Cooked in Britain Cohorts actively maintain a transnational connection, which reveals the transnational religiosity of the Bangladeshi community in Britain.

For the British-born Cohort transnational connection is more in the form of giving financial support than emotional. However, they think they are too young to take the financial responsibility at this stage of their life. Besides, the responsibility has already been taken and maintained by the older family members.

The successful maintenance of transnational links through campaigns and activism in the country of origin by the New-migrant Cohort shows how the inter-personal link has been replaced by inter-communal and inter-organisational influences and networks across borders.

6.1 Women across generations: transferring a collective sense of cultural identity

It was surprising to find out that, despite being brought up in the UK, almost all the women in the Cooked in Britain Cohort try to uphold their culture of origin, and they want their children to maintain the same ethno-cultural values. While it was even more surprising when earlier migrants women were successful in the process of acculturation (Ahmed, 2005; Phillipson et al., 2003; Gardner, 2002), the process they established continues from generation to generation.

6.1.1 “She told us the story how she was grew up, so we had a visual image”

Hamida (age 40, the Cooked in Britain Cohort) migrated to the UK as a newborn child in 1976, along with her mother Khurshida (age, 70, my participant from the Pioneer Cohort) from rural Sylhet to join her father, who migrated in 1964 as a labourer. In spite of her upbringing in a well off migrant family (her paternal grandfather migrated first as a labourer, then he brought his son and when they became financially stable, they

brought their wives and children) Hamida was very helpful and down to earth. During our first meeting at the Redbridge underground station, I saw her helping two strangers out by directing them and lifting their luggage onto the train they were looking for, although she had a bandage on her left hand. But what surprised me the most was that she bought a bottle of water and gave it to them, saying,

Take the bottle, sister; it will take you more than an hour to reach
your brother's place!

This gesture of Hamida's significantly shows the practice of sisterhood by diasporan women in the diaspora space. During my first meeting at her home, I was more interested in discussing her family and relationships, about the source of agency that her mother exercised and whether it had changed or transferred to Hamida over her life course, within and across Britain and Bangladesh. During that discussion, I found Hamida to be very affectionate towards her ethnic culture. Despite representing herself as a member of the global Muslim *Ummah* or Muslim sisterhood (she was working for the ELM Women link), Hamida nurtured her ethnic cultural aspects that came through her mother, Khurshida. Khurshida taught her the ethnic language, ethnic culture and stories of her life back home, which helped Hamida to develop a keen attachment to her ethnic roots. Hence the interpersonal connection, imagination and memory of Hamida's mother work on Hamida to internalise her ethnic self. However, this is autonomous rather than oppressive, in that Hamida has the space in her life or freedom to make her own choices or to act towards freedom. In her view, the main benefit to transnational people in diaspora settings is that they have the option to choose from various cultures.

During our discussion at her office, Hamida consciously did not show her ethnic elements in front of other 'sisters' (Muslim sisterhood), so I by no means expected to get ethnic cultural information. Whereas, I was surprised when Hamida was told me, at her home the story of how her mother had taught her about roots and nurtured the connection.

In her view, a transnational connection does not mean that there should always be a practical or physical proximity between migrants and their relatives. By connecting to one's roots, a transnational connection can also be maintained. The connection is there, when a migrant carries her culture and languages into her diaspora setting. Hamida was

sitting with her legs crossed (indicating that she was not bound by Bengali custom, where it is considered to show disrespect towards elders and lack of manners in front of strangers when a woman sits cross-legged) opposite a family photo in which her mother was wearing a beautiful traditional Bengali sari and Hamida herself was dressed in comfortable denim with a cute pink top. I was sitting near her in the living room. As Hamida was expressing her understanding of Bengali culture that she adopted from her mother, I could find in her words the cultural ideas, customs, and social behaviour of Bangladesh. She admitted that, living in the UK, her only way of getting to know Bengali culture was through her parents, especially her mother Khurshida who had lived quite a large part of her life in Bangladesh. Khurshida always tried to uphold the Bengali cultural values besides maintaining the lifestyle of an English culture. She made sure that all family members spoke Bengali at home, which immensely helped Hamida to speak well in Bengali. It was Khurshida who often made her husband (Nasir) give Hamida Bengali books on her birthdays, which now Hamida realizes was her way to keep the culture alive in her daughter (Diya, age 17). Hamida's expression showed she admired her parents for the love of their culture. She was very close to Khurshida, who shared the journey of her life, which included childhood, teenage life, her marriage, her married life and her motherhood. Hamada's experience challenges the views of Kasinitz et al. (2008) regarding the prolongation of trans-cultural values and traditions by the diaspora generation, in which they argue that the immigrant children are reluctant to connect to their parents' origin to the same degree as their parents, and not interested in their customs and traditions.

As Hamida continued, I could perceive her mother's role in attempting to uphold Bengali culture through her daughter. As Hamida explained:

My mom told us the story of how she grew up and so I had a visual image of her life. When I was nine years old, we went to Bangladesh and stayed there for six months. I must say that was the best time when I really understood my culture, enjoyed it and could connect myself with my mom's time in Bangladesh. To be honest, this didn't make me feel quite a part of it; but at least I could understand the difference between Bangladeshi and British culture and how it has an impact in my lifestyle. I am glad I can enjoy both the cultural values and most importantly can actually pick and choose from each

culture. That's why I am happy to have English dinner at Christmas and New Year; and can have Bangladeshi dinner on Bengali New Year, Eid and at get-togethers with Bengali families. My visit to Bangladesh was indeed priceless and since then I don't just follow what my parents do, which I became a part of; rather I am involved in it, realising and understanding the background behind it.

Hamida's story about putting down roots, not physically, but through shared emotions and cultural values can be related with what Cohen (1996) defines as transnational ties. According to him, "Transnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims. In the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination" (1996: 516).

My cultural experience as a Bangladeshi suggests that in Bangladesh, cultural morals with regards to the parent-child relationship are extremely different from western principles. In particular showing respect to parents and obeying their words in every aspect of life are viewed as cultural and religious demands. These cultural morals are taught not only by the family but also by educational institutions or other means of socialization. For example, there is a local form of three wheeled transport called, a 'rickshaw' and local bus; when I was 12/13 years old, I first noticed that a message or quotation from the Hadith (sayings of the Islamic prophet Muhammad pbuh) '*mayer payer niche shontaner behest*' (your heaven lies under the feet of your mother) was written on almost every local bus and on the back of the rickshaw. So, in Bangladesh, mothers are children's prime caregivers and most respected people in children life; both traditional and religious culture promulgates strong related messages. Hence, ensuring the religio-cultural upbringing of their children gave more success to the Pioneer Cohort to transfer cultural ideals. Here, religion acted as a powerful instigator for the Cooked in Britain Cohort's transnational engagement (Levitt, 2009:1239). According to Levitt, "When children grow up in households and participate in organisations in which people, goods, money, ideas and practices from their parents' countries of origin circulate in and out on a regular basis, they are not only socialised into the rules and institutions of the countries where they live, but also into those of the countries from whence their families come" (2009:1226). Despite spending her first 20 years of life in North-Yorkshire with native English peers, Hamida had had a very strong religio-cultural

upbringing, which made her more obedient to her parents and encouraged her to embrace ethnic ideals and morals. In her words:

My dad was a very compassionate person and my mom too, and they were always giving, even though we had that bare minimum, they didn't give us a lavish lifestyle, they said that people always waste things, *In sha Allah* (with God's will or hopefully) we will try to teach this to our children too.

I enjoyed interviewing and listening to Asifa (age 26, my participant from the British-born Cohort, and married to a transnational husband). Her words showed a deep appreciation of the culture she belongs to, as well as the culture she is in at present. She shared how her mother's lessons about maintaining a transnational connection helped her, when she got married to a Bangladeshi based husband. As a result, she was successful in maintaining a close relationship with her in-laws in Bangladesh. Asifa said,

My mom taught me how to maintain a good long distance relationship with in laws, how to be close to them, what they mean with certain things and all those... as I am married to a Bangladeshi based husband, I have to go there, visit them frequently and it makes me feel like we are a very big happy family. For all of that I give credit to my mom.

This shows how earlier migrant women succeeded in sustaining their cultural values and morals across generations in a diaspora community and continuing the saga of maintaining transnational ties. I am connected to Asifa on a social network. Her network activities include much discussions of her connection to her in-laws in Bangladesh and the strong position of her mother in her life. I noticed a photo comment made by Asifa. The photo was a collage of two photos. One of them was taken in Bangladesh, in which Asifa was in a *sari* with her mother-in-law and another one was with her mother in the UK, in which Asifa wore a black top and blue jeans. The comment was:

God gave me my mother in law as a bonus and said, 'Here you go, you have not one but two great moms!' Now I don't have a reason to be sad in the UK or Bangladesh, I have two moms looking after me!

Hamida and Asifa's explanation about their mother significantly shows the role of the Pioneer Cohort (who migrated in the 1970s to 1980s) in maintaining transnational ties, family formation and re-forming the ethno-cultural identity (Gardner, 1993; Phillipson et al., 2003; Ahmed, 2005; Alexander, 2013) in the Bangladeshi community in Britain. It has been articulated in significant scholarships, for instance, challenging the status quo of cross-cultural marriage and religious conversion (Fisher, 2006), playing a significant role in the ethno-culturalization process (Begum & Eade, 2005; Gardner, 2006). It has been mentioned earlier that the practices of maintaining transnational links of first generation migrant wives (who formally started migration to Britain in the 1970s to 1980s) revealed the fluid nature of transnational migration in which women create space for control and a sense of agency, to enjoy freedom, to empower themselves and prove their positive management of households and reject dependence on their husbands as a result of going through long term separation from migrant husbands (Gardner, 2006). Besides, Ahmed's (2005) account reveals that despite being an underclass and with the gender stereotype positioning the male as dominant in the community, first generation migrant women in the 1970s or 1980s context could create their space in a solid and constant way. They were able to define themselves and validate their own sets of ideals and principles, such as decorating their homes with artefacts brought over from Bangladesh, cooking similar food, and transmitting the rituals of prayer to other women in the community, in socialising with community women to achieve a sense of community and village life.

Hence, the story of Hamida's life regarding her and her mother Khurshida and the case of Asifa show that the contributions of the British Bangladeshi migrant women (who mostly have their second, third and/ or fourth generations in Britain now) through their adaptation strategies, have helped maintain transnational links, reconstruct home within the family and expand it in the community. The impact has been profound as they were able to transfer these to or influence subsequent generations within their families and contribute in the identity formation process of the community. Thus, they have been successful in promoting contextual reality at the same time as transferring a collective sense of cultural identity so as to perpetuate the transnational culture to the next

generations. It was not only through those artefacts, cultural rituals, and cooking the same cultural food (Ahmed, 2005) that Bangladeshi women, particularly the Pioneer Cohort recreated their own space in their new contextual settings but also through hundreds of stories of their life back home and ethnic language. By sharing those with the next generation, they created a self-reflection, resulting in the transfer of a collective sense of cultural identity.

6.2 Transferring values: generational struggles

Although some of the participants from the Pioneer cohort were successful in transferring cultural values to the next generation, most of my participants were unable to do so for the current generation who were born in the UK, since the individual lives and self-images of that next generation have been shaped by circumstances and visibly different from those of their parents. In the case of the children of the Pioneer Cohort, who were born or completely brought up in Britain, their socialization process was structured on a twofold system. One was regulated by the family (parents) in the private arena, and the other one was regulated by the social system or institutions (for instance peer groups; teachers; school etc) in the public domain. Such a two tier socialization process creates more difficulties for the children, especially for girls, because of their conflicting nature. Consequently, when these two cultures were simultaneously present in an adolescent's life it may result in serious complexity in the personality or identity development of the adolescent.

6.2.1 “I try to convince her to wear a scarf at least”

The experiences of some of the participants in relation to generational changes show that it arouses fear or anxiety in the case of girls more than to boys, as for a girl, it is directly interrelated with their honour and reputation. For that reason, parents tried to discourage the young generation from interest in love, affection, sex and sexuality, which are associated with western (British cultural) views. In my opinion, these concerns are deeply rooted into the cultural discourse, where women are reflected as ‘cultural reproducers’ (Yuval-Davis, 1997:117) and that is why such emphasis is placed on controlling their dress codes, social, and cultural ideas and ideas of love, friendship and marriage.

In the culture of Bangladesh, girls must wear an '*orna*' (long scarf) as it is viewed as a symbol of modesty. In Bengali films the idea has commonly been represented that one of the first steps towards sexually harassing a girl is to take off her *orna* or the part of the *sari*, which covers her chest. I can remember a social movie *Anondo Osru* (1995) in which a tomboy rural girl named *Dola* is not used to wearing her *orna* and sometimes completely forgets about it, making her mother cry, thinking that her daughter is at risk of sexual attack by outsider men. During her first meeting with the hero, she is climbing a tree and her *orna* falls down under the tree. The hero, who is passing by, suddenly notices her. He returns the *orna* to her, saying '*buker orna bukei rakhte hoy*' (a scarf should be placed in the right place).

These 'gendered expectations of young women as the guardians of cultural and religious integrity' (Dwyer, 2000:3) are very visible in Nafisa's story. I introduced Nafisa (age 41, the Cooked in Britain Cohort) in the previous section. Although she migrated to the UK when she was nine years old, her upbringing in the UK could not devalue the ethnic morals that she acquired from her parents. The way Nafisa maintained the knowledge of her parents can be related to what Wolf identifies in the Filipino second generation. According to Wolf (1997), the second generation children of immigrant parents are engaging in transnational connection 'at the level of emotions, ideologies and conflicting cultural codes' (Wolf, 1997: 458). Nafisa thinks that the way she grew up in her family is no longer welcomed by her children. Now she is worried about her teenage daughter's lifestyle, as her daughter prefers western belongings to ethnic. Although she has an adolescent boy too, her concerns are mainly about her daughter, whom she considers a symbol of a good and decent family. For this reason, she tries to balance between ethnic and western in picking items such as clothes for her daughter. I asked about her relationship with her children and she replied,

I have a strange relationship with my boy. I think I have no control over him, like how parents should teach their kids dos and don'ts. You know boys, they are not manageable all the time and in this country they have the acceptance and option to live separately from their parents when they reach 16, so I always keep that in mind and try not to force anything on him so that he can feel that he can still be okay living with us. But I always fear that my 17-year-old daughter might get involved in a pre-marital relationship! If your

daughter is on the right track it means your family is good and decent. I try to convince her to wear a scarf at least. Sometimes she listens; sometimes she just ignores it. Honestly, I have no problem with western clothes but she should dress in a decent way. You know, nowadays the scarf is a symbol of modernity!

From Nafisa's statement it can be observed that she is attempting to protect ethnic gender ideals. As part of the Cooked in Britain Cohort, she is tasked with maintaining the gendered ethno-cultural values that she inherited from her parents who belong to the Pioneer Cohort. However, sometimes these values are reinforced by the gendered element more than the cultural. This attempt to maintain such values might be seen to be at odds with the multi-cultural context of Britain that needs more 'cultural translation' (Hall, 1992: 247) in the boundary of family relationships.

When I was interviewing Nafisa at her home, I saw many family photographs of various sizes in her living room; every picture represented a happy family with a strong bond. However, one thing I noticed that was she put some passport size or cropped pictures of her eldest daughter, who has just reached 17, whereas all other family members were in normal size pictures. After a while, when I asked her to show some of her picture albums, I noticed that those pictures were cropped on purpose, as in most of the pictures her grown up daughter was wearing trendy western clothes, without any scarf. It can be argued that the process of becoming 'westernised' of the British-born Cohort, similar to the term 'Americanised' used by Zhou (1997), and the process of acculturation by the Cooked in Britain Cohort and the Pioneer Cohort are contending with each other, resulting in 'intergenerational discrepancy' (Ying & Han, 2007), or 'generational dissonance' (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996) within diaspora and transnational families.

6.2.2 "I couldn't share with my mother, so I make sure my children can share with me"

Some of my participants of the Cooked in Britain Cohort tried to adjust with circumstances and develop friendly relationships with the next generation, considering it as a changing process, in which the multi-cultural context plays an important role in making one's own definition of culture. At present, the Bangladeshi community in East London is an established community not only in a quantitative measure but also in the

sense that now it has a large group of migrant women who were brought up in the UK and have been influenced by both ethnic and English cultures. This process has been helpful in the case of the British-born Cohort, who can now share their emotions with their mothers, who were brought up in the UK and are well acquainted with the English culture and language. However, these mothers were unable to communicate with their mothers in the same way; for them, ethnic cultural values were the only common ground they could share.

My participant Hasina (age 43, the Cooked in Britain Cohort), whom I have already mentioned in the previous section was brought up in a working class migrant family. She experienced struggles and suffering due to the generational gap in her family, especially with her migrant mother, who was far away from the culture Hasina has taken on. Because of what she has learnt from her diaspora life, she wants her daughter to be comfortable in terms of sharing anything and everything with her. Regarding my question on the relationships among different generations, she said,

We may have that cultural thing and emotional bonding we inherited from our parents, but that doesn't mean we will have to impose those on our children. They were born here; they have more options, more cultures to pick from. You know I couldn't share with my mother, so I make sure my children can share with me ...it's a generational thing.

Although Hasina nurtures the ethnic values and morals she adopted from her parents and engages in maintaining transnational relationships, she does not want to inflict her beliefs on her children. She differentiates 'ways of being' (the actual social relations and practices by individuals) and 'ways of belonging' (a connection to origin through memory, nostalgia or imagination) (Levitt & Schiller, 2004:1008) in a diaspora and transnational space. She knows her children will learn and adopt more from their surroundings and practical situation rather than emotion, memory and ethnic cultural practices.

6.2.3 “My generation still repeats “do” and “don’t””

In Bangladesh parents usually use direct communication, and sometimes in a loud voice, which is not always appreciated by their children or grandchildren, who were socialised in the UK. In another case, Rukhsana’s (age 41, the British-born Cohort) expression and explanation show that the cultural behaviour of the elders has been taken for granted by her, and that she is worried about the generational changes that impact on ethnic cultural morals. Rukhsana is the third generation in the UK, since her grandfather migrated to the UK as a pioneer. Rukhsana is married to a British Bangladeshi husband, with whom she has three daughters and one son. She is well-educated and well established in the community, as she serves her area as a political councillor. Despite her status as British-born, she is well connected to her ethnic customs and behaviour and this has led to her having to face an inter-generational conflict within her own family, with her children. I have mentioned in the previous chapter in my description of the socio-demographic table of the British-born Cohort that Rukhsana was the only participant within the cohort, who was born in the 70s, unlike the others, who were mostly born in the 90s. Although I emphasised that the women who were born in Britain during the late 80s or the 90s constitute the British-born Cohort, I put Rukhsana in the group, but only because she was born in Britain; her upbringing took place in a different time and context, that of the Cooked in Britain Cohort. Here, the context is very significant because it highlights a clear difference among women from the same cohort. I asked her how she described generational differences, and her comment shows her anxiety regarding generational change:

My generation still repeats “do” and “don’t” whereas our fourth generation will question it a lot. If I say, “Can you sit down?” they will say ... “Why?” But if my mom says, “Sit down”, I sit down...don’t even question her.

In Rukhsana’s clarification, context is powerful, as it has had a huge influence on generational changes. Referring to the theoretical debate of the term ‘generation’ in identity and migration studies, this case shows that using the term ‘second generation’ (Laufer, 1971) to refer to children who were born in the country of settlement is problematic. For example, putting together all the British-born, who are diverse in terms of age (whose age might range from the teens to the forties) and context (who were born

in Britain in different decades) clearly ignores the intersectional differences of the diasporans. In the case of Rukhsana, context intersects with age and generation, and discloses the changing relationships and different positioning of women into diaspora families who share common features as British-born.

The generational changes and struggles were observed significantly between the cohorts Cooked in Britain and the British-born Cohorts. Here, my interpretation is that the ethno-cultural ideals and values were brought by the earlier cohort from their origin with first-hand knowledge, but the next cohort learned many of those, but could not internalise all of it due to their dual socialisation process. Thus their attempt at transferring values at times misses the essence of originality of those values, thereby failing to take a dominant position over westernised culture.

6.3 Changing but strong ties from long distance

In this section I focus on how the changing diaspora context and women's positioning into it influences the process of maintaining transnational connections by the women from different cohorts. Transnational migration has multi-dimensional effects on women's lives, especially as regards their experience of family and community life. Without support networks, moving from anyone's comfort zone to a completely different place undoubtedly brings considerable stress and trauma. Regardless of initial challenge, by developing strong connection through emotional and moral support and by playing an important role in decision making in relation to family and relatives in Bangladesh, migrant women develop their strong and autonomous self in transnational contexts. By focusing on experiences of women in terms of how they position themselves in transnational contexts, I wish to disclose how the patriarchal image of migrant women as submissive is challenged by the subject position they strongly take in context and how their transnational bond was maintained through the generations. This will help us to understand transnational migration, its opportunities and challenges, and the dynamics and social-cultural connections of women migrants in relation to place, which lead to individual and wider change.

The transnational linkage has been signified among the British Bangladeshis through a chain of give-and-take process between places, marriage migration (sending brides, who are mostly relatives from country of origin to country of settlement), or sending remittances from the UK to Bangladesh, or else exchanging goods amongst the people

of two places, represent the reproduction of the culture of migration. This is a significant way of maintaining links between places and of reproducing their native country in the country of migration (Gardner, 1993). However, this process of cultural reproduction is not static but changing, as growing British import businesses are providing goods from all over the Asia, which used to be sent from Bangladesh. Moreover, the changing marriage pattern among the new generation of British Bangladeshis, who are more willing to choose a partner from the British-Bengali community, causes the decline of marriage migration (Gardner, 1993).

Hence, my findings show that the changing transnational link, which is nowadays more dominated by internet or mobile technology, leaves little space for exchanging goods, and people, or frequent visiting. When the changing transnational connection fails to continue the chain of give and take, or if one does not act in the same way that others do, it ceases to work. Besides, the idea of displacement of a migrant has sometimes appeared as a process of selfishness and unfaithfulness to the people of origin, especially when the migration happens from third world countries to a first world country and there is no continuity of the chain of give and take in terms of material exchange. In my study, this is the situation of newly educated migrant women, who migrated as students, and later on married white British people and settled down in the UK. They are traumatised by such experiences.

Almost every participant (except the British-born cohort) has close connection to their relatives in Bangladesh. From my findings I have seen that for the British-born Cohort, transnational connection is more in the form of giving financial support than emotional. Therefore they consider themselves as too young to take this responsibility at this stage of their life. Besides their older family members are active in continuing the communication with family, relatives and wider community in Bangladesh, which is why they are reluctant to take this responsibility.

6.3.1 “But that made our bonding even stronger”

Most of my participants from the Cooked in Britain Cohort, who were brought up in the UK communicate with relatives in Bangladesh on a regular basis, it was easier for them due to hi-tec advancement. In contrast in earlier days, the participants in the Pioneer Cohort who migrated in the 70s or 80s, would only be able to contact their close ones by letter once every six months, or sometimes even less. Nevertheless, they did not think it

had any effect on their bond with family and relatives in Bangladesh. Jamila (age 58, the Pioneer Cohort) migrated to the UK as a transnational wife along with three children in 1978 from rural Sylhet to join her husband, who had migrated a decade earlier as a labourer. She was a full-time housewife, who had received only primary schooling in her village school and had to learn and struggle in the initial days of her migration with British lifestyle, household and kitchen appliances, among other things. Jamila and I discussed the different context of migration and different process of communication with relatives back home in the late 1970s. Jamila shared her views in this regard:

It was a very difficult time to wait for the letter from Bangladesh. Every day I would check my door and return to household stuff feeling sad was a very common thing for me. You know in those days letters were the only way of communication. I could only contact my parents three or four times in a year. But that made our bonding even stronger.

At the time she migrated, Bangladesh was not very technologically advanced. Nowadays mobile phones with 3G internet networks are widely available and affordable in Bangladesh, even in rural and remote areas, whereas conditions in the 70s, 80s, and even the 90s were much more backward. Rural people were not aware of mobile phones, nor could they afford them, they were seen as the symbol of the urban middle class and even they did not know what the internet was about. This technology based contextual difference had a significant impact on the way the Bangladeshi women from the different cohorts could establish a transnational connection and the extent to which they could maintain it. As Ho (1991) was cited in Phillipson et al. (2003:9), in argued, ‘within the context of transnational family and globalisation, there are photograph, phone calls, video cameras and emails, all of which aid participation in family life.

6.3.2 “They can’t take any decision without asking me”

Nafisa (age 41, the Cooked in Britain Cohort) migrated to the UK in 1985 as a child dependant. She is now a university graduate, a working woman, mother of three and the main decision maker in her household. The significant thing here is that she got married to a Bangladeshi based husband, who joined her in the UK one year into their marriage. She thinks her long distance relationship with her husband in Bangladesh for a year

after marriage helped her develop a connection with relatives and in-laws back home, which was not the same before marriage. She continued the connection even after her husband joined her in the UK. In the middle of the interview with Nafisa, she asked me to wait, as one of her relatives in Bangladesh called her on Viber to have their daily chat. This is the way they maintain transnational bonding, a new form of technology-based transnational kin network. She expressed in this way:

Oh I do communicate literally every single day with my relatives through Facebook...we share our pictures, videos and make a group chat, which wasn't possible in my mother's time. My younger cousins, they look up to me as a role model, I have done things that inspire them in every way. If there is a problem in our family, they would come and discuss it with me, I am their secret keeper. I am very closed to my relatives and in-laws, they can't take any decision without asking me, it doesn't matter how big or small the issue is. Last year I helped my brother-in-law start up his new business in Bangladesh.

The internet network creates a different kind of bonding among migrants and relatives back home. Migrants and relatives are much closer than before in terms of sharing everyday life and being involved in decision-making through frequent communication without physical presence. Foner (1997) states that, 'modern technology, the new global economy and culture, and new laws and political arrangements have all combined to produce transnational connections that differ in fundamental ways from those maintained by immigrants a century ago' (1997: 369). Phillipson et al. (2003) describe social networks as 'novel ways' of maintenance of transnational connection by transnational families (2003:9).

So this is how migrant women of the present UK create their avenue in transnational space. It can be argued that the responsibilities that Nafisa undertook as a transnational guardian redefined her role as a sister-in-law. This example also illustrates the way that trans-nationalism as a circumstance influences the migrant's life in diverse ways, as the migrant develops long distance yet strong ties. Furthermore this common feature of my participants of the Cooked in Britain Cohort challenges Rumbaut's (2002) exploration

on 1.5 and second generation young adults in which it has been argued that transnational attachment are 'always under 10 percent' (2002:89).

6.3.3 “A new space... where the emotional being dominates over the physical being”

For some of my participants who are newly migrant brides, relationships with family and relatives back home have changed significantly, but in a positive way. The concept of joint family declines when migration happens, and the nuclear family creates more scope for newly migrant brides in terms of the decision making process. Besides, the long distance between brides and in-laws makes their bond stronger than before.

From my personal experience, my relationships with my family and in-laws have changed if I look at it in terms of physical presence. As I am not present there all the time, however mental or emotional presence is always there. Here distance changes the form of relationship but not the extent, particularly in my case. If I was in Bangladesh I would have lived in a joint family with my in-laws, but here my family is only my husband, my 1-year-old son and myself. So migration has changed the relationship and the organogram of the family. If I was in Bangladesh, I would have to listen to my in-laws, but here I have to take my own decisions all the time. In this way, the relationship has changed, and it is quite significant in a way. In point of fact, transnational migration creates a new space in the web, where the emotional being dominates over the physical being. It is a space where migrants and their relatives reformulate their relationship according to this new context.

Sraboni's (age 33) experience gives a better explanation of this phenomenon:

You know they are always looking for the avenue where they can show their affection, that they are there. Perhaps if I was there they would not have shown this much affection all the time, but because I am far away they would show affection more; If you are sad they would not come and hug you but they would call you, talk to you for a long time and you know it would comfort you in some way. So this is what I would not say the relationship has totally changed, this is the form it takes when you enter a new world.

Thus, the experience of transnational relations creates both opportunities and struggles in which women can reconceive their positionality in context. Hence, the notions of family, home and belonging have been transformed into the process of transnational connection.

6.3.4 “I feel like that’s the strongest engagement with Bangladesh... I have”

In recent times and in some cases, newly migrant brides who used to have close connections with their relatives before are now struggling to maintain that tie in the same manner due to their unsettled and lower socio-economic positions.

The experience of Bithi (age 37, the New-migrant Cohort) is a clear example in this regard. Bithi migrated to the UK as a student in 2005 and during her studies she fell in love with an EU student, whom she married later on in Bangladesh, after finishing her studies. She again migrated to the UK in 2009 as a dependant of an EU citizen. She is now a writer and blogger and mother of a three year old son. Although her parents were positive about her relationship and marriage, she had to face negative reactions from her relatives. They criticised her, saying that she got married only in order to obtain an EU passport and for a better lifestyle, while forgetting her roots and cultural values. This affected her desire to maintain a transnational link with them later on when she migrated, after marriage, to settle down in the UK. She is misunderstood by her relatives because to them, her settlement in the UK is equivalent to abandoning their common struggle, culture, and roots; whereas for her, leaving the country behind and migrating to another is not the same thing, as she considers that her homeland can always be kept in her heart or feelings. In our discussion on maintaining a transnational connection, Bithi said,

One of the things that really bother me is, whoever leaves a country, in our country as a migrant they are actually culturally levelled as people who left their country for a better lifestyle, it’s sort of a cultural treason; you know what I mean? And it’s like you have abandoned your country for your own welfare and betterment. This way of thinking always works at the back of the mind of friends, relatives, extended families, and if you are unlucky enough, in your own family. That is the way they actually interpret your migration

because you have left a third world country for a first world country. I think it's an economic interpretation and it really bothers me, it hurts me because I know why I have migrated, it wasn't a whole hearted choice of mine and I believe it was in no way a desertion. I still can't believe they stopped communicating to me because I married a different national, because I live in this country. I didn't leave my country, I just migrated there; it's a very big difference. My country is in my heart.

Bithi's added that her financial status is also one of the main obstacles to maintaining a direct link with family and relatives in Bangladesh. When I asked her to describe her connection to her family and relatives in Bangladesh, she said the following:

I often talk to my parents, sometimes my cousins and their wives, these days it's a bit less, once or twice a week. I would really love to contribute economically, but I am really not in a position yet, very shamefully I am not. I don't have any personal assets in Bangladesh. I am just a writer, I write in Bengali but I feel like that's the strongest engagement I have with Bangladesh and Bangladeshis.

Due to her occasional income, Bithi cannot offer much financial support to her relatives in Bangladesh. While she defines the connection in a new form, without giving funding support, she thinks she can still be useful by giving intellectual support to her country of origin, which is also a powerful transnational connection. In her clarification, Bithi shows us that transnational connection is a two way process, in which the people who are connected to the migrants in the country of origin, their views and ideologies are as important as the migrants in terms of maintaining the connection. Here, the participants from the Pioneer and the New-migrant Cohorts, who have migrated to the UK at a mature stage of their lives, are showing very different relationship patterns with their families and relatives in their country of origin; this, however, is also evidence of the fact that they have entered into marriages with different perspectives and from different standpoints and are following the path of individualization (Berthoud, 2001, 2005; Shaw, 2004) in the changing context of the migration process and diaspora space.

6.3.5 Funding support for moral reasons

It was significantly observed among the participants that women who believe in Bengali nationalism or secularism and women who are more motivated by the ‘global Muslim identity’ are both actively involved in donating or charity work in Bangladesh. Their purpose may be different; for example secular women give donations or support war women and run campaigns to safeguard their rights, while religious women give support to poor people in their village for the exoneration of Allah in the name of their departed parents or solely for the blessings of Allah and so on. Nevertheless they share a common goal, in that both are supporting disadvantaged groups of people in their country of origin. A study on Bangladeshi migrants by Siddiqui (2004:45) shows that first generation British Bangladeshis make huge contributions and offer significant support when natural disasters take place. They also maintain a close tie with Bangladesh, not only by sending money to their kin and relatives for economic support, but also making contributions for religious purposes, for instance *Zakat* (giving money or goods to the poor in the name of Allah) (Siddiqui, 2004:45). These actions demonstrate the transnational religiosity of the Bangladeshi community in Britain.

6.3.5.1 “Because they are no longer with us; we try to keep that connection”

It was observed that the women, who are British-born or brought up in Britain and have their grand-fathers and/or fathers settled in the country, are socio-economically advantaged, which makes them inclined to continue the saga by supporting their relatives back home. In most cases it is their migrant mother in the Pioneer Cohort who helped in acquainting them with custom, tradition, nature, culture, relatives and villagers back home so as to develop a relationship with their country of origin.

Hamida, of the Cooked in Britain Cohort, thought that by engaging in socio-religious activities faithfully, a migrant can nurture her trans-culture aspects too. She gave credit to women’s power in this regard. Just as her mother transferred the transnational connection to her, she wanted to repeat it with her daughter:

We do charity in Bangladesh, all of my dad’s estates have been given away and our house has been given to the poor people for their usage. We have a plan that we are gonna save some of their land and

do something with it in our departed parents' name, to seek Allah's forgiveness and blessings for them. We haven't decided yet, but it would definitely be some sort of educational or welfare institution, where poor villagers will be the beneficiaries. This was their dream. Even now I've started in the Masjid, we are sponsoring one of the room's furniture. This is '*sadaqah jariah*' (ongoing charity) for my mother, I said to my children "if you love your *nani* (grandma), you have to do this", I am doing this for my mom; everybody will contribute for funds. If I don't teach them, when I die they are not gonna do this for me. I think it in different way, so for me the cultural aspect of my life, these have meaning, the religious aspect for me, so I concentrate on that a lot.

Rukhsana (age 41) described how her parents involved her in the process of maintaining a transnational network and made her responsible for continuing the connection.

I can't say my relationship with relatives has changed any less or more, I think when my parents were alive they always had that connection with them. Especially it was my mother who always maintained strong ties with her extended families back home and I think because my parents are no longer with us; we try to keep that connection. We don't keep too much but we always look after them, so if they are need of money or support, we are always supporting them and they don't make a decision without us. So we feel more responsible.

According to Werbner (2004), a present idea of trans-nationalism has been recognised as a reverse process of return, an enduring condition of being a transmigrant; which indicates that the movement of a migrant is a continuous process between the West and the Rest, whereas, the previous idea of trans-nationalism was focused in a one-way migration to the west (Werbner, 2004). However, Werbner (2004) questions whether such an intensive level of transnational communication will be continued by the young generations, particularly the second and third generation, or if it will continue in a very individualistic way as entrenched in local sending contexts, which raises concerns over diaspora as a stable form of ethnic and communal living. Similarly, Siddiqui (2004)

shows her concern whether the first generation link with Bangladesh will be continued by the later generations.

My present research shows how the Pioneer Cohort was successful in transferring to later cohorts their deep sense of belonging to their country of origin. Rukhsana and Hamida's statements illustrates that the role of the Pioneer Cohort was significant and powerful in terms of maintaining transnational ties, building a bridge between the old and young generations in the transnational space. Besides, the New migrant Cohort is also maintaining transnational ties with Bangladesh in their unique ways.

6.3.5.2 “This is, I believe, the greatest contribution I can make for my country”

Keya (age 36) a newly migrant is married to a white English man, with whom she has a five-year-old son. She lives with her in laws. In her household she is the main cook and outside, she works as a health practitioner. Despite her multiple roles and English cultural way of life or surroundings, she is keen to work for her country of origin. For this reason, in order to give financial support to war women in Bangladesh, Keya visits Bangladesh quite often, leaving her family in the UK. I asked her how often she visits Bangladesh and whether she provides any financial support there. She replied:

These days I visit Bangladesh quite often, I am campaigning for the rights of war women, I am paying for the medical costs of two *Birangonas* (war women), who are severely ill, and this is I believe the greatest contribution I can make for my country.

Keya's story shows how a present migrant woman manages to live in and integrate into the English culture, how she plays the role of household head, develops a successful career in her country of settlement and at the same time still succeeds in maintaining a transnational link through campaigning and activism in her country of origin, even beyond blood relations. This shows the influence of intersectional diaspora on transnational migration, in which inter-personal links have been replaced by the inter-communal and inter-organisational influences and networks across borders. In this respect, diaspora has been considered a reflexive process of social, cultural, economic and political formation (Werbner, 2004).

6.3.6 Changing status quo there

According to Gardner (1993), transnational migration represents a relationship of power and difference in between two places. The migrants make an ambivalent relationship with two localities of two nations. They equate homeland '*desh*' (home) with spirituality and religiosity and abroad '*bidesh*' (foreign countries) with material prosperity (1993:1-2).

I observed that the process of migration of my participants from Bangladesh to Britain has a progressive effect in giving an advantage to them to gain access to political, economic and cognitive empowerment in their country of origin, as well as the country of settlement. For example, most of my participants who are originally from Sylhet Bangladesh and have strong socio-economic and socio-political status in Britain, have now been recognised in their village as very respectable and powerful people. They are invited by the village people to every social, political, cultural and charity based programme, and viewed by the villagers as role models. All this is due to their financial support to the village welfare, political activities, and infrastructural development of village houses and properties.

Even the participants who do not have strong socio economic status in Britain are recognised as blessings for the family and relatives back home, who are now able to change their socio-economic status in Bangladesh with their support. In some cases, the migrants that are living on the minimum wage in Britain have tried to keep this a secret by saving money and sending it to their family and relatives in Bangladesh, thus giving them the illusion that their socio-economic conditions are better than they really are. This situation is also apparent in certain of my case studies.

Gardner (1993) notes that the representation of migrants in their origin makes a clear-cut categorisation and hierarchical relation between migrant and non-migrant, which idealizes the power of *bidesh* (foreign country) as a mark of separation of the richness from the underprivileged. She thinks the migrants always try to display their powerful identity as British Bangladeshis, as a source of power to their *deshi* relatives and neighbours, even if they have poor socio-economic status in Britain, due to the discrimination and stereotypes of British society. The representation of this power is reflected in their active involvement in village politics from a distance, buying new land with competing non-migrants in auction, visible consumption such as restructuring or

building new houses in a *bideshi* housing style, and distributing gifts of *bideshi* products, signifying them as expensive and of good quality. This representation makes a clear-cut categorisation and hierarchical relationship between migrant and non-migrant, which idealizes the power of *bidesh* as a mark of separation of the rich from the underprivileged.

However, my interview with a family friend of Nafisa (age 41, the Cooked in Britain Cohort participant), Tithi (age 42) presents a different scenario in terms of the hierarchical relationship between migrant and non-migrant. Tithi expresses her highest gratitude to her migrant friend Nafisa for her very generous and down to earth nature. I asked her how she would describe Nafisa when she visited Bangladesh. She replied:

She is such a kind and grounded person. When she visits Bangladesh, most of the time she stays in my house, she wears very simple Bangladeshi traditional clothes, there is nothing condescending in her nature. You know in Bangladesh the huge load shading is common in our everyday life, during her last visit, I was so embarrassed in seeing her keeping cool with a handmade fan, while sweating, but she was smiling and trying to show me that she was completely fine with it. We went to the village together and I saw her sitting on the mud with her two little kids while talking to the villagers. She was speaking the local language very well. The villagers asked her about England and she replied: “oh uncle London and Bangladesh are all the same! I eat the same food that you have in Sylhet now”.

However, the transnational link in migration has had a positive impact on the family, relatives, and villagers back home. Even the village, locality and the whole social system of the native land of a migrant are certainly affected by the transnational network. This happens when a migrant brings the changing pattern of family structure into rural areas; for example most of my participants’ families and kinship units in Bangladesh have changed from joint to single based, as many of the kinship members migrated from rural to urban areas of the country with financial support from the migrants, with the support of modern technology and infrastructure. Their lifestyles have been positively impacted by the migrants’ involvement.

During my observation in the participants' areas in Bangladesh, I noticed that the home villages of my participants are renovated in a modern style, and Sylhet, the city where most of my participants originated, has the most expensive food shops and restaurants compared to other cities of the country. One shopping mall has been named 'Tescoo', which could be seen as evidence of the very powerful impact of the transnational link established between the migrant population and the locals.



Figure 2: 'Tescoo' Shopping Centre, Sylhet, Bangladesh

According to Kabeer (2000), the feminization of migration has been perceived in a dominating way, in which men have been over-represented as central and focused migrant groups due to their involvement in labour industry in Britain, and women have been symbolised as dependants. Therefore, women's contributions in shaping the community and developing transnational networks have been overlooked. However, my exploration (mentioned above) in this regard shows that women of different generations are now able to deconstruct the stereotypical gender relations, play a significant role in the family, community and society and maintain transnational link influence their transnational identities in a changing form.

6.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed how diaspora women, both old and new migrants acquire self-knowledge in the displacement and adaptation process, and exercise autonomy. They pass them onto the next generations. Generational differences and struggles among the cohorts in diaspora families, particularly the struggle between the Cooked in Britain and the British-born Cohorts, are influenced by their individual positionality in the different contexts they were raised in. Finally, by developing strong transnational ties in changing forms, achieving economic empowerment, and acquiring decision making power in the family, community and transnational space, all indicate the positive impact that migration has had on Bangladeshi women's lives and positionality.

Chapter 7: Perceptions of home, belonging and diaspora identity

This chapter is about British Bangladeshi women's shifting perceptions of home and identity. The first part of the chapter focuses on the self-identifications of women from different cohorts and the second part describes different ways that women from different cohorts talk about and create a sense of home and belonging. I situate both their varied self-identifications and narratives of home in relation to their social positions and intersectional identities in Britain and the diaspora, as well as trans-nationally.

According to Eade (1997b), the identities of British Bangladeshis are always multiple and composed of a series of identifications, for instance 'Bangladeshi, Bengali, Muslim, British, Londoner, East Ender' (Eade, 1997b: 150). However, rather than solely concentrating on collective identification as most influential in shaping people's identity, I emphasize people's subjectivity in order to better understand the perceptions, experiences, expectations and personal understanding and beliefs of British Bangladeshi women of different cohorts about who they are and where they belong.

In my participants' cases, an individual's identity is multidimensional and contextual, changing in accordance with their everyday life experiences. The women in the Pioneer Cohort disclose an unconventional form of identity by giving precedence to their present context rather than to old memories and past lives. Women in the Cooked in Britain Cohort frequently refuse the oppositional binaries of secularism and Islamism, identifying as British Bangladeshi Muslims while nurturing secular nationalist values and ethnic culture in daily life practices. The British-born Cohort struggle with a binary process of identification and socialization, for instance, between being British and Bangladeshi women, a choice, which they perceive to have been inflicted on them both by the British society and the Bangladeshi community. The New-migrant Cohort in a different way seeks to dismantle stereotypes that link migrants' ethnic identity to presumed submissive status in a diaspora context. They do that in part by amalgamating both identifiably ethnic and majority cultures to the place and situations they inhabit.

The notion of home is equally subjective or inter-subjective to my participants. Notions of home are respectively influenced by reminiscence and /or contextual specificity, which certainly show contrasting aspects. The material conditions, the significance of

kinship, strong ties with family back home, adaptability and adjustment to the present context and changing social relations, practices and identities in transnational fields all act as influential factors in developing the idea of home in the diaspora space.

The women in the Pioneer Cohort pragmatically prioritize their present situation and context and at the same time identify home through embodied sensory memories of long-term diaspora life. They dismiss the generalization about the myth of return. In this way they disavow ideas about the constraints and stereotypes imposed on them. For the women in the Cooked in Britain Cohort, the idea of home is both more overtly political and pragmatic; it is about creating a sense of belonging to the place of settlement and current context, and not always attached to roots, memory, and emotions. Although the British-born Cohort consider birthplace as their home, they give value to their parents' place of origin as a part of their identity. Like the Pioneer and Cooked in Britain Cohorts, some of the New-migrant Cohort perceive home by giving value to their present settings. They prioritize living standards as a marker of home and belonging. They conceive home through sensing unity in the community religious institutions to which they are connected. An example in the New-migrant Cohort shows also the continued complexity of home in a diaspora context in which home has been conceived through the attachment with the place of origin and the experience of isolation in mixed-raced families. Another example in the New-migrant Cohort reveals that the material representations of a house in a diaspora space can act strongly for a diaspora woman to internalise her place of settlement as her home, equally with her place of origin.

7.1 Identifying diaspora identities

In responding to the question about what kind of identity they would be comfortable with (British Bangladeshi, British Bangladeshi Muslim, British Bengali, British Bengali Muslim, British Muslim), the participants from the different age groups expressed their opinion from their subjective point of view. At this point, I will describe how subjectivity is shaped by individual identity and how it shapes it in turn.

7.1.1 The Pioneer Cohort: identifying diaspora identities

From the experience of first generation Bangladeshi migrants and non-migrants, Gardner (1993) notes that it is not that emotional connections keeps migrants in touch

with the *desh* (home); rather, the transnational identity brings ultimate political and economic power to migrants in applying it to the context of *desh* (Gardner, 1993). Although the British Bangladeshi identity of the participants has been identified as challenging at some point in the UK, it has also been seen as a very powerful one in transnational space. For instance, in Bangladesh, the participants who migrated at a mature stage of their life admitted that they were treated with more admiration and consideration than before migration.

7.1.1.1 “Now they give me *salam*”

My interview with Jamila (age, 58-59, the Pioneer Cohort) (I introduced her in the previous chapter) shows that her intersectional identities (British Bangladeshi Muslim woman) work differently in the diaspora and translocational space. Although she is a housewife now as she was back in Bangladesh, her status back home has significantly increased now, due to her migrant status, which is evident in her account:

Now they *give* me *salam* (a respectful ritual greeting performed in Muslim countries), invite me to their family and social gatherings, which wasn't the case before I came to England. Actually they value my British passport, so I would say my British identity is very much powerful in Bangladesh, but not in England though.

According to Hall (2003), the experience of a diasporan in a diaspora space can be described ‘not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite, difference; hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves a new, through transformation and difference (2003:235). Eickelman and Piscatori (1990b) think that ‘identities change over time,’ (1990b: 17). Although Jamila considers her diaspora identity as insignificant in the mainstream British society, it is very powerful and influential in her country of origin, in the way it earns her respect and admiration that were unachieved before her migration. Similar to Jamila, most of the participants in the Pioneer Cohort considered their British identity as a symbol of power. Hence, the Pioneer Cohort represents a very different form of contextual diaspora identity, which was transformed over time and place, and has become stronger in a transnational socio-cultural space.

7.1.2 The Cooked in Britain Cohort: identifying diaspora identities

While the women in the Pioneer Cohort identify their collective identity (British citizen) as a source of power, the Cooked in Britain Cohort tend to identify like this but in a more complicated way. The latter mostly prioritize collective but intersectional identities, which were chosen by themselves rather than ascribed to them, for example, British Muslims. Below I give three examples of the Cooked in Britain Cohort, which will show the significance of the subjectivity among the participants in the cohort.

7.1.2.1 “It just keeps the whole idea of what sort of person I am like”

I was astonished after entering the house of one of my participant Ruma (age 44, the Cooked in Britain Cohort). Ruma migrated to the UK in 1982 as a transnational child at the age of twelve along with her mother from rural Sylhet to join her father, who migrated in the 70s as a labourer. As a university graduate, she currently holds the position of CEO in a social organisation, which she founded. Besides, she works as a charity consultant. Ruma is married with a transnational husband, with whom she has three children.

I met Ruma at a local HSBC branch at East Ham; another of my participants introduced me to her and left me there so that I could conduct my next interview, with Ruma, at her house. I saw Ruma wearing a western outfit: jeans, top, coat and scarf. It was a rainy day; she and I were both walking down to her house. I asked her to introduce me to her locality and she showed me the East Ham football club, saying that she really enjoyed their matches and telling me about some of the historic matches that she recalled, although I saw some ethnic shops and was expecting that she would tell me something about them. Slowly I formed the impression that she might be more westernized than ethnic. However, all my impressions were changed completely when I entered the house. One of my favourite *Rabindranath songs* (ethnic music) was playing in Ruma’s bedroom and she started singing beautifully with the music and took me to her room. I noticed some beautiful photographs of Ruma in the bedroom; in all the pictures she was traditionally dressed with ethnic makeup and jewellery. The whole environment made me more comfortable as I had not expected her to invite me into her bedroom during our first meeting, which is actually a part of the traditional or rural Bangladeshi culture towards guests in their home. Now I started feeling some ethnic elements in her, and when I asked her to describe her own identity, I thought she would say British

Bangladeshi or British Bengali. But I was surprised again! Ruma, who was brought up in Britain, who strongly believes in Bengali independence and nationalism, who is an active member of a Bengali cultural organisation, and one of the main organizers of one of the biggest Bengali cultural fair and food festivals in East London, stated that she considered herself to be Muslim above all.

I would prefer British Bengali Muslim, I am Muslim first, it just keeps the whole idea of what sort of person I am like! So I am Muslim, I am Bangladeshi and British as well.

7.1.2.2 “I said what I believe in”

In another case, my observation revealed that by ignoring the suggestion of her husband (a leader of a British Bangladeshi secular political group) in terms of identity, Hasina (age 43, the Cooked in Britain Cohort) (whom I introduced in Chapter 5) is one of the foremost members of the British Bangladeshi secular political group, takes a stand regarding the identity she prefers. An incident stood out when I asked about her views on the following categories of identity: British-Bengali, British-Bangladeshi, British-Muslim, British-Bengali Muslim, and British-Bangladeshi Muslim. She chose British-Bangladeshi Muslim, while her husband, who came immediately and sat next to her, stated his disagreement and said, “Well, I think for me it would be British Bengali”.

The participant replied to this comment by adding that –

“I am Muslim as well”!

But then again the husband tried to provoke her, with a facial expression indicating his determination that what he said was the right answer. The woman remained silent for a moment and when her husband was busy reading a newspaper, she just looked at me and said (in a low voice)-

British Bangladeshi Muslim! You know I said what I believe in!

I mentioned earlier, in Chapter 5, how Hasina’s style of dress changed from an Islamic-cultural to ethno-cultural one after her marriage to a transnational husband. Although

Hasina's husband had influenced Hasina's way of dressing, he could not influence her views about herself, the way she wants to describe herself to others.

The cases of Ruma and Hasina clearly show that the collective identities that the participants are assigned by the Bangladeshi community or British society, such as British or British Bangladeshi, have failed to dominate their self-identity, since their sense of self is created by their own perceptions.

7.1.2.3 “It sucks when you have already been identified as an unequal being”

The perceptions of the British Bangladeshi women about themselves and also their social position were affected by collective identities (Eade, 1997b) and/ or intersectional identities, for example, British-born Bangladeshi Young Muslim Women, which are intersected through ethnicity, religion, gender and age. Meyers (2002) defines such as options as patriarchal ideas of women, which interfere with their knowledge of who they really are, and thus interfere with their autonomy. Although Ruma and Hasina were successful in choosing and expressing their identities, most of my participants thought that their identities had already been established by society, giving very small or no room at all for women, particularly young women, to think or to choose independently. Before even knowing what they aspired to, on how they saw themselves, they had already been fitted into some sort of categorical boundaries or identities, which they thought were the main barriers to their taking stronger positions in their community and the wider society.

Hamida (age 40, the Cooked in Britain Cohort) who is a member of the ELM Women's link, was brought up in the UK and from a very affluent family, expressed her concern about the identity that had already been imposed on her by the community or society:

I would like to express myself the way I am, I would like to be comfortable everywhere and with everything I do, as an equal to non- British, non-white, non-Muslim, I would like to be in the equal platform and to get equal opportunities. But unfortunately it sucks when you have already been identified as an unequal being; those identities say everything, you know.

7.1.3 The British-born Cohort: identifying diaspora identities

Similar to the Cooked in Britain Cohort, the British-born Cohort reject the collective identity imposed by the community or the mainstream British society.

7.1.3.1 “Sometimes that leads to seclusion...but sometimes it’s also bonus”

I have chosen Alie (age 26, the British-born Cohort), as an example from the British-born Cohort as she has no connection with the ELM Women’s Link, unlike most of the participants in the British-born Cohort. Despite this distinctiveness, Alie represents the majority views of the Cohort by giving preference to the place and context in which she was born and live.

I met Alie at an annual conference of the women’s alliance *Nari Diganta*. She was wearing a *sari*, something that I observed was not common amongst other members of the British-born Cohort I met. Alie’s great grandfather came to the UK in the early 60s and later brought his family. Alie was born in 1989 in a typical Sylheti family. She studied Management and is currently working in a food processing company. She was married to a British-born husband, but after three years of marriage she divorced her husband in 2013 and is now the single mother of a two-year-old daughter.

After the conference, we had an hour-long discussion in a room next to the conference room. I found her answers to be very spontaneous. On our discussion about diaspora identity, Alie argued that it is difficult to adjust to the identity imposed on diaspora women by the larger British society, but also by the Bangladeshi community. In her account, it is more difficult to adjust to the multiple situations present in the diaspora community and the family, since they demand different patterns of behaviour and a show of different identities. She said,

Now we are fourth generation in this country, there is a struggle between east and west. When you go home, you have to be a practising Muslim; traditional Bengali Muslim woman would be your only identity; When you leave the house, you are amongst your white friends, you are amongst ‘white mentality friends’ (ethnic peers with an English way of thinking) and you can’t go to certain

things so there are a lot of issues that our parents and grandparents don't understand that we have to deal with. And sometimes that leads to seclusion, it secludes us from the society we live in, but sometimes it's also a bonus, it depends which way you look at it.

Alie's statement illustrates that different diaspora contexts create different identities for an individual and this can be a strength and/or a weakness for diaspora women, and that this is also dependent on context. Here, Alie suggests that diaspora women should consider the positive side of the diaspora identity; that they should positively manage the multiple identities that their contexts create, and that this will help them prioritize their subjective choice in context and develop their own agency. Conversely, some of my participants thought it is women's subjective experience that shapes individual identity.

7.1.4 The New-migrant Cohort: identifying diaspora identities

Unlike the Pioneer Cohort, who emphasised on their British identity as a form of powerful identification, some of the New-migrant Cohort completely refused to accept this idea. Bithi is a case in point. She preferred her ethnic identity to be her only form of identification for her, while being married to a white European and fond of British art, culture, and literature.

7.1.4.1 "People look at you and find an ethnic element on you"

I introduced Bithi (age 37) in the previous chapter, she migrated as a student in 2005, later on got married to a EU citizen and has settled down in Britain. Bithi enjoys being part of the English literary culture, mentioning that it has been the most amazing experience of her life, while she prefers identifying herself as only Bangladeshi, rather than being called British Bangladeshi. She considers that to be her root, which can never be ignored or changed. Bithi said,

When I came here first, my white boyfriend and I used to see a new movie almost every day, we used to be members of a public library and they are very rich, it was really an amazing, pleasant experience with new books, the one which was awarded by Man Booker, the

one which was awarded by Costa coffee, the one which was awarded by Whitbread, I mean I really like being part of that pulse, you are connected to the spinal cord of the whole cosmopolitan society, you are open to the world, you are in a happening place, where you can contribute as a creative person, as a sensitive person, as a person who is aware of social, cultural and political changes, as a person of the contemporary world. So I believe that it is quite a rush and I want to connect to it. But having said that I think I am still a Bengali, I am still Bangladeshi. I love my Bengali food and music; they are part of my everyday life. I have not disregarded nor have I abandoned my identity for another.

The way Bithi described her identity is related to what Stuart Hall (2003) explains in his article 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' through the particular study of the Caribbean diasporic understanding. He argues that the cultural identity of a diasporan does not certainly connect to his or her homeland, but to a variety of homelands. Every single homeland has an influence over the idea of home, which emerges from the interaction between the homelands that comprise it. Hall identifies these influences as 'presences' and correlates with Derrida's concept of difference, which is not completely envisaged but instead in a continual state of understanding (Hall, 2003: 239:240, and 1990: 229-230). Similarly, Bithi's diaspora identity is affected through her ethno-national identity and the process of adopting and understanding the mainstream British culture. Hall discusses it as continuous ambivalence between multiple identities. Hence, in Bithi's case, there is no dominant identity; her sense of identity arises from the interaction between past and present culture and places.

On the other hand, Bithi shares the same view as Hamida, that it does not matter what kind of identity an ethnic migrant woman give herself; people look at her and give her an identity. She said,

People look at you and find an ethnic element on you. It limits my confidence, my freedom.... I don't want to be recognised for my differences, I don't want to be hated for my differences, It's very simple, my self-identity is precious to me.

We can argue based on Bithi's and Hamida's statements that the hegemonic labelling of ethnic and diaspora identity carried by the diasporans as an ascribed identity, controls their sense of self and agency in context.

7.2 Sensing 'home'

In responding to the question about what 'home' is for them, the participants in the four cohorts expressed their opinion from their subjective point of view. I will describe how the idea of home is internalised, constructed, or reconstructed by my participants based on their past and/or present context before and after migration.

7.2.1 The Pioneer Cohort: sensing home

Not only the British identity that made the Pioneer Cohort believe in the contextuality of diaspora identity practice, but also spending a longer time in England made them feel Britain is their home. Most of my participants, who had spent a longer time in England (the Pioneer Cohort) or who were brought up in Britain (the Cooked in Britain Cohort), consider both Bangladesh and Britain as their home. The continuous process of migration creates ambivalence as well as resistance for migrant women in the diaspora space, who are connected to the country of origin metaphorically and practically (Dwyer, 2000). Here, the idea of going back has nothing to do with home and for them home cannot be mixed with practicality or contextuality. Mand (2010) argues that in a transnational field, home has been identified through contextual realities, such as different experiences, practices and understanding, which challenge the static notion of a home rooted in a locality and provide an understanding of home in the context of displacement and mobility.

7.2.1.1 "I would see the castles and country roads among the clouds outside the window"

I introduced Jahanara (age 66) in the previous chapter. She has created a stronger self in the family throughout the process of migration and diaspora life, through her actions and choices. It is important to recall these issues as they have had a significant effect on her definition of home. After convincing her husband to bring her to the UK, she became part of his migration project as a transnational wife; she has had to maintain transnational links, adapt to the diaspora life by taking on new challenges such as

learning the English language and fitting into a new environment; she also played an essential role in transferring ethnic-moral values to the next generations, but not without taking into account the fact that the context she lived in was not the same as the one she had left behind; finally, she played the role of a single mother and decision maker in her family after her divorce. Although she could not save the family she struggled to maintain throughout the migration process, she developed her family in the diaspora context, beyond the structure of the traditional patriarchal family. She called this her 'home' and she described it as follows:

I was in the aeroplane and my destination was back to London from Bangladesh. As the plane took off, I would see the castles and country roads among the clouds outside the window. I was then recalling the time I was on aeroplane for the first time from Dhaka to London some 40 years ago. At the time tears rolled down my cheeks with flashback of my parents and siblings' faces. All I could see in the clouds were their faces and my parents' house. Now after 40 long years, I can only find my inner soul thinking of my children and I can't wait till I land safely in London and am among them. I smiled and tears of joy rolled down and I said to myself, "Life is indeed unpredictable". I visit Bangladesh literally every year, I consider both equally as my home, but that doesn't mean I will go back to Bangladesh, we should not mix home with falsifying the urge of going back! I was born and brought up in Bangladesh, but then I have started my family here. Now my children, they are my home, and I want to spend the rest of my life here. So, I would call England my present home.

Avtar Brah (1996) theorizes diasporic space by differentiating home as where one lives (the lived experience of locality, and home as where one 'comes from' (the place of origin). As she explains: 'Where is home? On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of locality, its sounds and smells. Its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering

winter evenings, sombre grey skies in the middle of the day...all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations (Brah, 1996: 192).

For Jahanara, home is identified through her embodied sensory memories of long-term diaspora life rather than a rooted sense of belonging to the place of her origin, where she spent the first twenty years of her life with family and relatives. This identification of home signifies the family relationships and life stages enacted within a diaspora space, because this is the place where children are raised and educated and lastly leave when they grow up (Bowlby et al., 1997; Hunt, 1989; Jones, 1995, 2000).

Walters (1923) argues that ‘the notion of diaspora can represent multiple, plurilocal, constructed location of home, thus avoiding ideas of fixity, boundedness and nostalgic exclusivity traditionally implied by the word home’ (xvi). Similar to Jahanara, almost all my participants from the Pioneer Cohort describe home through characterizing plurality of home and belongings, which is complicated and multifaceted.

7.2.1.2 “I personally don’t believe home will always give you the feeling of going back”

Anu (age 50) migrated to the UK in 1983 at the age of 18 as a transnational wife of an immigrant labourer, along with two children, from rural Sylhet. Within five years Anu became the mother of four children. Her husband passed away 5 years after her migration. As a widow and a mother of four children, Anu had to struggle a lot to survive in a completely different society and culture compared to rural Sylhet where she came from. Even the Bangladeshi community in East London was not well known to her at that time (Anu was tearful while she recounted the hardest time of her life). Although it would have been easier for Anu to get family support and care back home, she decided to stay in the UK and get into education and build a career. After her higher secondary degree in Sylhet, she could carry on to a postgraduate qualification in the UK. This was the most significant reason behind Anu’s decision not to return to Bangladesh, despite the difficulties she was going through as a single immigrant mother. Today she is self-employed, the director of a Bangladeshi cultural organisation, and leader of the women’s section of a Bangladeshi political party in the UK, women section, UK. Similar to Jahanara, Anu considers both England and Bangladesh as her home. However, she does not think she will return Bangladesh at any stage of her life.

She thinks a feeling of home can be both psychological and practical, but the urge to go back can never be practical and should not be related to the idea of home. She said,

I visit Bangladesh literally every year. I consider both equally as my home. It comes from the bonding I have with back home and also from the life I am leading here in this country. But then feeling Bangladesh as my home doesn't mean I will go back to my origin. You know what, we should not mix home with falsifying the urge of going back! Its not practical anyway. No, I personally don't believe home will always give you the feeling of going back!

William Safran (1991) argues that diasporans 'maintain a 'memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland'; [they] 'believe they are not-and perhaps cannot be-fully accepted by their host country; [and] see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right; (Safran, 1991:83-84). In his view, a crucial element of diaspora is 'a strong attachment to and desire for literal return to a well-preserved homeland' (1991:84). However, Safran's normalization and generalization of the myth of return is rejected by Jahanara and Anu, women in the Pioneer Cohort, who prioritize context and challenge stereotypical representations of constraint and static identities of the earlier migrant women (Phillipson et al., 2003).

7.2.2 The Cooked in Britain Cohort: sensing home

The idea of home is contrasting and divergent for my participants in the Cooked in Britain Cohort. Some of them consider home by connecting it to belonging, while some of them identify home through connecting it to their roots. I will give three different examples from the cohort in support of this argument.

7.2.2.1 "We all knew then that the UK is our home"

According to Nash (2002), the connections between home and belonging in postcolonial studies suggests complex forms of belonging that emphasise ideas of home, the native country and indigeneity. Although her parents had fulfilled their wish by building their dream house in Sylhet, where they originally came from, without owning any house in

the UK and by feeling a detachment from their origin, gradually Hamida and her parents developed a sense of home in the place where they feel close by and contented.

When I was growing up, it was uncertain whether we would be settling here. Therefore, all my dad's income was transferred to Bangladesh, which was invested in building his dream house where we would be when we returned and he was also buying land to increase his assets. However, when I reached secondary school, my parents paid a visit to Bangladesh. This was the turning point for us as they could see they didn't fit in the Bangladesh they left and what they felt was nothing more than visitors to that country. This made them realize we were not going back to Bangladesh. And we all knew then that the UK is our home and this is where we want to die and this is where we want to be buried.

In her account, Hamida refers to home in a way that really gives the sense of a place of belonging. A building or a house does not always mean home. Even though her family had built a house in their native country, Hamida could not feel a sense of belonging to their homeland, but rather she realised that they could conceive a home through internalising a sense of belonging to the place and context they are currently in. Owning a property is not equivalent to having a home for her; at this point home is identified as more than a territorially defined place of residence (Warner, 1994).

7.2.2.2 “It would be better for me to develop my political career back home”

For most of the participants, the idea of returning to Bangladesh is neither practical nor desirable. A few of them had tried to return but changed their minds, as their children were reluctant to leave their birthplace. It is significantly observed that the participants that wanted to return had recently migrated or had been brought up in the UK. However, the idea was not fuelled by the their husbands, who were mostly transnational husbands; rather it came due to frequent visits to Bangladesh, where they assumed that they would have a greater chance of creating successful careers for themselves, which is much more difficult to achieve in the UK social context. Moreover, some wished to get involved in Bangladeshi politics to obtain wider fame and recognition. I have introduced Ruma (age 44, the Cooked in Britain Cohort) in the previous section. Ruma has been maintaining

close connection with her relatives, friends and local people in Bangladesh. She wanted to go back to Bangladesh with the intention of joining mainstream politics so as to develop her political career. For her, home is Bangladesh. She said,

I thought it would be better for me to develop my political career back home. I really wanted to see myself as a strong woman and a successful political leader working hard for the country's betterment and women's empowerment. So my husband and I had decided to return back to Bangladesh, we sold our house, but then the children were totally against our decision. Finally they won.

Despite being brought up in the UK, Ruma wants her to be connected with her birthplace through ethno-national political motivation and ideologies. However, her motherhood and relationship with her British-born next generation dominated over her choice and idea of returning.

7.2.2.3 “You are powerless to express yourself as a Muslim in public...”

Similarly, the women who represent their religious identity over ethnicity have no intention of returning, considering that Bangladesh is a secular country and would not be able to provide them with a favourable environment for a united Muslim community, which is to some extent what they currently have in Britain. Shajna (age 44) came to the UK in 1971 when she was only six month old. Her family is now the third generation in the UK; her father migrated to the UK first as a labourer, and later on brought his family (Shajna's mother, her two daughters and one son). Initially after migration they settled down in North Yorkshire because of her father's job was in that area. Later on they moved to London when Shajna was sixteen years old. Although Shajna came from a working class family, because of her current socio-economic, socio-political and educational status she thinks she now holds middle class status. She married a Bangladeshi based husband and now works in the administration level in ELM Women's Link.

After more than a decade of living in this country, I went to Bangladesh to meet my family and relatives, and I was completely shocked, OMG! This is not my Bangladesh that I left 12 years back.

Everything has changed, people have changed terribly, you are powerless to express yourself as a Muslim in public so I would not be comfortable in calling Bangladesh my home, it's my birthplace.

The significant thing that came out from Shajna's experience in Bangladesh is that home is not always connected to roots, memory, and emotions. Sometimes the idea of home is very different, practical and political for a diasporan. Shajna internalizes home by prioritizing her religio-political views. On the other hand, Ruma calls Bangladesh her home, where ethno-national and political ideologies influence her process of internalization.

Shajna donated her parents' property, her parents' villa to an orphanage madrasa (religious educational institution). She never wants to return to Bangladesh at any stage of her life. When I asked Shajna if she had any plans to go back to Bangladesh someday, she gave me a look as if I had asked her something hilarious! She laughed loudly and continued doing so till the end of her reply concerning this topic:

I hope not. This is a nightmare. My husband early in the years when we were married, used to say, 'If you don't listen to me, pack up everything and I will take everyone to Bangladesh'. I don't think it's my *desh* *mati* (homeland). I believe the world is for humans, we don't know where we are gonna die. My home is where I live. For me, Bangladesh is my parents' home, my birthplace; my culture comes from there and my roots.

Olwig (2002) argues that home embodies both the idea of a place of origin to which migrants continue to have transnational social, economic or political ties (Basch et al., 1994; Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Kearney, 1986; Mahler, 1998; Sutton & Chaney, 1987) and the idea of a more distant homeland that provides an important source of diasporic identity (Appadurai, 1996; Cohen, 1998; Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1990). As a result of this merging of terms, 'home' has become a rather generalized notion of an 'elsewhere' that constitutes the real place of belonging for migrants' (Olwig, 2002:216). However, Shajna describes how time, context and practicality have changed their parents' internalizing of home:

My parents they realised for them, to go back home for a visit, it was not the permanent thing and they didn't fit in the Bangladesh they left, they were like visitors, I think for them they realised actually this is our home, this is where our children are, this is where we want to die and this is where we want to be buried.

7.2.3 The British-born Cohort: sensing home

All those of my participants, who are British-born Bangladeshi women, and fundamentally not migrants but have a migrant background, consider home to be a person's birthplace. Moreover, they argued that one's origin is what influences people's attitude and culture and that it has nothing to do with conceptualizing home.

7.2.3.1 "It's not my home but it will always be a part of my DNA"

Rukhsana (age 41) considers her birth country to be her home where she will always be most comfortable and Bangladesh a country for where she goes to visit relatives every now and again. I introduced her in the previous chapter as the only participant that is part of the British-Born Cohort who was born before the 80s and raised in the same context as the Cooked in Britain Cohort. I have discussed in a previous section how, despite being born in the UK, she is connected to her ethnic values and ideologies because of her upbringing. However, her idea of home is not influenced by her ethnic upbringing, but rather it has developed through the significance she gives to her birthplace. Indeed this is a common scenario for all my participants in the British-born Cohort. Rukhsana clarifies this by saying:

I was born here, my home is Britain; and my mother's home is Bangladesh. Bangladesh is a holiday place for me and for my children. Bangladesh is not my home, but it is the country I cannot detach myself from, because this is where my parents came from, this is where I still have relatives. It has more sentimental values, it's not my home, but it will always be a part of my DNA, that country I go and visit.

7.2.4 The New-migrant Cohort: sensing home

Similar to the participants in the Pioneer Cohort, the New-migrant Cohort identify home by connecting it to memory and belongings. However, their ways of conceptualising home are different compared to other cohorts. I will give four unique examples from the New-migrant Cohort in support of this argument.

7.2.4.1 “Home is where you are supported and cared for”

Bithi has no interest in returning to Bangladesh at any stage of her life. She strongly believes in Bengali nationalism and feels that Bangladesh will always be her identity rather than home. Unlike Ruma, Bithi’s ethno-nationalism does not influence her views on home and the idea of returning. She views it as something very much related to the idea of comfort, but also because of practical reasons. She thinks that when a migrant leaves her country, change immediately sets in. It is completely unknown to the migrant how quickly and how irreversibly that change takes place, and it can only be realised when a migrant visits her place of origin, which makes her understand that the place she left once is no longer for her, as she does not fit in. Just after getting married to a native British man, she realised that she was getting used to the English way of living more and more and that also gave her the feeling of home. She prefers London as her home in a sense it is the place where she has spent the longest period of her life. In her words:

Sometimes it could be Britain and sometimes Bangladesh. I am now confused in calling one of them my home and I really don’t want to be stuck with one of them. My Bengali nationalism has a strong power over me in internalising *Bangla* (a sense of common culturalism of a nation) as my home. However, these days I have started feeling that this place and lifestyle are also my comfort, secured and secret zone and I would not be surprised if I started calling Britain my home equally with Bangladesh. It’s so different, it’s so difficult! London is the one place in where I lived more than 10 years in my entire life, so I do feel that London is my home. But then when I hear the word Bangladesh, you know that’s what you are, that’s what I am actually, I am made of Bangladesh. But that has never made me want to go back, and honestly I think I would never go back. Because the public

transport doesn't suit you, the social stardust doesn't suit you, the way of looking at things does not suit you, the cultural aspects of the society do not really suit you. A lot of things are being done badly there in your homeland. So, home is where people want it to be, home is where you are supported and cared for. It doesn't matter what ethnicity you have, it doesn't matter whether they are your biological parents, it really doesn't matter now. When a girl gets married, once they move into their own place they call it as their home, her parents' home and relationship with her family changes anyway, in any country it takes place. One of the things that really bothers me is, migrants are actually culturally labelled by others who think they left their country for a better lifestyle. It's sort of a cultural treason, you know what I mean? It's like you have abandoned your country for your own welfare and betterment. This way of thinking always works at the back of the mind of friends, relatives, extended families, and if you are unlucky enough in your own family. That is the way they actually interpret your identity, migration and home. Because you have left third world country for a first world country. I think it's an economic interpretation and it really bothers me, it hurts me.

Bithi's experience of home is very much context-specific; it changes over time, place and life stages. Bithi's construction of home is influenced by the intersection of family formation, gender, age, migration, geography, and cultural practices. Bithi's clarifications challenge the myth of women's perception of a better place back home, and what was argued by Song (2005) to be a negative influence on the process of transnational migration, where moving between two countries can have a concerning effect on meanings of cultural identity and a destabilizing impact on the links formed between places and people.

Dovey (1985) identifies the correlation among boundaries of home, time, and the experience of being at home. Likewise, in a Bangladeshi context, as a daughter Bithi left her parents' home and birth family and entered into a place of her own, a nuclear family through the processes of marriage, and inter and intra-migration, which she calls her home. Hence, Bithi's construction of home is influenced by the intersection of family formation, gender, age, migration, geography, and cultural practices.

7.2.4.2 “I think I will choose peaceful sleep than rather than a longer one”

Sheuli (age 42) moved to the UK from Portugal with her husband and three daughters in 2011. In 2004, she migrated from Bangladesh to Portugal as a dependent unskilled migrant with secondary education, accompanied by her daughters, to join her husband. She is residing in the UK as an European Bangladeshi and currently is an active member of ELM Women’s Link. Despite the fact that she lived in a European country for more than six years; she prefers to call both Bangladesh and Britain her home. In her view, she never felt a sense of belonging when she lived in Portugal, whereas, in the UK, she can share common feelings and understanding with her Muslim sisters. On the other hand, Bangladesh is the place she comes from; thus it is automatically a home for her. In Sheuli’s case, religion is seen as conferring a strong sense of belonging over language or culture, which ensures a comfort zone for a migrant in a diaspora space, which she can call home. I asked her what she would call a home. She replied:

I never feel segregated at the mosque. Because, we have our religious way of communication (*amra eki shathe khai, eki shathe namaz pori-* we eat together and pray together). Bangladesh is my first home and will always be, since, it is the place I come from and England, the second. When I want a long sleep, I want to go back there. But then I wake up and move forward. Now this is my home, a very secure place. Here I can get a peaceful sleep but not for long. I think I will choose peaceful sleep rather than a longer one.

In Sheuli’s case, the notion of home is janus-faced; sometimes it is contextual and sometimes psychological. It is a sense of having a personal space and security in life, so as to look forward. Contrariwise, it takes her back by connecting roots and relationships. In relation to the participants’ accounts, I argue that place and life course have been intersected in the transnational field, which has explored that home is very much fluid rather than static. It connotes the relation, which connects movement and context in a different way. In addition, the intersectional discourses of social categories influence an individual’s subjective understanding of home, which in turn, results in various definitions of the concept. In my participants’ cases, social status and culture intersect with time and places and influence their internalization of home.

Massey (1992) describes the plurality of home, in which home can be identified as one's motherland, town, where his or her family lives or originates from and/or where he/she usually lives, or else it can be related to other places or relationships. Similarly Douglas (1991) signifies home as a 'kind of space' or 'localizable idea'. She states that 'home is located in space, but it is not necessarily a fixed space... home starts by bringing some space under control' (1991: 289). The experiences of Sheuli and Bithi in the diaspora space show how it is possible to become content with the lifestyle your country of settlement offers and dissatisfied with the lifestyle and places left behind in a recent past, all through a process of adaptation. In the case of the New-migrant Cohort, the durability of comfort is stronger than the influence time had in the Pioneer Cohort's case. Eade (1997a:104) identifies how home is connected to the changing views of migrants, in which the myth of return has been rejected through adopting the pragmatic view that home can be anywhere as long as migrants feel comfortable. Hence, Sheuli and Bithi's clarifications challenge the myth of women's perceptions of a better place back home, and what was argued by Song (2005) to be a negative influence on the process of transnational migration, where moving between two countries can have a concerning effect on meanings of cultural identity and a destabilizing impact on the links formed between places and people.

7.2.4.3 "My home is where my root is"

Karpat (1990) argues that diaspora identity engages complexities and transformations in which some diasporans continue to consider their country of origin as 'home', while others come to identify mainly with their country of settlement. Unlike Bithi, Keya gives value to origin over time and context. She believes in Bengali nationalism deep down in her heart, which influences her internalisation of home. I introduced Keya in previous chapter. Keya (age 36) migrated to the UK in 2006 as a student. Two years after her migration, she got married to a white English man, with whom she has a five-year-old son. Keya believes that Bangladesh will always be home for her, as it is connected to her roots, and the connection she develops trans-nationally always gets her to her home. She said,

I always want to go back to Bangladesh, I miss the social life, I miss the crowd. Obviously, my home is Bangladesh. My English husband and mother-in-law get upset when I call Bangladesh my home. They

say “That means you are not happy here, we can’t make you happy”, but I say the home is where the Mom is! I stay with my typical English mother-in-law’s family, they are very supportive but whenever I’m with my in-laws’ relatives and friends, I always experience a separation. That feeling makes me feel crazier about my family and friends back home. I always feel that strong bonding with Bangladesh. How long I live in this country doesn’t matter, as a Bangladeshi, my home is where my root is!

From Keya’s statement it is significant that Keya feels a kind of loss of home at her in-laws’ big English home. In her book, ‘At Home in Diaspora’, Wendy Walters (2005) shares her experience of loss of home at home due to a state-sanctioned racism. Although she is a black American woman living in the USA, all the time she is treated as an African. She cites Patricia Hill Collins’s childhood memories, ‘I now see that I was searching for a location where I ‘belonged,’ a safe intellectual and political space that I could call ‘home.’ But how could I presume to find a home in a system that at best was predicted upon my alleged inferiority and, at worst, was dedicated to my removal? More important, why would I even want to?’ (Collins, 1998 in Walters, 2005: xviii).

Similarly, Keya experiences segregation by the wider families of her in-laws due to her ethnic background. Hence the idea of ‘home’ in a diaspora space is signified through isolation and integration. Tsagarousianou (2004) argues that ‘the notion of home therefore is much more complex than approaches to diasporas premised on the power of nostalgia would want us believe. It ‘is intrinsically linked with the way in which the processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances. It relates to the complex political and personal struggles over the social regulation of belonging’ (Tsagarousianou, 2004:52).

7.2.4.4 “These two are my homes”

Some of the participants in the New-migrant Cohort, who have recently migrated as transnational wives are in a twofold situation in terms of identifying home. Bangladesh and Britain are equally home for them. Although they consider both as their home, they want to go back to Bangladesh with the intention of doing something for the betterment of their country of origin, by becoming directly involved in the welfare of the country.

Here *desh* (home) and *bidesh* (foreign country) are equally inter-reliant and a changing perspective of one affects that of the other. Thus, the inconsistency is that there is always a myth of return and a hope for the future abroad as well (Gardner, 1993).

When I asked Sraboni (age 32), what home meant to her, I saw her looking at her surroundings and then she said,

When I am in Dhaka I miss London terribly and similarly when I am in London I miss Dhaka so much as well. London is my first home. After my marriage, I bought everything in this house; I decorated this house with the combination of *deshi* and *bideshi* culture. This is something that I built literally, that's why I missed it. You know this is my *shongshar* (some one's world after marriage).

At this point she stood up, walked through the room to a cabinet, which was in the room; She then exhaled while touching some of the things that were on display. She continued,

But then again I feel my soul is in Dhaka too as this is where I made my first friend, where I spent my childhood, I have my memories with my family and so much more. These two are my homes and it breaks my heart apart, as I cannot be in both places.



Figure 3: Sraboni's artefacts

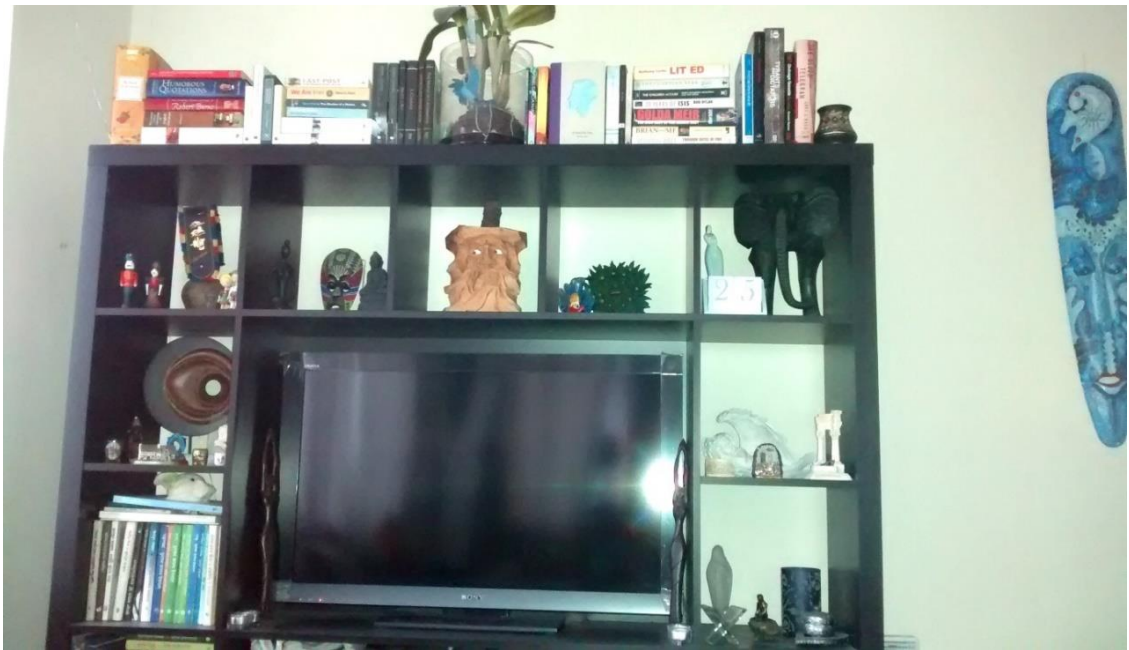


Figure 4: Sraboni's cabinet

Sraboni's statement shows how material representations of a house in a diaspora space act powerfully on diaspora women in terms of creating a sense of home. According to Divya Tolia-Kelly (2004), the visual and material cultures in the homes of South Asian women, for example, photography and artefacts inside their houses in a diaspora space, form new textures of home, but also have significant links with reminiscences of other places. Likewise, Katie Walsh (2006) argues that the notion of home is revealed through house interiors, along with the memories that interconnected the existing home to other places.

According to Ashcroft et al. (2006), "The scattering leads to a splitting in the sense of home. A fundamental ambivalence is embedded in the term diaspora: a dual ontology in which the diasporic subject is seen to look in two directions – towards a historical cultural identity on one hand, and the society of relocation on the other" (Ashcroft et al., 2006:425). In Sraboni's case, these two directions lead her to a space in which home and host are blended through rejecting the fixity of geographical borders. Having lived in two houses; two very different countries and having gathered memories from both, Sraboni identifies home with the combination of the material, immaterial, real and imaginary qualities of both places, rather than simplifying the notion as a connection to roots. Thus, both of her houses, in the place of origin and settlement, and the thousands of memories created there, give her the feeling of home within a transnational social space.

7.3 Summary

In this chapter, I have described how the women in the four cohorts internalise diaspora context through perceiving subjectivity and experiencing intersectional identities. I have identified that subjectivity and identity are both influenced by one another, making identity more fluid in various contexts *desh* and *bidesh* for instance. Hence the women in the four cohorts challenge the idea of accreditation of diaspora identity by breaking the certainty in the account of diaspora identity. It can be argued from the analysis of the interviews with the participants that the sense of home is very diverse. Noticeably, intersectional identities have been found to be very influential in construing participants' sense of self and the manner in which they internalize home. I have found that 'home' in the context of displacement has been experienced and internalised as a combination of physical building and a site of social relations in producing a space for cultural and social reproduction through the British Bangladeshi women of different age groups and generations. Being positioned into translocational space, my British-born young Bangladeshi participants internalize home, in experiencing contextual differences between Bangladesh and Britain. Overall, my participants in the Pioneer, Cooked in Britain and New-migrant Cohorts, who all come from different backgrounds, identify home through contextual realities such as different experiences, practices and understanding in a transnational field. This challenges the static notion of home that is rooted to a locality and provides an understanding of home in the context of displacement and mobility.

Chapter 8: Religion in individuals' and collective lives

In the first section of this chapter, I will focus on the complexity, sameness and distinctiveness of the British Bangladeshi Muslim women of different cohorts in relation to their Muslim identity. Particularly, I will discuss how my participants of different cohorts describe their Muslim identity by separating it from culture, and how some of them want to identify themselves through interconnecting religion with culture. In the second section of this chapter, I will discuss the influence of the intersection of Bengali', 'Western' and 'Global Islamic' cultures on British Bangladeshi Muslim women across generation and how they are being negotiated dynamically by different cohorts in daily life practices and different contexts.

For my participants, the sense of religious identity was developed through the intersection of roots, their subjective position and the place to which they belong. For many of the participants of different cohorts, origin is equally important with their present status in relation to belonging, while some of them emphasize more their subjective position and the place they belong to in terms of sensing religious identity, hence origin is less important.

The influence of religion and culture in terms of diaspora identity formation was identified as a huge topic amongst the participants. It is significantly observed that for my participants 'clothing' is a significant issue in terms of describing and defining identity and culture.

All my participants in the Pioneer Cohort, and the participants in the Cooked in Britain, British-born and New-migrant Cohorts who consider themselves as British Bangladeshi/British Bengali or British Bangladeshi Muslims, make a distinction between culture and religion to express their Muslim identity in daily life practices.

The Pioneer Cohort practise ethno-Islamic culture (established by Bangladeshi Islamic culture alongside ethnic cultural practises), while their Muslim identity is unobstructed and not rigid in the way it embraces the process of shifting identity formation across generation in context.

Those participants from the East London Mosque (mainly the British-born Cohort), who show their views by emphasising a collective Muslim identity, they predominantly practise religion by connecting it to global Islamic culture. However with other participants in the British-born Cohort they share a common practice by choosing and picking from both ethnic and western cultures.

The participants from the Cooked in Britain Cohort who have strong transnational ties, give importance to upholding Bengali culture in day-to-day livings alongside British and Islamic culture, while following the basic rules and regulations of Islam as ‘Bengali Muslims’¹⁰. On the other hand, by considering themselves as only British Muslim rather than Bangladeshi, most of the British-born participants and a few of the Cooked in Britain Cohort focus on contextual demand. For them, the context of British Bangladeshis is influenced through ‘Islamization’ or peaceful Islamic culture, in which they have redefined their ‘new’ form of Muslim identity by donning ‘Islamized western dress’ as a contextual demand and to protest the discourse on Islamic fundamentalism. Hence, religion has been recognised as a positive marker of identities over ethnicity or citizenship by the British Bangladeshi Muslim women, in which they explore solidarity collectively, by breaking away from the repressive identity that is continuously recognised as deleterious. However, most of the participants of all four cohorts practise a combination of Muslim, Bengali and British culture.

There is a multiplicity and dynamism in simultaneously practising religious and cultural identity across generations. The practice of observing westernized Christian religious-cultural festival by connecting them to Islamic history and collective ethno-cultural religious festivals show that the Muslim identity of women across generations from different cohorts goes beyond the debates of oppositional categories ‘Islamist vs Westernized’ ‘Islamist vs. Ethnic-Bengali’.

8.1 Muslim identity: describing as a Muslim or Muslim *ummah*

In this section, I will explore how my four cohorts describe themselves as a Muslim in a diaspora space. I will discuss the way women from different cohorts give emphasis on their subjective experience of practising religion through differentiating it from culture in relation to contextual differences. This section also includes an ethnographic

¹⁰ Here I mean Bengali Muslim as those people who practise Bengali traditional and/or Bengali Muslim culture other than the Global Islamic culture.

discussion of the Muslim identity of Bangladeshi women in London, in which dress-code as a cultural element and social power in relation to religion and context have a significant impact on the Muslim identity of a group of women who belong to different cohorts.

8.1.1 Religious identity and practice among the Pioneer Cohort

8.1.1.1 “My religious identity is very much non-political I would say”

Sajeda (55) is the only participant from the Pioneer Cohort, whom I met at the Maryam Centre. While I was interviewing another participant in a silent room of the centre, suddenly a woman came into the room and expressed her interest in giving an interview, so she waited for me. This lady was Sajeda, who was visibly exceptional in the centre with her gorgeous make-up and colourful ethnic-western outfit (a purple *shalwar-kamiz*¹¹ and *orna*¹² with a long overcoat. From a middle class background, Sajeda migrated to the UK in 1984 as a non-Sylheti graduate, along with one child, to join husband who migrated in the 1979 as a skilled migrant. Currently, she is working as a teacher and counsellor in a secondary school in London and is the mother of three children. Sajeda and I had a very friendly conversation; she was smiling all the time. Regarding my point on the Muslim identity, Sajeda thinks it is very contingent on context and cultural environment in the Bangladeshi community in Britain. She said,

People who come to the mosque if you do interview they will definitely give you the impression that they are devoted Muslims, whereas if you go to their house you will come up with different experience. This is why what they speak may not reflect in their actions accordingly. That does not mean they are pretending to be someone else but not themselves. I think when you will go in a community cultural event you will see me wearing a colourful ethnic outfit and you will think probably I am not a practising Muslim but now you see me in the mosque in a different look, you see me performing prayer so obviously your idea will be changed. Personally I believe I am a Muslim woman, my ethnic and migrant

¹¹Shalwar kameez is a traditional dress worn by women. Shalwar is loose trouser and kameez is a long top.

¹²Orna is a long, multi-purpose scarf. It is worn with shalwar-kamiz as a three piece set.

identities are secondary. But I am telling you that you will never come up with a simple conclusion with this sort of identity thing.

The significant point that came out from Sajeda's clarification is that the identity is something that is very much contextual rather than static. Sajeda showed her concern regarding the fact that the visibility of Muslim identity through practising religion in public is certainly not fixed identity. My participant Dipti (35) is the case in point. Dipti, who migrated to UK at the age of 26 as a parent's dependant in 2009 from rural Sylhet, is currently a single mother of two children and working as a security guard. When I first met her at the Mariyam Centre, she was in a long shirt, a trousers and a long head scarf. I conducted her interview at the centre in our first meeting. After the interview I saw her performing *Asar*¹³ prayer with *Jamaat* (assembly). When she left the centre she took her headscarf off. As I was accompanying her to the tube station, I had the chance to ask her about that. Dipti told me that she always keeps a head scarf in her bag with the intention of visiting the centre whenever possible. She does not maintain *purdah* outside the Mariyam Centre. She is not a practicing Muslim who is supposed to pray five times a day. Her busy life at job, and household responsibilities as a single mother, do not give her enough time and scopes to pray five times a day. However, she liked the environment of the Mariyam Centre, she found everybody in the centre was very kind and helpful. She liked the culture of praying with *Jamaat*, which according to her is very peaceful. Dipti's experience shows the difference between publicly displayed religious belonging vs lack of religious practice at home. Dipti used different strategy to integrate with public space (the Mariyam Centre) through her contextual and constantly changing Muslim identity and belonging.

However, Sajeda prefers to be identified as Muslim first, while viewing her ethnic identity as a secondary. Nevertheless, Sajeda does not think she should force her children to practise religion in the way she does. In her view:

You can teach them, you can show them the rules and regulations of Islam but you cannot do anything if they want to follow it in their own way. I just make sure they have the belief in Islam. Personally I love to practise religion in an individual way. My religious identity is very much non-political I would say.

¹³ The Asar prayer is the afternoon daily prayer recited by practicing Muslims. It is the third of the five daily prayers.

Here, the significant point is that Sajeda is consciously valuing her context and subjective choice in representing her identity as a Muslim, which is neither collective or political nor fixed. However, her belief in Islam is constant and benign similar to that of other cohorts, which I will discuss in subsequent sub-sections.

8.1.1.2 “But I will do it at home anyway”

I met Banu (age 70) at a convention in White Chapel organised by the women’s network ‘*Nari Diganta*’. She wore a beautiful off-white golden colour *sari* and smartly covered her head with her *sari*. It was surprising to see her singing ethnic cultural and secular feminist songs at the event while covering her head. Her clothing style and active participation in an ethnic-cultural and feminist event give me a sense of her liberal views in relation to religion and culture. Banu held a very important role in ethno-national politics in the community. I conducted her interview at her home, in our second meeting. When I entered her house I saw Banu counting a *tasbeeh*¹⁴. By observing Banu in two meetings I get the idea that ethnic cultural tradition and religious activities peacefully co-exist in her life.

I asked Banu to tell me more about the difference between her and her daughters in terms of practising religion and culture. She said,

I pray to Allah in my mind with every breath of mine, in fact I have a direct conversation with him in times of sadness and failures. These days I cannot bend my knees but I don’t stop praying. Maybe I would not be able to do that by standing up but I still can do that while sitting down. This year I might not be able to go to Eid prayers, but I will do it at home anyway.

Banu’s clarification reveals that religion can be performed and maintained by a diasporan through core religious values and ideals without highlighting it in her social life and connecting it to her identity representation. Thus the way Banu describes her devotion to practising religion is what Metcalf (1996) and Werbner (1996) found as imagined Muslim space through the ceremonial and sanctioned practice in a diaspora

14 A set or string of 33, 66, or 99 prayer beads used by Muslims as a counting aid in reciting the 99 titles of Allah and in meditation.

context, 'which thus does not require any juridically claimed territory or formally consecrated or architecturally specific space' (Metcalf, 1996: 3).

Similar to Sajeda, despite being a devoted Muslim, Banu is reluctant to influence her daughters' life in order to follow the basic Islam, since two of her daughters are married to white Christians. Although in Islam, Muslim women are not allowed to marry anyone from a different religion, Banu thinks it is not the place of society to interfere one's individual life. She said,

When they told me to wear trousers and I didn't agree to that, then how would they listen to me if I tell them to wear *salwar-kamiz*? So I see it in this way.

Here Banu and Sajeda's stories clearly reject the idea of being stuck with a certain identity through generation. Begum (2008) expresses that older generation women are seen as transmitters of traditional religious ideals, while the cases of Banu and Sajeda, who are the representatives of the Pioneer Cohort, certainly show that transmission of religion in diaspora context is very much strategic and contextual rather than a way of following traditional religious ideals.

Storry and Childs (2002: 251) note that the practice of Islam and the heritage of Asian culture have become inextricably intertwined especially for the first generation. This is the case for my participants from the Pioneer Cohort, Sajeda and Banu too. The Islamic practices, for example, five daily prayers, are an essential part of the everyday life of an older person in Bangladeshi culture. Similarly, ethnic cultural traditions and practices, such as wearing a *sari*, participating in ethnic cultural activities etc, are also very common phenomenon in Bangladeshi ethnic culture and both ethno-cultural and ethno-religious practices co exist in Bangladeshi people's life. They are born and raised into the ethno-religious culture, which automatically influence them to be religious and ethnic. So these are not the novel characteristics of a pioneer immigrant Muslim diaspora woman from Bangladesh. However, what is novel is that, being settled in a diaspora space, they learn how to express their Muslim identity with composure through nurturing religious ideals in a different context without making any contradiction on creating a barrier with their next generations, who are culturally British.

8.1.2 Religious identity and practice among the Cooked in Britain Cohort

8.1.2.1 “Muslim women are gonna lead non-Muslim women”

Shajna (age 44, the Cooked in Britain Cohort) is one of the most empowered women in the Maryam centre of the East London Mosque. I knew of her even before I met her. I mentioned in Chapter 2 that I had to undertake formalities to get permission to conduct interviews with the members of the Maryam Centre. It was Shajna who I had to contact via email to conduct the process. During the process, I also got the opportunity to arrange an appointment with her in her office in the centre. On the day of the meeting, I asked the receptionist at the centre about her, and she pointed out a lady with a navy blue colour *jubbah* and *hijab* in the corridor, who was busy talking to other groups of women in the centre. She looked very energetic, talkative and jolly. When I approached her, even before I could introduce myself, she greeted me saying ‘*Assalamualaikum* sister!’ Her conversation with other women at the centre and our very first conversation and her attitude towards me showed her to be welcoming and supportive rather than authoritative and rigid. I introduced myself and she instantly shook my hand. It was unexpected, as it is not a part of Bangladeshi or Islamic culture. Shajna took me to her office, a very large nicely decorated room with modern office equipment. A big bookshelf was full of Islamic scholarly books! A big corner sofa and table were placed in a corner of the room. Shajna offered me some snacks and coffee and we started our conversation. I had a long conversation with Shajna. I asked her how she described herself and whether her representation of herself was powerful or problematic in British society compared to other ethnic groups. She replied:

I would say I am a Muslim, then British Bengali, we have lots of issues around there but I am not afraid of being Muslim, I am not gonna take my *hijab* off. It is problematic (the identity as a Muslim British Bengali), we have this problem or debate just a few days ago that we have a subsidiary organisation called ‘pioneering women’. We opened that in case you know, it’s gonna be banned or it is difficult, because it’s Muslim women. And our business manager is non-Muslim. She is Christian actually. She is a bit uncomfortable. We keep her on purpose because we Muslim women can employ non-Muslim women. They couldn’t understand us, if we tell them

what Islam is about. They don't have to practise it, it's up to them; when they are ready, they will practise. We have lot of projects from 'pioneering women' because Muslim women are gonna lead non-Muslim women, not non-Muslim women are gonna lead Muslim women, so that they can believe in themselves, so the issue came is where Muslim women are collective.

In her article on the diaspora identity of South Asian Muslim women, Dwyer (2000) articulates that the stereotypical images of South Asian Muslim women devalue their subjectivities, by generalising them as passive groups of oppressive cultures. At this point, racialised and gendered discourses intersect with a Western production of unethical Islam and represent Muslim women as the embodiment of a repressive and fundamentalist religion. A dominant representation of young Muslim women as both oppressed and powerless is reinforced through gendered, classed, and racialized explanations. Hence, a politically conscious empowering Islamic identity that Shajna talks about opens up the scope to confront these superficial representations.

8.1.2.2 Islamic representation of Muslim identity vs liberal Muslim identity

I met Rebeka (the Cooked in Britain Cohort) at her office. She came to the reception and I saw a woman with ethnic clothing, she was wearing a blue long top, long trousers and a scarf. Rebeka is a political councillor. In 1987 at the age of ten, she came to the UK with her mother and three siblings to join her father, who migrated to the UK as a labourer in 1974. Although Rebeka and Shajna belong to the same cohort (the Cooked in Britain Cohort) they have different ways of expressing their identity as Muslim and the representation of it. As a member of the Cooked in Britain Cohort, Shajna's direct and strong attachment to the East London Mosque Maryam Centre is surprising. While, in my study, Rebeka as a participant from the same cohort represents the majority in terms of Muslim identity formation of the cohort. Rebeka has a particular way of representing herself as a Muslim woman:

Although I was brought up in the UK, I am very much Bengali, I love Bengali foods, Bengali *saris* and I know how to wear them decently. But then I am a British Bangladeshi Muslim woman; my British identity is quite strong though. Based on the way I look, not

many people would assume I was a strict Muslim. But I consider myself a strict Muslim. The reason is that I do practise my prayers five times a day, I fast, I do *zakat*. Apart from that I think I try to be as helpful as possible to everyone including neighbours. I think I am following all the rules from a religious point of view but I don't like showing them off. I do not cover my head and this is not important to me. I think religion is part of my life; I don't have to be extreme. But there are some other people who have recently adopted religion and become extreme. They treat me like a non-Muslim. You know what, most of the young women in our community who wear *hijab* I think nothing other than they are too lazy to be able to change their clothes. Not many of them even pray five times a day. When they talk and put emphasis on *hijab*, they alienate other Muslim women.

Through her clarification Rebeka declares her stand as a liberal Muslim (focused on the basic foundations of Islam but opposed to extreme views, actions or dealings). Despite being raised in Britain she establishes her choice of identity from her own perspective. Rebeka's favourite outfit is a *sari*, which is viewed as sexy in South-Asian society, mainly because of its exposure of the waist and the upper back, and the subtle enhancement of the breasts through the cut of the matching blouse often worn with it (Sheth, 2009). However, Rebeka opposes this view and thinks that she can still be a strict Muslim, as her preferred ethnic cloth *sari* can be worn without being overtly revealing or sexually provocative. Being influenced by transnational Islamic and Bengali ethnic culture, she thinks she can be welcoming to British multicultural society as much as possible and that her religious identity is positive towards assimilation.

Rebeka criticizes '*hijab*' as a symbol of alienation, the 'most visible marker of 'otherness' (Ask & Tjomsland, 1998: 48). On the other hand, Shajna has a different argument on this point. She thinks it is *hijab* and *purdah* that helped the less educated women in the community to come out to the public. It 'communicate[s] meaningfully with others... a crucial part' of Muslim women's identity (Hall, 1990: 222, 1997: 29) Shajna argues that, despite having lived in the UK for more than two decades, the Bangladeshi women have not learned English. They have not had make any significant impact on the community employment rates. Due to their limitations, they could not make a close connection with their children. Their children were addicted to drugs.

Therefore, to understand their children, it was necessary for them to understand English, to go to their children's school, and to engage in the community programme. Shajna thinks it was possible for them to be out, and be accepted by their community, when they started doing *purdah*. In her words,

If I look at the picture I took when I just started my work in the community, women were wearing *saris* without a scarf on their heads. If you see the same women now they are fully covered with scarfs on the head. And now they think they can come to the masjid, now Mashallah expanded, even for them now to allow women access for the first time a few years ago. This is a first, you know not many places in the world would allow women access, so it was kind of empowering women, especially as if you have to go to the masjid you have to be covered. There is an education circle in the masjid and there are lots of circles going around. So I saw people going out and getting an education and they are changing and this is what is happening in front of my eyes. And the mosque can claim the credit for it.

The acknowledgement of the role of the East London Mosque by Shajna reveals the importance of the faith-based organisations in the formation of collective Muslim identity. From Shajna's experience, it has been identified that the mosque was important to enable the British Bangladeshi Muslim women to create their space in the community. Metcalf (1996) identifies this space as the three-dimensional metaphor by referring it to the 'social space' of linkages and identities formed in new settings in a diaspora context, the 'cultural space' that arises as Muslims unite and act together, and the 'physical space' of homes and community buildings set up in new settings. Jointly, these spaces encompass the 'imagined maps of diaspora Muslims' (Metcalf, 1996: 18).

By affiliating with faith-based organisation the Bangladeshi women in the community became educated; they learned to cover up so as to come out and get access to public life. Hence, Shajna's statements show that covering the body is a power and opportunity for Muslim women to come out and be engaged in public life, rather than a symbol of oppression. Shajna's experience challenges the stereotypical views on *hijab* as a seclusion of Muslim women, which confines their scope and space as individual beings

compared to the men with whom they are related (Afshar, 1985; Odeh, 1993). Rebeke's views on *hijab* and Muslim women are being challenged here by Shajna's assertions that Islamic representations of identity can provide for Muslim women and it is powerful in the way it empowers Muslim women both economically and politically in diaspora communities.

However, the significant point is that both Shajna and Rebeke share a similarity in intersecting their British, Bangladeshi and Muslim identities, which creates 'new ethnicities' (Alexander, 2006: 2) for them. Both of them practise religion by following its fundamental rules; both of them recognize the significance of being a Muslim.

8.1.3 Religious identity and practice among the British-born Cohort

8.1.3.1 "I am a proud British Muslim, I shouldn't consider myself Bangladeshi"

I mentioned in Chapter 4, that it was hard for me to look for those whom I call the British born young. I had been going to the East London Mosque Maryam Centre every other day to be more familiar with the culture of the mosque and the young girls who were going on a regular basis to do volunteer jobs in the centre. However, the differences between me and my participants of the British-born Cohort in terms of approach, accent, clothing style, and age made it harder. Besides, not having enough knowledge of my project at this stage also caused difficulties in communicating with them. My reason for choosing the majority of the British-born Cohort from the network of the Maryam centre was because the centre has an established, strong and cohesive platform to engage young women in the community, and as a result a large number of young women attended as dedicated service providers for the betterment of the Muslim world or 'Muslim sisterhood', considering it as part of their daily routine.

However, I was not comfortable initially in being introduced to them unlike the other cohorts. I was sitting on the floor of the tiffin-room of the centre next to a young lady whom I presumed to be of Bangladeshi decent. I asked her whether she was a British born Bangladeshi and she said yes. I then discussed my project with her and she reluctantly agreed to be interviewed. She seemed to be confused and not clear about my project. However, I started talking to her. Her name is Shahrin (age 22); she was born in the UK in 1993. Her maternal grandfather migrated to the UK in the 60s and brought his family to Britain in the 70s. Shahrin's mother is married to a Bangladeshi based

husband, and together they have four children. Shahrin is the eldest one. She completed her A levels and is currently studying law. Besides, she is working in a super-market as a part-time sales girl.

Regarding my question on what kind of identity she would be comfortable with, Shahrin answered:

I am a proud British Muslim and I prefer to be called like this rather than Bangladeshi. I love this mosque (the East London Mosque). I come here literally every day. This is the place for knowledge gathering and sharing. This is one of the biggest free and secure places in England to practice every day Islam and its culture. We all sisters have our *hijab* on and that makes us beautiful and confident. We are here to help other sisters who need our support. Because we believe that by doing this we can change the position of the Muslim women in the community. That's the power of being united as devoted Muslims, that's us.

Similar to Shajna (the Cooked in Britain Cohort) religion acts for Shahrin as a symbol of 'empowerment' (Sanghera & Thapur-Björkert, 2007: 187). She expresses herself as 'visibly Muslim' through an Islamic way of dressing (Tarlo, 2010) to assert power, challenge authority, and instigate social change (Tarlo, 1996) throughout the community and British society. For her, Muslim identity is a political consciousness and chosen way of life. This is not only the way she identifies herself, but also the way she wants other to identify her (Ahmed, 2005a: 200). Rozario (2004) expresses that the global or collective Muslim identity 'Muslim *ummah*', encourages young British Bangladeshi women to view and respond to every aspect of their lives more Islamically. The belief of *ummah* is extremely influential. It offers not only unity with a movement that is the second largest and fastest growing in the world, but also affiliation to over 1400 years of history and a spiritual and romantic past (Saeed et al., 1999). Modood defines the political value of the Muslim *ummah* as a search for identity, meaning, dignity and power (Modood, 2006:46).

The significant impact of the collective Muslim identity on Shahrin can be seen through her daily life. She visits the mosque every day as a part of her daily routine, in doing so

Shahrin and other Muslim women in the mosque are encouraged to represent the 'potentially powerful' (Ansari, 2004:19) Muslim identity purposefully in their everyday life and are motivated to achieve a common objective, towards a positive change in the positioning of Muslim women. Shahrin, as a representative of the British-born Cohort, is significantly associated with faith based organisations, the East London Mosque for example, in prioritizing 'Muslim' as an identity of British Bangladeshi rather than 'Bengali'. Glynn (2002) thinks that the educated young generation from the middle class is noticeably motivated by the view of a new Islamism, as the generation is being drawn to the appeal of the conformists of international Islam.

In our discussion about the identity that Shahrin chose to describe herself, I asked her whether this identity was powerful or problematic in the male dominated community. She said,

You know we are against all sorts of traditional patriarchal rules of men that are imposed on women by them in the name of Islam. The consciousness of 'Islam' for us is enlightening rather than repressive, while it is a traditionally male dominated culture; it is their wrong interpretation and practice of Islam, which oppresses women, I believe.

I was interested to know more about what she meant by a wrong interpretation of Islam. She replied,

They say women are not allowed to engage in public and political activities, which is wrong. They say women should not be highly educated other than educated in Islamic education, which is also wrong you know.

Shahrin showed her choice of identity by emphasising a united Muslim identity but in light of Islamic feminism. This was shown in the way she considered *hijab* as not just simple pieces of cloth for Muslim women to wear, but as 'over-determined' markers of identity and otherness (Tarlo, 2010). Her way of representing united Muslim identity through wearing *hijab* as an obvious and common practice of the women in the mosque is similar to what Tarlo (2010) describes as the agency of the *hijab*, and ensemble.

Tarlo argues that young Muslim women and their dress code represent a newly evolving British Muslim identity, which is itself an ensemble (Tarlo, 2010). Sharin's views also focused on the nature of hybridity in the identity of the young diasporan women cohort in the community.

8.1.3.2 “I am a Muslim but that is a very private thing”

I interviewed some young British-born women, who were not engaged with faith-based organisations. Ashfia (27) was one of them. She was a dental nurse and involved with a community cultural organisation. Ashfia was married and the mother of a child. Ashfia's father migrated to the UK as a labourer and her mother (Jahanara, age 66, one of my participants in the Pioneer Cohort) joined the father as a dependent wife in 1975. I met Ashfia at an Eid gathering in the community. In the event, her sartorial style was distinctive in the way she incorporated western elements into her ethnic clothing. For example she wore a blue sari with a black western top. Her western fashion jewellery and soft neutral shades of eye shadow mixed with a shimmering base colour showed how the British-born Cohort adopted ethnic-western style, in forming their individual identity, which is dissimilar to that of the collective Muslim identity through an Islamic-westernized style into dress code (Dwyer, 2000).

During our discussion on amalgamation of community organisations working on women, Ashfia expressed that how uncomfortable she was, to staying in the same room as with the women from the East London Mosque, who had been invited by the former mayor of Tower Hamlet, Lutfur Rahman, to his Eid gathering party. Her discomfort was expressed by nodding her head and shaking her body. She was very critical in her argument at this point:

There is no problem with religion itself, as the problem lies in the ways they represent themselves, which actually divide us. Obviously I am a Muslim but that is a very private thing, I do not want to highlight it to all especially when I'm in a social engagement.

Whereas the members of the British-born Cohort like Shahrin from the East London Mosque took a religio-political ideological stand to express themselves as Muslim women, Ashfia, from the same cohort showed a contrasting view by considering

religion as a private thing that should not be related to an individual's social and cultural identity. The way Ashfia described herself as a Muslim, was akin to what Siddiqui categorizes as a Muslim group, who keep on the belief of Islam without addressing to all of its standards and rules; for them it is a private matter which is influenced by individual experience, understanding and 'picking' and 'choosing' Siddiqui (2004:57). Here in Ashfia's case, religion in its political or cultural form failed to play any significant role in shaping the Muslim identity.

Ashfia criticized the way Muslim identity is represented by the women from the East-London Mosque, which she thought challenged assimilation with the community or mainstream society. Both Ashfia and Shahrin shared a common view by recognizing themselves as 'Muslim', but they differed in terms of level of religiosity and complex ideological demarcations (Modood, 2010; Lewis, 2007: 22-23; Peach, 2005: 29; Garbin, 2005).

Regarding the issue of generational struggle and cultural conflict, Ashfia was critical as she thought that the Bangladeshi community reflects actual Bangladesh to the older generation in the community. She thought that the older generation perceived something from Bangladesh and wanted to impose it on the community through the next generation, for instance, they believed in ethnic culture and religious tradition at their core and therefore felt that the next generation should get attached to it, forgetting that they are bringing up their children in an open country, which is a multicultural society. Ashfia criticised the restricted views espoused by the earlier generation in the name of securing Muslim identity. She argued:

They do not want to allow their children to get married to a white British, or Christian or anyone else who are not Muslim. They have to get married to a Bangladeshi or Pakistani, so they are kind of trying to hold on to something that is slipping through their fingers. You know when you move forward when you leave behind everything and you take something as a part of your being. So you can't really expect that your next generation would follow that. The next generation would take a new part, and there is no going back. So this is something that I see with them, there is a certain kind of desperation to hold onto a certain identity. I do not want my *khala*

(maternal aunt) always telling me, 'Behave like a Muslim girl, dress like a Muslim girl!'

Ashfia's statement shows her having a contested relationship with religion, generation and identity. According to Vertovec and Rogers (1998) the context of diaspora and some conditioning issues within it influence identity and activity among second and third generation youth, which sets them apart from their migrant parents. Here in Ashfia's case, her education in Western schools, the regulation of secular and civil society discursive practices; and interest in European popular youth culture (Vertovec & Rogers, 1998) act as influential factors.

The significant thing is that both Shahrin and Ashfia were members of the British-born Cohort and wanted to set up their unique values in terms of identity formation, collectively or individually, which are different from those of their parents. In order to form such identities, some of them chose to highlight Islamic values and ideologies, and some others focused on hybridity.

8.1.4 Religious identity and practice among the New-migrant Cohort

8.1.4.1 "I am a Muslim woman and my actions and sayings represent me in today's world"

One of my interviews was conducted at another interviewee's home where I met a few of her guests. Among the guests were Tinni who spoke to me in Bengali but was dressed in western clothing (white trouser and pink top). In the middle of the interview, she asked for a break to perform the '*Asar*' prayer. Tinni (the New-migrant Cohort) was an educated, urban-based working-woman with an upper-middle class background. She migrated to the UK in 2010 at the age of twenty-seven to do her MBA. She met one of the childhood friends who was already settled in London. They fell in love and after completion of her study; she returned back to Bangladesh, got married to her boyfriend and came back to the UK in 2012. Now she is a successful banker in a renowned bank in England. Besides, she has recently joined one of the Bengali TV news team. Being born in Bangladesh, Tinni has lived her 27 years in Bangladesh. Her education was in English and hence the western world has had an impact on her. Since she was brought up in a Muslim country, Islam certainly had some influence on her. When she was in

Bangladesh, Bengali culture was dominant whereas the Islamic identity played a minor role. Tinni follows her parent's views on religion.

During my second meeting with Tinni at her in-laws', I was invited to her Christmas celebration party. I saw Tinni and most of the guests were dressed in red and white. Tinni wore a red gown with exclusive fashion jewellery. The dinner menu (Christmas turkey and cake) and the music featured western elements. The way she decorated the house gave me the picture of a typical English house; for example, a heavily decorated Christmas tree was placed next to the fireplace, which was nicely decorated with colourful lights! However, she stopped the music for a while when it was the time for *Magrib*¹⁵.

In terms of identity, Tinni thought that in Islam, women are expected to follow certain rules which somewhat contradicted with her lifestyle. She herself as a Muslim woman, believed that her actions and sayings would themselves represent her identity as a woman of her religion. On the other hand she also believed that her actions and sayings were influenced by her research, which enabled her to relate logic with the present world that she lived in. She said,

I am not an individual who will blindly follow anything. This is why, I live in a non-Muslim environment but I practise the preaching of Islam. I am a strong believer in the existence of the Almighty Allah. I pray regularly. Islam encourages Muslim women to stand out among other women of different religions by their dress or appearance. I find it very low of mind to jump to a conclusion about a woman based on what they wear, as long as it does not affect or harm anyone and anything that does not impact others adversely. I am the kind of person who does not deal with any such things. So I can say yes I am a Muslim woman and my actions and sayings represent me in today's world.

From her clarification, it is clear that Tinni did not think that a Muslim women's identity should be represented by a dress-code or by making a boundary to follow only religious cultural practices. At this point Shajna's account of the dress-code as a tool of

¹⁵ The *Maghrib* prayer is the fourth of the five daily prayers recited. The time of the *Maghrib* prayer is once the sun has completely set beneath the horizon.

Muslim women's empowerment in the community was not necessarily important to Tinni's way of representation of the Muslim identity. Here, the importance of dress-code in terms of Muslim identity is challenged through the differences amongst the different cohorts in relation to educational, socio-economic and socio-cultural background in a transnational and diaspora context.

Tinni believed that people should represent themselves by following the fundamental rules of Islam and acting towards humanity as Islam suggests, rather than by bringing gender discrimination into it. She believed that serving Allah through loving and serving others, and praising him through performing daily prayers, should be core of a Muslim. Meanwhile, her surroundings play a dominant role in shaping her culture's effect on her life. Having adopted western culture, Tinni thus would still be identified as a Muslim woman. As for Banu (the Pioneer Cohort), religion did not act for Tinni (the New-migrant Cohort) as an alternative source of identification (Jacobson, 1997). For example, Tinni loved fasting and unlike Banu, of the Pioneer Cohort, Tinni was strict to her view that a life partner definitely should be Muslim, even for the next generation. However, nationality did not matter to her. In that sense, her choice was based more on Muslim identity than national identity. She loved Bengali New Year, and the Bengali cultural programme, but also loved to wear western dress and eat western food like pizza and chicken wings more than Bengali food.

Thus, it can be seen that there were multiple ways of simultaneously practising religious and cultural identity by the women of different cohorts in the community. This can be linked with Werbner's articulation on women of the young generation who open up new identities by creating new spaces of 'fun' in the intersection of western amusement cultures, Islamic religious practice and the widespread South-Asian popular culture (Werbner, 2002). This cultural blending, practised by the New-migrant Cohort, gives me the sense of how rapidly they are now adopting the diaspora culture or the process of dealing with migration and diaspora context. The hybrid culture has previously been discussed and seen only in the case of women who were either born or brought up in the UK. Their upbringing in a diaspora context led them to produce a hybrid identity by merging two cultures or more together (Hussain, 2005).

To sum up this section, it can be said that for my participants, religious identities were "multifaceted and variable and in a constant state of flux and can never be static.... [they

are] fuzzy and complex” (Kershen, 1998: 2, 19). The ways women from the four cohorts describe and adopt their identity in relation to the practise of religion, culture and ethnicity in a diaspora space show a distinctiveness and dynamism and challenge the idea of what Smart’s (1999) view that “the diasporas of the Global Period [of the last twenty-five years] have become somewhat more orthodox in tone” (1999: 425).

8.2 ‘Ethnic’, ‘Western’ and ‘Islamic’ cultures: dynamism, sameness and differences across generations

In this section, I will discuss how religious and cultural practices create difference and inclusiveness among the different cohorts and how these are influenced by the generational changes in a diaspora space. I will mainly focus on the Cooked in Britain and the British-born Cohorts in the same family to describe the influence of three cultures in the identity formation of the cohorts, which shows the dynamism in different context across generations. I will share the stories of Afrin (the British-born Cohort and a representative of the ELM women link) and her mother Shahana (the Cooked in Britain Cohort), and Shajna (the Cooked in Britain Cohort and a representative of the ELM women link) and her experience with her daughter Amaya (the British-born Cohort).

8.2.1 “I have my own version of seeing things”

Afrin (19) had recently completed her A levels; she was born in London. Afrin was a volunteer at the Mariam centre, mostly she taught the English language to the ethnic groups of migrants. Afrin was wearing an *abaya* (a long-sleeved, loose fitting, flowing, and floor-length outer garment which actually hides the curves of the body, worn by Muslim women particularly in Saudi Arabia) with a scarf that covered her hair. According to Afrin, her parents did not practise Islam as to the extent that she did. Her mother preferred wearing ethnic clothing rather than Islamic or English, despite her complete upbringing in the UK. On the other hand she talked about her grandmother, who used to wear a *burkha*, and had a stronger sense of religion.

When I asked her the reason behind her not following her mother’s trend in terms of practising religion and culture, she said,

I think my grandma followed her own way and she was not educated enough to push her child to follow the same way that she did. So my mom got many of her Bengali cultural things and a few religious aspects. But I did not try to follow any of them. I followed what my mind said and what is essential for a Muslim to lead a respectful and peaceful life.

Afrin's account gives the idea that, by being ideologically alienated from her parents, she was able to exercise freedom of choice. At this point, she emphasised her own agency in defining her subjectivity with clear, coherent and confident terms in favour of 'Muslim' identity. According to Ali (2008), oppositional cultural values between country of origin and country of settlement, and the influence of structural racism, make young South Asian Muslims, including British Bangladeshis, different and create more complex identities. This motivates them to join the global Muslim *ummah* (a pure Muslim identity), and connect with other Muslims across a transnational Muslim community (Ali, 2008).

To learn more about the generational changes between Afrina and her parents, I asked her about the differences between the ways that she and her older generation practised religion and culture at home or in the community. She replied:

I don't want to follow the ethnic way of lifestyle that my parents do. I have my own version of seeing things; do you know what I mean? I'm not like my mom; I won't get married in the next five years. I want to be educated. I love my Islamic life the most, but having said this I do love some Bengali and western aspects too but I need to figure out a different way to do this so that it does not clash with Islamic rules and regulations. I do perform rituals like Salah five times a day, and fasting every other week! But I also like to perform special rituals such as weddings, I love wearing a *sari* and ethnic jewellery at a wedding event. I like English sport, documentary and geography channels too.

Afrin has her own way of practising culture following the context she was born and raised in. Because of her ethnic background, her family's settlement in a western

country and such living conditions and lifestyle over time, she was fond of different cultural things but she had to assure herself that she was not hampering her Muslim identity, her religion and its code of life. With a mixture of western, Islamic and ethnic elements, Afrin was inclined to enjoy her own definition of culture. Afrin defined her Muslim identity as a progressive one, which can be viewed as a publicly expressed new identity and ethnicity (Bhabha, 1994: 66-84; Hannerz, 1992: 261; Alexander, 2006).

Although Afrin valued Muslim identity rather than ethno-national identity in sustaining her commitment to Islamic morals and upholding the family reputation, she successfully managed traditional cultural demands as well. Knott and Khokher (1993) argue that the young South Asian Muslim women make a firm distinction between ‘religion’ and ‘culture’ of their parents. They challenge the conventional ethnic religio-cultural tradition of their parents, for example, ethnic dress code, while solely embracing a Muslim identity in and of itself. Thus, among them, as Knott and Khokher clarify, there is a “self-conscious exploration of the religion, which was not relevant to the first generation” (1993: 596).

8.2.2 “She wore *sari*, we sang, we danced with music”

I was curious to interviewing Afrin’s mother (the Cooked in Britain Cohort), thinking that she might say something about her own definition of culture and religion. So I asked Afrin instantly: Do any of your family members come to the mosque regularly? She said,

Not really, my father does come once a week to pray the *Jumma* prayer¹⁶, my mother doesn’t. She comes sometimes when she needs to leave my brother here with me and go out for shopping. Like today she is coming to catch me up so that together we can go to my uncle’s house.

I therefore was happily waited at the Maryam Centre to meet Afrin’s mother. During that time I observed Afrin’s activities. She was a very popular face in the centre; almost every woman greeted her after entering or before leaving the centre. She was very spontaneous in guiding newcomer at the centre.

¹⁶*Jumma* prayer is a congregational prayer performed on Friday. It is an obligation upon every adult Muslim man.

In the evening, I met Afrin's mother, Shahana in the centre. Shahana wore a long black cardigan, green *shalwar-kameez* and to cover her head she wore a black *orna*. In my research, she belongs to the Cooked in Britain Cohort. At first sight she smiled at me, saying:

Aww you just look like my niece!

She was quite interested in talking to me. Shahana (age 46) came to the UK in 1978, and later on got married to a Bangladeshi based husband, with whom she had three children. She was a community worker. Shahana was very articulate and expressed herself with her own logic, which impressed me a lot. I was keen to do an interview with her, as she was in a very good mood, so I asked her whether we could prolong our discussion even knowing that she had another appointment. She invited me to accompany her to her brother in law's place. So, I agreed without hesitation. . When we reached her brother in law's house, I observed that they greeted each other saying 'hi', 'hello' except for Afrin, who greeted her aunt and uncle by saying *Assalamualaikum!* The house was nicely decorated with beautiful western ornaments and family photos. There was not a single touch of Islamic culture but a few ethnic artefacts were visible in the dining space. Even though the Islamic essence was completely missing in the house environment and attitude, Afrin was quite comfortable and happy in talking to her aunt and female cousins (all of them wore western casual outfits). This picture gave me an idea of how diaspora women equally nurture three different cultures by ensuring their peaceful co-existence. Shahana and I started our conversation in an upstairs bedroom.

My first question in relation to religion and culture was, 'How do you practise culture and religion in your daily life?' She answered:

There are many things people from different religion backgrounds do adopt in terms of culture, without even realizing which culture they are following. But religion is something to its core. That's why I am not interested in making a connection between religion and culture. You see my daughter is a member of the centre but we enjoy our family events together. Last year we had so much fun at our cousin's wedding party; she wore *sari*, we sang, we danced with music.

From her clarification regarding celebrating a wedding all together in an ethno-cultural way I could realise how ethnic religio-cultural events in a family can play a strong role in bonding family members, irrespective of different social, cultural and political ideologies (ethno-nationalist, westernised and Islamist). By sharing common ground (ethno-Islamic marriage and rituals) within the family units, Shahana, of the Cooked in Britain Cohort (who preferred an ethnic lifestyle over Islamic in terms of practising culture and clothing) and Afrin, of the British-born Cohort (who consciously and visibly wanted to uphold her Muslim identity in public through her dress-code) from the same family revealed that the categorizations of cultures in terms of religion are not dogmatic and are changeable according to circumstances.

8.2.3 “I am Bengali inside but my western style cardigan also reflects my outside as westernized”

It has been significantly identified that the context of diaspora has a profound influence on the religious practices of different cohorts in different ways. Like her daughter, Shahana gives preference to contextual reality and practicality, despite being brought up in traditional ethnic way. My discussion regarding practising religion and culture with mother Shahana and daughter Afrin (who represented two different cohorts, respectively, the Cooked in Britain Cohort and the British-born Cohort) gave me the idea about how diaspora women prioritize context in their daily life activities and how ‘dress-code’ becomes significant to them in connecting culture and religion. Shahana shared her views in this regard:

I left Bangladesh when I was only nine year old. But I like to wear traditional dress, maybe because in my time I grew up seeing women wearing traditional outfits rather than western or Arabic. Besides my parents were less educated and had limited earnings, which resulted in our Bengali upbringing. But now I understand that this is not a place where you can follow one culture. Like today, I am Bengali inside but my western style cardigan also reflects my outside as westernized. And, these days everything has changed; my young girl now loves to wear *jubbah*, *hijab*, a long-skirt with a long top.

Shahana realised the influence of the multicultural context on choosing dress-code, but wants to remain practising ethnic values by her donning significantly. In her case, the intersection of socio-economic class, education and historical context influenced the way she dressed. In the case of her daughter, Shahana thought that the current trend of East London and the British society is more positive and multi-cultural in accepting the different dress-codes followed by the community women. Shahana's view is consistent with what Ali (2005:522) argued, that in today's Britain, migrant women are not facing any pressure for amalgamation because of the positive views on diversity and multiculturalism; therefore, they can represent their identities publicly.

8.2.4 “The mosque does this job incredibly”

I asked Afrin to tell me about the time when she started coming to the Maryam Centre and what was her motivation for doing so. Afrin said,

You will be shocked by hearing about my past. Let me show you something.

Then, she showed me one of her photos from her mobile. In the photo, Afrin was in hot pants and a crop top with coloured hair in modern style. She was pouting in the photo. It was hard to recognize that the person was Afrin. Afrin said,

I thought I should keep one of them just to remind myself about my horrible past. Every time I see the photo I feel the urge to become a good Muslim, I do *salaat al-tawbah* (the prayer of repentance). Yes, I wasn't a practising Muslim; I was more into clubbing and partying, had boyfriends you know what I mean. But I always had the feeling that something was missing in my life. When my grandma died, I completely broke down; I couldn't save her. She always wanted to see me as a proper Muslim woman like her. I needed to heal myself. So I came here. Soon after I realised that the peace was missing in my life!

Afrin and Shahana practise religious rules and regulations in certain ways. For example, Shahana tried to pray five times a day, but she was not as regular as her daughter. This was because she thought her practical situation, for instance family matters sometimes did not allow her to maintain the fixed prayer timetable. In contrast her daughter was very strict on this since she had no obligation to the family and therefore could easily go to the mosque for group prayer, which is a strong influential aspect of the religious culture of the mosque. In addition, this also helped her to spend much time in the mosque and participate in the voluntary activities of the community. Shahana shared her views on the differences between her and her daughter in terms of practising religion, through an example from her and her daughter's life:

She has changed her lifestyle and turned to an Islamic life after her favourite person, her grandmother died. My grandmother was my favourite person too. I saw her dying in front of me but it didn't change me a lot, honestly speaking. Because I had the life in Bangladesh where you would find many people to give you their shoulder, the time you needed. Here you see the mosque does this job incredibly. So you will definitely come here if you have pain deep inside. I got married to my *deshi* husband at my age of eighteen. So many things in my life changed drastically right after marriage. And I didn't have enough time to care about my emotion, pain or personal interest; I think this is the way a *deshi maia* (local girl) is meant to be! Dedicated and sacrificing themselves to their family! So am I. But it is easier for my 19-year-old daughter to come and spend more time at the mosque rather than home; for me it is impractical.

Shahana's clarification regarding the role of the mosque in relation to motivating young people towards Islam has been significantly identified at this point. This also opens the scope for women's direct involvement in the religious organisation. Besides, everyday religious practices at religious organisations (religious education at school etc) and involvement at formal places of worship (the mosque) (Larson, 1989; Jackson & Nesbitt, 1993), shape the identity of the young Muslim women in the community. On this point, Eade and Garbin (2005) argue that religious groups and organisations were

successful in showing their activeness and effectiveness in appropriately handling the frustrations of the young generation. Similarly, Glynn (2002) thinks that 'Islamism' suggests an alternative way to separate the young generation from criminal activities or drug addiction, which are associated with frustration, isolation, poverty and racism.

Afrin transformed herself from a mainstream British Bangladeshi into a mainstream British Muslim girl in a circumstance that was led by a frustration. The frustration was the result of both generational struggle and connection. Afrin's grandmother wanted to connect with Afrin through religious identification and practises, but Afrin never took an interest in that while her grandmother was alive. However, after her grandmother's death, the frustration successfully connected her with grandmother and brought her to the mosque. Erikson (1965, 1968) argues that as the oldest and long-lasting institution, religion plays a significant role in youth's identity formation particularly in a culture where youth are challenged by a constantly shifting social and political setting. It works through creating an environment that supports the growth of religious fervour, an ideology that arises at the fruitful ending of the psychological crisis related with identity formation. This process of religiosity through religio-cultural establishment has gradually led the community to turn towards Islamism from ethnicism, which is very clear in Shahana's statement and Afrin's experience.

My observation to the Maryam Centre reveals the intersection of place, religions, culture, diasporan and their everyday practices, which is created and shaped through the dynamic process of culturalisation of religion from a global perspective. The community women, who regularly visited to the centre, used to cover their body by wearing ethnic cultural dress (covering the head with a *sari* or shawl), but now the majority of them maintain the same dress code as other women in the centre (*hijab* and/or *jubbah*). In Bangladeshi Muslim culture, it is unusual to give *salam* (an Islamic greeting) to a stranger. My participants, who were the frequent visitors to the centre, had learned the culture of giving *salam* to everyone they met in the centre, and even at home, they had now started practising this culture. This small practice of culture of Islamic greeting, helped them into became confident enough to socialise and share experiences with other ethnic women with different languages and ethnic cultural practices. This kind of practice was previously unthought-of by them, due to their cultural shyness. However, this kind of religio-cultural practice raises a question regarding conservation, adaptation or removal of religious practices among the subsequent generations born and brought up in diaspora settings (Vertovec, 2000).

8.2.5 “But if the Muslim religion overtakes the culture let it be”

Similar to Shahana, my participant Shajna too found ethnic cultural tradition as a way of sharing culture with her British-born daughter (Amaya, age, 18). However, she wanted herself and her daughter to focus more on practising Islamic culture by abandoning ethnic cultural things, which are contradictory to the Islamic point of view. She always tried to do her best possible way to maintain ethnic cultural things that she got inherently, without making any question of her religious identity. She said,

In my case, my husband became ill in certain circumstances, he went to hajj, when he came we made a decision to completely abandon the Bangladeshi cultural dress wear and practices.

Because she was married to a Bangladeshi based husband, Shajna had to practise Bangladeshi cultural traditions; she had to wear traditional outfits like a *sari* until she and her husband performed hajj. The influence of her husband’s cultural tradition was strong enough in her life at the initial stage of the marriage, that Shajna’s father had to organise the *gaye halud*¹⁷ event during the marriage ceremony, even though he was opposed to it due to the free socialising element of it.

So first you play you know the traditional card then you think it’s not practical, when I started working I gave it up. But I still wear *sari*. You know in a wedding, I can’t give that up, that’s part of my culture, my daughters wear *sari* even though they like jeans, a top and *jubbah* as well. Because that’s the baggage we carried from our culture but there are certain cultural things that we dislike but there are lots of cultural things about me, he probably wasn’t happy. We found a way to compromise and *Mashallah* (thankfulness) we found a different kind of upbringing. Ok Bengali culture is apt to aside, it’s a part of us, we will try this and that but if the Muslim religion overtakes the culture, let it be, because religion is more important, so if the religion is saying, we can’t do it, I don’t do *gaye-holud* yeah? Because of the free mixing, we have given up *gaye-holud*, so we

¹⁷Yellowing of the body on the night before the wedding ceremony.

have given up lot of the cultural things that we inherited and we practised and for our children.

Shajna thought the way she practised ethnic culture and tradition would be changing across generations like it was changed from her parents to her. Shajna considered herself a very acceptable and friendly mother to her daughters. For example, at Christmas time, Shajna and her daughters cooked a roast chicken, because she felt, it was the part of her culture of being brought up in this country. So it was a tradition in her house to celebrate Christmas, but not in the way English people do. Shajna did not want to call it a Christmas celebration but rather, she and her family talked about Jesus in the Quran, and Mariam in the Quran and for them it was all about education. In this way Shajna thought she had changed lots of things in her family in terms of practising religion and culture, and she supposed that this was an effect of assimilation.

On the other hand Shajna thought that it is not possible to cut off connection with Bangladeshi culture, so she maintained her cultural tradition by transforming it in her own way. For example, she attended on ethnic wedding while wearing a long sleeved blouse, and with a scarf over her head. She was still wearing the *saris*, but she was covered. She narrated that this is now the common practice in the Bangladeshi cultural programme. Women are more conscious of their body. So ethnic cultural aspects are still present in their practices but Shajna thought that by wearing *jubbah* or *hijab* Bangladeshi young women are integrating with Arab culture too. To her, that is the main outcome of a multicultural society.

In Shajna's explanation, there is a difference between culture and religion. Gardner and Shakur (1994) articulate the socio-cultural aspect mainly the religious tradition of marriage among the ethnic group in the diaspora following through the ethnic origin's beliefs that create complexity for the Bangladeshi women who follow global Islamic culture. This has been seen in Shajna's explanation. Due to this contradiction, she was not always comfortable to join in the family programme of her relatives in Bangladesh, those are followed by ethnic traditions, which to some extent she thought create a barrier to maintaining good relations with relatives in Bangladesh. For example, she did not attend the marriage ceremony of her brother in law. Even though her husband went to Bangladesh, she and her daughters were reluctant to join him there. She believed the *gaye-holud event* was totally forbidden in Islam, as it had influences of Hindu culture.

I feel sorry for my husband in many ways. He would come with Indian/ Bangladeshi sweets or something and will say oh its *Baishakhi* (Bengali New Year) today; I will take you to the *Baishakhi-mela* (Bengali New Year carnival), when they were younger. He can't take them now, they wouldn't go; they would say, 'What is *Baishakhi*?' You know look at the people sitting wearing these cloths, they don't relate to it. It's unfortunate but this is the part of their culture but they will go to an Islamic shop, if there is an Islamic bazaar, they will go to it, so can you see how the culture is changing.

In her ethnographic research on Muslim settlers in Canada from the Ethiopian city of Harar Gibb (1998) explores how religious identification and practices of Canadian Harari has changed from a centuries-old Islam of syncretic saints' cults to an Islam that was constructed to cater to multi-national worshipers in transnational contexts. Gibb describes that, 'what appears to be happening is a homogenization or essentialization of Islamic practices, where culturally specific aspects of Islam that are not shared with other Muslim populations are likely to disappear, since they are not reinforced by Muslims from other groups in this context' (1998:260). Gardner explains that Bangladeshi 'migrants to Britain and the Middle East have moved from an Islam based around localised cultures and moulded to the culture and geography of the homelands, to an international Islam of Muslims from many different countries and cultures' (1993: 225).

Hence, Shajna's statements regarding abandoning '*gaye-holud*' and '*Baishakhi-Mela*' as syncretic and adopting Islamic culture such as reciting the Quran on a Christmas day or visiting an Islamic book fair give the clear example of changing religio-cultural practices by Bangladeshi Muslim diaspora women. Similar to Canadian Harari children, Shajna's children were not taught to about Bengali culture and traditions, as Shajna opposed any religious or cultural practices that lead towards saints' cults.

There are three significant things; first of all, Shajna did overcome the challenge of cultural differences between herself and her Bangladeshi-based husband that she encountered in her life, through establishing her own choices and decisions. Second, she could pass her choices and values to her daughters through motivating them in her own

way (religious way) rather than her husband's (ethnic way). And finally by celebrating ethnic cultural festivals through the combination of ethnic and Islamic culture (wearing a *sari* while covering the body with a long blouse and covering the head with *hijab*), as well as by celebrating a Christian cultural festival and making a connotation with Islamic history (celebrating Jesus's birthday by viewing showing respect to Issa) and present context, Shajna and her daughters defined their own acceptable diaspora identity.

8.2.6 “This is the kind of different conscious I have been brought up with”

Although both Shahana and Shajna were the participants from the Cooked in Britain Cohort, they had different identity choices in terms of dress-code. Unlike Shahana, Shajna was very clear in making her statement in relation to the Islamic dress-code. In her view, as long as English clothing is loose fitting, covers the body and represents modesty, it is acceptable in Islam. So there is no problem on wearing a long covered western dress, she supposed. She thought that time and the changing views of parents are equally important in choosing a dress-code. According to her, if she wore jeans and a long top to fit in with her peers, which was not acceptable at all, she would not go in front of her father because her father was against western dress, fearing that it could lead to his children assimilating with British society and losing their ethnic identities. To please her father Shajna did not wear a top and jeans at a young age but wore a long coat, but she allowed her daughters to wear such cloths, because Shajna was confident that her daughter was wearing them with *hijab*. She also prioritized environment and contextual settings in choosing particular dress for particular circumstances. Shajna felt confident to attend meetings and seminars and give speeches when she was covered, because in that setting, people were covered. She said,

Even if I wasn't practising I probably would practice in order to feel comfortable. Environment is very important to me.

Shajna's experience and opinion about maintaining a particular dress-code in a particular context shows how Muslim women manage the complexities of what to wear in a context where others project interpretations on them. Their dress practices are not just about religion and politics but also about morals, aesthetics, identity, fashion, globalisation, community, belonging and so forth (Tarlo, 2010).

Here I can sense what Shajna was talking about. During my interview at the Maryam centre in the mosque I too felt uncomfortable on my first day at the centre, when I was not covered. I felt that I was in the minority! I met some other women at the centre who usually did not wear a long covered dress, but when they entered the centre, they made sure they are covered. Some of them carried an extra-long scarf in their handbag, which they used while they stayed in the centre. I asked her whether she could tell me about her ways of practising culture in everyday life in terms of dress-code. She said,

In East London, I wear a *shalwar-kamiz*. At home I wear long skirt and top, I wear a long dress, I wear jeans and a long top, you know this is me, this is the kind of different consciousness I have been brought up with. In different environments I wear different things. In this environment, I wouldn't wear *shalwar-kamiz*; I would feel out of place. A few weeks ago I went to Germany, I had my jeans on, had a long top on, it was European dress but it was covered and loose fitting you know. So you are constantly changing and sometimes you know, when we have a meeting, I will have a meeting, I will wear a long skirt with the blouse, I will have my *hijab*. And my daughters (Amaya, age, 18 and Hena, age, 14) could wear English clothing as long as it's modest. So their blouse or shirt has to be below her knee. She could wear jeans as long as they are not tight, so she knows the rules and regulations, and we are relaxed about it, because she has to go to the university. At the same time she knows when she is in the masjid and there are lots of men she is facing, she will have to wear her *jubbah*, *hijab* is a must, and she knows why she has to wear *hijab*.

The way Shajna and her daughters Amaya and Hena, and Shahana's daughter Afrin practise the dress-code is what Dwyer (2000) calls a new form of 'Muslim' identity of young South Asian Muslim women, which represents an 'alternative Islamic diaspora' (Dwyer, 2000). In her view, with a combination of global and local experiences, the new form of identity ('long covered western dress' or dress in a style of combination of 'Asian-Islamic' and 'western', which is appreciated as covered and decent) creates scope for women to seek more options for themselves. Shajna and her daughters, and

Afrin are cases in point. The self-consciously Islamic identity has been recognised as an empowerment tool for Bangladeshi Muslim women, a negotiating strategy to reassure parents that they are careful about western culture and can be allowed to go to university (Dwyer, 2000; Ahmed, 2007). They felt keen to recognise themselves with a new ‘Islamic’ identity, which transcended any other. Ahmed argued that by creating alternative subjectivities and spaces to articulate their identities, young Muslim women are criticising the binaries modern vs. traditional, and allaying the fears of their guardians about the influences to which their daughters might be exposed. The point I want to highlight at this instant is that Dwyer (2000), Ahmed (2007) and Tarlo (2010) discuss Muslim dress code in the identity formation of young British Muslim women. Tarlo (2010) reveals how different ideas of custom, politics, devotion, choice, beauty, diffidence and cultural diversity are articulated by young British Muslims through the dress code that best expresses their identities, standpoints and concerns. However my research shows that not only young British-born Muslim women but also women who were brought up in Britain, have similar identity formation in terms of religion.

Ashfar et al. (2005) argue that the women’s choice of wearing *hijab* does not contradict with their ‘British’ nationality and a lot of women who wear *hijab* express a plurality of identities. Shajna, of the Cooked in Britain Cohort is a case in point. She adopted a combination of western-Islamic dress as a contextual identity choice. In this way, she expressed herself as modern by seeing no contradiction between being Muslim, modern and British. It shows how the Cooked in Britain Cohort also creates multicultural public spaces for Muslim women in the community.

8.3 Summary

We have found that women have different views on Muslim identity in relation to their differences, particularly, influenced by the intersections of age, generation, migrant status and context. The diaspora life experiences of the four cohorts as ethnic members and women have been seen as significant factors in terms of representing Muslim identity individually or collectively. For my participants, especially the British-born Cohort, the adaptation of *hijab* or veiling or multi-layered covering outfits acts as a crucial way to create space in the community and form collective identities. The intersection of religion, gender, generation, and historical and present social context has been identified as influential to create women’s strategic and contextual positioning into

diaspora family and community. The dynamic role of women in nurturing ethnic and western cultures, while maintaining religiosity show the unconventional way of defining religious harmony and disengagement of generational continuity in relation to religious identity formation. The role of women (who are affiliated with faith based organisations) in civic inclusion into mainstream British society would need a profound exploration in order to find out the scopes of collective Muslim identity in relation to women's positionality in public, and that what scope can alternative or collective Muslim identity create for newly migrants' women who have migrated with low educational and economic status. Besides, a detailed further exploration is needed on the intersectional identity of working class Muslim women of different generations, for instance how their class differences intersect with the 'Muslim' and 'generation' categories, and what kinds of negotiating mechanism they apply to challenge the intersection of racism, patriarchy and western discourse of unethical Islam.

Chapter 9: Community identity & politics

This chapter deals with the women's political identities and practices. The first section discusses how women of different cohorts engage in community formation and politics. The second section presents ethnographic evidence that shows how women of different cohorts play significant roles in ethno-nationalist, mainstream and Islamist politics. The last section focuses on women's role in mediating conflict between secularists and Islamists and how the aspirations and interests of women of different cohorts feature in the cohesion of the community.

The experiences of the four cohorts reveal that the nature of community identity and politics have developed variously in relation to 'secularism', 'ethno-nationalism', 'racism', 'Islamism' and 'feminism'. A large group of the British-born Cohort practise 'Islamism' as a homogenous identity of being Muslim, while the migrant Bengali population in Britain is more inclined to mainstream British, as well as ethno-nationalist politics. The latter have been regarded as significant 'players' in transnational politics; they are fighting against racism and challenging local problems of discrimination in areas such as housing, education, employment and so on. A significant number of the Pioneer Cohort are direct and indirect contributors to ethno-nationalist politics in the community, whilst a few of them are also involved in mainstream politics. In this respect, context is one of the major factors in the engagement of my participants of different cohorts in community identity politics. Many of the Cooked in Britain Cohort are actively involved in mainstream British politics. A significant number of the cohort have direct or indirect involvement in the community transnational and/or trans-local politics. The majority of the participants of the British-born Cohort are more interested in Islamist politics rather than mainstream or ethno-nationalist politics, as they think discrimination and domination are legitimated and nurtured by the mainstream politics of Britain. The New-migrant Cohort have been seen as dynamic participants in intersecting the ethno-nationalist movement with the feminist movement in the space of transnational politics.

9.1 Women and politics

This section is an attempt to explore the different ways in which women of different cohorts identify politically, examine what politics means to them and show how they become involved in the political sphere in a diaspora context.

9.1.1 “A consciousness, courage, strong feeling deriving from your particular circumstances”

It is remarkable that many of my participants of the Pioneer Cohort learned about politics and exercise political identity by nurturing transnational connection and experiencing diaspora lives in a particular context. My participant Nusrat (age 63, the Pioneer Cohort) migrated to the UK in 1968 with her parents as a dependent child and non-Sylheti, at the age of sixteen. Currently she is working as a child-care practitioner in London Borough. She completed her GCSEs in the first two years of her migrant life, after which her parents got her married to a Bangladeshi graduate who came to the UK for higher education. She barely had any consciousness regarding politics at the time she migrated; however, a year after her marriage she became the mother of a daughter. At that time, in 1971, the Liberation movement in Bangladesh was emerging. The story that changed her views was that of her neighbours in Bangladesh, who were killed by the Pakistani military and whose daughter was gang raped. The daughter was her childhood friend, and it was a huge shock for her, the simple thought of being in her friend's position made her scream out with pain. Her daily routine started changing immediately after the incident; she became vocal about such injustices and made her opinions public. She took part in a demonstration against the brutality of the Pakistani military in Bangladesh, marching to London Road while carrying her one-year-old daughter in her arms. There were several cultural shows organised by the Bangladeshi migrant community to raise international awareness and fund relief efforts for refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), following the Bangladesh Liberation War-related genocide. Nusrat was directly involved in each of the dance shows, music and drama events. Besides, she motivated her husband to join the rallies and speak up for Bangladesh.

I first met her at an event at the *Memsahab-on-Thames* restaurant, London, where participants were discussing the contribution of war women in Bangladesh who were badly tortured and abused during the Liberation War [see page 225]. It was surprising to

see how passionate she is about her political ideology even today. Despite her knee injury, she attended the event and stayed until the end. When I initially discussed my project with her, she was very serious about giving me any help that she could, which she immediately did by coming to me during the lunch break and offering me the contact information of other Bengali women I could interview. In addition, she gave me a book '*The Legacy of Women's Contribution in 1971*', which was written about Bengali women in the UK, and their contribution to the Liberation War from abroad. Nusrat was one of them.

During our second meeting, I asked Nusrat how she viewed politics. She said,

To me politics is a consciousness, courage, strong feeling deriving from your particular circumstances. My consciousness grew as part of the life lesson I learned living abroad, and it made me stronger eventually.

What is a significant revelation in Nusrat's statement is that the intersection of diaspora space and context affect diaspora women's lives, views and identities to a great extent. Being brought up as an adored daughter and later on becoming a housewife, Nusrat did not restrict her life and potential by settling only for that. Although she did not continue her education after her GCSEs, she managed to successfully hold a position as a British-Bangladeshi Pioneer woman in the ethno-nationalist movement through her effective and strong political engagement. She with her fellows took to the street to do all they could to support the victims of the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. She was politically empowered in such a way that she was able to take her political stance and use it to motivate others, including her husband.



Figure 5: Women took the leading role in a cultural programme at the Trafalgar Square (photo from the book of Toki et al. 2012)



Figure 6: Women were collecting cloth for Bengali refugees in 1971 (photo from the book of Toki et al., 2012)



Figure 7: 3rd April 1971, part of a women's demonstration (photo from the book of Ferdous Rahman, one of the pioneer women quoted in Toki et al. 2012)

Although Eade and Garbin successfully explored the formation of the political identity of British Bangladeshis in relation to community formation, their existing works on the formation process of ethno-nationalist identity of first generation have ignored the gender issue. For example, the majority of the works of Begum and Eade (2005); Eade and Garbin (2002); and Garbin (2005, 2008) on British Bangladeshi community unfold the process of generational shifting in the political identity and community in which women of the Pioneer Cohort have been identified as invisible in local government and nationalist politics or community level participation. In his discussion on the Bangladeshi diaspora, Eade (1989, 2005) mentions that access to political power in the public realm is entirely male centred. On the contrary, my observations and interviews with Nusrat and other women from the Pioneer Cohort show a different scenario of community politics. In their book on the contribution of women in the UK in supporting the Bangladesh War in 1971, Toki et al. (2002) show that a significant number of Bengali women in the UK were fully involved within the Bangladesh Liberation movement, contributing and extending direct and indirect support in both structured and informal ways. For example, two pioneering women's organisations in the UK (*Bangladesh Women Association UK* based in London, and *Women Welfare Association Midland* in Birmingham) were very proactive during the Liberation War in Bangladesh in 1971. Through these organisations, hundreds of

women participated in various demonstrations and campaigns to raise awareness and support the war victims of Bangladesh. They organised hunger strikes in different places to attract the media and international attention. According to Toki et al. (2012), some of the women were heavily pregnant at the time yet commenced with the hunger strike, putting their physical health at risk. Many women could not join public events but raised money and donations. One of the statements of the Pioneer women was quoted in Toki et al. (2002), “Those who cannot come to the demonstration they were still in the background, they were making *samosas* and *pakorras* (Asian snacks) for us and we collected it and then sold it.”

Thus, women’s visible presence as pioneers of the ethno-nationalist and transnationalist politics disprove existing findings that speak of the male-centred political identity of the community. Moreover, the present findings raise concerns about the missing representation of the older group of women in the migration history and the establishment of community identity in the UK.

9.1.2 “Politics is an approach to conduct your life in certain ways”

Ruma (age 44) is a representative of the Cooked in Britain Cohort. Ruma migrated to the UK in 1982 as a transnational child at the age of twelve, along with her mother from rural Sylhet, to join her father who migrated in the 70s as a labourer. As a university graduate, she currently holds the position of CEO in a social organisation, which she also founded, in addition to her work as a charity consultant. Ruma is married to a transnational husband, with whom she has three children. According to Ruma, it was marriage and family life that changed her in such a way that she now internalises politics. Being married to a transnational husband, who has always been very supportive of her decisions, Ruma found herself more independent and more empowered in her household. By playing the role of the main decision maker of her family, Ruma internalised politics. When I asked her how she defined politics, she replied:

Politics is an approach to conduct your life in certain ways. You need it every day in your life. It helps us to develop and follow rules and regulations in order to make our life into an order. You need to take it positively, but what we see now, some politicians use politics negatively to gain power and rule over the human race. When I got

married, I realised that my newly migrated husband was not confident enough to rule the family here. So I took the role of the leader of the household, I had to employ every single rule and regulation to direct my family. And that actually helped me to sense politics.

Ruma's clarification shows how marriage and family life in diaspora settings can change diaspora women's view of politics, which is very positive and related to achieving empowerment in their personal lives. During our interview, I saw Ruma talking to her husband and twenty year old son regarding an upcoming family event on the Victory Day of Bangladesh (16th December) that she was going to organise. Although her son was showing less interest to join in (he was trying to make excuses that he had other things to do), Ruma was extremely persuasive in convincing him about the importance of participating in this event. This observation certainly shows her leadership power. The story of Ruma in terms of gaining decision-making power in the family is very common to other participants of this cohort. At this point, the successful representation of the Cooked in Britain Cohort in mainstream politics through developing their position at the decision making level within local council bodies (Begum & Eade, 2005; Garbin, 2008) can be correlated with their empowerment as decision makers within the private, family sphere.

9.1.3 “Politics leads you to create unity, fulfil common goals, and achieve shared interests”

Rashna (age 25) is British born from a Bangladeshi Sylheti family. Her father migrated with her grandfather long ago in the 1970s. Later on, her mother with her three siblings joined her father in the mid-80s. She has one brother and three sisters, being the youngest of the siblings. Currently, she is about to graduate from university. Besides her student life, she is an active volunteer in the ELM Women's link. I met her at the Maryiam Centre, where I could observe her dedication towards her work with women, and her desire to help the other sisters at the centre. Because of her very busy schedule I had to re-arrange our interview twice but, when we did have our discussion about politics, I found that Rashna had very deep knowledge and determination about her ideological views. I asked her whether she could tell me her views on politics. She said,

Politics leads you to create unity, fulfil common goals, and achieve shared interests, especially when you are misrepresented and excluded by the so-called modern world. As a Muslim, my politics is to work towards the betterment of Islam, the Islamic society in Britain, and the whole Muslim world. But obviously Muslims do negotiate with the rest of the world as well. We work hard to help our Muslim brothers and sisters not just from our own community but from all over the Muslim world. When they smile, our goal is accomplished. This is how our politics is innocuous and positive towards British society.

According to Ali (2008), the Muslim identity has been identified by young generation British Bangladeshis not as a chosen one, but as one, which has been ascribed to them. From Rashna's clarification, it can be said that a sense of struggle amongst Bangladeshi Muslims living in Britain has caused a societal dynamic of assimilation vs. segregation, which has forced young Muslims to redefine their identities in more confident and united forms. This dynamic situation gives them the feeling that they should build up internal and homogenous unity in recognising their Muslim identity to differentiate themselves from the mainstream British cultural identity. At this point, the identity of 'Muslim' can be seen as a symbol of power or armour used to protect the inferior group in the community. Such a view is expressed by Barrett et al. (2006), who they articulate the progression of Islamic politics and the logic of unification. The authors argue that the young British Bangladeshi generation thrives in situations or settings of isolation with multiple stresses from diverse values and traditions, surrounded by the development of global capitalism, migration, displacement or replacement, new modes of production, depletion etc. On this point, Glynn (2002) thinks that the move to religion as a way out of social deprivation is as old as the analyses of class society, with the rising plea of Islamism amongst young groups of the community being noted elsewhere as well. Hence, the separation of religion from the culture of origin has been seen as significantly influential, leading to identification with a culturally independent 'global Islamic community' (Roy in Sirseloudi, 2012).

In the light of such claims, I was curious to know whether Rashna's political ideology came through her family and ethno-religious background or if it was derived from her involvement with the religious centre. I interviewed her on that point:

When and how do you think you became conscious about your political ideology? Do your parents have any influence on it? She replied:

After my O level, when I started coming to the centre with my friends, I slowly realised what politics is meant to be. But you would be shocked if I say my parents do not have any idea what Islamist politics is about! Like the way I have no interest about their Bengali political stuff, you know their rallies with song and dance. I never could connect myself to their views, which are to some extent alien and non-Islamic to me. I cannot think of nurturing a political view, which I do not own. But my parents do, as they brought those from their birth country to here. And this is not practical for me you know.

The oppositional cultural values, between country of origin and country of settlement, make Rashna different, which motivate her to join the global Muslim *Ummah* (a pure Muslim identity), and create a linkage with other Muslims across a transnational Muslim community. Rashna's clarification reflects also a point raised by Garbin (2008), that to uphold a British Muslim identity as 'authentic', generally individuals must respect their ethical obligation to Islamic ideologies, and at the same time, reject the secularist ethno-nationalist values of their earlier generations as syncretic. This has led the young generations to become involved in or devoted mostly to institutions based on religious politics, as, for example, the East London Mosque.

9.1.4 "Politics is a strategy that people take out for different purposes"

Sheila (age 34) is one of the participants from the New-migrant Cohort, who is actively engaged in ethno-nationalist politics, besides being an active campaigner for the Labour Party in the UK. Sheila migrated to the UK in 2002 as a transnational wife from a working class family of rural Sylhet to join her husband, who was raised in the UK. She divorced her husband due to domestic violence and is currently living as a single mother with her two children. Because of her migration, she could not complete her university course in Sylhet; however, Sheila has now started a degree in the UK on Health and Social Care, as well as working as a carer for the elderly. I was impressed with the multiple roles she plays and how smartly and strongly she manages them in a diaspora space, without any support from relatives in Bangladesh or the UK. It was even more

impressive to see her calm, cool and jolly at all of our meetings. The first time I met Sheila was at a cultural event on 'Bengali Language Movement Day' on the 21st February'. I was talking to one of my participants who actually invited me to the event. Suddenly a lady came and offered me some snacks. The lady was Sheila. She was wearing a black and white *sari* with a long sleeved blouse and beautiful headscarf. It is worth mentioning that in Bangladesh, black and white is the symbolic dress code used to celebrate Language Movement Day or *Shaheed Dibosh* (Martyrs' Day). Sheila was singing one of the most influential nationalistic and patriotic songs of Bangladesh '*Amar vaier rokte rangano*' (My brothers' blood spattered) with a chorus group.

This apparently simple fact revealed a very significant issue about her political identity to me, i.e. that by wearing a *hijab* while following the cultural dress code of a black and white *sari* and singing a song to celebrate Martyrs' Day, Sheila was positioning herself on both ethno-national and religio-cultural grounds. Sheila was so friendly that she invited me to be her Facebook friend at our first meeting. Because we are connected through Facebook, I could observe her status updates, posts and pictures on my Facebook home page. It was interesting and unique in a way to see how she was continually expressing her political views on Facebook on three different political grounds, for example, campaigning for Labour, endorsing the Bangladeshi political party she supports and criticising the opposition, and raising awareness of the importance of religion and supporting the Muslim sisterhood!

I interviewed Sheila the very next day after our first meeting. In response to my question about her views on politics, Sheila said,

For me politics is a strategy that people take out for different purposes. When I do Bangladeshi politics here, my intention is to make my ground solid in the community and be useful for my party back home so as to do something for my home country. Then again, when I do campaigning for Labour, I try to raise my voice in British society. I want to let British society know my stance against racism from the Labour platform. As a Muslim, I also would like to take a stand against violence toward Muslims all over the world and support Muslim sisters who work for a good cause.

The oppositional binary of ethno-nationalism or secularism vs Islamism in community politics is challenged through the dynamic positioning of Sheila. This was also been observed in various ways among the other participants of different cohorts except the British-born Cohort, which I will be discussing throughout the chapter.

9.2 Contributions of women in community identity and politics

The discussion in this section is intended to establish that the women in the Bangladeshi community have a significant impact on community identity and politics (mainstream British, ethno-national, ethno-local and Islamist politics). The nature of their political roles attached to the protest, creates unity, makes a bridge between grassroots politics and policy level, and forms a connection between local and trans-local and enable community cohesion through strategic management of the struggle between ethno-national and religious male groups for socio-political control of the public space. These roles are related to their socio-political positioning, which transcends the debate of binary opposition of secularism vs Islamism. Drawing our attention to the role of British Bangladeshi women in the movement demanding trial of war criminals (Bangladesh) will contextualise this discussion.

9.2.1 “Succeeding with the writ...were indeed big milestones”

I received a phone message from Rita (the Cooked in Britain Cohort) whom I interviewed first during my pilot study. The message was:

Will you be available in London around next week, I mean on 23rd of February? Please come and join us to listen to our *Birangonas* (war heroines); we will sign a memorandum for the recognition of our *Birangonas* as freedom fighters at *Memshaheb* restaurant. We will also have lunch there and join the human chain.

Without giving it a second thought, I decided to join the event, which I realised later was one of the best decisions I have made in my project. I therefore, arrived in London on the 22nd of February, 2014. On the 23rd I went to the *Memshaheb-on-Thames* Restaurant. The restaurant is beautifully located near the Thames River. I observed that the female and male activists came mostly from the New-migrant Cohort, and some

from the Cooked in Britain and the Pioneer Cohort came there to express their solidarity with the *Birangona* initiatives. The event coordinator was Keya (age 36) who is a representative of the New-migrant Cohort. I introduced her in Chapter 6. Keya migrated to the UK in 2006 as a student from a middle class family; later on she got married to a native, with whom she has a five-year-old son. She is a nutritionist and writer. Besides, she is currently doing her PhD on a part time basis. She was extremely busy at the event, as the event contained several segments (PowerPoint presentation and video



documentary on *Birangonas*, Skype meeting with *Birangonas* in Bangladesh, signing the memorandum for the recognition of *Birangonas* as freedom fighters, asking for donations to support *Birangonas*, future strategies needed to address the *Birangona* issue in the Parliament of Bangladesh and a human chain).

Figure 8: The human chain on 23rd to mark the *Birangona* Campaign (I am on the right)

As well as meeting her on that day, I was able to arrange another meeting, two weeks later, to interview her. I interviewed her at the same place where we first met. I came to know that Keya and other activists had been making frequent visits to the *Memshaheb* restaurant. I observed that the activists went there not only to discuss ethno-political issues, but also because the restaurant had become a kind of community space in which to talk and share daily life events over a cup of tea and snacks. Over the subsequent weeks of my stay in London I became a regular part of this ethno-political and ethno-cultural place. This is where I was able to identify the background and political movement of the Bangladeshi community in the UK in a more practical way. Besides, this example shows the power of a community place in relation to transnational

activism, how a place is closely linked to the trans-cultural practices of diasporans and how it can be recognised as fertile ground for producing and reproducing belonging.

During our discussion, I came to know from Keya that she had been continuing her initiatives on the *Birangona* project since the beginning of 2013 when the demand/public outcry for the trial of war criminals (Bangladesh) became uncontrollable in Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi communities all over the world. I asked her to tell me more about her *Birangona* project. She replied:

Last year we started our journey for *Birangonas*. Only four of us! We were desperate to do something for them. Our team members have been attending the meetings, organising the programmes, inviting people. They are so dedicated for our *Birangonas*!

BIRANGONA, a beautiful face of a harrowing story!

I was extremely fortunate to take the initiative. I put a status on Facebook requesting support from fellow Bangladeshis to come in the aid of a few *Birangonas* who were in need of urgent financial support. I lobbied for their rehabilitation, government allowance and most importantly to recognise them as freedom fighters by the state. And I am glad I could make it a huge success, though I didn't know it would be a life changing experience for me.

You know *Birangonas*; they are unfortunate women, then young adults who were raped brutally by the Pakistani army in 1971 during our Liberation war. *Birangona* was the name given by the late President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The name *Birangona* means *Bir-Nari* (Brave women) in line with military rank/medals of honour. Our objective was to make contact with these women, find out where and what state they are in and what help they need. This was a fact-finding mission to explore how we can support them in a more structured and systematic long-term way. Initially we took initiatives to make a documentary about them and give them some immediate financial support.

I and another co-activist provided the entire financial support. We were aided logistically and substantially supported by many, locally and nationally, in Bangladesh. I was doing all the coordination, organising and chasing. We arranged a get together for *Birangonas* in Bangladesh on our victory day in 2013 and gave them some financial support. I managed to admit *Birangona* Momtaz to PG hospital in Dhaka. She was gang raped by Pakistani soldiers in 1971 during the war of independence, while she was nine months pregnant. Shame on me, shame on my nation! What a life has been gifted to her! After the gang rape, her baby died in her womb. She has had sixteen operations till now. Her rectum and sexual organs are completely damaged. The doctor managed to save her life but couldn't save her from the curse of living! Her colon was removed for 43 years. She can hardly eat anything. She passes her stools through her tummy. But she can't afford to buy a colostomy bag, as it is very expensive for her. She covers it with her *sari*. *Sari* is full of germs. So she suffers with infection all the time. When I went to her house it was afternoon and she still hadn't had anything to cook. She was hungry; she was sick; she was begging to die! My eyes were full of tears! I promised her that I would fight for her! And I kept my words!

I was planning to establish a Foundation plus shelter home for our *Birangonas* and already got the land for that and a lot of *Birangonas* are ready to move there. They want this foundation to be called *Birangona Palace*! Now I am planning to make it as a research centre as well, or you can say kind of information centre about our freedom fight that will focus on *Birangonas*. I found working for the *Birangona* is very hard as there is no information and no support. We will document all the tortures and struggles they went through during the war at the hands of the Pakistani military and local collaborators and after the war by their compatriots, which are us! These ladies should be given a little bit of respect and peace before they die. To develop a foundation like this is not an easy job and I

need a lot of encouragement that will make our path easy. You can even be with us (she indicated to me).

It was awe-inspiring to see how active Keya is in creating a link with Bangladesh and the community in London regarding ethno-nationalist issues. As a representative of the New-migrant Cohort, she was also successful in creating a connection with other cohorts, particularly the Pioneer and the Cooked in Britain Cohorts. By bringing them under one umbrella to stand for women's rights and making it a national and transnational political demand, she demonstrated her dynamic role in community identity. During the event on the 23rd, I observed women from different cohorts expressing their highest solidarity with Keya, except for the participants from the ELM Women's Link, who were significantly invisible on ethno-nationalist issues. This was one of the platforms where the New-migrant, the Pioneer, and the Cooked in Britain Cohort, and a few of the British-born Cohorts stood together on ethno-nationalist political ground. From the various comments on Keya's Facebook status regarding the *Birangona* Campaign, I noticed Meher (age 57), one of the participants from the Cooked in Britain Cohort, who is also a member of the British Parliament, commenting on it:

I salute your constant efforts on behalf of these brave soldiers. I have raised this matter in Parliament several times with our UK Ministers about raising financial support through DFID sources. I have also raised this matter with PM Sheikh Hasina when she was here. Please be assured I am with you at all times until we get justice for the women of 1971.

It was more than the fact that Keya was helping women raise their voices in the ethno-nationalist and ethno-local political spheres; the very way she was doing this, the objectives she had to guarantee the success of the campaign created unity among women of different cohorts and reflect the feminist movement in the Bangladeshi community in London. Despite her role as a mother, wife and daughter-in-law, and her job as a nutritionist, writer and PhD researcher, Keya actively carried out her campaign in London and Bangladesh. She made frequent visits to Bangladesh, leaving her five

year old son behind in the UK. These actions certainly show her passion and enthusiasm towards ethno-nationalism and feminism.



Figure 9: Keya's campaign in Bangladesh (photo from social media)

Through her campaign in Bangladesh she made useful and strong connections with grassroots organisations and local government (located in the areas where the *Birangonas* live), the ruling party, social and print media, civil societies, and women's organisations, to create awareness, gather voices and get monetary support. These activities have created a strong basis to lobby the government. She successfully lobbied parliament members and the honourable speaker of Bangladesh to set up shelter homes for *Birangonas* and they were agreed to it. Her lobbying of government ministers achieved another success, when the government implemented a monthly allowance benefit for the *Birangonas*. She met the Prime Minister of Bangladesh in June, 2014 and represented the online forum [Organisation for War Heroines](#), which was initiated to raise awareness about the *Birangonas*, their social reality through reflection and action. Her dedication has provoked government into action. Her final success came when I saw her Facebook status in July, 2014.

Hip hip Hurreh!! Friends, we've done it. Our Ministry of Freedom Fight has declared that our *Birangonas* will be recognised as freedom fighters! Thank you so much to our honourable minister. Rimi *apa* said that the last time when she took all the details that we sent to her from our organisation for War Heroines and sat down with the minister and was talking through it she saw tears in his eyes. From that day everyday I was waiting for the good news. Thanks to our Lawyers who wrote the petition. Thanks all our friends who came to *MemShaheb* restaurant and did the human chain and signed

and stood for our *Birangonas* and those who couldn't come but still supported us. Well, succeeding with the writ, getting the National Policy formulated were indeed big milestones! But there is still a long road ahead to make these initiatives make any significant difference in the lives of our *Birangona* women. Hope everyone will be able to work together in rock solid solidarity towards that single purpose.

Keya's engagement in the political realm denotes her power positioning through political mobilization and leadership in transnational, national and trans-local space. By taking on a project such as the *Birangona* in a confident and united way and mainstreaming it in Bangladesh (the place of displacement), while living in the UK (her country of settlement), Keya not only strengthened her subjective position in the community but also aided in uniting women and men from different cohorts in the community. From this perspective, it can be argued that she possesses a strong ethno-nationalist identity, which has been revived through the New-migrant Cohort (particularly the women in focus) rather than generational continuity. As, Begum and Eade (2005) identify the political engagement of the community people throughout the 70s and 80s was shaped through the politics of the subcontinent and the struggles for independence. Whereas the next generation represent a major shift from these ideals, with their participation happening more at the micro-level of politics, such as local government and anti-racist organisations.

9.2.2 “She taught me to love Bangladesh, ...respect the Bangladeshi flag”

I mentioned earlier that by frequent visits to their ethno-political meeting-place, I was able to identify the essence of the various protests in Bangladeshi politics, most recently demanding the trial of war criminals in 2013, but also the significant influence this has had in terms of engaging women from different cohorts in a dynamic way in community identity politics. This was shown in the *Birangona* issue, when women from different cohorts took active participation in the protest. Even a few of the British-born Cohort, who are not connected to the ELM Women's link, expressed their solidarity with the protest. The protest was associated with the central part of Bangladesh, Shahbag, Dhaka and was initially incited by the *Gonojagoron-Mancho* (National awakening stage) and later being spread to other parts of Bangladesh and Bangladeshi communities all over

the world. A large group of people of Bangladesh demanded capital punishment for the war criminals who were convicted of war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal. The Bangladeshi community in the UK joined the protest, beginning with the establishment of another *Gonojagoron-Mancho* in the UK by one of the community groups, called '*Nijhoom group*'.

Bushra (age 20) is one of them. She is currently an undergraduate student. Bushra is a child of a member of the Cooked in Britain Cohort, Rita, who was the one who called me to join the event on the *Birangonas*. Bushra was motivated to follow an ethno-nationalist ideology by her mother, who was actively involved in the protest. She and her only brother tried their best to support their mother in the demonstration. I met her first when I was interviewing her mother at their home. Second time I met her was at the *Birangona* event at the *Memshaheb* Restaurant. She had wrapped her head in a Bangladeshi flag. I also observed that along with her mother she was at the centre of the human chain event. When I asked her what was her drive to engage in the movement, she said the following:

It's about your identity, about your roots! This is something I inherited and I should respect that. I should respect the country where my parents were born! And obviously my mother has had a huge influence on me, she taught me to love Bangladesh, to respect the freedom fighters and the Bangladeshi flag!

Although a generational shift from ethno-nationalism to contextual realism to Islamism was revealed by the work of Eade & Garbin (2002), and Garbin (2005, 2008), the gender aspect in generational identity politics shows the strategic management and continuity of ethno-national and local mainstream politics. For instance, their research on community identity politics indicates that women among the younger generation are mostly driven by Islamic identity politics, while the case of Bushra shows that there is a parallel group of young women in the community who strongly uphold ethno-nationalist identity in recent times. From Bushra's statement it can be seen that by regaining consciousness of ethno-nationalist issues, for example by joining the protest of the British-born Cohort, she challenges the process of 'generational shifting' (Begum & Eade, 2005; Eade & Garbin, 2002; Garbin, 2005, 2008) in the political identity of the community. However, the participation of the cohort is not significant in number.

Rita migrated to the UK as a student from urban Dhaka in 1990 and joined her brother, who was a skilled migrant. She was the child of an educated middle class family in Bangladesh. She married a Bangladeshi man who came to the UK for higher education and later on settled down as a skilled worker. Rita is a mother of two children, a son and a daughter. Currently she is running a Bengali theatre in London. She is also a proud ethno-nationalist activist.

I asked her whether she could describe the role she played in the protest. She replied:

When the movement started we all motivated people, supported them. I never think of myself as from a distinct part of Bangladesh. All we Bangladeshis in the community who have the sense of nationalism and who are patriots joined the protest. We used to gather in Altab Ali Park in front of *the Shaheed Minar* (Martyrs Monument, the symbol of sacrifice for Bangla), we raised our voices, we gave slogans, we carried banners and festoons to let people from all over the world know that despite being detached from our homeland, we aren't detached mentally, we are always with her (the motherland). And we have zero tolerance for the betrayer! I am happy that I could motivate my family. I felt proud seeing my daughter and son raising their voices for Bangladesh!

It is remarkable that many participants from the Cooked in Britain Cohort, who are ideologically conscious of ethno-nationalism, have positively motivated their children. This indicates that women have managed to achieve more success in community politics in comparison to the male-based politics, which failed to maintain generational continuity. Keya, the successful campaigner of the *Birangona* project, was also a part of the demonstration. She successfully inspired not only her fellow Bangladeshis, but also her native English husband into joining the protest. She put a picture of her husband on social media when they were protesting with the caption:

James is supporting our protests against war criminals and supporting our revolution. Will you join us?

This can be seen as women's political empowerment in ethno-nationalist issues in the community, starting with the private/ family life and penetrating the public domain. The most significant observation in the protest was the active participation of a number of women from the Pioneer Cohort, who succeeded in striking a balance between Bengali nationalist and secular politics with the Muslim identity. Another significant observation is that usage of social media and mobile phones in activism among the community women was successful in the way they gained unprecedented popular support in the community in terms of mobilizing ethno-national values. This resulted in transforming a national discourse into a transnational one, and forming transnational movements and campaigns according to contextual demand in a diaspora space.

9.2.3 Breaking the binary

In the previous chapter, I have already introduced Banu (age 70) whom I met at the first conference of the community women's network '*Nari Diganta*', where she holds a senior position in the central committee. I have already given a description about her and presented some of my observations related to her, However I am repeating this description at this point, as it is closely connected to the argument I want to discuss here. Thus, in short, Banu migrated to the UK as a dependant (wife) of a diplomat husband along with her two daughters in 1972 at the age of 27. Although Banu has only a GSC level qualification, she held a very important role in the ethno-national politics of the community. I interviewed her at her home in our second meeting. When I entered her house, I saw Banu counting *tasbeeh* (prayer beads). By observing Banu in only two meetings I immediately realised that ethnic cultural tradition and religious activities peacefully co-exist in her life.

At the conference, I saw that Banu covered her head with a *sari* in a very balanced way, while she was engaged in a Bengali secular cultural programme and while the national anthem was played. The pictorial documentation of the network's activities revealed its initiatives on women's rights and the protest against the lack of conviction/ impunity of war criminals in Bangladesh.

I asked her:

I: How do you see the protest against war criminals in London?

B: Well, I was in the protest. If you google it, you will see my picture in the community protest.

I: That's amazing! What was your purpose to join the protest?

B: I do respect and support the Liberation of Bangladesh and I hate *rajakar* (collaborators) the most. We are here always to stand for Bangladesh. When I migrated to the UK, I gave my full support and donation to the war devastated Bangladesh. And now we protest to respect our freedom fighters, people who were killed and raped by them! You know everyone is so outraged by the war crimes.

I: Do you think your protest in the UK made any impact in Bangladesh?

B: Of course, it did! We could express our solidarity and become united with the people who protested in Bangladesh, which made the protest stronger and bigger! And now you see one of them has been hanged already and we are waiting to see the same result for all *rajakar!*

When I searched the internet for news about the protest in London, it was surprising to see Banu in the front line in several of the events of the demonstration. In one picture, she was holding a banner with fellow activists saying 'We demand justice for the crimes of 1971' while covering her head with shawl and holding a head banner over her head. Another picture shows that she was holding a placard saying 'Three million martyrs is no joke' while covering her head with a long *hijab*. Banu's case certainly shows that by protesting against war criminals in Bangladesh while covering the head, as well as standing for secular Bangladesh, the Pioneer Cohort not only challenge the current debate on self-determination vis à vis imagined Muslim identity and/or break the oppositional binary: ethno-nationalism/ Islamism, but also denote their strong and dynamic positionality in the transnational movement.



Figure 10: Protest against War Criminals by the community women (photo from social media)

9.2.5 “To help the disadvantaged groups in the community through the light of Islam”

The response to the protest in the community was manifold, but none was as noticeable and significant as the reaffirmation of Muslim identity in the ethno-nationalist discourse. When those of my participants who have a strong ethno-nationalist ideological basis were actively running the protest, many of the religious Muslims from the East London Mosque took an opposite stand and rejected the protest, through a counter-protest to free Jamaat-e-Islami leaders¹⁸. Almost all my participants who are linked to the ELM Women’s link thought that the protest against war criminals was not about politics of ethno-nationalism, but rather a political strategy to destroy Islamism in community politics through ‘eye wash’ in the form of secular revolution. It is worth mentioning that most of the suspected war criminals are the political leaders of the largest Islamist political party ‘Jamaat-e-Islami’ Bangladesh. They opposed the creation of Bangladesh and are being accused of having collaborated with the Pakistani army in committing genocide in the Liberation War of Bangladesh (1971)¹⁹ The Jamaat-inspired

¹⁸ https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=london+protest+to+free+Jamaat+e+Islami+leaders&espv=2&biw=1351&bih=669&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjP8uac-qPNAhVF8AKHdaTCCsQ_AUICCGD&dpr=1#imgrc=pMXydbFoYCEm-M%3A

¹⁹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/03/bangladesh-party-leader-accused-war-crimes>

UK Islamic Mission is an established Islamic organisation in the UK, which was originally set up in 1962 in the old East London Mosque²⁰.

Mahin (age 43) is an active member of the ELM Women's link and a leader of the Islamic Forum, Europe. Mahin (a representative of the New-migrant Cohort) migrated to the UK in 2003 from urban Dhaka as a transnational wife of a skilled migrant, along with a child. She holds a post-graduate degree in political science from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Currently, she is not working but taking care of her two daughters.

My first meeting with Mahin was at the Mariyam Centre; she was extremely busy with the Centre's upcoming event for International Women's Day. However, I was able to introduce myself to her. I asked her for an interview. Although she did not agree at first, finally she told me that she would be able to give me only half an hour if I could manage with that time. So I met her at the Centre, in the evening, three days after we had first met. She repeatedly told me that her life was like a machine, as she never had any free time for herself. She had multiple organisational responsibilities and also shouldered most of the responsibilities of her family, as her husband is a solicitor, who is rarely at home during the day, most of the time having more pressing issues at his chamber. Also, numerous women came to the centre every day, asking for her support and advice.

Mahin's daily life experience indicates that women who are involved in Islamist politics are equally empowered in public and private. In our discussion on the political role of women in the community, I was more curious to know her reaction to the demonstration of British Bangladeshis on the 'war criminal convictions of 2013', I asked her to tell me her views. Like the other participants of the ELM Women's link, she strongly disagreed with the campaign. She said,

You might be thinking that what they are doing is revolutionary! This is the way to show your patriotism, to fight for democracy, and fight for justice. But my knowledge and education on political science taught me to see the backside of the story. I know the nasty political game that was played out by the ruling party in Bangladesh to polarise the nation, to strengthen their support and destroy *dhormio raajnitik adorsho* (Islamic political ideology). And in the

²⁰<http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/bmms/1994/08August94.html#UK%20Islamic%20Mission%20conference>

same way the community people are now even more segmented due to this issue. This is not patriotism. I love my birth land and I have a strong fondness for my country and I am against any war crimes and those of collaborators, but not of those who are falsified as war criminals just for taking their position for united Muslims and not for war! You see, not only our Muslim brothers and sisters who were born here are against this, but also the people like me who came from Bangladesh show their complete disagreement with that. We know how people were misled by the politically motivated trial. So we stand together to protest against death sentenced Bangladeshi Islamist leaders.

Mahin's explanation shows that the protest of the ethno-nationalist group weakened the unity of the community people by widening the divide with the Islamist group, since the protest influenced the Islamist group to produce a counter protest. Mahin and her fellows supported the counter protest²¹, which reveals the visibility of Muslim Bangladeshi women's groups in political protest. Banu and Mahin both upheld Muslim identity in a confident way but at a political level, because of their different ideological standpoints, one of them actively supported the demonstration and another took an opposite stance to it. Although both of them believe in ethno-nationalism, Mahin's connection to institutional-based Islamic political identity is stronger than her ethno-nationalist identity, whereas Banu's non-institutional Muslim identity came second to her ethno-nationalist identity.

On the topic of the political role of women in the community, Mahin said,

Obviously, I am involved with the masjid now, I have got Islamic forum Europe. I am a campaigner for equality rights for women, whether they are Bangladeshi or any other ethnic minorities. I do support ethnic minorities in general, but obviously, as a woman, when women come under discrimination, I support that as well. This is what my political stand is! To help the disadvantaged groups in the community in the light of Islam! I believe that Muslim women in the community have to come forward, contribute productively and

²¹<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-25557101>

innovatively, and become involved in the ethical and moral uplifting of society as a whole.

Mahin's clarification on this point shows that women who are connected to institution based Islamist politics apply their political ideologies to help individuals, women, and the wider community for betterment. In her view, presently, it is not possible for them to influence the central or national level politics in Britain; therefore, they want to focus more on community or grass roots level integration through religious initiatives and activities. She thinks that religious politics can unite their community to give them support against discrimination and prejudice and can help them take on positions in the decision making process at the local level, while the segmented ethno-nationalist political groups (rightist, leftist groups) of the community present a threat to the unity of the Muslim *Umma* she supports. In my view, this is a positive strategy of institution-based politics in a diaspora community used to motivate community people, particularly women, to get involved.

9.2.5 “Their attempt was not successful as now I am successfully continuing my 14 years”

I was waiting for Adhury (age 41) at Becton train station. It was the first time we met up. Although in our phone conversation I had assured her that I would be able to reach her house, she was overprotective, saying:

No, no, I don't want to take the risk of any unexpected situation that may interrupt our meeting and I may not be able to reschedule it, since I am really busy at the moment. So I will pick you up from the station.

Already, before we had even met, I got the impression of a hectic schedule and the importance of keeping an appointment in the life of a political councillor like her. Adhury represents the Cooked in Britain Cohort. Accompanied by her mother and three siblings, she migrated to the UK as a teenager in 1990 to join her father and uncle. She had had an ethnic cultural upbringing at home, while, at the same time she became accustomed to a very British way of socialisation outside of the home, particularly at school. At the age of 21, she got married to a Bangladeshi based husband. She holds a

post-graduate degree in Applied Anthropology, Youth & Community Work in the UK. Currently she is working as a political Councillor in London, and local Advisor of a Bangladeshi rightist political party in Sylhet, Bangladesh.

To return to our first meeting at Becton station, Adhury, finally arrived, and waved to me to get into the car, as she was very busy speaking on the phone. I did so and was surprised to see that she was wearing her ethnic dress (*salwar-kamiz*), considering she had just left her workplace. I tried to say 'Hello!' but Adhury was having what seemed to be a very important conversation on the phone. Nonetheless, she smiled at me, looking into my eyes and through polite gestures requested me to wait for a minute. Although, I was next to the driving seat, it took me seven to eight minutes to say 'Hello!' (she had three phones ringing every second). So far, her behaviour gave me the feeling of a traditional Bengali rather than someone brought up in Britain, which actually made me feel more comfortable in that particular situation. Finally, she switched two of her phones off and we started talking. From her conversations over the phone, I got the impression that she is very disciplined and successful in her professional field. For example, she was talking about reallocating some of her office hours for sending emails and cards for Christmas and New Year rather than spending her time doing it from home. She took me to her brother's residence, which was near to the station. Towards the end of the interview Adhury checked her mobile notifications and said,

Ohh, I didn't realise that the interview would be so long! Today I have another appointment with my husband. He asked me to go shopping together. These days I am becoming busier and can't even find enough time for my family! See, he already gave me five missed calls.

At this time she asked me to excuse her to call back her husband. They were talking in a local Sylheti language but I could understand most of it. It was just a five/ six-minute conversation. She apologised for her possible delay, and then asked whether her children were at home and had had their lunch; and whether the plumber had come or not. I formed the impression that, unlike traditional Bengali men, Adhury's husband was quite good at household maintenance, and it was Adhury who was the main breadwinner of her family. After the interview, she asked me what my next destination

was, as she wanted to drop me off. Because I knew that she was already been late for her next appointment with her husband, I decided to go on my own. She insisted that she should give me a lift and finally I had to agree. It again demonstrated the very Bengali nature of someone brought up in Britain, who was effectively playing multiple roles both in public and private as mother, wife, household manager and political councillor. I must say I was astonished by her seemingly successful multi-tasking.

During our discussion on politics, Adhury shared her experience about her motivation to get involved in mainstream British politics, successful political career, overcoming political obstacles and contribution to ethno-nationalist politics. She said,

When I came into politics, community people used to say: “Look ... her father uses his daughter to make money”. I didn’t say anything; I was just waiting to reply to them through my positive works for the community. During election time (2014) the Conservative Party tried to influence the Muslim groups in the community against me. They circulated leaflets accusing me of preventing Muslims from their prayers at my workplace, and thus I am against Islam, which was completely made-up. Personally I am a firm believer of Islam and I practise Islam in my daily life. But I don’t want to use my religion as a political strategy. You know many politicians in the community use religion to get sympathy and moral support from the community Muslims. Anyway, their attempt was not successful, as now I have successfully continued for 14 years. The reason I got into politics is not only because of the Bangladeshi community, I saw the situations the most vulnerable people were in, (especially ethnic groups of women); they had no voice in the community; senior politicians have no idea about what’s happening at the grassroots. As a social worker and anthropologist I had first-hand experience of people’s difficulties, so that I thought I could make a better representative and build a bridge between those vulnerable people and politicians.

From Adhury’s statement, it can be seen that structural barriers are still entrenched in the community in terms of women’s engagement with community politics. Because of their gender, they experience humiliation, blame and scandal, all due to patriarchal

notions of who is eligible to participate in political life. Religious fabrication has been seen as an important strategy in local politics, which intersects with gender and produce difficulty in accepting women's leadership in politics. However, the difficulty has been successfully challenged by Adhury through positive and strong management of her political roles, which are so influential in shaping her political prospect and career. Adhury is therefore, like many of my other participants from different cohorts, ambitious, confident and competitive in relation to engaging in politics and has been able to develop a strong positionality in the community identity and local British politics.

In the work of Begum and Eade (2005), women's shifting political positioning in terms of 'generation' has been discussed from a perspective where first generation women who migrated to Britain as dependant migrants have often been seen very invisible at community level participation; second-generation British Bangladeshi women have been able to develop their position at the decision making level within local Council bodies; while third generation women, who are ideologically alienated from earlier generations, have been created their space by focusing concern on community development issues or by getting involved in 'curbing nascent confrontational tendencies' through faith based organisations. My discussions on the role of the Pioneer Cohort (the examples of Nusrat and Banu) have already challenged the statement of 'invisibility in community politics'. When I started writing this chapter on 'political identity', three women of Bangladeshi-origin, British citizens, one of whom is a representative of the Cooked in Britain Cohort and another two who are part of the British-born Cohorts were elected members of parliament in the UK general elections 2015. This again represents women's political empowerment in the diaspora community. Also it challenges the 'generational shifting' (Begum & Eade, 2005; Eade & Garbin, 2002; Garbin, 2005, 2008) of the Cooked in Britain Cohort to the British-born Cohort, from mainstream politics to Islamic identity politics.

In our discussion on ethno-local politics, I asked Adhury whether she was at all involved in this area. She said,

I am supposed to be neutral and represent anyone and everyone in the area. If I act as an activist of a particular political group of Bangladesh, then other groups may not feel comfortable coming to

me for assistance and help. Besides, some Bangladeshi leftist political groups complained against my involvement with rightist political parties. So, now, I indirectly support my Bangladeshi political group. At the moment, I am acting as an advisor of a right wing party in Sylhet, Bangladesh. I am in touch with this particular political party regularly over the phone and internet. Face to face... unless it is a private meeting, I don't go. If I go they would have to make sure that no pictures are taken.

In his research, Garbin (2008) reveals that the active involvement of the Cooked in Britain Cohort in mainstream British politics in the local context gradually turned away from the previous concerns of the Pioneer Cohort regarding trans-local activities for instance, direct and indirect involvement in village politics in Sylhet. However, Adhury's case shows that the Cooked in Britain Cohort still pursues both concerns, but not to the same extent. To present herself as neutral to all political groups in the community, as well as to show the primacy of her allegiance to local British politics, Adhury makes a strategic move in the British context and chooses not to expose her involvement in trans-local politics and social welfare activities in Bangladesh.

9.3 Community cohesion and women's role in conflict

This section focuses primarily on what political experience women have in terms of conflict in community politics, and how they deal with it. In the community, a cordial relationship was observed amongst the participants of Bangladeshi leftist, rightist, Islamist political groups. I observed that one of the participants was campaigning for another, who is a Labour Party candidate, although they have opposite views and different levels of engagement in terms of mainstream politics in Bangladesh. Moreover, the members of the women's network were observed standing on one platform, regardless of their different political views in terms of Bangladeshi politics. This represents a very different scenario from that of the men in those cohorts, which I will be discussing next.

In the previous sections, I have analysed the nature of politics in the Bangladeshi community, through the lens of the debate: 'Islamists vs. secularists' (Garbin, 2005). The struggle during the Liberation War of Bangladesh has been re-interpreted through

the struggle of community space, its representation and most recently the *Shahbag* protest (*Ibid* 'war criminal protest) in Dhaka, which was reflected in the demonstrations in London.

9.3.1 “But we don’t say anything to them and this is our strategy”

In our discussion on political conflict in the community, Rita as a representative of the Cooked in Britain Cohort (whom I introduced in the previous section) shared her experience in this way:

They use religious identity to justify their violent acts and all these. You know eight of our male activists were injured by them and were hospitalised during the demonstration in Whitechapel.

She continued:

In the Bengali New Year festival and carnival, you will see some Muslim enthusiasts from the East London Mosque, they will come and convoke. *Tara chitkar kore bolte thake tomra ja korcho haram, tomar dhorme fere jao, tomar bishwwashe fere jao, Muslim hishebe tomra eigulo korte paro na, narider shathe mela mesha bondho koro, tomra ei nongrami, ei nirlojjota theke dure chole asho, I have no idea how baishakhi mela can be nirlozzota* (they shout at us, “What you are doing is sinful, being a practicing Muslim, being a believer you cannot really join in. You cannot join in carnival, this country practices free mixing, go back to your religion, go back to your beliefs, and do not mix with women, come back from this indecency”, I have no idea how a Bengali New Year carnival can be indecent).

These are a very racially charged, aggressive people and they are doing this under the nose of the police, that’s what happens in every *Baishakhi-Mela* (Bengali New Year carnival). A lot of people, hundreds turned up in *Baishakhi-Mela*. They are all practising

people, mostly. Just by looking at them, you will definitely know who they are, but they are still allowed to come in. I believe that the heart of people is actually secular; you cannot bind them with religious constraints; you cannot bind them with any cultural constancy. I was a very practising Bengali. You cannot bind the heart with regulations, that's why people go in and enjoy such events with their whole families. They [the Islamists from ELM] try to intimidate with their presence only, the police doesn't do much. You cannot treat someone like that, this is a personal choice, this is a social choice and this is also a cultural choice. Religion has nothing to do with it and should not have anything to do with it. We pretend that we are deaf and go join the carnival.

The community activists who believe in ethno nationalist and secularist ideologies have tried to transmit their values through the celebration of the Bengali New Year, cultural and independence days, and demonstrations in shaping local space as a symbol of Bengali nationalism. In contrast, criticizing Bengali nationalist cultural events as syncretic, Islamist leaders have politically striven to mobilize the religious identity as an authentic value. According to Garbin (2005), violence exploded between these two groups due to the influence of transnational political representation and the struggle for socio-political control of public space. In the work of Eade and Garbin (2006), this conflict has been mentioned in the case of the celebration programme of the Bengali New Year (*Baishakhi-Mela*) and the celebration of the National Mother Language Day (at the *Shaheed Minar* [Martyrs Monument]). The two opposite political standpoints pushed the generations involved in a process of competition and struggle for the adoption of community space. The expansion of the East London Mosque and the amplification of the Bengali New Year celebrations, in some cases, caused unexpected community violence. It is noteworthy that the East London Mosque and the Altab Ali Park (where the *Shaheed Minar* is situated, and where the Bengali cultural events and protest movements take place) are both located in Whitechapel, in very close proximity, which actually inflames the conflict situation, as it is impossible to avoid observing and following each other's activities.

I was interested to know what role the women of these two groups play during the struggle. Here my question regarding the issue was answered by Rita as follows:

As I told you, what they do the most is leafleting in front of the gate (Bengali New Year Carnival), telling people that we are no longer Muslim, and sometimes they throw eggs at the event. But we don't say anything to them and this is our strategy. They just try to provoke us, to create an incident and make it an issue. But we are tolerant and peaceful. We even made the protest against war criminals very peaceful! We didn't do anything that can provoke them.

Whilst men fight to occupy the community space or to represent dominantly their political views, women on the other hand try to deal with it in an accepting and silent manner. Being aware of conflict routes, Rita finds it helpful to avoid conflict through her silent reaction to the campaign and protest of the East London Muslim groups against Bengali cultural practices, which they consider syncretic. In her views if being silent accomplishes what you aim for this is the ultimate success and a strong response to protest, which is also helpful in terms of bringing a peaceful environment to the community. On the other hand, with regard to the protests demanding a war crime tribunal, Rita thinks that raising her voice from a united platform without provoking anyone is yet another peaceful way of making a stand used by the women in the community.

9.3.2 “We are encouraging more women from the East London Mosque”

On the other hand, Ruma (age 44), the representative of the Cooked in Britain Cohort takes a unique strategy in terms of conflict resolution. Ruma is one of the organisers of the '*Mina Bazar*' (Bengali cultural carnival). What she does is encourage more women who are connected to religious-based organisations to participate in the *Mina Bazar* by showcasing their religious culture and activities. Here, her intention is to promote them by giving them more spaces for stalls at the fair, so that this group of women, their Muslim brothers from the organisations and others can know what the fair is actually about and, most importantly, its economic and social opportunities.

Last year we promoted some Somalian women, we allotted two stalls to them. This year we are encouraging more women from the East London Mosque, from our own and other ethnic communities so

they can get equal space in the fair. One of my friends, who is a member of the ELM, told me that she was interested in having a couple of stalls so that she can sell some stylish *hijab* and things like that. I was happy, anyway, as this is what we were looking for. Being in a multicultural society, you have to be more compassionate, friendly and respectful to others.

It can be identified in Ruma's clarification that women in the community act strategically by giving space and scope to others who have a different ideological standpoint. Ruma believes that co-existence of different values on one platform can be seen as positive and helpful towards creating a society that respects each other's views and activities, and forges an amicable relations among them, finally leading to a truly united community. As a process of peace building, Ruma values 'relationship building' (McKay & de la Rey, 2001) through personal accountability that contribute to the reduction of community violence. Her process of peace building is focused on understanding multicultural practice in a diaspora community and unconventional harmonious approaches that support different groups of the community to reach reciprocally satisfactory situations that reconcile the polarity among the secularists and Islamists in the community. In this way women's role in peace-building process in a diaspora community also focuses on 'gender-aware and women-empowering political, social, economic and human rights' (Mazurana & McKay, 1999).

9.3.3 Grassroots level integration for peace

Shajna (age 44) is a representative of the Cooked in Britain Cohort whom I introduced in Chapter 7. Her family migrated to the UK during the Liberation War in Bangladesh in 1971 when she was a six-month-old baby. Shajna, who graduated from a London university, is one of the most influential women leaders in the Mariyam Centre, East London Mosque. Shajna shared her experience during our discussion on women's position in conflict between 'secularist and Islamist' or 'Islamist and extremist' groups in the community and their role in peace building:

Well you know the EDL, there is an issue with the EDL in the masjid as well, so that's the English Defence League, they targeted the masjid, and obviously the islamophobia started. But the Muslim

community got together, the community is very good at getting together, and the Mariyam centre always stand united against the threat posed by all radicalism. We raise awareness through various sessions among the sisters' groups in the centre. We also have sessions on 'encountering radicalism while maintaining a peaceable demeanour'. But these issues need to be discussed in the social and print media.

From Shajna's clarification, it has been identified that by creating unity and space on a structural basis to articulate their global Muslim identity, the community Muslim women group are forming unconventional process of peace-building, which involves engagement of grassroots community women in awareness raising process in relation to political and religious conflict. However, Shajna thinks that their bottom-up approach towards a peaceful community have been ignored by media, researchers and policy makers. Her argument recalls NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (2004), who argue that the majority of women's voices go unheard during formal processes of conflict management, peace negotiations and policy implementation, despite their positive effort towards grassroots level integration for peace.

I asked Shajna whether she knew anything about the fact that a group of people from the East London Mosque circulated leaflets during *Baishakhi Mela*. She replied:

I don't. It is in the mosque, lots of people do things, saying that they are representing the mosque. There are some community-based strong minded Muslims, who disapprove of these things. I don't support it, because I think each person should do what they want to do, Bangladeshi culture is not just Muslim Bangladeshi, there are other religious groups. The people who do it, these are people without education. Look what's happening in Bangladesh. This kind of thing comes here, Bangladeshi politics come into Britain, and community people take it that one step further. The thing is, if you are Muslim, you have to be tolerant of your neighbour, you can give *dawah* (invitation) but you can't abuse them in this way and I am totally against this kind of thing. I think it's affected me in the sense that I wouldn't go to *Baishakhi-Mela*. I get lots of invitation during

Baishaki-Mela, but I have never been there, it's not for me, I don't feel comfortable. I have no objection to people doing it, if they want to do it, it's up to them because that's their cultural thing, if they want to do it, they can do it.

Similar to other participants from the East London Mosque, Shajna's clarification shows that women from the Islamist group are against the political control of community space. They try to avoid from any kind of conflict situation raised by such behaviour. At this point, it can be said that although Islam in Britain has been integrated to form a legitimate locational identity (Werbner, 2004), the exclusionary form of Islamic identity practice has repressed the process of integration into the British mainstream.

Regarding the point on the role of women in conflict resolution, Shajna said,

We organised a project aimed at preventing violent extremism with the Muslim women's collective (Muslim Women's Forum) and that was after the 07/07 bombing. And one of the things we did was strengthening the family workshop programme. Obviously, the programme agenda was very controversial, because it was like saying that those who are using this fund, or those who are targeted, are terrorists and are trying to prevail. And the way the agenda came, it came from government because they had to do something, keep the community quiet, the wider community. It felt like we were targeted as Muslims in the community. So one of the ways around this, we said, was by talking as Muslim Women's Collectives. We will do some series of workshops where we can engage and have already started engagement or dialogue with our young people to see what they are actually doing. One of the things is the 07/07 bombers, their parents didn't know what they were doing, they went to bars, their local business, and then all of a sudden we heard that they were involved in these things. The question is how much do we know our children? What we did was some parenting courses, lots of family outings, engagement; I think that's the wider way we take part in conflict resolution.

Ranstorp and Hyllengren (2013) think that women can take an important role in discontinuing radicalism; Shajna is a good example of this. Rather than being silent to the risk of community conflict associated with political and religious extremism, she plays an active role as a potential influential advocate of anti-extremist actions, for example, by leading the awareness building process among the young Muslim group in the community and their families on issues related to the socialisation process of young children, who are at risk of being drawn into extremist activity. Thus, in the process of conflict resolution, Shajna not only plays a significant role as an 'activist and advocate for peace' (Schirch & Manjrika, 2005) but also contributes to building the capacity of her community to prevent political conflict.

9.4 Summary

As we have seen, women have a significant impact on community identity. The personal life experiences of individuals, which are generally not expressed and talked about in the political identity of a diaspora community, have emerged as influential factors in terms of gaining political consciousness. For instance, the notion of struggle for women to relocate abroad or live in a particular diaspora context and transnational space plays a critical role in enforcing the importance of not losing political consciousness and, therefore, forming individual and collective political identities. Drawing on their particular experiences and consciousness, women fight in the ethno-national space for the rights of other women who have been politically violated and for bringing justice to them; this is the environment created by women in community identity politics.

The gender dimension in political engagement and community identity has been identified as a more dynamic set of identities and continuities across cohorts, which is more cohesive and benign. Conflicts of male-based politics for space and access to resources in the community are approached by women in a peaceful manner. Women from different cohorts and different political backgrounds have been identified as showing their common interest in mobilizing, engaging and supporting women that hold different political standpoints. The intersection of religion, gender and politics has been identified as both powerful and challenging in relation to women's political identity formation. The role of women in political activism breaks the binary of self-determinism and Islamism to some degree, and shows the unconventional practice of

political harmony, strategic maintenance of transnational political links as well as reinforcement of generational linkage of ethno-nationalism. The role of collective cultural and religious festivals and the emergence of a commercialised 'Bangladeshi' identity would need further exploration in the identity construction of Bangladeshi people and communities based on intersectional categories (particularly gender, generation and class); even though the current argument has been identified, there is a significant rigidity among secular and religious developments in community politics in the context of space and ethno-national identity.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I draw on the issues that have emerged from the previous chapters. I focus on diversities among the Bangladeshi women in Britain, their changing family relations and developing agency through transnational and diaspora positioning, religious identity and practice, political participation and decision-making in the family and community, all in relation to local specificities concerning intersectional discourse in the Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK. These have been analysed using the participants' different and shared understandings of events, experiences, aspirations, ideas, opportunities, struggles, complexities and contributions in a diaspora context.

The main goal of this thesis was to examine the positioning and positionality of Bangladeshi women in London in relation to age, generation, socio-economic status and time of migration. This thesis has shown how their experiences and practices in a particular context change their positionality in a diaspora space.

By adopting a feminist ethnographic approach to research, this study has discussed and debated the family roles and relationships, women's agency across generation, subjectivity choice of identity, home and belonging, religion, and community identity politics in the positionality of fifty-six British Bangladeshi women in London.

10.1 Review

Chapter 4 has focused on the diversity and distinctiveness of the British Bangladeshi women's cohorts, which have been characterised by differences in the migration process, time and context of migration and diaspora space.

I have argued that the use of the term 'generation' in existing literature on the Bangladeshi diaspora in Britain is not desirable for various, compelling reasons. The term has been used to signify kinship or social generation, particularly in the work of Eade & Garbin (2001, 2002, 2005 and 2006) and Gardner (1993). While my exploration has revealed that using this general, simplified term would be inappropriate to study diaspora women, especially due to their diversity in relation to intersectional and contextual differences, which is revealed in my research on Bangladeshi women in

Britain, for example. My participants have been through distinctive experiences in their process of migration, most at different and particular stages of their life cycles, and in some cases, even women in the same age groups have had different contextual or transnational upbringing in the pre and post migration phases. Therefore, arguing that the term ‘generation’ is confounding, I have preferred to categorise my participants as members of particular ‘cohorts’ from an ethnographic perspective through intersecting their age, time of migration, and contextual upbringing. I have organised my cohorts into four categories:

The Pioneer Cohort migrated to the UK before or during the 60s until 80s as dependant migrants, playing a strong role as transnational wives, mostly in maintaining the transnational family even before their migration. They are the mothers of the Cooked in Britain or British-born Cohorts. The majority of the cohort migrated to the UK with low socio-economic and educational status from rural Sylhet after the 70s, through the process of family reunification in order to join their husbands’ working class families in the UK, who migrated a decade before as labourers. The contribution of the cohort through proper management of the household in the UK brought them success in terms of changing the socio-economic status of the family from working class to middle class. There is also a group of educated women within the cohort, who migrated from middle class backgrounds from the urban areas of Bangladesh, as dependants of skilled migrant husbands, although they are not significant in number.

Women who were brought up in the UK from the 70s to the 90s are the ‘Cooked in Britain cohort’. The cohort comprises participants of three different age groups: the group who migrated at under one year of age to two years old and therefore were completely brought up in the UK, a group who migrated between the ages of 5 and 12, which also means that their upbringing also happened in Britain, and another group who migrated as adolescents or teenagers at the ages of 15 or 16, so part of their socialization also occurred in the UK through schooling. Largely, this cohort migrated to the UK along with their mothers and siblings from the 70s to the 90s from rural Sylhet, to join their fathers who migrated a decade earlier, mostly as labourers. Here, the similarities between the Pioneer and the Cooked in Britain Cohorts are that they migrated together in the same time frame and have gone through the adjustment process in the same diaspora context.

Marriage is the one of the most significant elements between the two cohorts, which carries both similarities and differences. For example, while both of the cohorts are predominantly married to Bangladeshi based men, the Pioneer Cohort was married before migration, whilst the later one married after migration. The special feature of the Cooked in Britain Cohort is the common practice of transnational marriage, i.e. marrying transnational husbands and bringing them to the UK. This was previously not the case because it was the transnational wives who used to migrate to join their husbands as dependant migrants. Thus, the decades of the 70s and 80s in the migration history of the Bangladeshi diaspora in Britain were characterized by the feminization of migration, a process, which changed dramatically with the migration of transnational husbands during the 90s. Therefore, the first phase of family migration or chain migration was characterised by transnational brides or wives in the case of the Pioneer Cohort, and the second phase by transnational grooms or husbands in the case of the Cooked in Britain Cohort. Hence, the interrelation between the diaspora context and the changes in the patterns of transnational migration in the process of settlement and expansion of the diaspora community is significant because of the impact it has had in influencing diaspora community identity and giving it a non-static form.

I have explored that there is not only a difference between the Pioneer and the Cooked in Britain Cohorts, in relation to the practices of bringing transnational spouses to the UK and, thus, establishing a pattern between transnational migration and marriage, but also a significant difference is seen in terms of family transformation through divorce and remarriage. The Cooked in Britain Cohort can be seen as the pioneers in practising divorce and remarriage, while the Pioneer Cohort are completely reluctant to do this. The context of the ethno-culturalization process in the community is an influential factor in the socialization process of the Cooked in Britain Cohort.

Women who were born in the UK as children of the Pioneer Cohort or the Cooked in Britain Cohort (mostly after the 90s) are considered the 'British-born Cohort'. A significant feature of the cohort is that a large part of them are directly or indirectly connected to the East London Masjid Women's network. Here, religion is seen as an influential intersectional category in the formation of the identity of the cohort, which leads to them having a unique and more united set of identity, compared to the process of identity formation by any of the other cohorts. However, there is also a group within the cohort who are trying to amalgamate with mainstream British society, rather than holding a United Global Muslim identity. The British-born Cohort has a wider range of

life experiences compared to any other cohorts. Since they now have the privilege of living within an established Bangladeshi community and British multicultural society, of being raised in families with better socio-economic status, compared to the time and context when the Pioneer and the Cooked in Britain Cohorts had to struggle with the low-socio economic or working class status of the families, of having freedom at home in terms of making their own decisions about their education, marriage, re-marriage and employment, they are more integrated into mainstream society. Unlike the Pioneer and the Cooked in Britain Cohorts, the British-born Cohort have discontinued the transnational marriage system and, therefore, members of the cohort are marrying British-born Bangladeshi men or men who are British citizens or native British men. Thus, the process of transnational connection through marriage is seen as declining through the British-born Cohort.

Women who came after 2000 at a mature stage of life (by the term 'mature stage', I mean in their 20s and 30s) are classified in my research as the 'New-migrant Cohort'. They are the group of women who have been migrating since 2000 for various reasons, .e.g due to the impact of globalization and the process of urbanization of Bangladesh. This impact and changing process started a different flow of migration by producing a large number of urban-based educated and skilled women migrants in Britain with different socio-economic and class backgrounds, challenging the previous class-based (working class), and geography-based (migration from Sylhet region to London) chain migration process. The New-migrant Cohort is diverse in terms of marriage practice. Many of them migrated after marriage through the process of transnational migration but not by transnational marriage, and some of them with short-term visas got married after migration, to native or EU citizens, as a strategy of settlement. The latter practice shows how marriage after migration in a diaspora space can be influential and empowering for the New-migrant Cohort in their diaspora positioning.

By analysing these cohorts I have focused on the diverse nature of the Bangladeshi women and the significance of their diverse experiences in the formation of diaspora identity, I have argued that the distinctiveness of Bangladeshi women in Britain in relation to intersectional categories and contextual differences should be taken into account in the scholarship of diaspora identity and women's positioning within it.

Chapter 5 has focused upon the status of British Bangladeshi women in relation to their changing family positions. I have explored how translocational context impacts

differently on newly and older Bangladeshi migrant women and Bangladeshi women that were either born or brought up in the UK. The changing contexts of Bangladesh and Britain in relation to social structure and gender positioning led diaspora women of different cohorts to have different understandings and experiences of diaspora life, in terms of the migration process, practices, family and social relations and responsibilities, traditional culture and religious practices, and so on. I have shown how the women of the four cohorts studied have successfully positioned themselves in the diaspora context as change makers by taking on challenges in order to adjust to a new context and new settings, by engaging in intersectional discourse and/or adjusting to diaspora elements within the family and community.

I have described their dissimilar life experiences by focusing on ‘marriage’ and ‘married life after migration’ as the most changing life stages in the course of their lives. I have shown how transnational marriage and its changing form in relation to the diaspora context act as influential elements on diaspora women’s family and social positioning.

The way the Pioneer Cohort tried regenerating their role in new settings, after marriage and migration, indicates that both marriage and migration encompass a repositioning of place and space. Although the role of the Pioneer Cohort in relation to arranged or forced marriage in the case of their daughters from the Cooked in Britain Cohort is identified as submissive and insignificant, the experience of marriage and its impact on their life course and that of their Cooked in Britain daughters led them to support their British-born daughters in changing the traditional and rigid custom of arranged marriage and/or forced marriage.

By practising an unusual marriage system, followed by the bride’s consent, for example entering into an arranged marriage agreement with a transnational husband over the phone, a number of Cooked in Britain women have impacted change not only in the Bangladeshi marriage culture, but also on the migration pattern, through discontinuing the process of feminization of migration. By marrying Bangladeshi-based men of their own accord, a group of the Cooked in Britain Cohort are now experiencing more power, in complete contrast to those who experienced forced marriage. Hence, the freedom to choose one’s partner has been seen as having a huge changing effect in the life cycle of the cohort. The shifting family migration was shaped by marriage in both Bangladesh and Britain; wider cultural linkages and values were formed transnationally through the British Bangladeshi wives. The role of the transnational husbands who later joined their

wives in the UK (mostly the Cooked in Britain Cohort) breaks the traditional gender roles and reveals the dynamics of family in the diaspora space.

The British-born Cohort, and the newlywed New-migrant Cohort, who have recently migrated to the UK as dependant migrants of their respective husbands, have better educational qualifications and professional skills and, therefore, are able to maintain a non-hierarchical relationship in the family. By accepting migration with its multiple responsibilities and playing multiple roles, including decision making roles in their family as demanded by context, they break the rigidity of traditional gendered roles and relations, and establish themselves as transformative agents in the migration process. This new form of role of transformative agents reduces the division between 'home' and 'abroad', which certainly changes their positioning in the family and community. Although, the idea of triple role burden is significant in the present context, they consider these multiple roles to bring a positive impact in their personal and public life, by enhancing social class and status.

I have explored that the shifting gender role practice is well accepted by the Cooked in Britain and the British-born Cohorts who went through unhappy family relations and divorce. The denial of the traditional image of wifhood and the rejection of male domination in the relationship through divorce reveal their strong feminist characteristics and changing positionality in the diaspora context, when compared to the context of their displacement.

I have shown how the experiences of women in relation to their positioning in transnational contexts unfold their strong subjective position in context. Similar to the Pioneer Cohort, the struggles of migration (pre-, during and post) of the New-migrant Cohort reveal that these phases equally carry distinct recompenses with regard to greater freedom and responsibilities. Presently, migration in context is a powerful process of changing identity or positionality for the New-migrant Cohort, who have better education and skills. The struggles of re-entering professional life after migration and creating an individual space within the established Sylheti community are now more challenging to the cohort than the initial adjustment process. In the shifting process of diaspora identity, the New-migrant Cohort has reformed the ideas of coping mechanisms and women's agency. Rather than solely being a caregiver support system for the family, members of the New-migrant Cohort make their own positionality by taking on the challenges of uncertainty of settlement, enhancing their knowledge and

skills through higher education and training, and expanding their roles in the broader host community. By adopting mainstream culture, developing their own ground within it and amalgamating it with ethnic culture, the cohort are successful in defining their strong cognitive autonomous self in relation to their positionality in diaspora space. In terms of maintaining transnational connections, they have their own, new version, such as giving intellectual support as a means of establishing a powerful transnational connection.

I have shown that by marrying Bangladeshi-based husbands, the Cooked in Britain Cohort has succeeded in deconstructing the stereotypical gender relations embodied by the Pioneer Cohort, who migrated as transnational wives. This form of marriage practice by diaspora women is seen as influential in the development of transnational identities because of the significant role these women play in the family, community and society and their role in developing non-hierarchical, strong, long distance ties. It is also advantageous for the cohort in terms of gaining access to political, economic and cognitive empowerment in their country of origin, as well as country of settlement.

In Chapter 6, I have discussed how the British Bangladeshi women of different cohorts challenge the patriarchal image of migrant women as submissive by making their own choices, controlling transnational and diaspora life and ensuring positive ‘refigurations of individual identity’ (Meyers 2002) in internalising who they really are.

I have discussed how the migrant women establish strong transnational ties through providing emotional and moral support to family and relatives in Bangladesh and by playing a significant role in decision-making, regardless of initial adjustment challenges. The adaptation strategies of the Pioneer Cohort, in terms of maintaining transnational links, reconstructing home within the family and expanding it in the community have been profound, as they have been able to influence or transfer these to subsequent generations within the families and in the identity formation process of the community. I have shown how this further affects the developing relationship between old and young generations in the transnational space. By sharing hundreds stories of their lives back home, and their ethnic language with the next generation, they have given a self-reflection of themselves and appeared as transformers of a collective sense of cultural identity while promoting contextual specificities at the same time.

I have shown that the Pioneer Cohort were successful in the process of transferring ethno-cultural values to their children, the Cooked in Britain Cohort, who were socialized with the same ethnic and religio-cultural morals. Although the latter cohort now try to uphold their culture of origin by practising these values, they have failed to connect their children (the British-born Cohort) to it, since the British-born Cohort have undergone a double tier socialization process, ethnic and western. I have shown how these generational differences and the relationships among generations within the same family in relation to a changing diaspora context influence diaspora women to have different pattern positioning in the family.

I have shown that the experience of transnational relations creates both opportunities and struggles in which women can reconceive their positionality in context. Hence, the notions of family, home and belonging have been redefined by the process of transnational connection. The technology based transnational link fails to continue the chain of give and take process characterised by exchange of goods and people, or frequent visiting. However, it has had a positive impact on diaspora women, and their families and relatives back home, bringing both groups closer than before through frequent, but intangible communication.

In Chapter 7, I have discussed how subjectivity and identity are mutually influenced, making them more fluid in diaspora and transnational contexts. By breaking the certainty in the account of diaspora identity, the four cohorts challenge the idea of accreditation of diaspora identity. They describe their individual identity as contextual, multidimensional, and changing through everyday life experiences, such that the assigned collective identities of 'British' or 'British Bangladeshi' fail to dominate self-identity.

I have shown how the idea of 'home' as 'janus-faced' has been reconceptualised by the intersection of gender and transnational space. The nature of home as fluid rather than static in diaspora space has been explored through the intersection of gender, place and life course in the transnational space. For example, the material conditions, the significance of kinship, strong ties with family back home, adaptability and adjustment with present context and changing social relations, practices and identities in transnational fields, all act as influential factors in developing the idea of home in the case of the four cohorts.

In Chapter 8, I have explored how the age, class, migrant status and context of the four cohorts influence their religious identity and practice and how the intersection of ‘Bengali’, ‘Western’ and ‘Global Islamic’ cultures impact on the positioning and positionality of the cohorts in different contexts. I have shown that the intersection of roots, subjective positioning and the place a migrant belongs to is an influential factor in developing the sense of religious identity of different cohorts.

I have explained how Islamic representations of collective Muslim identity, formed through faith-based organisations, have been considered by a group of women (mainly the British-born and a few of the Cooked in Britain and New-migrant Cohorts) as a powerful identity. This form of politically conscious empowering Islamic identity helps women create their own space in the community, opens up scope to confront the superficial representations of Muslim women as oppressed and powerless by the gendered, classed, and racialised explanations of outsiders, and empowers them cognitively, economically and politically in the diaspora space. I have explained how religion has been acknowledged by them as an encouraging marker of identities, over ethnicity or citizenship.

By ideologically alienating themselves from their parents who belong to the Pioneer Cohort or the Cooked in Britain Cohort, a majority of the British-born Cohort make their own choices, emphasizing their own agency in defining their subjectivity with clear, coherent and confident terms in favour of ‘Muslim’ identity. I have discussed how their dress code (‘long covering western dress’ or clothes worn in a combination of ‘Asian-Islamic’ and ‘western’ styles, which is appreciated as covering and decent) has been identified as very crucial in the identity representation of women from different backgrounds and age cohorts, who are conscious of their autonomy and representation of a collective Muslim identity. I have argued that the significance of a dress code in terms of Muslim identity has been challenged by the educational, socio-economic and socio-cultural background differences of the cohorts in the transnational and diaspora contexts, although the dress-code in the case of the women who represent the Global Muslim *ummah* has been seen as a powerful tool to achieve empowerment in the community.

By avoiding the clash between ethnic and Islamic, the Pioneer Cohort defines identity as very much contextual rather than static. Unlike the women representing the Global Muslim *ummah*, most of the Pioneer, Cooked in Britain and New-migrant Cohorts

strongly represent a non-political and flexible Muslim identity. However, the four different cohorts share a commonality in their belief in Islam, which is constant and benign.

Although for many of the Pioneer Cohort transmission of religion in a diaspora context is a continuity of belief in certain traditional religious ideals, the New-migrant and the Cooked in Britain Cohorts take it as a strategy or a specific demand of a particular context.

There is a disposition to differentiate culture, particularly ethnic culture from religion in daily life practice amongst the women of the different cohorts who consider themselves as British Bangladeshi/ British Bengali or British Bangladeshi Muslim. On the other hand, women who are more inclined to identify themselves as members of a Global Muslim *ummah* (mainly the British-born Cohort) configure religion and culture in their personal and community lives. Sometimes the British-born Cohort offer their own definition of culture by combining western, Islamic and ethnic features and arguing that they do not conflict with each other.

In some cases common ground on the matter is found between the secularist Cooked in Britain and the Islamist British-born Cohorts through celebrating ethno-Islamic marriage and rituals within family units, which reveals that the process of culturing religion in a diaspora context is changeable rather than dogmatic.

The practices of culture and religion of the New-migrant Cohort are influenced by the changes of place and context, day to day living, socio-economic background before and after migration and the relationship with the family and the community. The ethno-religious culture is well accepted by the Cooked in Britain Cohort, since the religious identity they share differs greatly from radical Islam and is considered by them a positive feature for their easier integration in multicultural Britain. I have shown that it is not only the group of women who were either born or brought up in the UK that practise cultural blending, but also the very New-migrant Cohort is now adopting the diaspora hybrid culture (combination of traditional religious culture and mainstream western culture) in the process of dealing with the migration and diaspora context.

In Chapter 9, I have explored how daily and personal life experiences, particularly the struggles women go through as they attempt to relocate abroad or live in a particular diaspora context and transnational space, are embedded in their internalisation of

political consciousness. This political consciousness leads them to engage in community identity formation by creating individual and collective political identities.

I have shown how the sense of community identity of the four different cohorts has been formed through the intersection of origins, their subjective position and the place they belong to. I have shown that the dynamics of women's roles in terms of transnational politics have generally been based on the differences among the cohorts and their pre- and post-migration context. For many of them, political identity is formed by practising transnationalism actively and dynamically, while some of them shape their form of community identity politics through prioritising the context they belong to.

The Pioneer Cohort has made both direct and indirect contributions to the creation of a basis for ethno-nationalist politics in the community, succeeding in striking a balance between Bengali nationalist and secular politics with the Muslim identity. I have analysed how the political positioning of the Pioneer Cohort on ethno-nationalist ground engendered women's political empowerment in the community, starting with the private/ family life and penetrating the public domain. In addition, I have drawn attention to the lack of representation of the Pioneer Cohort in the history and the formation of community identity in the UK.

The Cooked in Britain Cohort pursues both mainstream British and trans-local politics, but not to the same extent. By not exposing their involvement in trans-local politics and social welfare activities in Bangladesh, they strategically present themselves as neutral to all political groups in the community, and show the primacy of local British politics.

A large group of the British born cohort practise 'Islamism' as a symbol of power, a united and homogenous identity- the 'Muslim' identity- is a product of their unflinching struggle within the societal dynamic of assimilation vs. segregation. This powerful coherent identity leads them to get involved in institution based Islamist politics and create a platform in the community space, in which they can apply their political ideologies. They focus more on community or grass roots level integration through religious and welfare initiatives and activities, and take a stand against discrimination and prejudice, the by-product of which is strengthening and opening up of more positions in the decision making process at the local level, as well as in private.

I have shown that the New-migrant Cohort is dynamic in intersecting the ethno-nationalist movement with the feminist movement in the space of transnational politics.

I have presented ethnographic evidence that shows how women of different cohorts play significant roles in ethno-nationalist, mainstream and Islamist politics. Furthermore, I have illustrated the diverse roles, reactions and means of protest of the four different cohorts on the movement demanding trial of war criminals in Bangladesh, and I have also looked at some of the collective efforts among certain groups in the cohorts. I have focused on the *Birangona* (war women) campaign particularly led by the New-migrant Cohort, in both the UK and Bangladesh, with extensive ethnographic details. I have demonstrated that this kind of movement and campaign brought the ideas of secularism/‘ethno-nationalism’, ‘racism’, ‘Islamism’ and ‘feminism’ into the community identity and politics. I have revealed how the campaign succeeded in creating a bridge between grassroots politics and policy level in the transnational space, forming a connection among the cohorts by uniting them to stand up for women’s rights and making it a national and transnational political demand. This denotes women’s socio-political power positioning through political mobilization and leadership in the transnational, national and trans-local space, which transcends the binary discourse of secularism vs. Islamism. Moreover, I have illustrated how women make effective use of social media and technology, in particular so-called ‘smart phones’, to gain unprecedented popular support in terms of mobilizing ethno-national values through the transformation of a national discourse into a transnational one, and by forming transnational movements and campaigns according to contextual demand. I have argued that the ideas that shape the organisation of the movement against war criminals are transnationally connected, but contextually unconventional; the movement spreads through the concurrent processes of encounter and association between different political views.

I have illustrated how the intersection of religion, gender and politics is both powerful and challenging in relation to women’s political identity formation, and how the women who are involved in institutional based religious politics create unity and space on a structural basis and apply a bottom-up approach to engage grassroots community women in the awareness raising process in relation to political and religious conflict.

The gender dimension in community identity politics reflects a more cohesive, benign and dynamic set of identities and continuities. I have argued that these women break the oppositional binary of secularism and Islamism, by practising an unconventional way of political harmonization, by maintaining strategic transnational political links, and strengthening the generational linkage of ethno-nationalism through their dynamic form

of political activism. I have shown how the different aspirations and interests of the participants feature in the cohesion of the community through building relationships by focusing on multiculturalism, ensuring co-existence of different values on one platform, and applying unconventional harmonious approaches that support different groups of the community. They focus on reciprocally satisfactory situations that reconcile the polarity between the secularists and Islamists in the community and enable gender-awareness and women's empowerment on the political, social, and economic planes and human rights.

10.2 Main findings

The main argument of this research is that the British Bangladeshi women of different age groups in London play dynamic, complex and multifaceted roles by transforming themselves in accordance with changing diaspora and transnational contexts, which are empowering in relation to the positionality of Bangladeshi women in Britain. Their positionality, which I call 'contextual identity', challenges the stereotyped and essentialized notion of ethnic diaspora women as passive, dependents and marginalized.

In Chapter 4, I discussed the term 'generation', which has been used in existing literature on diaspora and migration, is confusing and inappropriate to address the diversity of diaspora people in relation to their intersectional and contextual differences. Hence, a significant finding is that using 'cohort' can be an appropriate way to avoid generalizing diasporan, and address diversity among them and the different contexts in which they are situated. For example, I have categorised my participants into four cohorts and they are significantly different from each other based on their intersectional and contextual differences such as age, time of migration, and contextual upbringing. To recapitulate, I have termed them as follows: the Pioneer Cohort, the Cooked in Britain Cohort, the British-born Cohort and the New-migrant Cohort.

As I showed in Chapter 1 that to examine the positioning and positionality of diaspora women in diaspora and transnational space, I have drawn attention to five key areas that emerged over the course of the research and formed the basis of the six empirical chapters: : a) **marriage, changing family roles in relation to diaspora positioning of women;** b) **generational transferal of ethnic cultural values and practices, and changing transnational link in relation to transnational positioning of women;** c)

perceptions of home, belonging and diaspora identity; d) religion in individuals' and collective lives and e) women's role in community identity and politics.

Here are my specific findings under these five areas:

- a) I have argued that the intersection of marriage, migration, time, transnational and diaspora context influences the transnational positioning of women of the four cohorts and their changing family roles within structural, social, and cultural contexts. Within the process they become dynamic and initiate change by taking on the challenges of a diaspora context, forming reversed gender roles at home, discontinuing feminization of migration by bringing trans-national husbands, confronting patriarchy and breaking the traditional forced marriage system in their community.
- b) My study reveals that the diaspora space in accordance with time and context creates both opportunities and struggles for the British Bangladeshi women of different cohorts. They challenge the patriarchal image of migrant women as 'submissive' and reconceive their positionality as an 'empowered self' by taking control of their diaspora life and transferring this experience to subsequent generations. They are successful in developing and maintaining long distance but strong ties with their family and relatives in Bangladesh, in which they give moral and emotional support, and play a decision-making role with the help of technological based transnational link.
- c) I have argued that the identity of women of the four cohorts is influenced by their subjectivity and vice-versa. In this process, they challenge the assigned collective identities of 'British' or 'British Bangladeshi' by identifying their individual identity as contextual, multidimensional, and changing through everyday life experiences. I have revealed that the intersection of gender, place and life course in diaspora and transnational space influences the nature of home as fluid rather than static.
- d) I have found that the practices of culture and religion of the four cohorts are encouraged by changes of place and context, day to day living, socio-economic background before and after migration and the relationship with the family and the community. The four cohorts have been seen as divided into two groups in terms of beliefs. One group, who consider themselves as British Bangladeshi/ British

Bengali or British Bangladeshi Muslim, think that culture and religion each have their individual principles and paths, and should not be amalgamated. Therefore this group try their best to place both ideologies in their life in a balanced and peaceful manner. On the other hand, the other group, who are motivated to the ideology of the Global Muslim *ummah* (mainly the British-born Cohort) align religion and culture in their personal and community lives. A significant number of the British-born Cohort practise culture in their own way, in which western, Islamic and ethnic features are intermingled, and not contradictory. My study has revealed that a politically conscious collective Muslim identity that has been formed through community religious organisations is very powerful in the way it empowers members of the group cognitively, economically and politically in the community and mainstream British society. It encourages and supports Muslim women to come out, create their own space in the community, and challenge the marginal portrayals of Muslim women as immobilized by the gendered, classed, and racialised explanations of outsiders.

- e) I have argued that the daily and personal life experiences of diaspora women in a particular diaspora context and transnational space act as motivators in gaining political consciousness and engaging in community identity politics. By presenting ethnographic evidence I have argued that the roles of women of different cohorts in ethno-nationalist, mainstream and Islamist politics are dynamic, diverse and remarkable.

I have argued that the women in the Pioneer Cohort have made both direct and indirect contributions to the creation of a basis for ethno-nationalist politics in the community. I have brought attention to the lack of portrayal of 'the women in my Pioneer Cohort' in the history and the formation of community identity in the UK.

I have shown that the intersection of religion, gender and politics has both powerful and challenging outcomes on women's political identity formation. For example, a significant number of women in the Cooked in Britain and British-born Cohorts, who are involved in institutional based religious politics, develop sisterhood, unity and reciprocity among the Muslim women irrespective of age, class, race, and nationality by making a community space for themselves and apply a bottom-up approach to support grass-roots level unification through religious and welfare initiatives, and awareness-raising activities. They confront injustice and prejudice, which is challenging for them

as they work from the platform of a religious women's group in the male-centred community.

The role of the New-migrant Cohort in the *Birangona* (war women) campaign shows their dynamism and uniqueness in many ways. It intersects ethno-nationalist movement with the feminist movement in a transnational political context, and denotes women's socio-political power positioning through political mobilization and leadership in the transnational, national and trans-local space, transcending the discourse of binary opposition of secularism vs. Islamism. It makes a connection between grassroots politics and policy level in the transnational space; and it creates a link among the four cohorts by bringing them together to stand up for women's rights, making this a national and transnational political demand.

Gender dimension in community identity politics reflects a cohesive, benign and dynamic set of identities and continuities. For example, the women of the four cohorts break the oppositional binary of secularism and Islamism, by focusing on reciprocally satisfactory situations that reconcile the polarity between the secularist and Islamist in the community and enable gender-awareness and women's empowerment. Similarly, they challenge the oppositional dualism in the process of maintaining strategic transnational and trans-local political connection, and strengthening the generational linkage of ethno-nationalism.

10.3 Final thoughts and suggestions for further research

Theoretically this research has examined that the identity processes in a diaspora space are simultaneously but not equally engaged in mobilizing diaspora women's subject positions. The research has revealed that the complex nature of positionality faced by diaspora women in the intersection of multiple identity locations cause them to experience marginalization in a particular diaspora context. However, their lived experiences inside a 'translocational positionality' (Anthias, 2002, 2008) allow them to exercise agency in different diaspora and transnational contextual spaces. This example suggests a way to avoid normalizing and essentializing diaspora women as 'submissive'. For example in my research, the old migrant housewives who have low socio-economic and educational status experience exclusion and deprivation in the community and mainstream British society; however, they are privileged by being

British citizens in transnational space. Hence, the positionality they take on as ‘British citizens’ challenge the essentialist notion of ‘ethnic women’ as ‘minority’.

The New-migrant Cohort share common practice with the Pioneer Cohort in terms of migration but have different experiences in terms of time and context of migration. Similarly, many of them have common characteristics with the British-born Cohort in terms of age, but have different experiences in terms of cultural and religious practices. The complex nature of their positionality in a diaspora political and cultural context works differently from that of than other cohorts and enables them to set up unique values and perspectives in a transnational political context.

An important contribution of this research is identifying the term ‘generation’ as problematic in addressing and categorizing diaspora people in relation to their intersectional differences, and use of the term cohort in its place. Another contribution that the thesis makes is in disclosing diaspora women’s positioning, in particular in highlighting their dynamic roles in changing diaspora and transnational family contexts and community identity formation. The study in this PhD thesis is therefore expected not to be the final word on these areas but to encourage further research, either by focusing on the recommended areas in this research or by studying where the outcomes are relevant in other contexts. For example, with regard to the intersectional identity of working class Muslim women of different generations it would be fascinating to explore the ways in which class differences intersect with ‘Muslim’ and ‘generation’ categories. It would be interesting to find out the ways working class Muslim women of different generations apply negotiating mechanisms to challenge the intersection of racism, patriarchy and western discourse of unethical Islam. Another significant area for further research would be the role of collective cultural and religious festivals and the emergence of a commercialised ‘Bangladeshi’ identity in the identity construction of Bangladeshi people and communities based on intersectional categories (particularly gender, generation and class).

References

- Abu-Lughod, L. (1988) Fieldwork of a dutiful daughter. In Altorki, S. & El-Solh, C. F. (eds) *Arab women in the field: studying your own society*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 139–161.
- Abu-Lughod, L. (1991) Writing against culture. In Fox, R. G. (ed) *Recapturing anthropology: working in the present*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 137–62.
- Abu-Lughod, L. (2006) Writing against culture. In Lewin, E. (ed) *Feminist anthropology: a reader*. Oxford and Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 153–169.
- Adams, C. (1987) *Across seven seas and thirteen rivers: life stories of pioneer Sylheti settlers in Britain*. London: Thap.
- Afshar, H. (1985) Women, state and ideology in Iran. *Third World Quarterly*, 7(2), 256–278.
- Afshar, H., Franks, M., & Rob, A. (2005) Feminisms, Islamophobia and identities. *Political studies*, 53, 262–283.
- Ahmed, F. (2007) Muslim women's experience in Britain. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 24(3), 55–65.
- Ahmed, N. (2005) Women in between: the case of Bangladeshi women living in London, In Thapan, M. (ed) *Transnational migration and the politics of identity. Women and Migration in Asia*, (1), New Delhi: Sage, 99–127.
- Ahmed, N. (2005a) Tower Hamlets: insulation in isolation. In Abbas, T. (ed) *Muslim Britain: communities under pressure*. London: Zed Books, 194–207.
- Ahmed, S. (1999) Home and away: narratives of migration and estrangement. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2 (3), 329–347.
- Al-Ali, N. (2000) *Secularism, gender and the state in the Middle-East: the Egyptian women's movement*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Al-Hindi, K. F. & Kawabata, H. (2002) Toward a more fully reflexive feminist geography. In Moss, P. (ed) *Feminist geography in practice: research and methods*. Oxford: Blackwell, 103–115.
- Alexander, C. (2006) Imagining the politics of BrAsian youth. In Ali, N., Kalra, V. S. & Sayyid, S. (eds) *A postcolonial people: South Asians in Britain*. London: Hurst & Company, 258–271.

- Alexander, C. (2013) Marriage, migration, multiculturalism: gendering 'the Bengal diaspora'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39(3), 333-351.
- Ali, M. (2004) *Brick Lane*. New York: Scribner.
- Ali, S. (2005) Why here, why now? Young Muslim women wearing hijab. *The Muslim World*, 95(4), 515-530.
- Ali, S. (2008) *Second and third generation Muslims in Britain: a socially excluded group? Identities, integration and community cohesion* [online]. England: Oxford University, 1-34. Available online: <http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/~hos/papers/Sundas%20Ali.pdf> [Accessed 18 /4/2016].
- Altorki, S. (1988) At home in the field. In Altorki, S. & El-Solh, C. F. (eds) *Arab women in the field: studying your own society*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 49–66.
- Ansari, H. (2004) *The Infidel within*. London: Hurst and Company.
- Anthias, F. (1998a) Rethinking social divisions: some notes towards a theoretical framework. *Sociological Review*, 46 (3), 506-535.
- Anthias F. (2002) Where do I belong? Narrating collective identity and translocational positionality. *Ethnicities*, 2, 491–514.
- Anthias, F. (2008) Thinking through the lens of translocational positionality: an intersectionality frame for understanding identity and belonging. *Translocations, Migration and Change*, 4(1), 5–20.
- Anthias, F. (2012) Transnational mobilities, migration research and intersectionality: towards a translocational frame. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 2 (2), 102-110.
- Anthias, F. (2013) Intersectional what? Social divisions, intersectionality and levels of analysis. *Ethnicities*, 13, 3-19.
- Anthias, F. & Yuval Davis, N. (1983) Contextualising feminism - ethnic gender and class divisions. *Feminist Review*, 15, 62–75.
- Anthias, F. & Yuval-Davis, N. (1989) Introduction. In Yuval-Davis, N. & Anthias, F. (eds) *Woman, nation, state*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1–16.
- Anthias, F. & Yuval-Davis, N. (1992) *Racialized boundaries: race, nation, gender, colour and class and the anti-racist struggle*. London: Routledge.
- Anwar, M. (1979) *The myth of return*. London: Heineman.
- Appadurai, A. (1996) *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Ballard, R. (ed) (1994) Introduction: the emergence of desh pardesh. In *Desh pardesh: the South Asian presence in Britain*. UK: Hurst and Co, 1-34.
- Bammer, A. (1992) Editorial. *New Formations* (17) , vii-xi.
- Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N., & Szanton-Blanc, C. (1994) *Nations unbound: transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments and deterritorialized nation-states*. New York: Gordon and Breach.
- Barot, R., Bradley, H., & Fenton, S. (1999) *Ethnicity, gender and social change*. London: Macmillan.
- Barrett, M., Eade, J., Cinnirella, M. & Garbin, D. (2006) *New ethnicities among British Bangladeshi and mixed-heritage youth*. Surrey: Leverhulme Trust.
- Barry, T. & Carrington, B. (2012) *Education, racism, and reform*. London: Routledge, 30.
- Barry, T. & Carrington, B. (1990) *Education, racism, and reform*. London: Routledge, 30.
- BBC. (2005) Bangladeshi London from Sylhet to London, find out how the Bangladeshi community has made its mark on the capital. Do you know where Bangla Town is? *BBC London: Faith- Bangladeshi London*. 8th May. Available online:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/articles/2005/05/27/bangladeshi_london_feature.shtml [Accessed 5/6/2017].
- Begum, H. & Eade, J. (2005) All quiet on the Eastern front? Bangladeshi reactions in Tower Hamlets. In Abbas, T. (ed) *Muslim Britain communities under pressure*. London: Zed Press, 179-192.
- Begum, H. (2008) Geographies of inclusion/exclusion: British Muslim women in the East End of London. *Sociological Research Online*. 13 (5). Available online:
<http://www.scoresonline.org.uk.13/15/10.html> [Accessed 3/2/2016].
- Behar, R. (1996) *The vulnerable observer: anthropology that breaks your heart*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Bengtson, V. L. & Allen, K. R. (1993) The life course perspective applied to families over time. In Boss, P., Doherty, W., Larossa, R., Schumm, W. & Steinmetz, S. (eds) *Sourcebook of family theories and methods: a contextual approach*. New York: Plenum, 469-504.
- Benkin, L. R. (2015) Ethnic cleansing: the neglected case of the Hindus of Bangladesh. In Sunil, K. (ed) *State, society and minorities in South and Southeast Asia*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 80.
- Berthoud, R. (2001) Family formation in multi-cultural Britain: three patterns of diversity. *ISER conference on changing family patterns in multi-cultural Britain*, University of Bath, November 20, 2001, 1-26. Available online:

<https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/publications/working-papers/iser/2000-34.pdf> [Accessed 26/5/ 2017].

- Berthoud, R. (2005) Family formation in multi-cultural Britain: diversity and change. In Loury, G.C., Modood, T. & Teles, S. M. (eds) *Ethnicity, social mobility and public policy: comparing the US and the UK*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 222-252.
- Bettie, J. (2003) *Women without class: girls, race and identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bettie, J. (2014) *Women without class: girls, race and identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bhabha, H.K. (1994) *The location of culture*. London: Routledge .
- Boserup, E. (1982) Introduction. In Abdullah, T. & Zeiden, S. (eds) *Village women of Bangladesh*. London: Pergamon Press, vii.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bowlby, S., Gregory, S. & McKie, L. (1997) Doing home: patriarchy, caring, and space. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 20 (3), 343–350.
- Bowling, B. (1998) *Violent racism: victimization, policing, and social context*. Oxford, New York : Oxford University Press.
- Brah, A. (1996) *Cartographies of diaspora: contested identities*. London: Routledge.
- Brah, A. & Phoenix, A. (2004) 'Ain't I a woman': revisiting intersectionality. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 5(3), 75-86.
- Brewer, J. (2000) *Ethnography*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Brown, W. (1997) The impossibility of women's studies. *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 9(3), 79–101.
- Bryman, A. (ed) (2008) Ethnography and participant observation. In *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 400-434.
- Buch, E. D. & Staller, K. M. (2007) The feminist practice of ethnography. In HesseBiber, S.N. & Leavy, P. L. (eds) *Feminist research practice: a primer*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 187-221.
- Buch, E.D. & Staller, K.M. (2014) What is feminist ethnography? In HesseBiber, S.N. (ed) *Feminist research practice: a primer*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 107-144.
- Cain, M. T. (1977) The economic activities of children in a village in Bangladesh. *Population and Development Review*, 3(3), 201-227.

- Cain, M., Khanam, S.R. & Nahar, S. (1979) Class, patriarchy, and women's work in Bangladesh. *Population and Development Review*, 5(3), 405-438.
- Carey, S. & Shukur, A. (1985) A profile of the Bangladeshi community in East London. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 12(3), 405-417.
- Carpiano, R. M. (2009) Come take a walk with me: the 'go-along' interview as a novel method for studying the implications of place for health and well-being. *Health and Place*, 15.
- Carstathis, A. (2014) The concept of intersectionality in feminist theory. *Philosophy Compass*, 9, 304 – 314.
- Charon, M. (1986) *Sociology: a conceptual approach*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Charsley K. & Shaw, A. (2006) South Asian transnational marriages in comparative perspective. *Global Networks*, 6 (4), 331–344.
- Choudhury, Y. (1993) *The roots and tales of Bangladeshi settlers*. Birmingham: Sylhet Social History Group.
- Choudhury, Y. (1995) *Sons of the soil*. Birmingham: Sylhet Social History group.
- Clifford, J. (1986) Introduction: partial truth. In Clifford, J. & Marcus, G. E. (eds) *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1 -26.
- Coffey, A. & Atkinson, P. (1996) *Making sense of qualitative data*. London, Sage.
- Cohen, R. (1996) Diasporas and the nation-state: from victims to challengers. *International Affairs*, 72, 507-520.
- Cohen, R. (1998) Cultural diasporas: the Caribbean case. In Chamberlain, M. (ed) *Caribbean migration: globalised identities*. London: Routledge, 21–35.
- Collins, P. H. (1989) The social construction of black feminist thought. *Signs*, 14, 745-773.
- Collins, P. H. (1990) *Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Collins, P. H. (1991) *Black feminist thought*. New York: Routledge.
- Collins, P. H. (1998) *Fighting words: black women and the search for justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- Combahee River Collective (1977) *The combahee river collective statement* [online]. Available online: <http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html> [Accessed 18/3/2016].

- Commarroff, J. & Commarroff, I. (1991) *Revelation and revolution: Christianity, colonialism and consciousness in South Africa*, 1. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press.
- Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh* (1972) Part II, Fundamental principles of state policy. Dhaka: Govt. of Bangladesh.
- Craven, C. & Davis, D. A. (2013) *Feminist activist ethnography: counterpoints to neoliberalism in North America*. New York: Lexington Books.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989) Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139-167.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991) Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity policies, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.
- Dale, A., Shaheen, N., Kalra, V. & Fieldhouse, E. (2010) *Routes into education and employment for young Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in the UK*. Occasional Paper 19, Available online: <http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/publications/occasion/Occ19.pdf> [Accessed 15/6/2013].
- Davies, C. A. (1999) *Reflexive ethnography: a guide to researching selves and others*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Davis, K. (2008) Intersectionality as buzzword: a sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist Theory*, 9, 67-85.
- De Welde, K. (2003) Getting physical subverting gender through self-defense. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 32(3), 247-278.
- Dench, G. Gavron, K & Young, M. (2006) *The new East End: kinship, race and conflict*. London: Profile Books.
- DeWalt, K. M. & DeWalt, B. R. (2002) *Participant observation : a guide for fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek, Calif., Oxford: AltaMira Press.
- Dhamoon, R. K. (2011) Considerations on mainstreaming intersectionality. *Political Research Quarterly*, 64(1), 230-243.
- Dikomitis, L. (2012) *Cyprus and its places of desire: cultures of displacement among Greek and Turkish Cypriot refugees*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Doty, R.L. (2003) *Anti-immigrationism in Western democracies: statecraft, desire, and the politics of exclusion*. London: Routledge.
- Douglas, M. (1991) The idea of a home: a kind of space. *Social Research*, 58 (1), 287–307.
- Dovey, K. (1985) Homes and homelessness. In Altman, I. & Werner, C. M. (eds) *Home environments*. New York: Plenum Press, 33-64.

- Duelli Klein, R. (1983) How to do what we want to do: thoughts about feminist methodology. In Bowles, G. & Duelli Klein, R. (eds) *Theories of women's studies*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 88-105.
- Duncombe, J. & Jessop, J. (2002) 'Doing rapport' and the ethics of 'faking friendship'. In Miller, T., Birch, M., Mauthner, M. & Jessop, J.(eds) *Ethics in qualitative research*. London: Sage Publications, 107-122.
- Dwyer, C. (2000) Negotiating diasporic identities: young British South Asian Muslim women. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 23(4),475–486.
- NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (2004) *No women, no peace: the importance of women's participation to achieve peace and security* (April, 2004). Available online: <file:///Users/lubnaferdowsi/Downloads/ngowgpn.pdf> [Accessed 15/5/2016].
- Eade, J. (1989) *The politics of community: the Bangladeshi community in East London*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Eade, J. (1990) Nationalism and the quest for authenticity: the Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets, *New Community*, 16(4), 493-503.
- Eade, J. (1994) Identity, nation and religion: educated young Bangladeshi Muslims in London's East End, *International Sociology*, 9(3), 377-394.
- Eade, J. (1996) Nationalism, community and the Islamicisation of space in London. In Metcalf, B. (ed) *Making Muslim space: Muslims in Western Europe and North America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 217-233.
- Eade, J. (1997a) Keeping the options open: Bangladeshis in a global city. In Kershen, A. (ed) *London: the promised land? The migrant experience in a global city*. Aldershot: Avebury, 91-109.
- Eade, J. (1997b) Identity, nation and religion: educated young Bangladeshi Muslims in London's East End. In Eade, J. (ed) *Living the global city*. London: Routledge, 145-160.
- Eade, J. & Garbin, D. (2002) Changing narratives of violence, struggle and resistance: Bangladeshis and the competition for resources in the global city. *Oxford Development Studies*, 30(2),137-149.
- Eade, J. (2005) Concluding remarks: global and local, migration and moralities. In Eade, J. (ed) *Global ethics and civil society*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 166.
- Eade, J., Fremeaux, I. & Garbin, D. (2001) The political construction of diasporic communities in the global city. In Gilbert, P. (ed) *Imagined London*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Eade, J. & Garbin, D. (2005) *The Bangladeshi Diaspora: community dynamics, transnational politics and Islamist activities*. London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 27.

- Eade, J. & Garbin, D. (2006) Competing visions of identity and space: Bangladeshi Muslims in Britain. *Contemporary South Asia*, 15(2),181-193.
- Edwards, R. (1990) Connecting methods and epistemology: a white woman interviewing black women. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13, 477–490.
- Elder, G. H. Jr (1985) *Life course dynamics*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell university press.
- Elder, G.H. Jr , Johnson, M.K., & Crosnoe, R. (2003) The emergence and development of life course theory. In Mortimer, J.T. & Shanahan, M.J. (eds) *Handbook of the life course*. Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers: New York, 3–19.
- Erikson, E.H. (1965) Youth: fidelity and diversity. In Erikson, E. H. (ed) *The challenges of youth*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday/Anchor, 1-28.
- Erikson, E.H. (1968) *Identity: youth and crisis*. New York: Norton.
- Evans, J. & Jones, P. (2011) The walking interview: methodology, mobility and place. *Applied Geography*, 31, 849-858.
- Falzon, M. (ed) (2009) *Multi-sited ethnography: theory, praxis and locality in contemporary research*. Abingdon, UK: Ashgagte.
- Falzon, M. (ed) (2016) *Multi-sited ethnography: theory, praxis and locality in contemporary research*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ferdowsi, L. (2012) *Shifting identities: intersectional discourse within Bangladeshi diaspora in Great Britain*. MA thesis, University of Hull.
- Finlay, L. (2002) Outing the researcher: the provenance, process and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research*.12(3), 531-545.
- Fisher, M. (2006) *Counterflows to colonialism: Indian traveller and settler in Britain 1600-1857*. Delhi: Orient Longman, Permanent Black.
- Foner, N. (1997) What's new about transnationalism? New York immigrants today and at the turn of the century. *Diaspora* 6(3), 355-375.
- Foucault, M. (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. (1984) *The history of sexuality. An introduction*. London: Penguin.
- Frank, A. W. (2004) *The renewal of generosity: Illness, medicine, and how to live*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Frank, A. W. (2005) What is dialogical research, and why should we do it? *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(7), 964–974.
- Frankenberg, R. (1993) *White women, race matters: the social construction of whiteness*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

- Galbraith, J. K. (1992) The functional underclass. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 136 (3), 411–415.
- Garbin, D. (2005) Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK: some observations on socio-cultural dynamics, religious trends and transnational politics. *Human Rights and Bangladesh Conference*. London: SOAS, 17 June, 2005, 1-10.
- Garbin, D. (2008) A diasporic sense of place: dynamics of spatialization and transnational political fields among Bangladeshi Muslims in Britain'. In Smith, M.P. & Eade, J. (eds) *Transnational ties: cities, identities and migrations*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.
- Gardner, K. (1993) Desh-bidesh: Sylheti images of home and away. *MAN*, 28(1), 1-15.
- Gardner, K. (1995) *Global migrants, local lives: travel and transformation in rural Bangladesh*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gardner, K. (1999)^[SEP] Location and relocation: home, 'the field' and anthropological ethics. In Watson, C.W. (ed) *Being there: fieldwork in anthropology*. London: Pluto Press, 49-74.
- Gardner, K. (2002) *Narrative, age and migration: life history and the life course amongst Bengali elders in London*. Oxford: Berg.
- Gardner, K. (2006) The transnational work of kinship and caring: Bengali–British marriages in historical perspective. *Global Networks*, 6(4), 373–387.
- Gardner, K. & Shakur, A. (1994) I'm Bengali, I'm Asian, and I'm living here. In Ballard, R. (ed) *The South Asian presence in Britain*. UK: C. Hurst and Co., 142-164.
- Geertz, C. (ed) (1973) Thick description: toward an interpretive theory of culture. In *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*. New-York: Basic Books, Inc, 3-30.
- Gibb, C. (1998) Religious identification in transnational contexts: becoming Muslim in Ethiopia and Canada. *Diaspora*, 7(2), 247-69.
- Giddens, A. (2008) *The constitution of society: outline of the theory of structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gilroy, P. (1993) *Black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness*. London: Verso.
- Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L., & Blanc-Szanton, C. (eds) (1992) *Towards a transnational perspective on migration: race, class, ethnicity and nationalism reconsidered*. New York: New York Academy of Science. Unil-Mouline.
- Glynn, S. (2002) Bengali Muslims: the new East End radicals. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 25(6), 969-988.
- Gupta, A. & Ferguson, J. (1997) Discipline and practice: 'the field' as site, method, and location in anthropology. In Gupta, A. & Ferguson, J. (eds) *Anthropological*

- locations: boundaries and grounds of a field science*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1-47.
- Hall, S. (1990) Cultural identity and diaspora. In Rutherford, J. (ed) *Identity, community, culture, difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 222–237.
- Hall, S. (1992) The question of cultural identity. In Hall, S., Held, D. & McGrew, T. (eds) *Modernity and its future*. Cambridge: Polity, 273–325.
- Hall, S. (ed) (1997) *Representation: cultural representation and signifying practices*. London: Sage.
- Hall, S. (2003) Cultural identity and diaspora. In Braziel, J. E. & Mannur, A. (eds) *Theorizing diaspora*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 233-247.
- Hanisch, C. (1970) The personal is political. In Firestone, S. & Koedt, A. (eds) *Notes from the second year: women's liberation: major writings of the radical feminists*. New York: Pamphlet, 76-78.
- Hanisch, C. (2006) *The personal is political. the women's liberation movement classic with a new explanatory introduction*. Available online: <http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html> [Accessed 30/8/ 2016].
- Hannerz, U. (1992) *Cultural complexity: studies in the social organisation of meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Haraway, D. (1988) Situated knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14 (3), 575-599.
- Haraway, D. (1991) *Simians, cyborgs and women: the reinvention of nature*. London: Free Association Books.
- Haraway, D. (2013) *Simians, cyborgs and women: the reinvention of nature*. London: Free Association Books.
- Harding, S. (1986) *The science question in feminism*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Harding, S. (1987) Is there a feminist method? In S. Harding (ed) *Feminism and methodology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1-4.
- Harding, S. (1991) *Whose science? Whose knowledge?: thinking from women's lives*. Ithaca, New York : Cornell University Press.
- Harding, S. (1998) *Is science multicultural? Postcolonialisms, feminisms and epistemologies*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Hareven, T. K. (ed) (1996) *Aging and generational relations: life course and cross-cultural perspectives*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Harrington, B. (2003) The social psychology of access in ethnographic research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 32(3), 592- 565.

- Hartsock, N. (2004) The feminist standpoint: developing the ground for a specifically feminist historical materialism. In Harding, S. & Merrill, B. H. (eds) *The feminist standpoint theory reader: intellectual and political controversies*. New York: Routledge, 35–54.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2007) The practice of feminist in-depth interviewing. In HesseBiber, S.N. and Leavy, P. L. (eds) *Feminist research practice: a primer*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage, 111-148.
- Hesse-Biber, S.N. & Leavy, P. (2006) *The practice of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. & Leavy, P. (2010) *The practice of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. & Avila, E. (1997) I'm here, but I'm there: the meanings of Latina transnational motherhood. *Gender and Society*, 11 (5), 548-571.
- Hooks, B. (1991) *Yearning: race, gender and cultural politics*. London: Turnaround.
- Hunt, P. (1989) Gender and the construction of home life. In Allan, G. & Crow, G. (eds) *Home and family: creating the domestic sphere*. London: Macmillan, 66-81.
- Hulko, W. (2009) The time- and context-contingent nature of intersecitonality and interlocking oppressions. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, 24, 44-55.
- Hussain, E. (2007) *The Islamist*. London: Penguin.
- Immigration Rules part 8: family members* (2016) children under family members. GOV.UK
- Jacobson, J. (1997) Religion and ethnicity: dual and alternative sources of identity among young British Pakistanis. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 20, 238-256.
- Jackson, P. & Nesbitt, E. (1993) *Hindu children in Britain*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham.
- James, A. (2001) Ethnography in the study of children and childhood. In Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J. & Lofland, L. (eds) *Handbook of ethnography*. Sage: London, 246-257.
- Jones, G. (1995) *Leaving home*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Jones, G. (2000) Experimenting with households and inventing “home”. *International Social Science Journal*, 52 (2), 183–194.
- Jones, P., Bunce, G., Evans, J., Gibbs, H. & Hein, J.R. (2008) Research design: exploring space and place with walking interviews. *Journal of Research Practice*, 4(2), 1-9.
- Kabeer, N. (1988) Subordination and struggle: women in Bangladesh, *New Left Review*, 168, 95-121.

- Kabeer, N. (1991) The quest for national identity: women, Islam and the state of Bangladesh. In Kandiyoti, D. (ed) *Women, Islam and the state*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 115-143.
- Kabeer, N. (1999) Resources, agency, achievements: reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30(3), 435-464.
- Kabeer, N. (2000) *The power to choose: Bangladeshi women and labour market decisions in London and Dhaka*. London: Verso.
- Kabeer, N. (2001) Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. In Anne, S. (ed) *Discussing women's empowerment: theory and practice*. SIDA studies (3). Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Stockholm, Sweden, 17-57.
- Karpat, K. H. (1990) The hijra from Russia and the Balkans: the process of self definition in the late Ottoman state. In Eickelman, D.F. & Piscatori, J. (eds) *Muslim travellers: pilgrimage: migration and the religious imagination*. London: Routledge, 131- 52.
- Kasinitz, P., Mollenkopf, J., Waters, M., & Holdaway, J. (2008) *Inheriting the city: the children of immigrants come of age*. New York and Boston: Russell Sage and Harvard University Press.
- Kearney, M. (1986) From the invisible hand to visible feet: anthropological studies of migration and development. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 15, 331–61.
- Keith, M. (2005) *After the cosmopolitan? Multicultural cities and the future of racism*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kenway, P. & Palmer, G. (2007) *Poverty among ethnic group: how does it differ?* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundations.
- Kertzer, D. (1983) Generation as a sociological problem. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 9, 125-149.
- Khanum, S .M. (1994) *We just buy illness in exchange for hunger: experiences of health care, health and illness among Bangladeshi women in Britain*, Ph.D Thesis, University of Keele.
- Khanum, S. M. (2001) Household patterns of a 'Bangladeshi village' in England. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27(3), 489-504.
- Khanum, S. (2002) Anthropology at home: some methodological dilemmas in migration research. *Social Science Review*, 19, 225-234.
- Kibria, N. (2012) Transnational marriage and the Bangladeshi Muslim diaspora in Britain and the United States. *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 13(2), 227–240.
- Knapp, G. A. (2005) Race, class, gender, reclaiming baggage in fast travelling theories. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 12(3), 249–265.

- Kershen, A. J. (ed) (1998) *A question of identity*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Knott, K. & Khokher, S. (1993) Religious and ethnic identity among young Muslim women in Bradford. *New Community*, 19, 593-610.
- Kondo, D. K. (1986) Dissolution and reconstitution of the self: implications for anthropological epistemology. *Cultural Anthropology*, 1 (1), 74-88.
- Kondo, D. K. (1990) *Crafting selves: power, gender and discourses of identity in a Japanese workplace*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press.
- Kristeva, J. (1982) *Powers of horror: an essay on abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kundnani, A (2002) The death of multiculturalism. *Institute of Race Relations*. Available at: <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/the-death-of-multiculturalism/>. Accessed 7 June, 2017.
- Kusenbach, M. (2003) Street phenomenology: the go-along as ethnographic research tool. *Ethnography*, 4, 455-485.
- Kyambi, S. (2005) *Beyond black and white: mapping new immigrant communities*. London: Institute of Public Policy Research.
- Lacan, J. (1974) *Television*. Paris: Seuil.
- Larson, H. (1989) *Asian children—British childhood*. PhD Thesis. Berkeley: University of California.
- Laufer, R. W. (1971) Sources of generational consciousness and conflict. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 395, 80-94.
- Lawson, S. & Sachdev, I. (2004) Identity, language use, and attitudes: some Sylheti-Bangladeshi data from London, UK. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 23(1), 49-69.
- Leavy, P. L. (2007) The practice of feminist oral history and focus group interviews. In HesseBiber, S.N. & Leavy, P. L. (eds) *Feminist research practice: a primer*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage,149-186.
- Letherby, G. (2003) *Feminist research in theory and practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Levine, P. (2006) Sexuality and empire. In Hall, C. & Rose, S. (eds) *At home with the empire: metropolitan culture and the imperial world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,122-142.
- Levitt, P. (2009) Roots and routes: understanding the lives of the second generation transnationally. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(7), 1225-1242.

- Levitt, P. & Glick Schiller, N. (2004) Conceptualizing simultaneity: a transnational social field perspective on society. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 1002-1039.
- Lewis, G. (2000) *Race, gender, social welfare*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Lewis, P. (2007) *Young, British and Muslim*. London: Continuum^[1]_{SEP}.
- Lindenbaum, S. (1981) Implications for women of changing marriage transactions in Bangladesh. *Studies in Family Planning*, 11, 394-401.
- Lloyd-Evans, S. & Bowlby, S. (2000) Crossing boundaries: racialised gendering and the labour market experiences of Pakistani migrant wives in Britain. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 23 (4), 461-474.
- Loizos, P. (2007) Generations in forced migration: towards greater clarity. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20 (2), 193–209.
- Lykke, N. (2011) Intersectional analysis: black box or useful critical feminist thinking technology? In Lutz, H., Vivar, M. T. H. & Supik, L. (eds) *Framing intersectionality: debates on a multi-faceted concept in gender studies*. Surrey: Ashgate.
- Mac anGhail, M. & Haywood, C. (2005) *Young Bangladeshi people's experience of transition to adulthood*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Madison, D. S. (2005) Ethics. In Madison, S. D. (ed) *Critical ethnography: method, ethics and performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 95-126.
- Madge, C. (1993) Boundary disputes: comments on Sidaway. *Area*, 25, 294-99.
- Maher, F. & Thompson-Tetreault, K. (1994) *The feminist classroom*. New York: Basic Books.
- Mahmood, S. (2006) Feminist theory, agency, and the liberatory subject: some reflections on the Islamic revival in Egypt¹. *The Finnish Society for the Study of Religion Temenos*, 42 (1), 31–71.
- Maguire, P. (1987) *Doing participatory research: a feminist approach*. Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts.
- Mahler, S. J. (1998) Theoretical and empirical contributions towards a research agenda for transnationalism. In Smith, M. P. & Guarnizo, L. E. (eds) *Transnationalism from below*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 64–100.
- Mand, K. (2010) I've got two houses, one in Bangladesh, one in London... everybody has: locality and belonging(s). *Childhood*, 17 (2), 273-287.
- Mand, K. (2011) Researching lives in motion: multi-sited strategies in a transnational context. In Coleman, S. & Hellermann, P. (eds) *Multi-sited ethnography: problems and possibilities in the translocation of research methods*. New York: Routledge, 41-53.

- Mann, R. (2009) Evolving family structures, roles and relationships in light of ethnic and social change. *Beyond current horizons: technology, children, schools and families*. Available online: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.366.832&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [Accessed 6/4/2016].
- Marshall, V. W. (1981) State of the art lecture: the sociology of aging, In Crawford, J. (ed) *Canadian gerontological collection*. Winnipeg: Canadian Association on Gerontology, 76-144.
- Massey, D. (1992) A place called home? *New Formations* ,17, 3-15.
- Mazurana, D. & Susan McKay, S. (1999) *Women and peace-building*. Montreal: International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development.
- McCall, L. (1992) Does gender fit? Bourdieu, feminism, and conception of social order. *Theory and Society*, 21, 837-867.
- McCall, L. (2005) The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs*, 30, 1771-1800.
- McKay, S. & de la Rey, C. (2001) Women's meanings of peace-building in post-apartheid South Africa. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 7(3), 227-242 .
- Metcalf, B. (1996) Introduction: sacred words, sanctioned practice, new communities. In Metcalf, B. (ed) *Making Muslim space in North America and Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1-27.
- Meyers, D.T. (2002) *Gender in the mirror: cultural imagery and women's agency*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mies, M. (1991) Women's research or feminist research? The debate surrounding feminist science and methodology. In Fonow, M. M. & Cook, J. A. (eds) *Beyond methodology: feminist research as lived research*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington.
- Modood, T. (2006) British Muslims and the politics of multiculturalism. In Modood, T., Triandafyllidou, A. & Zapata-Barrero, R. (eds) *Multiculturalism, Muslims and citizenship: a European approach*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Modood, T. (2010) *Still not easy being British: struggles for a multicultural citizenship*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.
- Mohanty, T. C. (1988) Under Western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. *Feminist Review*, 30, 61-88.
- Moore, H. L. (1988) *Feminism and anthropology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Moser, C. (1993) *Gender planning and development: theory, practice and training*. New York and London: Routledge.

- Nader, L. (1988) Up the anthropologist-perspectives gained from studying up. In Cale, J.B. (ed) *Anthropology for the ninties*. New York: Free Press, 470-485.
- Nagar, R. & Geiger, S. (2000) Reflexivity, positionality and identity in feminist fieldwork revisited. In Tickell, A., Sheppard, E., Peck, J. & Barnes T. (eds.) *Politics and practice in economic geography*. London: Sage, 267-278.
- Naples, A. N . (2003) *Feminism and method: ethnography, discourse analysis, and activist research*. New York: Routledge.
- Naples, A. N. (2004) The outsider phenomenon. In Hesse-Biber, S. N. & Yaiser, M. L. (eds) *Feminist perspectives on social research*. New York: Oxford University Press, 373–381.
- Narayan, K. (1997) How native is a ‘native’ anthropologist? *American Anthropologist*, 95(3), 671-86.
- Nash, C. (2002) Cultural geography: postcolonial cultural geographies. *Progress in Human Geography*, 26 (2), 219-230.
- Nash, J. C. (2008) Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review*, 89, 1-15.
- Nast, H. J. (1994) Opening remarks on Women in the field. *Professional Geographer*, 46, 54-66.
- Ní Laoire, C. (2007) The green green grass of home? Return migration to rural Ireland. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 23(3), 332-344.
- Nussbaum, M. (2000) *Women and human development: the capabilities approach*. New York: Cambridge Press.
- O'Grada, C. (2009) *Famine: a short history*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Oakley, A. (1981) Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms. In Roberts, H. (ed) *Doing feminist research*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 30–61.
- Odeh, L. (1993) Postcolonial feminism and the veil: thinking the difference. *Feminist Review*, 43(1), zx26-37.
- Olwig, K. F. (2002) A wedding in the family: home making in a global kin network. *Global Networks*, 2 (3), 205–218.
- Olwig, K.F. (1999) Travelling makes a home: mobility and identity among West Indians. In Chapman, T. & Hockey, J. (eds) *Ideal homes? Social change and domestic life*. London: Routledge, 73-83.
- Ortner, S. (1995) Resistance and the problem of ethnographic refusal. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37(1),173-193.
- Osmani , S. (1991) The food problems of Bangladesh. *The Political Economy of Hunger, Oxford*, 3, 308-317.

- Owen, D. (1995) *Ethnic minorities in Great Britain: patterns of population change, 1981-91*. Coventry: Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick.
- Ozkazanc-Pan, B. (2012) Postcolonial feminist research: challenges and complexities. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 31(5/6), 573-91.
- Page, H. (1988) Dialogic principles of interactive learning in the ethnographic relationship. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 44 (2),163-81.
- Panayi, P. (1996) *Racial violence in Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*. London: Leicester University Press.
- Papanek, H. (1973) Purdah: separate worlds and symbolic shelter. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 15(3), 289-325.
- Parmar, P. (1982) Gender, race and class: Asian women in resistance. In Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (ed), *The empire strikes back: race and racism in 70s Britain*. University of Birmingham: Hutchinson Press, London: Routledge, 236-75.
- Peach, C. (1990) The Muslim population of Great Britain. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 13(3), 414-419.
- Peach, C. (2005) Britain's Muslim population: an overview. In Abbas, T. (ed) *Muslim Britain: communities under pressure*. London and New York: Zed Books, 18-30.
- Phillipson, C., Ahmed, N., & Latimer, J. (2003) *Women in transition: a study of the experiences of Bangladeshi women living in Tower Hamlets*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Phillipson, C., Al-Haq, E., Ullah, S. & Ogg, J. (2000) Bangladeshi families in Bethnal Green: older people, ethnicity and social exclusion. In Warnes, T., Warren, L., & Nolan, M. (eds) *Care services for later life*. London: Jessica Kingsley, 273-290.
- Phoenix, A. (2006) Interrogating intersectionality: productive ways of theorising multiple positioning. *Kvinder, Kön og Forskning*, 2-3, 21-30.
- Platt, L. (2007) *Poverty and ethnicity in the UK*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Portes, A. & Rumbaut, R.G. (1996) *Immigrant America: a portrait*, 2nd edition. Berkeley : University of California Press.
- Prins, B. (2006) Narrative accounts of origins: a blind spot in the intersectional approach? *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13, 277-290.
- Puar, J. 'I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess' intersectionality, assemblage, and affective politics. *Transversal* (multilingual webjournal). Available online : <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0811/puar/en/print> [Accessed 15/4/2016].
- Puwar, N, & Raghuram, P. (eds) (2003) *South Asian women in the diaspora*. Oxford: Berg.

- Rabinow, P. (1986) Representations are social facts: modernity and postmodernity in anthropology. In Clifford, J. & Marcus, G.E. (eds) *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 234-261.
- Rahman, S. (2007) *Reproduction of urban classes in Bangladesh in the context of globalization*. Washington D.C.: American University.
- Ranstorp, M. & Hyllengren, P. (2013) Prevention of violent extremism in third countries: measures to prevent individuals joining armed extremist groups in conflict zones: executive summary. *Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies (CATS), Swedish National Defence College*. Available online: <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:688158/FULLTEXT01.pdf> [Accessed 4/1/2017].
- Reay, D. (1998) Rethinking social class: qualitative perspectives on class and gender. *Sociology*, 32(2), 259-275.
- Reed, Isaac A. (2010) Epistemology contextualized: social-scientific knowledge in a postpositivist era. *Sociological Theory*, 28(1), 20-39.
- Reinharz, S. (1983) Experiential analysis: a contribution to feminist research. In Bowles, G. & Duelli Klein, R. (eds) *Theories of women's studies*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 192-209.
- Reinharz, S. (1992) *Feminist methods in social research*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rosaldo, R. (1986) From door to his tent: the fieldworker and the inquisitor. In Clifford, J. & Marcus, G.E. (eds) *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 77-97.
- Roseneil, S. (1993) Chapter 7: Greenham revisited: researching myself and my sisters. In Hobbs, D. & May, T. (eds) *Interpreting the field: accounts and ethnography*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 177-208.
- Rowlands, J. (1995) Empowerment examined. *Development in Practice*, 5(2), 101-107.
- Rozario, S. (2004) *Genetics, religion and identity among British Bangladeshis: some initial findings.2*. Cardiff: Radcliffe Publishing.
- Rozario, S. (2005) The new burqa in Bangladesh: empowerment or violation of women's rights? *Women's Studies International Forum*, 29(4), 368-380.
- Rumbaut, R. G. (2002) Severed or sustained attachments? Language, identity, and imagined communities in the post-immigrant generation. In Levitt, P. & Waters, M. (eds) *The changing face of home: the transnational lives of the second generation*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 43-95.
- Ryder, N. B. (1965) The cohort as a concept in the study of social change. *American Sociology Review*, 30(6), 843-861.

- Saeed, A., Blain, N. & Forbes, D. (1999) New ethnic and national questions in Scotland: post-British identities among Glasgow Pakistani teenagers. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22 (5), 821-844.
- Safran, W. (1991) Diasporas in modern societies: myths of homeland and return. *Diaspora*, 1(1), 83-99.
- Samad, Y. & Eade, J. (2002) *Community perceptions of forced marriage*. London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
- Sandhu, S. (2003) Come hungry, leave edgy. *London Review of Books*, 25(19), 10-13.
- Sanghera, G. & Thapur-Björkert, S. (2007) 'Because I am Pakistani... and I am Muslim... I am political' –gendering political radicalism: young femininities in Bradford. In Abbas, T. (ed) *Islamic political radicalism: a European perspective*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 173-191.
- Savage, M., Devine, F., Cunningham, N., Taylor, M., Li, Y., Hjellbrekke, J., Le Roux, B., Friedman, S. and Miles, A. (2013) A new model of social class? Findings from the BBC's great class survey experiment. *Sociology*, 47 (2), 219-250.
- Scheper-Hughes, N. (1995) The primacy of the ethical proposition for a militant anthropology. *Current Anthropology*, 36(3), 409-440.
- Schirch, L. & Manjrika S. (2005) *The role of women in peacebuilding*. Available online: <http://www.gppac.net/uploads/File/Resources/GPPAC%20Issue%20papers/The%20Role%20of%20Women%20in%20Peacebuilding.pdf> [Accessed: 8/2/2017].
- Schrock, R. (2013) The methodological imperatives of feminist ethnography. *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, 5. Available online: <http://www.jfsonline.org/issue5/articles/schrock/> [Accessed 25/5/2017].
- Sebstad, J. & Cohen, M. (2000) *Microfinance, risk management and poverty*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available online: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACJ418.pdf [Accessed 12/6/2016].
- Sen, A. (1985) Well-being, agency and freedom: the Dewey lectures 1984. *Journal of Philosophy*, 82.
- Sen, A. (1990) Individual freedom as a social commitment. *New York Review of Books*, 37, 49–54.
- Sen, A. (1999) *Development as freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sen, G. (1993) Women's empowerment and human rights: the challenge to policy. Paper presented at *the Population Summit of the World's Scientific Academies*.
- Shaw, A. (2004) Immigrant families in the UK. In Scott, J., Treas, J. & Richards, M. (eds) *Blackwell companion to the sociology of families*. Oxford: Blackwell, 270-286.

- Sheth, A. F. (1009) The hijab and the sari: the strange and the sexy between colonialism and global capitalism. *Contemporary Aesthetics*. Available online : <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=558> , [Accessed 2/9/2016].
- Siddiqui, A. (2004) Muslim youth in Britain: cultural and religious conflict in perspective. In Malik, J. (ed) *Muslims in Europe: from the margin to the centre*. New Burnswick, N.J.: Transaction, 49-59.
- Siddiqui, T. (2004) *Institutionalising diaspora linkage: the emigrant Bangladeshis in UK and USA*. Dhaka: Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, GoB and International Organisation for Migration (IOM).
- Sigle-Rushton, W., Lindstrom, E. & Williams, C. (2013) Intersectionality. In Evans, M. & Williams, C. (eds) *Gender: the key concepts*. London: Routledge Ltd, 129-134.
- Singer, M. (1998) *The political economy of AIDS*. Amityville, NY: Baywood.
- Sirseloudi, M. (2012) The meaning of religion and identity for the violent radicalisation of the Turkish diaspora in Germany. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 24(5), 807-824.
- Smith, D. (1974) Women's perspective as a radical critique of sociology. *Sociological Inquiry*, 44, 7-13.
- Smooth, G. W. (2013) Intersectionality from theoretical framework to policy intervention. In Wildon, R. A. (ed) *Situating intersectionality*. New York: Palgrave, 11-42.
- Sodha, M. (2014) *Made in India, cooked in Britain: recipes from an Indian family kitchen*. UK: Penguin Fig Tree.
- Solomos, J. (2003) *Race and racism in Britain* , 3rd edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Song, M. (2005) Global and local articulations of Asian identity. In Alexander, C. & Knowles, C. (eds) *Making race matter: bodies, space and identity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillian, 60-75.
- Spiro, E.M. (1996) Postmodernist anthropology, subjectivity, and science: a modernist critique. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 38(4), 759-780.
- Spivak, G.C. (1988) Can the Subaltern speak? In Nelson, C. & Grossberg, L. (eds) *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 271-313.
- Spradley, J. (1979) *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Stanley, L. & Wise, S. (1983) *Breaking out: feminist consciousness and feminist research*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- Stanley, L. & Wise, S. (1993) *Breaking out again: feminist ontology and epistemology*. London: Routledge.
- Stanley, L. & Wise, S. (2002) *Breaking out again: feminist ontology and epistemology*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge.
- Starn, O. (1994) Rethinking the politics of anthropology. *Current Anthropology*, 35(1), 13-38.
- Staunæs, D. (2003) Where have all the subjects gone? Bringing together the concepts of subjectification and intersectionality. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Women Studies*, 11 (2), 101-110.
- Storry, M. & Childs, P. (eds) (2002) *British cultural identities*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Sutton, C. & C. Chaney (eds) (1987) *Caribbean life in New York city: sociocultural dimensions*. New York: Center for Migration Studies.
- Takacs, D. (2002) Positionality, epistemology and social justice in the classroom. *Social Justice*, 29 (4), 168-181.
- Tarlo, E. (1996) *Clothing matters: dress and identity in India*. London, Delhi, Chicago: Hurst, Viking and University of Chicago Press.
- Tarlo, E. (2010) *Visibly Muslim: fashion, politics, faith*. Oxford: Berg.
- Thompson, B. (2002) Multiracial feminism: recasting the chronology of second wave feminism. *Feminist Studies*, 28(2), 337-360.
- Tolia-Kelly, Divya P. (2004) Materializing post-colonial geographies: examining the textural landscapes of migration in the South Asian home. *Geoforum*, 35(6), 675-688.
- Toki, R., Jahanshahi, R., Khanom, H., & Rahman, A. (eds) (2012) *The legacy of women's contribution in 1971*. London: The Central London Youth Development Trust.
- Travis, A. (ed) (2011) Virginty tests for immigrants 'reflected dark age prejudices' of 1970s Britain. *theguardian*, 8th May. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/may/08/virginty-tests-immigrants-prejudices-britain>, Accessed 1/09/2016.
- Trommlerová, S. K., Klasen, S., & Lessmann, O. (2015) Determinants of empowerment in a capability-based poverty approach: evidence from the Gambia. *World Development*, 66 (C), 1- 15.
- Tsagarousianou, R. (2004) Rethinking the concept of diaspora: mobility, connectivity and communication in a globalised world. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 1(1), 52–66.

- Ullah, A. A. (2007) Women in Bangladesh diaspora: an overview of Bengali women in the UK. *BASUG Conference on Women: future of Bangladesh*. The Hague, 28th April 2007, 1-11.
- Ullah, A.A. & Eversley, J. (2010) *Bengalis in London's East End*. London: Swadhinata Trust.
- Vertovec, S. & Alisdair, R. (1998) Introduction. In Vertovec, S. & Rogers, A. (eds) *Muslim European youth: re-producing religion, ethnicity, and culture*. Aldershot: Avebury, 1-24.
- Vertovec, S. (2000) *The Hindu diaspora: comparative patterns*. London: Routledge.
- Vertovec, S. (2000) Religion and diaspora. *School of Geography and the Environment Conference on New landscapes of religion in the West*, University of Oxford, 27-29 September 2000, 1-45.
- Visram, R. (1986) *Ayahs, lascars, and princes: Indians in Britain 1700-1947*. London: Pluto Press.
- Walby, S., Armstrong, J. & Strid, S. (2012) Intersectionality: multiple inequalities in social theory. *Sociology*, 1-17.
- Walsh, K. (2006) Dad says I'm tied to a shooting star! Grounding (research on) British expatriate belonging. *Area*, 38(3), 268-278.
- Walters, W.W. (2005) *At home in diaspora: black international writing*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Warner, D. (1994) Voluntary repatriation and the meaning of return to home: a critique of liberal mathematics. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 7(2-3), 160-174.
- Watson, J. (ed) (1977) *Between two cultures*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Weiss, R. S. (1994) *Learning from strangers: the art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York: Free Press.
- Werbner, P. (2004) Theorising complex diasporas: purity and hybridity in the South Asian public sphere in Britain. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30(5), 895-911.
- Werbner, P. (2002) *Imagined diasporas among Manchester Muslims: the public performance of Pakistani transnational identity politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Werbner, P. (1996) Stamping the earth in the name of Allah: zikr and the sacralizing of space among British Muslims. *Cultural Anthropology*, 11(3), 309-38.
- Westkott, M. (1979) Feminist criticism of the social sciences. *Harvard Educational Review*, 49(4), 422-430.

- Willis, K. & Yeoh S. A. B. (eds) (2000) *Gender and migration*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Williams, L. (2010) *Global marriage: cross-border marriage migration in global context*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wilson, J. (1980) *The declining significance of race: blacks and changing institutions*, 2nd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, J. (1987) *The truly disadvantaged: the inner city, the underclass, and public policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wolf, D. L. (1996) Situating feminist dilemmas in fieldwork. In Wolf, D. L. (ed) *Feminist dilemmas in fieldwork*. Colorado: Westview Press.
- Wolf, D. L. (1997) Family secrets: transnational struggles among children of Filipino immigrants. *Sociological Perspectives*, 40 (3), 457-483.
- World Bank (2012) *World development report: gender equality and development*. Washington, DC.
- World Bank (2014) *Voice and agency: empowering women and girls for shared prosperity*. Washington, DC.
- Ying, Y. W. & Han, M. (2007) The longitudinal effect of intergenerational gap in acculturation on conflict and mental health in Southeast Asian American adolescents. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 77(1), 61–66.
- Young, A. A. (2004) Experiences in ethnographic interviewing about race: the inside and outside of it. In Bulmer, M. & Solomos, J. (eds) *Researching race and racism*. London: Routledge, 187-202.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (1997) *Gender and nation*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2005) Intersectionality and gender mainstreaming. *Swedish Journal of Women's Studies*, 26 (2-3), 19-29.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2006) Intersectionality and feminist politics. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13, 193-209.
- YuvaYuval-Davis, N. (2007) Intersectionality, citizenship and contemporary politics of belonging. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 10(4), 561-574.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2011) Beyond the recognition and re-distribution dichotomy: intersectionality and stratification. In Lutz, H., Herrea Vivar, M.T. & Supik, L. (eds) *Framing intersectionality. Debates on a multi-faceted concept in gender studies*. Farnham: Ashgate, 155-169.
- Zhou, M. (1997) Growing up American: the challenge confronting immigrant children and children of immigrants. *Annual Reviews Sociol*, 23, 63–95.

APPENDIX 1: Socio-demographic profile of the four cohorts; Tables (1-4)

Appendix Table 1: The Pioneer Cohort (PC)

Name	Age at mig	Time of mig	Process of mig	Class position in Bangladesh (BD)	Occupation in UK	Relationship status	Education
Anu	18	1983	Dependant wife of a migrant labourer, SYL	Working	Director, Bangladeshi cultural org & politician	Widow, 4 children (childn)	Post-grad, UK
Banu	28	1972	Dependant wife of a diplomat, SYL	Middle	Community worker & former political leader	Married, 4 childn	High school (PAK)
Jahanara	25	1973	Dependant wife of a migrant labourer, SYL	Working	Single mother of a middle class family	Divorcee, 6 childn	Primary school, BD
Jamila	22	1978	Dependant wife of a migrant labourer, SYL	Working	Housewife	Widow, 5 childn	Primary school, BD
Jannat	20	1963	Dependant wife of a skilled migrant, DK	Middle	Writer, community activist, & political advisor	Widow, 2 childn	Graduate, BD, Post-grad, UK
Khurshida*	30	1976	Dependant wife of a migrant labourer, SYL	Working	Housewife	Married, 7 childn	Primary school, BD
Nilufar	26	1978	Student's dependant, DK	Middle	Office secretary, husband's accounting firm	Married, 1 child	Graduate, BD
Nusrat	16	1968	Dependant child, DK	Middle	Child-care practitioner	Widow, 2 childn	High school, UK
Ranu	23	1975	Dependant wife of a skill migrant, DK	Middle	Retired teacher and owner of a charity organisation	Married, 1 child	Post-grad, BD Diploma, UK
Sajeda	24	1984	Dependant wife of a skilled migrant, DK	Middle	School teacher & school counsellor	Married, 3 childn	Graduate BD, Diploma, UK
Sofia	34	1987	Dependant wife of a migrant labourer, SYL	Working	Housewife	Married, 4 Childn	Primary school, BD

Note: *Hamida's mother; SYL: Sylhet; DK: Dhaka; PAK: Pakistan; Childn: Children

Appendix Table 2: The Cooked in Britain Cohort (CBC)

Name	Age at mig	Time of mig	Process of mig	Class position inBD	Occupation in UK	Relationship status	Education
Adhury	16	1990	Dependant child, SYL	Middle	Councillor	Married with TH, 2 childn	Postgrad,UK
Areefa	2	1975	Dependant child, SYL	Working	Service dev.consultant	Divorcee, 2 childn	Graduate, UK
Dalia	12	1977	Dependant child, SYL	Working	Community worker &artist	Married with TH, 3 childn	High school, UK
Hamida	5	1976	Dependant child, SYL	Working.	Fronrunner ELM	Married with TH, 2 childn	Graduate, UK
Hasina	10	1982	Dependant child, SYL	Working	Activist & political leader	Married with TH, 3 childn	Graduate, UK
Meher	15	1973	Dependant child, DK	Middle	Political & social activist	Married with TH, 2 childn	Graduate, UK
Nafisa	11	1985	Dependant child, SYL	Working	CEO at a private company	Married with TH, 3 childn	Graduate, UK
Nazrin	02	1973	Dependant child, SYL	Working	Magistrate, UK	Divorcee,4 childn	Graduate, UK
Rebeka	10	1987	Dependant child,SYL	Working	Councillor	Married with TH, 2 childn	Graduate, UK
Rita	15	1990	Student, DK	Middle	Owner of a playhouse, artist & political activist	Married with TH, 2 childn	Graduate, UK
Ruma	11	1982	Dependant child, SYL	Working	CEO & founder of a cultural org	Married with TH, 3 childn	Graduate, UK
Shahana*	3 m	1978	Dependant child, SYL	Working	Community worker	Married with TH, 3 childn	High school, UK
Shajna	6 m	1971	Dependant child, SYL	Working	Administrator ELM	Married withTH,3childn	Graduate, UK

Note: *Afrin's mother; TH: Transnational husband.

Appendix Table 3: The British-born Cohort (BBC)

Name	Age during interview	Process of migration	Family background in BD	Occupation in UK	Relationship status	Education
Ashfia	27	Child of a mother of the PC	Working	Dental nurse & member of a community cultural org	Married, 1 child	Diploma, UK
Afrin*	19	Child of a mother of the CBC	Working	Student & ELM member	Unmarried	High school, UK
Alie	26	Child of a mother of the CBC	Working	Officer in a food processing co.	Divorcee, 1 child	Graduate, UK
Asifa	26	Child of a mother of the PC	Working	Advocacy, health visiting & ELM member	Married with TH, 2 childn	High school, UK
Bushra	27	Child of a mother of the CBC	Working	Banker	Divorcee, 2 Childn	Graduate, UK
Rashna	25	Child of a mother of the PC	Working	Student & ELM member	Unmarried	High school, UK
Rehnuma	24	Child of a mother of the CBC	Working	Account assistant & ELM member	Unmarried	Graduate, UK
Rifat	17	Child of a mother of the CBC	Working	Student, and ELM member	Unmarried	High school, UK
Rukhsana	41	Child of a mother of the PC	Middle	Coordinator of a council hall & councillor	Married, 4 childn	Graduate, UK
Samia	19	Child of a mother of the CBC	Middle	School teacher & ELM member	Unmarried	High school, UK
Shahrin	22	Child of a mother of the PC	Middle	Salesgirl, super shop & ELM member	Unmarried	Undergrad, UK

Appendix Table 4: The New migrant Cohort (NMC)

Name	Age at mig	Time of mig	Process of mig	Class position in BD	Occupation in UK	Relationship status	Education
Amina	20	2011	Student migrant, SYL	Working	Jobless, asylum seeker	Divorcee, 1 child	High school, BD
Anila	20	2002	Student migrant, DK	Working	Social worker & artist	Married, 1 child	Post-grad, UK
Asha	40	2005	Student's Dependant, DK	Middle	Employee at a day centre	Married, 2 childn	Post-grad, BD
Bithi	31	2009	Dependant wife of a EU citizen	Middle	Writer	Married, 1 child	Graduate, BD & Post-grad UK
Chonda	24	2012	EU citizen	Working	Sales girl, & ELM member	Married	High school, BD
Dipti	26	2009	Parent's Dependant, SYL	Working	Security guard	Married (separated), 2 childn	Post-grad, UK
Keya	27	2006	Student migrant, DK	Middle	Nutritionist & writer	Married, 1 child	Post-grad UK
Mahin	31	2003	Dependant wife of a skilled migrant, DK	Middle	Member, ELM & Islamic forum	Married, 2 childn	Post-grad, BD
Monika	17	2012	EU citizen	Working	Student & ELM member	Single (unmarried)	High school, UK
Nahar	29	2010	EU citizen	Working	Housewife	Married, 2 childn.	High school, BD
Priti	23	2008	Student's Dependant, DK	Middle	Planning officer	Divorcee	Graduate, BD & Post-grad, UK
Ria	36	2011	Dependant wife of a skilled migrant, DK	Middle	Sales-girl in a retail store, UK	Married, 2 childn	Post-grad BD & UK
Rikta	28	2000	Dependant of a British-born husband, DK	Middle	Artist, and freelance writer	Married, 2 childn	Post-grad, BD
Risa	25	2002	Dependant wife, DK	Working	Sales assistant	Married (separated), 2 childn	High school, BD
Rubina	28	2004	Student's Dependant, DK	Middle	Teaching assistant, school	Married, 2 childn	Post-grad, BD
Sheuli	39	2011	EU citizen	Working	Member, ELM & Islamic forum	Married, 3 childn	High school, BD
Shongita	14	2000	Dependant child, DK	Upper	Director, business & media org	Married, 1 child	Graduate, UK
Shumona	21	2002	Dependant of a British-born husband, SYL	Working	Carer of elderly people & political member	Divorcee, 2 childn	High school BD
Sraboni	27	2009	Dependant wife of a skilled migrant, DK	Middle	Civil servant, & artist	Married, 1 child	Post-grad, BD & UK
Suhana	20	2004	Student's Dependant, DK	Middle	ELM member & community builder	Married, 1 child	Graduate, BD
Tania	38	2000	Dependant wife of a Diplomat, DK	Upper-middle	Freelance journalist	Married, 2 childn	Post-grad, BD
Tinni	26	2010	Dependant wife of a British Bangladeshi	Upper-middle	Banker, and media artist	Married	Post-grad BD & UK