Challenging discourses on BSA Muslim women through an intersectional analysis of everyday experiences across spaces of home, work and public space

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Abstract

This thesis explores the intersectional identities of British South Asian (BSA) Muslim women, examining their everyday lives across different spaces of home, work and public spaces. It draws on interviews, photos, diary extracts and walk-along interviews with 28 women, aged between 25-40 years, living and working in Oldham. The thesis examines how dominant discourses on Muslim women -- which present them as extreme, and a threat, yet as also a silent, oppressed minority -- affect their interactions with family, co-workers and community members in everyday situations.

The thesis utilises intersectional thinking (Crenshaw, 1989) when looking at the lives of BSA Muslim women. In particular, it explores how applying an intersectional lens, which takes into consideration gender, ethnicity, social class age, as well as religion, can provide rich, nuanced and holistic accounts of everyday encounters and interactions across spaces of home, work and public spaces. Importantly, this approach provides a powerful tool with which to challenge stereotypical, normative and narrow understandings of BSA Muslim women. The thesis unsettles assumptions about home, work and public space through emphasis on the different aspects of Muslim BSA women’s everyday lives including employment, motherhood and family ties. The thesis further explores how discursive discourses shape understandings of BSA Muslim women, as well as how these influence affect BSA Muslim women’s interactions and experiences as the minority ‘Other’.

The thesis begins by considering the home as a social field (Bourdieu, 1998) the family as a ‘realized category’. Through an intersectional lens which considers gender, ethnicity, religion and culture the thesis challenges perceptions of the home as a private ‘sealed space’. Instead, analysing the socio-cultural of home, as a site of nested influences situated within a particular community and locality illustrates the porousness of the home for BSA Muslim women. Furthermore, through the use of Goffman’s (1959) concept of the ‘performative self’ the home is further troubled, as a space where women must continuously perform in accordance to expected social norms. In this chapter the experiences of working from home or establishing home based businesses further complicates the dichotomy of public/work and private/home spaces, and seeks to understand the motivations behind such entrepreneurship as well as the effect on family and spatial practices in the home.

The second chapter explores the space of work and analyses the difficulties faced by BSA Muslim in work environments. Analysing institutional practises through an intersectional lens highlights the way stratification of gender, race and religion are already in place in organisations. The chapter also challenges stereotypical discourses of economic inactivity of BSA Muslim women through the need to consider locality, life stages and discrimination as barriers to employment. The chapter further explores what happens when a visible religious identity such as the hijab enters the workplace, and analyses BSA Muslim women’s experiences of othering in the workplace through micro-aggressions, infantilization or interpersonal discrimination.

The final chapter explores how the dual discourses of BSA Muslim woman as victim/threat vacillates according to the types of space that BSA Muslim inhabit. This vacillation is considered using the concepts of hypervisibility, invisibility and ‘double consciousness’ (W.E.B Dubois’, 2007), and considers how these concepts can highlight the experiences of BSA Muslim women as they move across everyday spaces of hospitals, public parks or public transport. I argue that these concepts are interlocked and that BSA Muslim women are generally solely understood through dominant discourses, which not only ensure they are ‘hypervisible’ in public spaces, but that this visibility in turn renders BSA Muslim women ‘invisible’, as they can only be understood through this
hypervisibility. This chapter further argues that BSA Muslim women’s experience in the everyday are routinely punctuated by interactions which challenge or deny their right to belong and illustrates how such exclusion from public spaces reflects by extension their exclusion from the nation. The final empirical chapter also explores BSA Muslim women’s within ‘homogenous community’ spaces and considers how ‘community’ considered through an intersectional lens are spaces layered with gendered, religious and cultural expectations.

This thesis presents key arguments which examine the everyday experiences across home, work and public spaces and demonstrates how encounters across these spaces affect women’s sense of self, often resulting in modifications of behaviours through knowledge of the unwritten rules and socially constructed norms of each space.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institute of learning.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

Introduction

In this thesis I draw upon personal narratives of British South Asian Muslim women (henceforth BSA Muslim women) living in Oldham. I was interested in the everyday lives of these women particularly in relation to the ways they understood and articulated their sense of self in contemporary Britain, given hegemonic discourses which shape understandings of BSA Muslim women. This interest was sharpened by an incident which occurred before I officially began this study. Whilst in charge of a charity stall at the local library I had a lengthy discussion with a white, middle aged man. At the end of our chat he commented he had been surprised, as I had come across as articulate, adding, ‘you’re not like other Muslim women, you know who wear that’ and pointed to his head, indicating my hijab. This struck me as an odd thing to say, and when I asked how many Muslim women he knew he was contrite enough to admit that he was really only acquainted with one other Muslim woman, who worked in his office, and didn’t wear hijab. The incident remained forefront in my mind, and indeed guided the impetus for this research. How can people feel they ‘know’ Muslim woman? What does this ‘knowing’ entail? And where does this knowledge come from? Given the limited interaction this man had with Muslim women, why did he feel that his knowledge could account for drawing comparisons between all Muslim women? I reflected on my own reaction to this and contemplated other BSA Muslim women’s experience of this knowledge of them. How did they understand these grand narratives? And what effect did this have on their everyday interactions?
This curiosity developed into exploring women’s sense of identity and how these could shift and change as they moved through different spaces and social situations in their daily life. I was particularly struck by the notion that we are different people in different spaces, which runs counter to the often one-dimensional portrayal of BSA Muslim women in popular discourse. It is this notion of BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives which is key to countering hegemonic and dominant discourses. As such, the concepts of intersectionality, that is the way in which social identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion and so on, converge, overlap and intersect in multiple and complex ways (Mirza, 2013) in everyday lives are key concepts in this thesis. It is the significance of exploring these intersecting identities, across a variety of spaces within the everyday that this thesis contends is paramount to challenging dominant, stereotypical representations of BSA Muslim women.

1.1 Representations

The figure of the Muslim woman appears in both public and popular discourse as a contentious figure, through pervasive images of niqabs (face veils), and official policy and public media texts which recount fears of young Muslim women becoming ‘jihadi brides’, or else willing victims to their overtly patriarchal religion and culture. Just as Muslim communities have come to be seen as homogenous and static, Muslim women are similarly presented as monolithic, one-dimensional caricatures. This study attempts to move beyond such stereotypes, and similarly to existing research on Muslim women, uses personal narratives to do so (Dwyer, 2000, Kirmani, 2009; Tarlo, 2010; Mirza, 2013). However, where this study differs, and indeed extends the literature, is that it focuses on the fluidity, motion and richness of the everyday lives of BSA Muslim women by exploring their everyday lives across a variety of spaces, namely home, work and ‘community’ spaces. This adds to
scholarly debates challenging dominant representations of Muslim women but argues that such debates can benefit from an approach that explores women’s lives across the spectrum of these everyday spaces. An intersectional approach so allows for an avoidance of the tendency to ‘flattening’ of identities which can occur with research on Muslim communities, often due to ‘exploring a singular category’ such as religion without consideration for other social relations such as gender, class, ethnicity, region and culture (Mac and Ghaill and Haywood, 2015, p.98). This study argues that through employing the theoretical concept of intersectionality but expanding it to include religion, space, self and the everyday, it is possible to gain more meaningful understandings of and explore BSA Muslim women’s lives in a way which highlights the complexity, richness and intricacies which characterise Muslim women’s experiences of their everyday. Given the current climate of hostility, othering and increasing Islamophobic abuse faced by Muslim women the necessity of exploring BSA Muslim women’s narratives cannot be overestimated. As Mirza (2013, p.112) notes, there are real consequences of the simplistic constructions of BSA Muslim women through the dichotomy of either victim/threat, not least because ‘stereotypes are powerful forms of knowledge’ which ‘can shape the lived experience of the ethnicised and racially constructed Muslim woman in Britain.’

1.2 Background

In 2017 the Runnymede Trust published its report ‘Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all’, 20 years after the Trust’s first report on Islamophobia (1997). The report warns that without a definition and a clear concerted approach to tackle Islamophobia being adopted by the public, and more importantly by policy makers, there is a risk that everyday experiences of
hostility and discrimination against Britain’s Muslim population will continue to go unchecked. Of course, as the report states, the world is a vastly different place 20 years on, and there have been a number of global and national events that have shaped and adversely impacted understandings of British Muslims: from the ‘race riots’ in Oldham and other Northern towns in 2001, to the 9/11 attack in New York and the 7/7 bombings in London, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the rise of the so-called Islamic state, and any number of terrorist atrocities committed across the world. Such events at local, national and global scales have affected not only the way British Muslims are seen in contemporary British society, but how they see themselves.

The essentialisation of Britain’s Muslim communities, noted in the Runnymede Trust’s 1997 report, as homogenised monolithic groups, is still very much part of public discourses, and dominates understandings of contemporary British Muslims. Various policy initiatives aimed at dealing with the ‘Muslim question’ have come to define British Muslim identities as synonymous with questions of securitisation, risk, self-segregation and incompatibility with British values (Berkeley, 2013). In contemporary understandings of British Muslims, women are central, as it is the visible Muslim women that has come to symbolise the ‘Muslim other’ (Mirza, 2013). Furthermore, in the national conscious the moral panic regarding Muslim communities extends to seeing the Muslim body as dangerous, unknown and a potential threat (Ahmed, 2003). For example, in 2016 David Cameron’s comments suggested that young Muslim women’s purported susceptibility to radicalisation was a result of their ‘traditional submissiveness’, while a lack of English speaking skills was deemed a factor in the self-segregation of Muslim communities (Payton, 2016; Mason and Sherwood, 2016).
Furthermore, government reports such as the Casey Review (2016) proposed better Muslim integration as key to tackling extremism and radicalisation. Such discourses position Muslims in Britain as potential threats, locating them outside the mainstream and lacking the essential skills to integrate into British society. As Hussain and Meer (2018, p.48) observe, ‘there does seem to prevail a mood in government that sees Muslims as “outsiders” who need to be brought “inside”’. This high degree of visibility in media and policy initiatives has also included representations of BSA Muslim women as docile, oppressed by cultural/religious influences, and in need of being rescued from their men (Ahmed, 2003).

The Muslim population in Britain has grown notably in size, from around 1.4 million in 1997 to nearly 3 million according to the 2011 census. Ethnic minorities remain over-represented in statistics of poor health, unemployment, educational attainment levels and poverty. The statistics on hate crimes also show a startling rise in verbal, physical or threatening behaviour against Britain’s Muslim population. According to the government’s Hate Crime Action Plan, over 1,000 anti-Muslim hate crime incidents were reported in the first four months of 2016 (UK Gov, 2016). Following the 2016 EU referendum, which followed a campaign that partly centred around the issue of migration, race hate crime rose by 400% in the first week after the vote, with nearly a quarter of the reported incidents targeting those of a ‘Muslim appearance’ (Burnett, 2016). The term ‘Muslim’ has become synonymous with dominant representations, of ‘imperilled women’ and ‘terrorist men’ (Alexander, 2013, p.6). This means that the complexities of everyday lives remain lost in most public representations of British Muslims.
1.3 Theoretical considerations

This study focuses on BSA Muslim women’s experiences of living in Oldham and is premised on the notion that it is vital to gain a better understanding of BSA Muslim women’s experiences in the everyday and to concretise their everyday lived realities. Oldham has long-term established Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities and as such is often used as an example for changing race relation policies, thus inhabiting an interesting position in the public and political imagination. Oldham is a former mill town and is located close to Manchester, in the North-West of England. The 1950s and 1960s brought an influx of Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrant male workers to the town as labourers in the textile industries. By the mid-1970s the textile industries were in decline and eventually collapsed, leaving these early migrants facing long term unemployment. This history of a once flourishing mill town, and its subsequent decline is entrenched in the history and public imagination of Oldham, creating a narrative of the town which hinges on a ‘discourse of nostalgia and cultural decline seen through the prism of race and ethnicity’ (Webster, 2003, p.96). In 2001 race riots erupted in the town, and subsequently labelled Oldham as ‘troubled by Muslim “self-segregation” and ghettoisation’ (Phillips, 2016, p.184). Whilst policy focus shifted from ‘multiculturalism’ to ‘community cohesion’ and the issue of Oldham’s of ‘angry young men’, the women of Oldham and their experiences of living in the town were notably absent. Instead portrayals of Oldham’s BSA Muslim women were relegated to a few lines in the investigations which followed the 2001 Oldham riots. According to the reports in Oldham the ‘perceived lesser status’ of Muslim women left them ‘isolated from society, unable to speak English and confined to the home’ (Ritchie, 2001, p.83) with women and girls considered to suffer added discrimination in such communities (Cantle 2001). In many ways Oldham’s history of post-industrial decline, poverty, self-
segregation and riots form the grand narrative of the town (Slater and Anderson, 2011; Johnston et al. 2016) Indeed, when I asked the participants what people might think of when talking about Oldham, they referred to the riots as what ‘everyone knows about Oldham.’ This knowledge shaped participants experiences, and shaped knowledge of them as Shain (2010, p.83) notes, following the race riots the ‘repositioning of Muslim males (who were once regarded as passive and law-abiding) as dangerous fanatics has impacted on representations of Muslim women.’ This, as Shain explains, is because femininity is defined in relation to masculinity, therefore the more dangerous, extreme and aggressive the Muslim male appears, the more ‘passive, controlled, and vulnerable Asian and Muslim girls and women are assumed to be’ (ibid, p.83). The effects of these assumptions and positioning on BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives is discussed further in Chapter 6. It is contended that often in research place is relegated to the background, yet in this study it is necessary not only to consider Oldham in its physical, geographical and historical sense, but also through the emotions, connections, relations and meanings participants attached to the town. What does it entail to live in a town marked by narratives of poverty, deprivation, racial unrest and ghettoization? How do these discourses shape participants sense of belonging or connection, and how do these affect interactions in everyday spaces?

As one of the most deprived towns in the country the range of social inequalities in Oldham show continued and persistent deprivation, yet as this study will show, BSA Muslim women are navigating new ways to circumvent this inequality through education and varying forms of employment. The specific group of women chosen for this research, namely second/third generation women are also at an intersection, having expectations of, experiences and connections in contemporary Britain that differ from those of older generations, and therefore also differing notions of belonging and identity than older generations.
The present study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of what it means to be a Muslim woman in contemporary Britain. It does this through qualitative investigation of BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives across different sites namely, home, work and public spaces. Furthermore, this research uses an intersectional approach by focusing on social identities, lived experiences and interactions in order to understand BSA Muslim women’s sense of self and how this self is navigated in the ‘context of the all consuming hegemonic racist and sexist discourses’ of Islamophobia (Mirza, 2013, p.7). It pays attention to the everyday lived realities of these women and asks what happens when the Muslim woman moves between different types of space, each offering different kinds of normative and unwritten rules of interaction. The concept of intersectional selves, and different aspects of the self come to the fore in different spaces is a key aspect of this research. In this thesis I seek answers to the following questions: Which aspects of identity shape BSA Muslim women’s experiences in the home, and how do ethnicity and culture shape family practices? How are multiple identities framed, managed and negotiated within professional work environments? And finally, turning its attention to public and community spaces, this thesis asks how BSA Muslim women manage, subvert or negotiate these spaces given the popular discourses which shape understandings of them in stereotypical ways and which make Muslim women hypervisible.

While previous studies have tended to focus on one type of space only, this study benefits from a layered analysis across different kinds of everyday space, adding to understandings of the richness and complexity of BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives. The analysis focuses not only on intersecting identities, but also on the spaces themselves which include home, work and public spaces. Critically analysing the specificity of home, work and public space entails exploring the influences that shape access to and experiences, as well as the
practices in these spaces. This thesis also considers the discourses and practices associated with each space.

The research was carried out in Oldham between October 2015 and July 2016 and employed qualitative sit-down interviews as well as the use of photo diaries, diary entries and walk along interviews with 35 women aged between 25 and 40 years old and living in various wards of Oldham. All of the women were born in Oldham, and although some had lived elsewhere during their lives, at the time of the study all were living in the town. The importance of using Oldham as a site for research is discussed further in Chapter 3, and discusses the research design of the study, arguing that the locality is of key importance when understanding not only how and which areas of public space are accessed, but how pathologized understandings of this locality shape BSA Muslim women’s understandings of self and other.

I now go on to outline the content of this thesis, with each chapter focusing on the key space I have identified.

### 1.4 Chapter summaries

#### 1.4.1 Chapter 2 - Islamophobia, Intersectionality and the everyday

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical framework for the research, making use of theories of intersectionality and of the everyday. This chapter is divided into two parts, the first focusing on theories of Islamophobia and intersectionality and the second on concepts of the self, the everyday and space. The chapter begins by exploring the origins and effects Islamophobic discourses, which are also discussed as an unavoidable facet of everyday life
for British Muslims, furthermore, gendered Islamophobia is considered a ubiquitous and pervasive feature of BSA Muslim women’s lives. The chapter then moves on to discuss the value of using an intersectional approach in the study of BSA Muslim women’s experience of everyday life. Considered one of the most important contributions to sociological studies, and particularly studies on gender and race (McCall, 2005), intersectional approaches present tools with which to analyse not only intersecting identities of race, gender, ethnicity, religion and class and so on, but also to consider how these categories are ‘reciprocally constructing phenomena’ which ‘in turn shape complex social inequalities’ (Collins, 2015, p.2). In other words, intersectionality encourages an approach which not only looks at the individual, but also at how the wider framework of social inequalities shapes an individual’s experiences. This chapter argues that adopting an intersectional approach offers a way of challenging stereotypical discourses of BSA Muslim women, because it develops understandings of the way intersecting identities shape everyday lived experiences. I expand the usual categories of analysis for intersectionality with an emphasis on the focus of religion, as this contends that the racialised and gendered discourses framing Muslim women contribute to their ‘othering’.

Part two of this chapter argues that including a focus on the concepts of space, the self and the everyday adds further complexity to both Islamophobia and intersectionality. This is because each space is considered different, shaped by varying discourses and practices, which emphasises the notion of fluidity, complexity and multiple nuanced experiences of self in the everyday. In this second part everyday spaces in Oldham are discussed as comprising of social encounters which are ambivalent, tense and continually unfolding. Therefore, taking the everyday as the facet through which to explore intersectional identities and the discrimination of BSA Muslim women in public spaces is a key aspect of
this research. This also highlights the need to focus on different intersectional selves within these spaces. It is argued that gendered stereotypes of BSA Muslim women dominate encounters in everyday situations. Nayak (2017, p.289) further articulates this everyday ambivalence for BSA Muslim women, where the hypervisibility of the Muslim ‘other’ requires expulsion from the ‘imaginary idea of the nation state’, thus ‘purging the nation’ and ‘stabilising it as white’.

1.4.2 Chapter 3- Methods

Chapter 3 details the rationale behind the chosen methodological approach. This included qualitative interviews, photo and diary elicitation interviews, and walk-along interviews. This chapter also details the methodological considerations of carrying out the research, including arguing for a case study approach, and why discussions of Oldham are relevant to the contextual background of BSA Muslim women living there.

This chapter discusses how intersectionality informed the choice of methodology and methods by examining the question of ‘how to do intersectionality’ (McCall, 2005), and the methodological challenges this approach presents. Jordan-Zachary (2007) contends that sometimes methods and methodologies can contribute to the additive, single-axis discrimination and essentialisation of identities which intersectionality should challenge. I argue that facet methodology (Mason, 2011) offers a particularly useful way to do intersectional research, which can avoid this essentialisation of difference. The use of a range of methods addresses some of these challenges, because when used in varying conjunctions to form ‘mini-investigations’ or ‘facets’ they can shed light on different aspects of everyday lives. This, it is argued, illuminates various aspects of BSA Muslim women’s lives.
across different spaces and contributes to gaining a more encompassing understanding of BSA Muslim women’s lives in Oldham.

The chapter, informed by feminist methodology, also engages with issues of positionality. This was of particular importance given the research involved members of a community already marginalised along racialised and gendered lines. Being reflexive as a researcher and acknowledging questions of power and privilege form part of the discussion of the chapter. More particularly, being a Muslim woman and living in Oldham brought up questions of the ‘insider’ perspective of research. As Ahmad (2003, p.44) notes, researching as an ‘insider’, and as a Muslim woman researching other Muslim women ensues ‘complex methodological, ethical and political tensions’. These tensions include questions of representation, power, academic and personal responsibility, especially when ‘engaging with research and discourses that situate the researcher as potentially, the researched too’ (ibid, p.50).

However, as this chapter contends the notion of insider/outsider are not easily demarcated. Researchers can occupy dual and contradictory positions, inhabiting what is termed a ‘space between’ (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). This space in itself can be difficult to navigate, as being so intimately connected with the town and as a long term resident my positionality as a researcher was one that required continued reflexivity.

1.4.3 Chapter 4- Home and Work

The first analysis chapter focuses on the home and discusses this space as imbued with various meanings, attributes and functions. Notions of safety, privacy and comfort are some of the most commonly used attributes associated with the home. Given the ‘othering’ BSA Muslim women experience in wider public spaces, this chapter explores whether home could be configured as an inclusive and safe site for BSA Muslim women. An intersectional
approach to analysing discourses and practices of gender, ethnicity, religion and culture in the home, reveals this space to be a site of ambivalence, contestation and conflict. Crucially, as this chapter discusses, far from being a private space, the home can be considered as an unsealed space one where the self and belonging are experienced as shifting, contradictory and relational. The key argument in this chapter concerns is the porousness of the home, where relationships between those within and outside this space are explored through an intersectional lens. The homes discussed in this chapter are sites of nestled influences; practices within the home cannot be understood as divorced from the wider and socio-cultural context in which the home is situated. The homes of participants are situated within particular wards, within Oldham and within Britain. Consequently, what lies beyond the boundaries of home can affect the social relations that comprise it. Taking into consideration BSA Muslim women’s intersectional identities further highlights these influences, and it is only through considerations of these intersections that the home can be understood beyond the simple dichotomies that present it as a site of safety, or of ‘patriarchal control’ (Casey Review, 2016, p.108).

The notion of the home as a private and sealed place is further complicated in this chapter through an exploration of home businesses, a practice that necessarily involves the opening up of the private home to public scrutiny. The socio-economic factors which led the women to establish such businesses direct analytical attention to how the recent recession and the nature of local labour markets shape these women’s lives, especially as Oldham is a town with high levels of economic deprivation. The home is also viewed in relation to motherhood and intimate relationships and showed that for BSA Muslim women negotiations of gender relations, parenting, and responsibilities of managing the home spaces were also factors in BSA Muslim women setting up home businesses.

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1.4.4 Chapter 5- Work and Home

This chapter broadens the analysis of BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives by focusing on their everyday lives outside the home and their experiences of education and employment. With regards to educational attainment and employment, Muslim women, particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, have been discussed predominantly in terms of their perceived non-participation or economically inactive status. A cursory examination of media or policy documents reveals that such portrayals are nothing new, and in fact continue a long tradition of knowledge production, shaped by neo-colonialist and racialized notions of the ‘other’. For example, in highlighting the ‘striking inequality’ faced by ‘some women’ within ‘certain, segregated communities’ Dame Casey continued the long tradition of perpetuating the hegemonic, one-dimensional discourse of Muslim women as ‘facing high levels of social and economic isolation’ because ‘in some places cultural and religious practices in communities’ were holding them back (Casey Review, 2016, p.5). In this chapter I argue that it is necessary to examine interactions between local labour markets, BSA Muslim women’s life stages as well as familial and cultural expectations, in order to gain a more rounded picture of BSA Muslim women’s experiences of employment and to counter dominant narratives of economic inactivity.

This chapter argues that it is necessary to move beyond such discourses in order to analyse BSA Muslim women’s experiences in employment. It does so by drawing on participants’ narratives of recruitment, experiences within office and work environments and interactions with colleagues and management. Discrimination was a prevalent feature of women’s employment experiences, contributing to changing work patterns, place of employment or leaving work altogether. An intersectional approach to analysis on multi
levels is a key aspect of this chapter, as macro level understandings of social categories such as race, gender and religion are discussed on the meso level of work environments in order to evaluate the extent to which such understandings affect BSA Muslim women’s experiences. This is shown in the experiences of Muslim women who veil and their narratives of being othered, infantilised, or compared unfavourably to other colleagues in the workplace. The positive effects of seeing Muslim women in management and senior position roles cannot be overestimated, as the chapter noted that for BSA Muslim women having other individuals with similar cultural, or religious values in such management roles attributed to a sense of comfort, collegiality and aspiration to continue or progress in employment. This chapter also explores the negotiations engaged in by Muslim women who both work and are mothers. The social construction of the ‘mother’ is explored here from a cultural and religious perspective, and examines the pressures placed on Muslim women to successfully manage employment and motherhood.

1.4.5 Chapter 6- Public Interactions and belonging in public spaces

In the final empirical chapter, the analysis of everyday spaces is broadened further to include wider public spaces. The analysis centres on how BSA Muslim women situate their sense of self in Oldham. The notion of ‘white space’ (Anderson, 2002) is also discussed in this chapter as a way of framing the analysis and the experiences of BSA Muslim women. White space and the exclusion of minorities in Oldham is seen not only as a physical act, but also a form of exclusion though collective history and therefore collective exclusion of those considered outside belonging. This chapter argues that Oldham’s history as a former industrial town, its subsequent decline and ascribed description as a ‘ghetto’, further
contribute to racialised understandings of the town and consequently BSA Muslim women’s place in it. It is contended that such collective histories reinforce boundaries; and the imagination of a ‘white space’ works to exclude BSA Muslim women as bodies which are out of place. This exclusion manifests itself in the encounters BSA Muslim women endure in the white space of Oldham, whereby interactions are driven by gendered and racialised understandings of BSA Muslim women as other.

In this chapter everyday belonging is analysed from the perspective of identities which are considered culturally, religiously and ethnically other. An intersectional analysis of identities, both on a macro level of hegemonic discourses which frame understandings of BSA Muslim women for the white majority, and on micro level of BSA Muslim women’s own sense of identity illuminates everyday experiences that become punctuated with interactions through which the BSA Muslim woman is considered as outside belonging. In this chapter the concepts of both hypervisibility and invisibility alongside white space are key conceptual framing in this chapter. Hypervisibility and invisibility both shape experiences of participants and contribute to the non-person treatment of BSA Muslim women. Such treatment negatively impacts on BSA Muslim women’s sense of self and they actively reflect on their experiences through a form of double consciousness (Du Bois, 1965), where they show awareness of the perceptions of them as Muslim women and as such either subvert or manage such expectations.

The concept of community also forms a significant section of this chapter, and community is discussed in terms of a ‘canopy’ (Anderson, 2004) that can contribute to a sense of safety and comfort. Interrogating notions of community from an intersectional perspective, which explores intergenerational, gendered, religious and cultural differences, reveals a space that
is ambivalent, layered and continually unfolding. Far from being a homogenous and ‘safe’ space, community is discussed in terms of ambivalence and tension, where gendered notions of belonging impact forcefully on women’s sense of self. Here, BSA Muslim women become hypervisible as their adherence to correct moral and cultural behaviour is policed, and subsequently they are judged according to visible markers of outward piety. In focusing on the community, this chapter also returns to discussions in the first chapter and the nested influences of everyday lives. Analysis shows that expectations of wider community are seen to influence relationships between family members, as learning correct moral behaviours are part of experiences in the home. Community is part of the socio-cultural and wider context within which the home is situated.

1.4.6 Chapter 7- Conclusion

The thesis concludes by bringing together the various themes discussed in the chapters and by returning to the core questions that have informed the study, namely how BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives are affected and shaped by the intersections of social identities such as race, ethnicity, gender and religion?

The chapter considers the wider implications of the findings presented in this thesis. The chapter contends that employing an intersectional lens but expanding it to include religion, the self, space and the everyday can provide valuable insight into the lives of BSA Muslim women, which, crucially can counter hegemonic discourses. This more multidimensional approach to the understanding of intersectionality emphasises the shifting, fluid, multi-dimensional, relational and interactional nature of everyday lives. Neither intersectionality nor Islamophobia are experienced as fixed or static experiences, or in additive or archetypal
ways; therefore, it is only through layering concepts of the self, space and the everyday that the complexity of everyday lives can be fully recognised or considered. Consequently, it is argued that the strength of analysis in this study lies in the ability to consider a variety of spaces, as it is through this that nuanced, holistic and deeper understandings of BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives can be achieved and in doing so, dominant, stereotypical discourses can be challenged. It is argued that the study further complicates the notion of a public/private dichotomy by analysing how wider social, cultural and religious influences shape practices of gender and identity in the home. Through analysing work spaces, simplistic notions of economic inactivity are challenged, and experiences within work places are focused on to show how experience of discrimination affect BSA Muslim women’s understanding of their place in work space environments. Finally, a focus on public spaces shows how the prevalence of skewed and stereotypical discourses affects BSA Muslim women’s encounters in their everyday lives. It moves beyond simplistic understandings of Islamophobia to account for how othering of Muslim women is experienced on a visceral, emotional level and is reflected upon by BSA Muslim women to the extent they modify their use of and behaviour in public spaces. Furthermore, an exploration of community challenges ideas of homogenous spaces, and asks questions of gendered experiences. Community is discussed as an ambivalent space, offering some aspects of safety. Yet, community expectations, and policing of behaviour contribute to narrow, proscriptive understandings of what it means to be a BSA Muslim woman.

This thesis comprises of the key theoretical concept of intersectionality, and brings the added dimensions of religion, space, self and the everyday. Doing so allows for understandings of BSA Muslim women which move beyond stereotypical discourses and highlights the nuanced complexities of Muslim women’s identities and their everyday lives.
Chapter 2- Intersectionality and the everyday

This review chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part focuses on the concept of Islamophobia and theories of intersectionality. The discussion is centred on how a gendered approach to Islamophobia can provide nuanced understandings of British South Asian Muslim women’s everyday lives. Intersectionality is then discussed as a valuable analytical tool to understand how the intersections of race, gender and religion can help to trouble widespread discourses that depict BSA Muslim women as silent, oppressed victims of a backward culture. The second part of this chapter then further builds on this complexity by introducing concepts of the self, the everyday and different spaces. In this second part it is argued that the layering of these concepts and considering intersectional selves as multiple and emplaced further complicates understanding of both Islamophobia and intersectionality as it highlights the fact that neither Islamophobia nor intersectionality are static or fixed. The layering of these concepts provides the theoretical framework for this chapter and adds complexity to both theories of Islamophobia and intersectionality, as it develops the understanding that each space is different and therefore the site of shifting, multiple and nuanced experiences for BSA Muslim women.

PART I- Islamophobia and intersectionality

2.1 Introduction

The ‘Muslim’ woman has become an increasingly contentious figure in public debates in many Western countries, represented as embodying both the victim of oppressive patriarchal regimes and the highly visible ‘other’. This tendency is no less apparent than in
Britain where, against the backdrop of policies on multiculturalism, community cohesion and integration, and debates over veiling and the war on terror, the continual construction and reconstruction of the ‘Muslim woman’ has become subject to intense social and political scrutiny. The question then arises, what is the BSA Muslim woman? In what form does she exist both within and outside the public imagination, and what does this mean for women’s everyday lived experiences?

It is the public, popular and stereotypical constructions of the ‘British South Asian (BSA) Muslim woman’ that is the focus of this chapter. More specifically, it is the terms continually used in official policy documents and public discourse to construct the ‘Muslim woman’ which are analysed and unpacked. I argue that understandings of BSA Muslim women continue to labour under ‘neo-colonialist’ assumptions which inform singular and stereotypical understandings of this group. I begin by exploring the contemporary experiences of BSA Muslim women and how these are framed in current policy and academic discourse. The research then moves onto discuss Islamophobia, I argue that gendered Islamophobia more particularly shapes the context within which BSA Muslim women experience everyday interactions.

An intersectionality lens further contextualises the nuances of these everyday experiences, and challenge stereotypical assumptions on BSA Muslim women. Through accounting for the way gender, ethnicity and religion intersect to shape can help shed light on the multifaceted nature or everyday lives. The inclusion of religion within intersectional analysis is also considered a crucial aspect of highlighting the intricate, lived nuances of Muslim women’s lives. This chapter thus develops a theoretical framework which highlights the
narrowness of general understandings of BSA Muslim women, presenting ways in which these narratives can be challenged and more complex understandings advanced.

2.2 Muslim women in the UK

Understandings of BSA Muslim women in Britain, in particular the racialised representation of South Asian Muslim women are shaped by a narrative that is controlled, managed and repeatedly enforced through a mixture of government policies, media representations and social anxieties. BSA Muslim women therefore occupy a contradictory space, one that simultaneously reinforces the notion of victimhood, yet paradoxically, also presents the Muslim woman as a threat, an aberration to British societal norms. This section presents a brief overview of literature regarding BSA Muslim women in Britain.

From literature charting early migrant women’s lives in Britain (Wilson, 1978; Westwood, 1984; Shaw, 1988; Ballard, 1994) to later work from Brah (1996) which looked at diaspora and young Muslim women’s experiences growing up in Britain, South Asian women have been presented as a group torn between two cultures was a recurring theme. Earlier sociological literature focused on birdaris or kinship, connections to the country of origin, and issues of izzat (honour) and baseti (shame). Arranged marriages, and cultural and religious obligation were also considered as impacting on earlier Muslim migrant women’s lives, in ways which were restrictive, confining and as forms of control (Khan, 1977; Shaw, 1988; Ballard, 1994). As Alexander (2002, p.556) notes, Britain’s South Asian communities were pathologized, and configured as a group with overdetermined cultural differences distinct from the wider majority, ‘studies of Asian communities pored endlessly over the
fascinating cultural features of arranged marriages, kinship systems and religious rituals’ and therefore only appeared in literature as either ‘stereotypes or ideal types’ (p.574).

Claire Dwyer’s (2000) work represents a shift in the way young BSA Muslim women were represented in sociological literature. This shift could be attributed in part to a change in focus to younger generations and changing lives. Dwyer’s work highlights everyday dilemmas of negotiating diasporic identities. Crucially, Dwyer’s (2000, p.477) research illustrates that identities are rarely fixed, but fluid and always in a state of flux, however BSA Muslim women ‘acknowledged that in the practice of their everyday lives they were often called upon to prioritise one aspect of their compound identities’. The issue of generation is yet another intersectional difference that taken into consideration offers yet another lens within which to consider BSA Muslim women’s everyday experiences. Differing aspirations, opportunities, expectations and lived experiences of this from previous generations have distinct impact on identity and belonging. As Franceschelli (2016, p.243) notes, changing gender roles and expectations, as well as continuity remain a part of identity and understanding of belonging for BSA Muslim, which emphasises the notion that ‘cultures are not monolithic, but rather manifold and supple.’ Later sociological literature focusing on these second and third generation women, the daughters and grand daughters of earlier migrant women, whilst shifting debates to issues of hybridity, identity and issues of social change, nonetheless still used ‘deterministic themes’ of religion, arranged marriages, hijabs and veiling (Brah, 1996; Basit, 1997; Dwyer, 1999) as a central focus for studies (Ahmad 2003, p.45) which limited the discourse on BSA South Asian women.
It could be argued that second and third generation BSA Muslim women born and living in Britain have experienced two distinct social contexts (Haw, 2009), one that spans a pre and post 9/11 world. BSA Muslim women of these generations are themselves at an intersection, able to remember and reference a period in which racism was focused on race and ethnicity, whilst also able to trace a shift in discourse to the current vilification of Muslims as one that hinges significantly on religion. In the post 9/11 and 7/7 context, academic literature has increasingly highlighted the narrow frameworks within which BSA Muslim women are understood in the public polity. These narrow frameworks have constrained BSA Muslim women’s voices, as discourses categorised as prevalent within ‘Islamic culture’ such as honour killings, forced marriage, ‘war on terror’ or the veil, or more lately ‘jihadi brides’, ensures understandings of Muslim women vacillate between victim or threat (Rashid, 2013; Mirza, 2013; Weedon, 2016). BSA Muslim women ‘s voices have remained absent from these narratives, or where represented, are often done so only in proscribed or narrow frameworks (Rashid, 2013).

Arguably, the requirement for BSA Muslim women to prioritise one aspect of their compound identities, as Dwyer (2000) observed in earlier work, was exasperated post-9/11, after which Muslim women were called upon to distance themselves from an Islam and cultural values considered incompatible with the West. Additionally, as the ‘suspect community’, British Muslims were increasingly required to prove their loyalty to the nation (Ryan et al. 2009). As a consequence, BSA Muslim women have repeatedly tried to resist such ‘othering’ and ‘lay claim to the “normal” within public debates (Ryan, 2011, p.1045). Work from Saeed (2016, p.58) shows how, for veiled women, and their visible religiosity, what is acceptable to be seen in Britain is a matter of socio-political discourse and what can be safely contained within the ‘ideological framework of Britishness’. What becomes
abundantly clear is that Muslim women are never given the opportunity to determine their
own narratives, rather their stories, and their voices remain marginalised and therefore
silenced. The BSA Muslim woman is the ideal marker for identity politics, yet, she is rarely
included in debates about identity, or discussed in only narrow and denigrating ways
(Saeed, 2016).

In a post-9/11 context, the shift between Muslim woman as ‘victim’ of oppression to
potential terrorist in popular opinion and public policy has been noted in various academic
literature (Shain, 2003; Puar and Rai, 2004). Research has focused on ways in which BSA
Muslim women are overrepresented as victims of racial or religious abuse (Zempi and
Chakraborti, 2014) as discriminated against in the labour market (Yeandle et al. 2006;
Ghummam and Ryan, 2013; Modood and Khattab, 2015; Khattab and Hussein, 2017) as
members of one of the most socially disadvantaged groups in Britain, and of course,
increased securitisation as potential threat and extremists (Saeed, 2016; Jackson, 2018;
Zarabadi and Ringrose, 2018).

However, whilst academic research has helped shed light on how the contemporary social
and political climate is impacting on Muslim women, nonetheless there is a danger that this
narrates our understandings as it can reproduce the discursive stereotypes, reducing BSA
Muslim women to ‘simply being objects of social research’ (Ahmad, 2003, p.45). It is
imperative therefore to remain aware not only of the myriad influences which structure
Muslim women’s lives, but how these are manifest and shaped by everyday experiences.

While it is important to retain the widest possible conception of BSA Muslim women and
their everyday lives, Islamophobia is central to any understanding. It is difficult to analyse
the lives of British Muslims without an understanding of Islamophobia. Indeed, the centrality of Islamophobia was reflected in the comments from the women who took part in this study and shows the attitudinal context in which these behaviours and attitudes are experienced in everyday lives. The following sections of this chapter analyses the concept of Islamophobia, and in particular how understandings of gendered Islamophobia can help shape understandings of BSA Muslim women’s experiences.

2.3 Islamophobia

Though the clear increase in Islamophobia and othering of Muslims has generally been attributed to terrorist events such as 9/11 and the 7/7 London bombings, the word Islamophobia has been in popular usage since 1997 in the UK. Anti-Muslim sentiments have a longer history however and can be also be traced back to Orientalism and categorisations of Muslims as ‘Other’, stereotyped as having inherently negative qualities and attributes (Moosavi, 2014). Coined by the Runnymede Trust in 1997, Islamophobia was used to allude to a distinct anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim discrimination. With a number of key elements, including seeing Islam as inferior, not just different, and considering anti-Muslim prejudice as natural and not problematic, Islamophobia was declared a ‘part of the ‘fabric of everyday life in Britain in much the same way that anti-Semitism was taken for granted earlier in the century (Runnymede Trust, 1997, p.73). The term Islamophobia has gained increased traction over the past decade and is described as ‘the process of homogenising Muslims and attributing negative, backward and exotic otherness to them as a group’ (Garner, 2010, p.159). In a report marking the twentieth anniversary of the original report into Islamophobia, The Runnymede Trust further offers the following definition:
Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life' (Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all. 2017, p.1)

Much like xenophobia and anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, though perhaps exacerbated by events such as 9/11, has long and deep historical roots (Esposito and Kalin 2011). Indeed, as Zempi and Awan (2016, p.4) state, ‘contemporary Islamophobia is a reflection of an historical Islamophobic phenomenon which was constructed in colonial times, but which has increased significantly in recent times, creating a deeper resentment hostility and fear of Islam and of Muslims than existed before.’ Modood (1997, p.4) argues that Islamophobia is about both religion and race, and that Islamophobic discrimination is based on cultural racism, a form of exclusion as ‘pernicious’ as that which focuses on physical difference of the body. Furthermore, Jackson (2017, p.149) notes that Islamophobia is a form of cultural racism, whereby the same tropes of biological racism are employed, but attention is shifted to focus on the ‘cultural heritage of groups and individuals’ which in turn essentialises and fixes these groups as Other. Central to Garner and Selod’s (2015, p.11) interpretation of Islamophobic discourses and practices is the process of racialisation, which implicitly ties the concept of hatred of Islam and Muslims with race and racism. Crucially they argue that it is necessary to counter the misconception which suggests that religious affiliations are ‘never to do with the body’ whilst “race” is only to do with the body.’ The argument that Islamophobia results from a process of racialisation is a complex one, and hinges on the
notion that groups can become racialised based not only on phenotypic differences, which are not limited to skin colour, or any other physical characteristic, but also cultural differences which are seen as embodied by the other (Meer, 2013). This is particularly important when discussing the veil and embodied intersections of race, gender and religion of BSA Muslim women’s identities. However, despite the contentions around and difficulty in defining Islamophobia, there is a consensus that events such as 9/11 marked a profound shift in the way Muslims and Islam were perceived in the West (Poynting and Mason, 2007; Jackson, 2017). Along with public debates concerning integration/segregation, security and the threat of terror, Muslim women and in particular the veil, are the most contentiously discussed regarding the presence of Muslims in Europe and the UK. These debates engage notions of belonging and citizenship, of integration and multiculturalism, of public and private spaces and the effect of visible differences such as the veil within these. Crucially, Islamophobia is not confined to one particular facet of life: it encompasses encounters between individuals in public spaces, it animates discourse in public media, shapes understandings in official government policy, and has a virulent online, virtual presence. As Jackson (2017, p.2) notes, hostility towards Muslims can be used to justify a plethora of social ills as, ‘Terrorism, riots, segregated communities, lack of national identity, child grooming and low educational achievement’ are all enveloped into a discourse which serves to not only mark out the Muslim as ‘Other’, but as an ‘Other’ which impedes and threatens national ideals and values.
2.3.1 Gendered Islamophobia

Categorising individuals as visibly Muslim relies not only on assumptions based on ethnicity or race, but also on identifiers which can include differences such as dress. For Muslim women this identifier can include the hijab or niqab, as well as other forms of cultural dress such as shalwar kameez. Such visibility can lead to negative experiences in BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives, particularly given the gendered and stereotypically narrow perceptions of Muslim women (Rashid, 2017). Such is the prevalence of the ‘Muslim question’ in European public spheres that the Muslim woman has been reduced to a set of codes, which centre on the veiled body in particular. In Western perceptions the Muslim woman presents a controversial and contradictory figure, as both victim of and complicit in a backward, oppressive religion. As Dahinden et al. (2014, p.330) contend, so ubiquitous has the discussion on Muslim women in Europe become that the figure of the ‘oppressed and submissive Muslim woman’ is used as a binary opposite to that of the ‘equal European woman’. More particularly, this binary is repeatedly constructed and used as the basis for understandings of and attitudes towards Muslim women. This binary posits veiled Muslim women as both a threat to ‘Western values’ of freedom and gender equality (Carland, 2011), and as victims in need of saving (Abu-Lughod, 2002). As recent social panics over the potential ‘jihadi brides’ illustrates, Muslim women are caught within forms of identity ascription which oscillate between victim and threat, and it is these ‘external categories of moderate/extremist that influence their everyday lives’ (Saeed, 2016, p.57). Given the intersection of gender, ethnicity and religion (discussed further below), BSA Muslim women face everyday experiences different from their Muslim male counterparts. For example, Muslim women are over-represented in figures of hate crimes (OSI, 2005), principally attributed to veiled Muslim women being ‘unmistakeably Muslim’ and ideal targets against
which to enact violence. As Allen (2015, p.289) notes, ‘the widespread stereotypes about Muslims and Islam that had begun to emerge in public and political spaces’, contribute to a sense of justification for attacks on Muslim women. Indeed, the veiled woman has become an overdetermined figure, judged purely on the basis of this visible difference, despite intersectional differences of class, race and age and so on. It is these intersectional differences and, more specifically, how these differences manifest and work across different types of public and private spaces which are the focus of this thesis, and so this review chapter seeks to construct a theoretical framework through which to understand these everyday experiences.

It is undeniable that Islamophobia crucially shapes many aspects of BSA Muslims lives. Subsequently there is substantial academic and analytical literature which details discrimination, anti-Muslim sentiment and hostility towards Muslim communities. However, given the proliferation of such literature, there remains, what Mac an Ghaill and Haywood (2015, p.97), describe as a ‘key limitation’, which is to address the fact that Islamophobia, as a concept and certainly the term itself, can also flatten British Muslim identities. As Mac an Ghaill and Haywood (2015, p.98) note, concepts such as Muslim, Islamophobia and racialisation are in fact shifting and unstable, therefore in exploring the everyday lives of British Muslims there is ‘the need to go beyond a singular category of religion in exploring their lives’. Simply put, there is more occurring in the way British Muslim women are ‘othered’ that can be surmised solely through reference to religion or religious discrimination. Therefore, one way in which the flattening of identities can be countered is through the use of a theoretical framework adapted in this chapter, which layers an analytical approach to intersectional differences of gender, race, ethnicity, social class as well as religion, and situates these across everyday spaces.
2.4 Intersectionality

Any discussion of BSA Muslim women necessitates awareness of discursive framing and the politics of representation. As Brah (1993, p.443) notes it is imperative in such discussions to make distinctions between ‘Muslim women as a category of discourse and Muslim women as concrete historical subjects with diverse social and personal biographies and social orientations.’ Yet all too frequently social, public and media discourses have constrained the parameters within which BSA Muslim women are ‘known’ through over determined visual, symbolic and physical manifestations. Where the BSA Muslim woman is veiled, this embodied representation is arguably made all the more cogent and ‘visible’ (Dwyer, 2000).

The use of intersectional analysis presents a way to challenge stereotypical understandings of BSA Muslim women as well as elucidate more fully their experiences. Amos and Parmar (1984, p.6) state, when critiquing the approach of ‘white Eurocentric feminism, that ‘one tendency has been for Black women to have either remained invisible within feminist scholarship or to have been treated purely as women without any significance attached to our colour and race.’ It is attaching significance to race and colour, and to the context of multiple discriminations that provides the framework for intersectionality. The roots of debates surrounding intersectionality, a term coined by Crenshaw (1989) can be traced back to the work of Black feminists and the black women’s rights movements in the USA. Crenshaw argued that black women were frequently absent in analyses of gender oppression and of racism, as the former focused on the experiences of white women, whilst the latter were concerned primarily with black men. Intersectionality then is a way to consider multiple intersections of discrimination for minority women, using the analogy of traffic intersections, ‘Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one
direction, and it may flow in another’ (Crenshaw, 1989, p.65). Discrimination faced by minority women does not fit in neatly within either the paradigms of racism or of sexism, rather these intersect often resulting in a combination of ways in which discrimination may be experienced;

‘Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated’ (Crenshaw, 1989, p.65).

The term ‘intersectionality’ was initially employed to address shortcomings in the American legal system, however, subsequent uses of the concept have proved it to be wider reaching. Criticising both antiracist and feminist theories, Crenshaw argued that multiple oppressions could not be understood in a separated, single axis manner but instead as synthesised experiences. Patricia-Hill Collins (2000) further extended the analyses of intersectionality in analysing social discriminations, as well as how intersecting forms of oppression could work together in producing injustice and different kinds of lived experiences. MacKinnon (2013) moves away from the analogy of traffic intersections, viewing intersectionality as a theory which succinctly captures overlapping inequalities. She argues that using intersectional analyses ‘fills out the Venn diagrams at points of overlap where convergence has been neglected’ (p.1020). According to MacKinnon, at the centre of this ‘overlap’ are ethnic minority women. In the analyses of differences that exist not only between white and minority women, but also within communities of minority women themselves, intersectionality proves invaluable. When considering the ‘overlapping’ of gender, race,
ethnicity, religion, class and culture, it is possible to consider minority women as holistic individuals, as differentiated within their own communities as well as outside of them.

Intersectional analysis is ideally a twofold process, combining structural and political foci (Crenshaw, 1989). The structural aspect focuses on the direct impact intersections of inequality may have upon an individual and their place within society. Political intersectionality focuses on institutions, and the relevance intersectional inequality has on the management, control, direction and resistance within these institutions. Jordan-Zachery (2013, p.256) considers intersectionality as a powerful analytical and political tool, not only as a method through which to identify the positioning of minority women, but as a means to liberate them and their communities; ‘in essence, intersectionality articulates a politics of survival for black women.’

Not only is it necessary to recognise the intersections (race, gender, ethnicity) which effect individuals’ daily lives but recognising ‘social power axes’ is equally important when understanding how social identities are placed along political and social spectrums. Yuval-Davis (2011) contends it is possible to approach intersectionality from a basis that recognises the fluidity and dynamism of an intra-categorical approach, troubling the categories of ‘gender’ and ‘race’, while combining this with an inter-categorical approach which focuses on the way different social categories such as race, gender, and class can affect particular behaviours or the distribution of resources to communities. McCall (2005) further contends that combining the inter-categorical with the intra-categorical approach can lead to a deeper intersectional analysis which addresses both the structural and political dimensions of intersectionality. In viewing intersectional analysis in a way that troubles social categories as well as focusing on their shifting dynamics, allows for understandings of
inequality across social categorisations and across structures, making ‘visible’ the manner in which institutions - educational, political, social and national - frame particular understandings and shape experiences of minority groups.

Whilst recognising the terms gender, ethnicity, race and class as social constructs, it is also important to acknowledge that the constructs of ‘race’ and ‘gender’ are very much lived experiences, often determining the everyday experiences of minorities. Indeed, focussing on the post-structural and post-categorical approaches within intersectionality as a framework can lead to a loss of focus on the everyday lived reality of the individual (Staunaes, 2003).

Bringing the subject into intersectionality is vital for understanding how social categories position the ‘other’. However, keeping these categories in view at the same time is difficult as various categories will overlap, overrule or differentiate from each other. Theoretically the categories may be managed simultaneously, but analytically it may become necessary to focus on one category over another. It is this managing of categories, theoretically and analytically, which has become a dilemma for intersectionality, and, crucially, where Staunaes (2003, p.105) contends that the subject becomes important. Additionally, Singh (2015) notes, that intersectionality has taken an increasingly structural critique approach to identity and identity politics which further blurs the notion of the subject within intersectional research. This is why Staunaes (2003, p.105) contends that the subject becomes important. ‘Doing intersectionality’ or providing rich narratives of the subject’s experiences of multiple social categories is vital in that it allows for understanding, ‘how the concrete doings and intermingling of categories work in a specific context and where and how these doings result in troubled subject positions’.
Intersectionality presents a way in which it is possible to highlight multiple discriminations; it has significantly improved the way in which social theorists understand privilege and marginalisation, and how these intersect across race, gender, ethnicity, religion or class. The use of an intersectional framework allows for the troubling of social structures and boundaries, the challenging of existing power structures, and the political effects of these structures on and in the everyday lives of marginalised groups. Within research on BSA Muslims intersectionality can be used to trouble discourses and the social construction of the Muslim community as ‘dangerous’, which simultaneously makes them hypervisible as a minority group, yet renders BSA Muslim women as silent subjects or even objects. The theory allows for consideration of everyday lived experience, drawing out narratives of ‘being’ a BSA Muslim woman and how that translates into how BSA Muslim women negotiate institutions of employment, education and home in their everyday lives. Using an intersectional approach challenges us to look at the ‘Muslim community’ in a way that takes into consideration the complex interplay of socio-economic conditions, geography, migratory history, ethnicity, class and other sub-categorisations. In this way it is possible to analyse the multiple positioning of women both within minority communities as well as outside them.

The following sections now move on to consider the inclusion of religion and religious practices within intersectional analyses, and how these can further enrich understandings of BSA Muslim women’s lives.

2.4.1 Intersectionality and the inclusion of religion

Although intersectionality has proved immensely useful in facilitating a consideration of multiple sites of discrimination/disadvantage, especially when exploring intersections of
categories of race, gender, ethnicity and class, the aspect of religious affiliation has yet to be explored fully in conjunction with these. Given the particular discrimination faced by BSA Muslim women, the understanding of how ‘being Muslim’ affects or intersects with gender, race or ethnicity is crucial. As Silvestri (2011, p.1230) notes, ‘faith and religiosity remain elusive subjects for the social sciences’, yet Muslim women are traditionally seen to ‘embody’ Islam through traditional gender roles, dress and practises. Through focusing on the intricacies of the everyday, alongside understandings of ethnicity, gender and religion, the diversity of BSA Muslim women as individuals both within and outside particular communities can be observed and highlighted. Dominant narratives of Muslim women as ‘problematic’ and ‘victims’ of a backward, archaic religion continue to be prevalent in, and at odds with, European society. The individual Muslim woman, who in the case of BSA Muslim women, is also a European citizen, rarely feature in prevalent lazy stereotypes of Muslim women who are narrowly framed within debates on Islamic dress and patriarchal control. Given that intersectionality has hitherto focussed on ‘fixed’ or ‘capacity endowed’ categories of difference such as race, gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality and disability, feminist theories on differences have become ‘gridlocked’ (Anthias, 2011; Mirza, 2013). These capacity endowed categories have become delineated as the most important and therefore most scrutinised reducing ‘the amount of space available within intersectionality’ to include such differences such as religion (Singh, 2015, p.658).

Cultural constructions of Muslim women both in political, media and public discourses have and continue to remain regulatory discourses, which affect Muslim women’s lives. As Brah (1993) notes, both racism and ethnicity are always gendered; crucially race and gender
intersect in particular ways for BSA Muslims, as the additional intersection of religion frames the daily lived realities of BSA Muslim women differently from their male counterparts, as well as from other minority women. However, the role of religion has yet to be adequately analysed within feminist intersectional approaches. It could be argued this may be due to religion being considered as a contingent social category, or not a ‘capacity endowed’ category of difference. Consequently, religion may be considered a ‘voluntary identity’. Yet, as Meer and Modood (2009, p.339) describe, the ‘racialisation of religion’ and particularly anti-Islamic sentiments have served to other BSA Muslims through both ethnically and religiously endowed categories. Further, they contend there is ‘less sympathy for the notion that Muslim minorities might be subject to racism by virtue of real or perceived “Muslimness”. As Alexander (2017, p.14) notes, in ascribing religion as a voluntary identity, this ‘seemingly removes them from the status of victim’.

Weber (2014) asks how intersectionality can be re-conceptualised to include matters of religion without de-emphasising the importance of ethnicity and race as categories of difference. She contends that the inclusion of religion, and in this case Islam, in the intersectional framework should not lead to a discussion of what ‘Islam “is” but to an examination of how it is lived and ‘made’ in ever-changing ways’ (Weber, 2014, p.23). The complex subjectivities of Muslim women present a challenge to contemporary understandings of intersectionality, in particular due to the ‘tension between mainstream feminism’s construal of religion as oppressive, and religious women’s very different and varied experiences regarding religious life, including those aspects that are experienced as positive and empowering’ (Singh, 2015, p.670). Furthermore, intersectional frameworks which seek to include religion and faith must include anti-racism as fundamentally important; because as Weber (2014, p28) notes, the conditions under which Muslim women
are recognised as European citizens are subject to ‘new forms of race and racialization’ and
the ‘insistence that Islam can only produce gender inequality is expressed in the name of
religion or culture, but it relies on the structures of race and racism’. This, Weber (2014,
p.29) argues, returns intersectionality to its ‘traditional, historical, emancipatory roots’, as it
highlights the way women experience race and gender differently according to their
positions within structures of power.

Given the particular intersections of faith, ethnicity, and gender experienced by BSA Muslim
women, highlighting the nuanced and highly subjective positions and positioning of
individuals is vital. Social categories are not experienced uniformly across groups as certain
categories, such as ethnicity and religion, can carry varying stigma within and across
different contexts of migration, space, time and politics (Werbner, 2013). The question then
arises, which social categories matter when and where? In order to contextualise answers to
this question theories of intersectionality and the everyday provide an effective framework
within which to challenge hegemonic perceptions of BSA Muslim women. To that end
Anthias (2012) proposes a theoretical framework which attends to different levels of
analysis, addressing social categories, dominant and exclusionary political practices as well
as knowledge production. Crucially Anthias (2012, p.13) contends that ‘intersectionality’
need not have one particular meaning (that of intersecting discriminations). Instead an
intersectional framework that locates social categories within ‘a broader social framing that
attends to power, hierarchy and context- both spatial and temporal’ is preferable. Attending
to the spatial and temporal means taking into account everyday experiences as taking place
in specific locations and at particular times. Bringing these dimensions into dialogue with
intersectionality offers a holistic and detailed account of BSA Muslim women’s lives.
The following section moves on to consider the ways in which intersections of race, gender, religion and ethnicity make up the intersectional selves of BSA Muslim women. I also discuss the importance of understanding the self as situational, relational and interactional, and how different spaces may influence and inform the display of an appropriate self.

Part 2- Self, everyday and spaces

2.5 Introduction

In this part I explore the concepts of the self, the everyday and space in order to help situate understandings of the self as intersectional, situational and relational. This adds to the literature on intersectionality as it allows for understandings of the self as fluid, multidimensional and situated across time and place. This complexity is important as it recognises that BSA Muslim women encounter a variety of spaces within their everyday lives, and each space requires a re/negotiation of self and which takes into account the norms and unwritten rules of each space. This part argues that the concepts of self and space are intermeshed, which further complicates the intersectional approach to identity. This is key in supporting a holistic, nuanced and complex analysis of BSA Muslim women’s lives as it contends that a consideration of self within particular space challenges dominant discourses of BSA Muslim women as either victim or threat.
2.5.1 The intersectional ‘self’

If BSA Muslim women’s ‘positioning’ in wider society is to be analysed, it is the everyday practices, the intersectional social categories and the situated self that require further research. This means attending to the social categories of gender, ethnicity and religion, within everyday situated practises and analysing them across a number of different spaces. Given that we see/are seen, and are embodied differently in different situations and spaces, it is therefore important to understand to what extent social categories are impacted upon and shape everyday experiences of BSA Muslim women. This is particularly relevant when considering that it is through the mundane, everyday acts of talking, walking or transitioning between different ‘spaces’ such as home, work or public spaces that notions of self and other are produced.

This research uses a narrative approach to intersectionality and the everyday lives of BSA Muslim women to illustrate how transitions between these different spaces affect the sense of self. This study takes as its starting point one central aspect of the intersectional self, namely that people present different selves in different kinds of spaces and social situations. Additionally, given that in particular spaces BSA Muslim women’s ability to pass through different types of space ‘unnoticed’, is likely to vary, so is how they negotiate and how women manage their sense of self. Furthermore, different contexts and spaces allow for varying displays of ‘who we are’ because, crucially, intersections of ethnicity, religion and gender are not stable. This gives rise to questions such as where the BSA Muslim woman is allowed/able to be, and whether gender is the more salient category compared to ethnicity or religion in certain contexts, such as in the home. Similarly, even though a person might experience their own ‘community’ as an inclusive force, does gender affect the way Muslim
women are positioned or excluded from certain facets of their communities? Exploring women’s movements between such different contexts in their everyday lives allows for an understanding of how different aspects of their identities are privileged or problematised in any given space, and the impact this might have on their sense of self. Everyday lived realities offer a stark reminder that self-identities are rarely fixed, they are unpredictable, fluid, and constantly evolving; they are routinely challenged, opposed or adapted, while certain aspects of identity can undo/remake/dictate others.

However, as May (2013, p.7) notes, when considering identity categories it is possible to enter a ‘circular logic, whereby the identity category or combination of categories are seen as defining a person’ and, as such, there is a danger that BSA Muslim women could similarly come to be understood solely through membership of these categories. Therefore, I argue, maintaining an awareness of the relationship between intersectionality which focuses on social categorical identities, and the self, which encourages a more holistic approach to individuals becomes necessary. As has been previously discussed, though intersectionality proves a valuable analytical tool in understanding how social categories marginalise certain groups, a focus on the self allows for a contextualisation of ‘how the overall categories work and intersect with the lived experiences’ (Staunes, 2003, p.101). The use of identity categories can also present ‘flat or two-dimensional’ (May, 2013, p.8) ways of understanding people, and as such, remaining critically aware of the fluid, complex and sometimes contradictory ways individuals may describe their sense of ‘self’ becomes an important aspect in challenging stereotypical understandings of BSA Muslim women.

Researching how BSA Muslim women negotiate, resist or internalise narratives as gendered and racially othered subjects, allows for understanding the effect of being ‘other’ and being
seen as the ‘other’. Being self-conscious in the everyday includes having a particular awareness of the way the body and the self are actually body-for-others, as objects to be seen and objectified leading to a ‘third person consciousness’ (Fanon, 1986). Ironically, as Alcoff (2006, p.108) astutely observes, the more one becomes aware of one’s status as other, the more the body and dress become coded as indicators for an entire race/gender/religion, as ‘Every image imparted will be imparted for the whole race (or I would add gender); every gesture will reflect on the whole race (or gender); every failure will prove the preordained conclusion.’

It is exploring this self for other that this review focuses on in the next section. In exploring the self as relational, shaped by interaction with others, the effects of being seen as other and how this can affect a sense of self are discussed.

2.5.2 Self for others- the relational self

The concept of the self provides a lens through which to analyse the myriad of ways in which social relations, constructions of identity and relationships between institutions and individuals are constructed. When we begin to look for our self, it is perhaps in relation to the ‘other’, that which is not the ‘self’ in which we find it, ‘who am I? becomes a matter of ‘who am I not’. Indeed, Mead (1934) contends that a person’s sense of self cannot be established in isolation, but in relation to the observation and judgement of others (Crossley, 2006). Mead’s (1934, p.203) theory focuses on similarity, and the ‘relational self’, shaped by the observance of and in relation to others. The self becomes aware of and takes ‘the attitudes of other individuals toward himself within a social environment or context of experience and behaviour in which both he and they are involved’.
If the self emerges through engagement with others, we can conceive of the self as a social process, and, ‘in trying to find out who we are, even if we believe the riddle is locked inside, we invariably engage others in the search for the key to ourselves’ (Burkitt, 2008, p.1).

Furthermore, as Mead (1934) explains, we learn to project our sense of self in anticipation of the reaction of others and to judge ourselves in the same way others judge us. In other words, we have learnt to assume the perspective of others, and thereby gained the ability to judge which of the many aspects of our self is suitable in any given situation. Cooley (1922, p.184) described this self-monitoring process as ‘living in the minds of others’, which he categorised as engaging in the ‘looking-glass self’. In this engagement with others we are both the subject as well as subjectified, thus as we seek to portray a ‘self’, others are simultaneously projecting onto and reacting to that self.

As Hall (1990) notes, identity and identities are always in the process of being or becoming, and crucial to understanding our self is and our relationship with others is similarity. In looking at others we seek that which is like our self, and thus a shared commonality allows the self to identify that which is the same. However, paradoxically the notion of difference is also fundamental to our sense of self. The distinction of the ‘self’ from what is ‘other’ is the cornerstone from which a person is classified, that is, my self that makes me different from others, yet that self is one that is based on similarities as well as differences. In the context of the everyday the ‘self’ is not something that is fixed or static, rather it is fragmentary, punctuated with instances of both sameness with others and differences from them (Ferguson, 2009). Indeed, as Jenkins (2008, p.21) notes, similarity and difference are interdependent, and identification requires both, ‘whether in abstract logic or messy everyday practice’ neither similarity nor difference makes sense on their own. Though the
Self considers its uniqueness as an essential essence to its being, the self, it could be argued, is only articulated in relation to others.

Through the role that other selves have in the construction of the ‘self’, it can be surmised that an identity can become imposed upon a person, as ‘every identity is placed, positioned, in a culture, a language, a history’ (Hall, 1987, p.44) which must be negotiated. Thus, the self is also subject to political, historical and social contexts; a self is something that must be worked at, where meaning-making is an on-going process subject to wider societal and global forces (Alcoff, 2006). As members of a community deemed dangerous and isolationist, BSA Muslim women must then negotiate a self that is constrained by external social and political narratives which impose an identity which may not resonate with their sense of self. As such, the roles they play in society and within differing situational contexts are a case of negotiation, resistance and performance management in order to ‘fit’ or resist such demands. Being accepted in any social situation is a process of self-reflection and awareness, yet, for ethnic minority groups, who regularly experience social encounters as the cultural, racial or ethnic other, this adapting of the self to fit in can lead to deep feelings of anxiety and ambivalence.

A sociological approach therefore entails that we look at the role of cultural norms and reactions of others in the make-up of the self. This allows for understanding the ways in which minority groups may see the world, as well as acknowledging that institutions that speak of/for the self are replete with political and socio-economic biases (Hall, 1996). Critically, it is important to note that ethnic communities also impose social roles on their members. For BSA Muslim women compliance with social expectations at local and intimate
family levels, influenced by traditional cultural/religious expectations for example, thus also helps shape the self, sometimes in strongly gendered way (Karner, 2007).

Taking the self into account within everyday situations presents a prism through which to analyse interpersonal relationships, and the way the self interacts with the social world (Elliot, 2013). This is where the work of Erving Goffman (1959), on the presentation of self in social interaction becomes germane. Goffman theorised such everyday interactions with the help of theatrical metaphors, arguing that the self was performed in a number of roles. He distinguished between a public identity that is performed on the ‘front stage’ for an audience and in accordance with the unwritten rules of interaction, and a private self performed in the backstage. Though able to drop some of aspects of the public ‘act’, this private self is, according to Goffman, still aware of social expectations. For Goffman then, there was little to distinguish the public self from the private, for example in the sense of the private self being closer to an expression of any ‘true’ self. Indeed, it could be argued that for Goffman, there was no ‘true self’ to return to, because the private self is in fact always conscious of the social stage and engaged in the process of managing the self. In short, the private self ‘was a modern-day myth that people are forced to enact rather than a subjective entity that people privately possess’ (Collins, 1965, p.80). In essence, the self is transient, always performing rather than fixed, it is interactive, complex and multi-level (Modell, 1993).

However, critics of Goffman’s work argue that in conceiving the ‘self’ as individuals attempt at cynical (mis)representations of themselves, society is an amoral stage, where performers and performances alike are manipulated and manipulating in turn (Gouldner, 1970). Furthermore, Goffman’s concept implies that performances are carefully managed in order
to impress upon others a self that may not be entirely sincere (Tseélon, 1992; Gergen, 1999). However, although Garfinkel (1967) agrees with Goffman’s assertions regarding social actors and the nature of performance, he contends that the self is indeed invested in such performances, and that it does in fact matter that the presentation of the self is seen as genuine, not least because the performance is not merely for others, the audience, but also for our internalised selves (May, 2013). This debate regarding the notion of cynical performances and the investment in such performances for BSA Muslim women within different ‘backstage’ and ‘frontstage’ spaces will inform some of the analysis in the empirical chapters of this study.

2.5.3 The multidimensional self

It is equally important to pay regard to the way in which individuals engage with shaping the self in response to external factors. As Franks and Gecas (1992) note, in Cooley’s conception of the ‘looking glass self’, there is a degree of autonomy with regards to the extent of and the degree to which the self chooses to be influenced by the responses of others. This process of negotiating can be termed as ‘reflexive’, which relies on monitoring and reflecting on the process of ‘self’ in everyday interactions.

Reflexively thinking about our ‘selves’ necessarily invokes questions of ‘which of our selves is appropriate in this space?’ Different spaces necessitate the presentation of different selves. In this chapter so far, I have explicated the relational origins of the self, the performative self, and the relational performance of a self. If we take the notion that we come to know ourselves through the knowledge created about us, then situating the ‘self’ appears to be a contentious and unenviable task. What is missing from the symbolic
interactionist realm of Mead, Cooley and Goffman is a focus on the issue of inequalities and power. It is here that the conceptual terrain of Foucault (1980) and Hall (1996) are valuable, as it allows for a focus on the way inequalities shape a sense of self and other. Therefore, the following sections of this chapter will adopt a Foucauldian approach to knowledge, discourse and power in order to contextualise BSA Muslim women’s everyday experiences.

In the everyday, different aspects of the self are in/out of place in different spaces. In order to understand BSA Muslim women’s sense of self it is necessary not only to analyse the intimate, personal and interpersonal but also the social structure which the self, as woman, South Asian, British and Muslim must navigate. What then of the social structures which govern the everyday lives of BSA Muslim women? If the self in the everyday is determined not only inwardly, in the ‘private’ sense of self, but externally by socio-political forces which determine how the ‘Other’ is seen, how might BSA Muslim women be ‘interpellated’ or ‘hailed’ (Hall, 1996) into their roles as subjects? Paying attention to social structures and institutions is vitally important when discussing how certain groups become accepted whilst others are cast as ‘outside’ belonging. Analysing intersectionality in the everyday through discourses of unequal power relations (Foucault, 1980) highlights the way in which BSA Muslim women’s social roles (Goffman, 1976) become fraught with tensions shaped by inequality. In situating the notion of power in mundane every day and routine encounters it becomes essential to note that within each interaction intersectional differences between social actors will ensure power is experienced in ‘differing degrees and in differing combinations’ (Jenkins, 2008, p.159).

Ethnic minority women in a majority white environment have an identity that calls attention to itself, simply through virtue of being a woman and a member of an ethnic minority. Our
understanding of racial and gender identities and our experiences of them within our ‘selves’ is one that shapes us into subjects that feel, know, and act as subjects that are known and acted upon. In this way, it might be supposed that the self becomes subsumed within a hierarchy of knowledge (Foucault, 1980) regarding racial and gender identities, and for BSA Muslim women, also religion. In this way power and knowledge become linked and these processes, by which the self becomes subsumed within hierarchical knowledge, can become a way of confirming identity (Townley, 1993). As such, discourses come to manufacture meaning for/of the self rather than from the self. Consequently, it is possible to see how a discourse emerges within which it is simple to know ‘that self/subject’, because ‘that self/subject’ has been overidentified with and marginalised within a particular group. Hierarchies are pervasive, and important to the way knowledge is constructed as, ‘hierarchies are the quintessential manifestation of power. They signify higher and lower ranks in a given order, domination and subordination, greater and lesser value, prestige and influence’ (Weiler, 2009, p.487).

The process by which discourses come to inform knowledge of the other can be clearly seen when analysing the discourse of the overidentified BSA Muslim woman. As a marginalised minority group they have come to be seen through stereotypical images and identities subsumed within a particular categorisation, because as Taylor, (1998, p.248) observes, ‘dominant discourses seek to position subjects in terms of a set of ascribed characteristics which account for, or totalise identity by making those ascribed characteristics “stand for” the complete identity of the subject’ to the exclusion of other possible characteristics. Using Foucault’s (1980) concept of power and discourse we can see how BSA Muslim women’s everyday experiences are shaped by this knowledge of the discourses that defines what it means to be ‘Muslim’ and a ‘woman’. As the marginalised ‘other’, BSA Muslim women’s
social interactions across spaces are shaped by this ubiquitous inequality of power and
social roles. It is due to these dominant discourses that an analysis which layers concepts of
intersectionality, the self and everyday becomes important to provide detailed and nuanced
understandings of BSA Muslim women’s lives.

However, traditional sociology has long focused on the works of Cooley, Mead and Goffman
to explain concepts of the performative and multi-dimensional self as well as similarities and
differences. Yet, in adhering to these classic sociologists, the concept of self that is often
used as a measure is invariably white. Likewise, the generalised other against which the self
is judged is also white, yet, for ethnic minority groups, other dimensions of differences such
as race, ethnicity and religion are not taken into account. This chapter contends that it is
necessary to attend to issues of inequalities and power, hence the inclusion of Foucault.
Additionally, there is also the need to address questions of inequality specifically in relation
to ethnicity and race. As Smith (2014, p.3) has observed, ‘for the most part, the ‘classical’
sociology of everyday life has been remarkably blind to the role played by racism and
processes of racialization’, yet these processes fundamentally affect people’s sense of self
and of being othered in the everyday. In order to contextualise BSA Muslim women’s
everyday lives this study utilises the work of sociologists such as Du Bois, who it is argued,
provides invaluable insights into the nature of reflexivity and self for the racialised other. Du
Bois’s (1903) seminal work, *The Souls of Black Folk*, not only examined social structure and
inequality as affecting black experiences, but also fundamentally how these deeply affected
individuals’ sense of self and place in the world. Du Bois’s work reminds us that is impossible
to adequately understand racism and racist practices without contending for the way such
practices are threaded into mundane, everyday life (Smith, 2014). Furthermore, this study
examines, how, as a consequence such practices are ingrained and negotiated into BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives.

The following section focuses on the concept of the everyday, as well as how intersectionality can draw attention to the way the everyday is experienced by those who are considered the racialised ‘Other’.

2.6 The everyday

Analysing the dominant narratives of BSA Muslim women, which in Western discourses situates them as fundamentally Other, is imperative but how best then to disrupt this understanding? Crucial to disrupting these frameworks is engaging with discussions of situated everyday experiences, and combining these with intersectional categories of race, gender, ethnicity and religion which, in turn, can provide individualised and detailed accounts of BSA Muslim women’s lives. Exploring the everyday practises in multiple sites including home, work and public spaces provides a rich rhetoric of the public/private self, as well as the opportunity to understand how the spectre of the over-determined Muslim woman interrupts/disrupts the everyday. As has been discussed above, the experience of being a Muslim woman varies across spaces and the effects of such variations on self-identity and ‘self’ therefore form an important aspect of this research.

Douglas (1970, p.3) notes ‘all of sociology begins with the understanding of everyday life, and all of sociology is directed either to increasing our understanding of everyday life or, more practically, to improving our everyday lives’. The everyday is thus an integral part of sociological research and has gained increased attention from sociologists in the latter half
of the twentieth century. The sociology of everyday life calls for a study of people in their ‘natural context’, that is, the everyday social world. Yet, as Bennet (2005) contends, more than any sociological concept, the notion of everyday life has proved the most difficult to define due to the ambiguity of the term. Everyday life seems to be the category within which ‘bits and pieces’ of life are deposited, and which is associated with the ‘familiar, taken-for granted and common-sensical’ (Featherstone, 1995, p.55). Arguably, it is the ‘unnoticed’ and taken for granted aspects of everyday life which makes the everyday a useful and valuable object of social research. As much as the ‘everyday’ may be considered a collection of paradoxes, and thereby the study of the ‘everyday’ as ‘trivial’, nonetheless Scott (2009, p.1) argues that everyday lives should not be defined as opposite to events occurring on a grand scale. Instead, she argues, ‘that everyday life is the wider picture’, and micro-level practices on a smaller scale are reflections of wider society and the relationship between individuals and the wider collective. As Felski (2000) notes, everyday life is rarely viewed with neutrality; as such then, examining the everyday, with its seemingly mundane and routine banality provides a unique perspective that moves away from the stereotypical way of knowing the BSA Muslim woman and opens up a more holistic, individual outlook.

The notion of the ‘everyday’ as a dynamic and contested sphere, and worthy of study in its own right, was developed by Michel de Certeau (1984) who highlighted the significance of the way people ‘do’ or ‘practice’ everyday life. De Certeau contends that though the everyday may consist of social roles and ‘mundane’ routines, nevertheless individuals can subvert, resist or break rules, negotiating and renegotiating their everyday existence in ways that not only reproduce but also actively engage with or even resist social norms. Interpreting everyday life as inseparable from the meanings ascribed by individuals presents a notion that individuals have many social roles which they negotiate in their everyday lives.
Goffman (1959). The management of and negotiation of an individual’s social roles according to the space encountered in everyday life is a central theme of analysis in further chapters of this thesis.

For ethnic minority people, social interactions and social roles take place in societies that are racially and ethnically conceived, ordered and arranged. In other words, the social world or ‘everyday’ can become the central problematic. Furthermore, considering the experiences of racialised minorities within these social processes and hierarchies of disadvantage provides a basis for rich analysis that considers both ethnicity and the everyday in conjunction. For ethnic minorities, everyday encounters can involve racist interactions as part of the normal, mundane and routine. As Essed (1991, p.10) notes, once we realise the everyday is racially ordered, we understand that ‘racism is an everyday problem’, and further that ‘racism is transmitted in routine practises that seem “normal”, at least for the dominant group’. As such the ethnic minority social actor must reconfigure their everyday to include, dismiss or actively resist such aberrations. The everyday then becomes a contested ‘space’ of competing and contradictory discourses and practices, where the practice and relations of power are performed on a daily basis. Within this context for minorities the everyday constitutes, configures and determines social distinctions such as race and ethnicity (Clayton, 2008).

For BSA Muslim women such discourses and practices work on multiple, intersecting levels of racial difference, ethnicity, gender and religion. This can mean that everyday life is constituted of spaces that are risky, or where their difference renders them as ‘other’. The fear that the white majority have of the ‘other’ can translate into anxiety that is projected onto the bodies of BSA Muslim women, which are internalised by BSA Muslim women,
shaping their conceptions of identity and belonging. As Mirza (2013, p.6) notes, in an increasingly Islamophobic Europe, it is the Muslim female body that has come to symbolise the contagion, the threatening ‘other’ that is posited in Western society as the enemy within. Muslim women are bound ‘by embodied practises of contingent and reconfigured ““‘Muslimness’” such as the wearing or not of hijab.’ The individual Muslim woman is replaced then by lazy stereotypes, whereby ‘she’ and the ‘threat’ she embodies becomes subsumed into over-determined discourses. Rather than a unique individual, the Muslim woman becomes representative of a group (Dwyer, 2000).

Taking into account intersectionality theory as challenging social categories (as well as the external social hierarchies of economic, political and social institutions which perpetuate and produce inequalities), the positioning of BSA Muslim women within particular discourses requires deeper analysis. As Skeggs (1997) has observed, certain ‘bodies’ carry value in the everyday. In the case of Muslim women, who are visibly racially or religiously gendered as ‘other’ their bodies carry less, or unequal value to that of white women. The work of Mirza (2013) in exploring the embodied intersections of race, gender and religion for Muslim women, as well as how the internal subjective world is performed and affected upon by the external Islamophobic discourses, is crucial in understanding how such intersections feature in the everyday lived experience. While Mirza (2013) focuses on the experiences of transnational Muslim women, the present study seeks to understand how the particular intersections of race, religion and gender shape everyday experiences for second/third generation BSA Muslim women. This specific cohort is situated in a particular context that can only be understood by taking into account their diasporic connection, migratory history, as well as the social and political structures within which they are placed. Additionally, understanding how further intersections of age, class, occupation, or life stage
can shape experiences of the everyday allows for an insight into the complex layering of people’s sense of self. Crucially, these are furthermore analysed as situational intersections. In other words, the analysis attends to how, depending on the particular intersectional space, the intersectional selves of BSA Muslim women are likely to vary. It is this question of different selves in different spaces that the following sections will focus. But first, it is necessary to distinguish between everyday places and spaces as they are understood in this thesis, which situates the lives of BSA Muslim women in Oldham as a place, and home, work and public spaces as different types of space within this.

2.6.1 Everyday places and spaces

Defining the notion of ‘place’ is a difficult process, as the concept itself has much usage:

‘in everyday language: It is a word we use daily in the English-speaking world. It is a word wrapped in common sense. In one sense this makes it easier to grasp as it is familiar. In another sense, however, this makes it more slippery’ (Cresswell, 2013, p.2).

The concept of ‘place’ is then both simple, yet immensely complicated. Place can be a matter of ownership, a sense of emotional attachment, an area of safety or risk. Places are dynamic and fluid, continually being made, enclosed, defended and contested. The work of Thrift (2008, p.95) talks of ‘place-in-process’ whereby ‘place’ is understood as ‘concerned with movement, interactivity and continuous birth’. Shamai (1991) contends that having a ‘sense of place’ is intimately connected with individuals and consists of three dimensions, that of belonging to a place, a sense of attachment and commitment to it. People can have
different levels of belonging and attachment to a place given socio-economic factors, ethnicity, political climates and their sense of being ‘accepted’ in a particular place (Savage et al. 2005). ‘Place’- in a physical, tangible context can relate to borders/boundaries, the idea of ‘knowing one’s place’; similarly imagined boundaries often prove central concepts when it comes to understanding relations between people. Emotional attachments to place further develop the notion of place as a relational, spatial concept reliant on individuals, involvements, resistance and re-construction. Feeling ‘in place’ and ‘out of place’ relates to both geographical and emotional aspects of ‘belonging in a place’ as well as the politics behind such constructions. As Holloway and Hubbard (2001, p.5) note, places comprise of moral dimensions which determine behaviours and actions, acting to include as well as exclude, ‘the implication here is that certain people, and particular activities, can be considered ‘in place’ or ‘out of place’ in specific areas.’ Place, in its physical, material sense can shape particular behaviours or acceptance of behaviours through coded hierarchical structures, and this can be particularly important with regards to the way ethnic minorities understand and navigate places.

For ethnic minority individuals the notion of place is one that can evoke feelings of being ‘in place’ or ‘out of place’. Such emotions are caught up in boundaries, both imagined and physical. Within a particular community, certain places can be understood as ‘belonging’ to a group of people. On the national level this can be linked to a ‘national identity’ where the country is referred to as a ‘homeland’ (Yuval-Davis, 1997). The idea of the country becoming a place of exclusion is particularly important when considering how notions of ‘national identity’ are produced by both state and people. On more local levels, the need for a place where ethnic minority populations feel safe and included lends itself to the idea of ‘territoriality’, where adhering to a set of collective norms and behaviours ensures a sense
of connection (Wemyss, 2009; May, 2011). Territoriality, and the marking of a place can be a matter of resistance by minority groups against unequal social relations, disadvantage, and marginalisation for minority groups (Wemyss, 2009). For the minority ‘Other’ the territorial ‘place’ can be interpreted as one that provides insularity from being considered as the ‘outside/outsider’ by the majority indigenous population. Shared cultures, practises, language, ethnicity or religion can contribute to a feeling of ‘belonging’. A ‘shared identity’ whether real or imagined (Anderson, 1983) can extend the feeling of safety and belonging in the home to feeling at home in community or locality. Finding a place or community within which to belong, real or imagined can lead to feelings of territoriality when that ‘place’ is considered under threat. Such territoriality is evident in the moral panic over ethnic minorities taking over a particular ‘place’ when the ethnic minority becomes the majority. For example, responses to the 2011 Census, which revealed indigenous white Britons made up 45% of the population of London, revolved around a rhetoric of ‘decreasing whiteness’, ‘foreign-born’ and ‘swamping of migrants’ and being ‘swamped by foreign born migrants’ (Travis, 2015; Doughty, 2015; Pilditch, 2016). In this way territoriality is linked with national identity and belonging. ‘Places’ can also inherit historical and political narratives (Nayak, 2003), and the notion that an ethnic minority group may ‘take over’ or ‘lay claim’ to a place to the detriment of the white majority highlights that ‘place’ and the question of who is allowed to ‘belong’ in a particular place are complex, interrelated and racially coded.

2.6.2 Connecting place and space

In his comments on place, Gieryn (2000, p.464) presents some ‘ground rules’ for its consideration; firstly, that place consists of a ‘unique spot in the universe’ along varying
gradients, be that a favourite room, or a city. Secondly that place has physicality, ‘place is
stuff’ (p.465) invested in by people. Thirdly, Gieryn (p.465) states that place requires
naming; identification or representation are crucial in determining a place, as they are
‘doubly constructed’, both in the physical sense and through feelings, meanings, emotions
and imagination. Place is not place ‘without naming’. Gieryn (p.465) also provides an
explanation of what place is not, in particular ‘place is not space’; for Gieryn and others
(Kidder, 2012, Hillier and Hanson, 1984) space is a more abstract concept related to
materiality (distance, geometry, size and shape) and ‘what place becomes when the unique
gatherings of things, meanings and values are sucked out’ (Gieryn, 2000, p.465).

However, Massey (1994, p.2) does not adhere to this view of place and space, rather space
is not a flat, and empty void, ‘it is constructed out of social relations’ particularly racial, class
and gendered relations, further, that there are multiples of spaces/spatialities and these are
interrelated. This thesis uses Massey’s (1994) notion of spaces as constructed ‘out of the
multiplicity of social relations’ to understand the relation between space and place. Social
relations within spaces are nestled within places, the spaces explored here, home, work and
community are all located within the place of Oldham. Such a view employs Massey’s (1994,
p.5) challenge to the notion of space as static, and instead contends that space is dynamic,
shifting, politicised and contested. To think of spaces and spatiality is to consider the social
relations, power dynamics and interactions within spaces, as well the dialectical relation
between these and the symbolic and cultural meanings attached to spaces. Home, work and
community spaces do not exist in a void, they are mutually constructed by both the
practices within these spaces and the meanings attached to them (McGregor, 2004;
Richardson and Jensen, 2003).
Thus, this thesis focuses on both Oldham as place, and as home, work and community as spaces within that place. Such an articulation pays regard to the fact that the ‘particular mix of social relations which are thus part of what defines the uniqueness of any place is by no means all included within that place itself’ (Massey, 1994, p.5). Indeed, just as notions of BSA Muslim women in Oldham are derived from an interconnectedness of media, political and social discourses beyond the fixity of any place, so too do the relations within spaces of Oldham stretch beyond Oldham. The notion that place can be understood as a dynamic, fluid relational context allows for the consideration of place as an aspect of everyday life which requires understanding of the social constructions, power relations and inclusion/exclusionary nature of societal relations (Massey, 1994). More so, Oldham as a place does not serve as merely the background against which life is played out. Just as spaces are multiple and in the process of becoming, so too are places continuously shifting, part of broader interconnections of regional, national and global identities (Savage et al. 2005). It is important to situate the place, that is, Oldham through its relational, historical and local/global interconnections (Ingold, 2000; Massey, 2004)

Thinking of place as a social construct allows for the understanding that places are rarely fixed or natural. Instead meanings attributed to a particular place vary according to the ways a certain place may be experienced, described, understood or managed. Different groups will experience the same place differently, and ascribe different meanings, crucially because the self is multifaceted and intersections of race, ethnicity, gender and class will ensure that places are experienced in a multiplicity of ways (May, 2011; Massey, 1994). Places are areas where competing discourses and practises emerge, are played out and resisted in the everyday. For example, the town of Oldham or the particular ‘place’ of Glodwick are interpreted differently by media, politicians and more particularly the people
who live there. Along with the geography and physicality of a particular place, the ideas, lived experiences, institutions and social activities of a community within ‘place’ are also vital in making up the structure of it. Through layering ideas of the ways in which ethnic minorities experience their ‘place’, with lived experiences and the social constructions of a ‘place’ are crucial in understanding how ethnic minorities experience different places and spaces according to intersectional differences.

2.7 BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives across different spaces

This thesis examines the spaces of home, work and public space as a way to understand the way BSA Muslim women’s embodied intersectional differences operate across these spaces. Such a multi-layered approach to intersectionality in everyday spaces deepens understandings of everyday encounters. Taken on their own, an analysis of any one of these spaces would provide rich accounts of everyday lives, yet analysed together, it is possible to see how encounters and embodied differences are experienced within and across different spaces. Through examining different spaces, this thesis explores the multidimensional self of BSA Muslim women, and how different expectations shape the different selves BSA Muslim women must perform in their everyday. Additionally, given dominant Islamophobic discourses which formulate normative and stereotypical understandings of BSA Muslim women, this thesis seeks to explore the ways women may reflect upon their self and the way these narratives affect the ways they are seen within different spaces.
2.7.1 Home

The first space discussed in this thesis is the home. When considering the notion of home it is important to remember that the concept is often more than a physical manifestation of walls and a roof. ‘Home’ is comprised of ideas, imaginations and connections which stretch beyond the spatial; ‘while homes may be located, it is not the location that is ‘home’, rather they can be understood as places replete with ‘social, psychological and emotive meaning for individuals’ (Easthope, 2004, p.135). Given that BSA Muslim women are hypervisible in the public sphere, subject to and configured by dominant discourses, their notions of ‘home’ can be complex, illustrating in many ways the fact that public/private domains cannot be easily separated when considering the home. As Buitelaar and Stock (2010) point out, home is the state of ongoing processes through which we position ourselves and are positioned in relation to others. Furthermore, where there is a sense of being ‘othered’ in public spaces, feelings of safety and belonging in the home are, in contrast, even yet more keenly felt.

The concept of home is often attached to notions of privacy (Fairhurst, 1998; Buse and Twigg, 2006), identity and safety/security (Cristofretti et al. 2011). Furthermore, familiarity and routine are intrinsic to the notion of ‘home’ as a ‘safe place’ and travelling between the home and other public spaces symbolises the passage from internal (private), what is known, to external space (public), the unknown and vice versa. In other words, the home as the private sphere is a place within which strangers and threat can be generally excluded; travelling to a ‘place’ outside the home, from the internal to the external world can mean enduring either symbolic or physical risk. However, the highly gendered notion of home, from a feminist viewpoint, does not always necessarily equate with safety (Oakley, 1974; Eisenstein, 1984). The home can be a place of restriction and patriarchal threat; additionally,
it is necessary to note that the notion of ‘home’ as a place carries varied meanings for individuals across differences of age, racial ethnic and gender. For example, bell hooks (1991) wrote of the home as a place constructed by black women as a place of care, nurturing and resistance to a racially segregated society. The private home can then be interpreted as a place which excludes the ‘other’ who are not considered part of the home, yet at the same time is a place of inclusion and safety for those who are socially constructed in public as the ‘Other’ by the majority (Rowles and Chaudhury, 2005).

Mallet (2004) has discussed the multi-dimensional aspects of home through recurrent themes in social science literature. The home is discussed in relation to a physical place, as feelings and connections, with regards to social relationships, and as a state within which to express the self. As a physical space home is variously conflated with house, with a focus on home ownership as a source of personal and family security. Physical structures of the home/house examine the ways in which houses are divided up into rooms, and the specificity and purpose of each room serves. The aesthetics of each home vary according to cultural, social and historical contexts. Additionally, social and cultural contexts also contribute to the division of spaces, as Shaw (2000) demonstrates in her analysis of Pakistani family households in Britain and the use of the ‘front room’ as a space to maintain purdah with the separation of genders, especially when receiving guests. The consideration of spaces within the home according to social, cultural and ethnic differences can illuminate the way home is experienced by BSA Muslim, and in this study is used to signify both the continuity and change within BSA Muslim women’s households due to intersectional differences of ethnicity and religion.
In this thesis home is critically examined through the discourses of public/private, safety and belonging. The extent to which BSA Muslim women may feel at ease at home and able to comfortably express a sense of self will also be explored, in particular asking if the familiarity of home spaces provides an inclusive space for the self.

2.7.2 Work

Examining the workplace also allows for an analysis of the challenges faced by BSA Muslim women when they enter the spaces in which they work. Popular discourses present this group of women as economically inactive, restricted by gendered and cultural restraints from taking up employment. However, as research shows the picture is significantly more complex and requires acknowledgement of women’s intersectional identities as well as the porous boundaries between home and work.

Writing in 1978 Amrit Wilson provided some of the earliest accounts of South Asian women’s lives and employment in Britain. In *Finding a Voice*, Wilson demonstrated how in terms of employment South Asian women fared worse than their White working-class counterparts. She also discussed the categorisation of South Asian women as ‘victims’, highlighting the problems they faced in everyday life due to patriarchy and work-based discrimination and racism. For many South Asian women paid work was a new experience, baffling and exciting as it gave them the first hint of an independent economic identity. Yet clear discriminatory practises prevailed throughout workplaces, with South Asian women facing some of the worst discrimination:

‘Asian women are the worst off all British workers. They are at the bottom of the heap. They come unprepared, easy victims to unscrupulous employers... they are
black so they need not even be treated like women, but more like animals’ (1978, p.48).

For women who complained about conditions in sweat-shops or factories, little help emerged from labour unions, whose often racist attitudes made them reluctant to fight for Asian women’s rights.

Sallie Westwood’s book, *All Day Every Day: Factory and family in the making of women’s lives* (1984), presents a story of the racialized and gendered experience of work for South Asian women in the UK. Westwood states that locating discussions of politics of gender, race and class in the lives of women who work in a factory illuminates complexities of everyday lived realities. In presenting the everyday lives of Asian women working in a clothing factory, a traditionally low-wage manufacturing industry, Westwood charts the intricacies of work, home and identity as intertwined processes, where the intimate, public realms of home are not easily separated from the realm of employment and work. As Westwood (1984, p.158) observed, even when South Asian women were at their place of work, ‘the home’ still featured prominently. Economic relations within households infringed on the women, impacting on which type of work they could do and where; ‘The world of work and the world of home are not two separate spheres, each with an independent existence,’ rather they were ‘one and the same worlds brought together’ where the gender subordination of women at home was often repeated in the workplace.

Doreen Massey (1994) considered how regional differences affect how gender relations are configured in home and work spaces for both White and South Asian women, focussing on the aspect of geography and particularly the ways in which deindustrialisation changed working patterns, and male/female relations both within the home and at work. With
regards to the cotton towns of the North, the long traditions of female employment in low paid factory jobs continued, although this was not consistent. As Massey (1994, p.208) notes, ‘for women in one way or another tied to the home, or to the very local area’ homeworking becomes increasingly the only available option; again this made use of the cheap female labour, where the women worked long hours whilst rarely being properly paid. Harrison (1983) further explored the concept of ‘homeworking’, with a particular emphasis on Muslim women. Focusing on industries such as clothing and seeking to understand how the sexual division of labour was managed in the home, homeworking was seen as leading to increased isolation and of course exploitation, where homeworkers, often women, were paid lower than national wages. Homework, as Harrison (1983, p.84) notes, was the only option for a variety of women, including those who perhaps ‘disliked the discipline and timekeeping of factory work’, as well as ‘Muslim women observing semi-purdah.’ The inclusion of Muslim women here is contextualised through notions of purdah, as Muslim women were essentially employed in the context of their homes and extended families ensuring there was rarely room for independence outside the home. Though there was the prospect of a wage, women rarely left the sphere of the family, which meant they did not make independent friends or contacts, nor could they establish a ‘separate sphere’ away from the context of the home.

The literature on Muslim women and work features research by Brah (1993), who challenges the gender-blind approach to labour markets, and instead focusses on the labour market as constituted and conceptualised by race, class, gender and ethnicity. Brah also notes that discussions on South Asian Muslim women in the labour market have come to be dominated by low economic activity rates. Brah contends that a proliferation of ‘culturalist’ explanations exist in discourse on South Asian Muslim women and work. Through
comparisons with non-Muslim women and the use of racialized themes, these discussions primarily conclude with the contention that ‘Muslim women are prevented from taking up paid employment by Muslim men’ (Brah, 1993, p.445). Such explanations often fail to account for the racialised gendering of labour markets as well as the extent to which racialised, gendered and Islamophobic stereotypes perpetuate Muslim women’s position in the labour market. Crucially, Brah points to the need to analyse Muslim women’s everyday, personal narratives in relation to discourses which construct them as ‘economically inactive’ considering the impact these discourses have. Young Muslim women’s negotiations in the labour market are often impacted upon by multiple considerations of ideological, structural and economic factors; these include the impact of national/global economies on local labour markets, the ideological positioning of women in relation to family and caring responsibilities as well as the social constructions of race and gender with regards to job aspirations (Brah, 1994).

Research by Brah and Shaw (1992) reiterated similar points, namely that although Muslim women are under-represented in forms of paid work, they are however not absent from the economy. Again, racial discrimination, exploitation and low wages all form part of labour market experience for BSA Muslim women. Crucially, a major determinant of Muslim women’s involvement in paid work was their own determination to do so, and once in the work place women cited hostile environments, as well as religious and cultural insensitivity to progression in work as well as reasons for leaving work. As Brah and Shaw (1992, p.52) note, from their research it is evident ‘that young Asian women doing paid work are faced with a wide variety of problems and constraints associated with the nature of the employment market and their racialized gender position.’
Applying an intersectional lens to the micro-politics of workplaces highlights the ways in which race, gender and religious identities are already subject to social stratification which structure the way BSA Muslim women experience organisations. Just as the everyday is a space that constitutes and determines social distinctions (Clayton, 2008), institutions and organisations navigated in the everyday present similar spaces of negotiation for BSA Muslim women. Organisations are areas where stratification and hierarchies are rigorously maintained, which in turn are imperative to processes of identity. How are BSA Muslim women seen in organisations then, given that hegemonic ideologies filter in and through everyday lives? This is one of the questions this study seeks to explore. After all, just as spaces are not neutral, they are not hermetically sealed, discourses formed in the wider social polity can filter into organisations, affecting beliefs and attitudes which in turn shape not only BSA Muslim women’s experience of work, but expectations of them at work. BSA Muslim women seen and being seen, often in places where they had previously not inhabited. These ‘space invaders’ (Puwar, 2004) are often being categorised not only through their individuality, but instead through tropes and narratives which are determined collectively, they are simultaneously representing all Muslim women.

The consideration of spaces expands further outwards in the next section to analyse the importance of public and community spaces in BSA Muslim women’s lives.

2.7.3 Public and community spaces

Everyday life is characterised by habitual forms of living, many of which entail spatial practises, daily movements, rhythms and routines across various spaces and encounters. In order to analyse public spaces and their uses by different groups it is necessary to view
these through a lens which can trouble the mundane, seeming normalcy of everyday lived reality. Essentially, everyday lived realities seen through the lens of ‘Other’ illuminate not only the ways in which ethnic minorities negotiate their own identities, but also how the ‘power of racial and social hierarchies’ constitute and shape their daily realities (Clayton, 2012, p.1674). Understanding how BSA Muslim women experience public spaces means using a particular lens to trouble this ‘normalcy’ of every day space. In considering spaces, and the space of the urban city particularly, intersectional differences of race, religion and gender becomes a key aspect of understanding how BSA Muslim women become hypervisible (Khoury, 2009) and how this visibility affects their experience within everyday public spaces.

Public spaces are categorised by interactions between ‘strangers’. It is important to situate these interactions within a wider framework. As Amin (2012, p.60) notes, the dynamics of bodies interacting in urban space entails more than simply co-presence. Rather, myriad influences, including cultural, global connections, social habits and pre-formed dispositions are part of the ‘mingling in urban spaces’ and as such can shape interactions between strangers. Social encounters routinely subject individuals to a public gaze, thus in seeing and being seen individuals become mindful of their similarities and differences to others. This awareness is an example of the ‘double consciousness’ (DuBois, 1965) that is an aspect of their daily lives. DuBois (1965) described ‘double consciousness’ as a form of twoness, whereby the racialised other internalises the external gaze, subject to opinions and stereotypes which are formed outside their sense of self. It is argued that for the racial other, such ‘double consciousness’ works to inform understandings of ‘appropriate behaviour’, management of the self, and in some situations might lead to changing or modifying behaviour in order to off-set any stereotypical understandings of them.
Because intersectional differences are situational it is also useful to consider how being seen as ‘other’ through phenotypical differences affects access to and use of public spaces. There is however, a paucity of literature which considers this situational intersectionality. Spaces can become demarcated along gendered and racial lines and serve to ensure the ‘Other’ does not feel a sense of belonging. Indeed, given that lives are shaped by different spaces, paying attention to interactions and experiences in these spaces highlights the way in which different intersections of race, gender, ethnicity and religion interact within these spaces. Anderson (2015, p.13) coined the term ‘white space’ to describe spaces whose distinct features were an overwhelming majority of white people and a noticeable lack of black people. More particularly, such spaces perceived as ‘white’, are seen by whites as normative and in line with a national sameness, moreover these spaces are unremarkable and a taken-for-granted refection of daily life. Yet, within that same setting, ethnic minority groups must be reflexive of their own presence, carefully managing their presence in that space, and actively performing in order to pass through it. Indeed, within that space minority groups may have an awareness of the stereotypes formed of them by the white majority which can rule perceptions and interactions (Anderson, 2015), and which in turn further isolate those who are perceived as ‘other’. Clayton (2012, p.1679) notes, in his research with Somalian Muslims in Leicester, local public spaces can reproduce ‘a complex but broadly hierarchical system of local acceptance. Such hierarchies form a key element of experiences of acceptance, belonging and integration,’ and can negatively impact upon a sense of identity and experience of spaces for ethnic minority. As such, BSA Muslim women, marked by their non-whiteness, can find themselves further excluded.

In addition to public spaces, this thesis also seeks to analyse the concepts of community and belonging for BSA Muslim women, understanding ‘community’ as a space which is
contradictory and ambivalent and also requiring negotiation. The term community is laden with many connotations, including belonging, familiarity, comfort and similarity. However, within dominant media and political discourse communities which are formed of predominantly ethnic minority groups have often come to be seen as ‘segregated’, dangerous and often described as isolationist ghettos. The term community itself however is not without ambivalence (Ahmed and Fortier, 2003). Despite community being, as Alleyne (2002, p.608) describes, ‘so fundamental a concept’, that it seems almost self-explanatory, nonetheless the term ‘community’—especially when used, as is common, with ethnic minority groups can be problematic (Young, 1990). In British politics, the term community can become laden with particular connotations, usually depending on which community is being discussed. In particular, the Muslim community has been discussed in terms of self-segregation, as isolationist, misogynistic and backward (Hussain and Meer, 2017). In current dominant discourses on national identity and belonging, ‘community’ is differentiated between the majority, seemingly white British idyll which are white spaces deemed the ‘norm’ and quintessentially English (Hall, 1996). These are often contrasted with the problematic ethnic enclaves, rife with poverty and extremism, and a foreign element against which the national idyll must be protected (Hall, 1996). Furthermore, communities are often divided into ‘good’ or ‘bad’ communities—bad communities are ‘culturally bound and segregated collectivities’ (Sveinsson, 2008, p.11) and contrasted with ‘good’ communities which are fully integrated and concomitant with traditional British values (Alexander, 2005). This exclusion, for those groups or communities which are othered by the majority can also be as source of solidarity. However, it should not be taken for granted that ethnic minority groups necessarily feel most secure amongst those with a similar ethnic or cultural identity. As Alleyene (2002) points out, when thinking of community, it is necessary to remain
attuned to the many nuanced, complex and ambivalent connections any group may have to
the notion. Just as in the space of home, the ‘community’ can also be experienced as a form
of exclusion for ethnic minority individuals. Being the insider/outsider, where degrees of
belonging can be measured in terms of kinship, language and cultural/religious practises,
the question as to exactly how and to which extent one belongs to a community are ever
shifting.

2.9 Conclusion

In order to highlight nuanced understandings of BSA Muslim women’s lives, this study
centralises the way multiple discrimination can manifest in everyday experiences. This study
aims to do this by taking a layered approach, adding further complexity to intersectionality
with the additional layers of self, everyday and spaces, essentially in an approach that is not
additive, but which sees each intersection and space as different, with shifting and fluid
experiences. Additionally, seeing the everyday as the ‘central problematic’, is worth
reflecting on as it has ‘the potential to shed a different, revealing light back onto the wider
social world and the historical processes that shape that world’ (Smith, 2014, p.2). In this
way, layering an intersectional approach, with a focus on different spaces and the everyday,
as well as the inclusion of religion, highlights ‘multiple positioning’ of BSA Muslim women.
This research also aims to explore the complex interplay between place and self. The use of
intersectionality as well as questions of multiple selves in multiples spaces are particularly
useful here, where considerations of which selves are appropriate where become an
intricate part of BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives and how they negotiate everyday
spaces. When taking into account gendered and racialised understandings of identities the
nature of everyday spaces provides a contextual background to management of self. The fluidity of everyday experiences lends itself to an intersectional scrutiny as the process of understanding the individual perspective, from those who are ‘othered’, means taking into account the holistic, myriad and complex nature of identity. This is exactly the impetus of this research, and as this chapter has explored, this complexity of everyday intersectional selves provides a means to analyse everyday encounters and thus the richness of BSA Muslim women’s identities.

The next chapter moves on discuss the methods and methodology used in this research. The chapter outlines the research questions, discusses researcher positionality, as well as considerations for implementing intersectional thinking into research practices.
Chapter 3- Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research questions, and discusses the methodology underpinning the study and methods of data collection and analysis. The main aim of this study is to provide a more nuanced and complex account of the everyday lives of BSA Muslim women than one discussed in popular and political discourse. I begin with the research questions, then discuss the use of a feminist approach to research, and why these are particularly suited to studies which use intersectionality and notions of the every day. I then move on to consider the specificity of the research site, Oldham. The suitability of qualitative research methods, including interviews, diary and photo elicitation, and walk along interviews, as well as facet methodology are also explored. Reflexivity and positionality form a significant focus of this chapter, analysing the implications of insider/outsider approaches to research with ethnic minority groups as well as the implications of researchers sharing identities with those researched. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the ethical issues involved in this study.

3.2 The research questions

As this research intended to provide a holistic, nuanced and detailed account of BSA Muslim women’s lives in everyday spaces of Oldham, it was necessary to give careful consideration to which spaces would be explored, through which methods and categories of analysis. As such, the research questions were as follows:
How are BSA Muslim women’s lives shaped by intersections of social categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, class and religion?

How do BSA Muslim women experience varying aspects of their multiple identities across different spaces, such as home, at work, or in public spaces?

How do BSA Muslim women manage their identities in the everyday, and how are these identities expressed across these different spaces?

These questions provide a frame for exploring the everyday intersectionality present in BSA Muslim women’s lives. Understanding an intersectional approach that encompasses religion, class and geography - as well as race, ethnicity and gender- is crucial in analysing the lives of BSA Muslim women in Oldham. As has been discussed in the previous chapter neither religion nor geography feature very strongly in intersectional studies, yet are crucial when considering the everyday lives of BSA Muslim women. As discussed in previous chapters in connection with the Muslim woman as an ‘over-determined’ subject and Oldham as an ‘over-determined’ place, the lives of BSA Muslim women in Oldham have become subsumed under a ‘grand narrative’ that posits them as a silent, oppressed minority within a marginalised community. The current study therefore aims to provide a framework which will allow for explorations of the complexity of intersecting identities of BSA Muslim women through accounts of everyday lives at home, work and in public/community spaces.
3.3 Feminist methodology

In any empirical study careful consideration must be given to issues of methodology. Understanding epistemological and ontological questions is inherent to the process; questions regarding what is known, what exists, and how this knowledge is categorised as well as epistemological questions regarding how this knowledge is owned and legitimised prove the foundation for research design. Many feminist researchers in the 1980s and 1990s critiqued traditional social sciences as espousing a sexist bias, with male approaches, gender insensitivity, male knowledge and perspectives featuring predominantly in research (e.g. Stanley & Wise, 1983; Eichler, 1988; Mies, 1993). Dominant approaches to social sciences at the time favoured ‘reason, progress and truth’, however within feminist epistemology questions about how and by whom this truth is decided upon, as well as the political and social structures behind such ‘truths’ are vitally important. Feminist methodological approaches in the social sciences tend to centre on a postmodern, post-structuralist viewpoint, and foreground women’s experiences. Concerned with hierarchies between researchers and the researched, as well as with emancipation and empowerment, feminist research seeks to place marginalised voices at the forefront of social science research, replacing the ‘view from above’ with ‘one from below’ (Mies, 1999). A guiding principle of feminist research then is one that respects, empowers and accepts that women’s stories are a legitimate source of knowledge. The feminist research agenda is two-fold: firstly, to identify and challenge traditional masculine methodologies in social sciences; and secondly, to identify methodologies or forms of knowledge production that are emancipatory or at least recognise and value the female voice in social research. As Armsetead (1995, p.628) notes, ‘feminists advocate an egalitarian research process one grounded in actual
experience and language of women’. This distinction which foregrounds ‘women’s every day experiences’ in their ‘own language’ is crucial in relating the lived realities of BSA Muslim women, whose voices have hitherto been subsumed within pathologised perceptions of both the stereotypical Muslim woman and the Muslim community.

Embracing a feminist epistemology which considers women’s lives, experiences and ‘truths’ to be valuable insights into social structures is key if research into marginalised groups such as BSA Muslim women within a marginalised community of Oldham is to have emancipatory or empowering effect.

3.3.1 Intersectionality and feminist methodology

Described as an important, perhaps even the most important recent theoretical contribution to sociological analysis (McCall 2005), intersectional analysis can nevertheless be difficult to apply in an empirical investigation, whether qualitative or quantitative. Intersectional analyses can be seen in works that employ both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, from micro level studies of everyday lived experiences (Smith, 1987), to analysing social structures and organisations (Acker, 2006) as well as studies on macro level approaches which discuss intersectionality across an international basis (McCall, 2001).

The question remains, ‘how do you do intersectionality?’ McCall (2005) states that discussion of methodologies used in intersectional studies has been scarce, while trying to include multiple intersections of social life and social categorisations has arguably brought forward new methodological problems. McCall has identified three main approaches to
studying intersectional social complexities and describes them as ‘anti-categorical’, inter-categorical and intra-categorical. The anti-categorical approach employs a postmodernist, poststructuralist lens to challenge the social constructions of gender, race and class. The inter-categorical approach uses these social constructions and categories as a basis to define the subjects of analysis as well as compare experiences across categories; for example, comparing the experiences of black working-class women with those of white working-class women. However, such categories can also be seen as misleading social constructs, which do not allow for complexities and individual narratives from within groups, leading to generalisations. The intra-categorical approach to intersectionality allows for the notion that inequalities exist within social groups and categorisations. The categories, as imperfect as they are, nonetheless are powerful factors which shape the everyday lives of individuals, and it is these unequal relationships between and within groups that must be scrutinised. This research employs a combination of both inter-categorical and intra-categorical approaches, in order to understand the way Muslim women are positioned in contemporary British society, as well as compare experiences between BSA Muslim women.

Intersectionality as well as being interdisciplinary can be considered a reflexive process; it attends to the notions within which power relations are created and maintained, as well as subjects’ locations within hierarchies of power (Charusheela, 2013). Thus, this research employs an approach that pays attention to the micro practices of everyday life and connects those with macro social practices which often result in the discourses used to frame understandings of BSA Muslim women, as well as the wider constraints these can place on women’s lives.
3.3.2 Facet methodology

As this research will involve highlighting the everyday lived experiences of BSA Muslim women, in order to further holistic, and rich understandings, it is paramount then to adopt what could be considered a ‘feminist methodology’, given the emphasis placed on the importance of women’s stories within this methodology. The nature of intersecting social categories as well as the multi-faceted character of the ‘everyday’ (discussed in previous chapters), means that a variety of research methods will have to be used. Such an approach, termed facet methodology is useful for consideration of the intersectional nature of BSA Muslim women’s lives in Oldham, as ‘facet methodology assumes that the world and what we seek to understand about it is not only lived and experienced, but is multi-dimensional, contingent, relationally implicated and entwined’ (Mason, 2011, p.78).

Mason uses the visual metaphor of a gemstone to discuss the concept of facets and what this entails for both a methodological approach and use of methods. Crucially, Mason (2011, p.76) contends that rather than seeing facet methodology as a rigid set of procedures, ‘it requires and celebrates researcher creativity, inventiveness, a “playful” approach to epistemology’. As such, it complements feminist post-structuralist approaches which encourage openness, flexibility and reflexivity (Taylor, 1998). Mason (2011, p.75) describes facets as involving ‘different lines of enquiry, and different ways of seeing’. In facet methodology, the overall research enquiry is the gemstone, and the facets equate to the different ‘methodological planes’ or methods which are designed to be able to cast and refract light in a variety of ways that contribute to understandings of the overall research project. In other words, the gemstone, as a visual metaphor, turned one way or another
reflects and refracts light in different ways, so that the gemstone is seen from a variety of perspectives, contingent upon the angle from which it is looked upon. In this research, the overall research enquiry is BSA Muslim women’s lives in Oldham, and the facets include the intersection of identities across different planes of inequality. As discussed in the previous chapter, the relational self within different spaces of home, work and public spaces, are the key facets through which the everyday lives of BSA Muslim women are analysed. These function as the methodological planes which shape the overall problematic, and in order to shed light across the different planes, the facets are not simply a mini group of sub-studies, but rather mini-investigations which each have something that is theoretically substantive and interesting to say about the everyday lives of BSA Muslim women, and, crucially which relate to the overall enquiry in some way.

Facet methodology also guides research practise, in that facets are not only substantive but also refer to the methods used. As Mason (2011, p.79) notes, ‘because facets are methodological-substantive, these processes always involve problematising not only what facets tell us, but how they do this’. It is therefore important to carefully consider which methods are used and why, and how they shed light on a particular line of enquiry.

Critically important for this research is that facet methodology presents a way of thinking through methods and methodology in ways which can help to address the issue ‘how to do intersectionality?’ (McCall, 2005). Within research which adopts a feminist, intersectional approach, sometimes methods and methodologies can result in a return to the ‘additive’ approach of single axis discrimination. Jordan-Zachery (2007, p.257) notes that this can lead to research conclusions which suggest that “race trumps gender”, and it is precisely these
essentialisations which intersectionality seeks to criticise. It is the reliance on commonly
used methodologies which can lead to essentialisation of differences because they fail to
provide contextual background. It is precisely the contextual background that provides a
structure to intersectional analysis; ‘measuring intersectionality’ should take into account
the context of ‘lived experiences’ in order to provide both a deeper understanding of
political and structural intersectionality, as well as a means to scrutinise and challenge
discrimination. Here, Mason’s (2011) metaphor of the gemstone as the overall research
enquiry is particularly useful, because the facets also make the whole. As such, the
gemstone, or contextual background is always worth bearing in mind. As Simien (2007,
p.271) states:

‘methodologically, researchers often hold one aspect (either race or gender)
constant, so that their comparisons are more manageable. However,
intersectionality research requires more than simply performing separate analyses
by race and gender and using traditional theories to interpret the results’.

Rather, just as intersectionality theory seeks to address multiple discriminations by
addressing simultaneous inequalities, facet methodology can be used as a way of
conducting research which seeks to shed light on the many facets in the lived experiences of
ethnic minority women. Facet methodology can address some of the problems of the
‘additive approach’ to intersectional research, because it is not simply about data
generation, but instead offers a methodology which is both ontologically and
epistemologically oriented. As such, it can challenge what is known, as well as how that
knowledge is produced. Furthermore, facet methodology does not stop at data generation

but is carried through and interrogated along, across and between facets. In fact, ‘it is implicated in all stages of research, including how we theorise from or with data’ (Mason, 2011, p.83). The use of facet methodology from data collection, to analysis, through to write up and the claims made on the basis of research can, to some extent, challenge researchers to critically reflect on and check the temptation to carry out separate analyses that favour either gender or race (Simien, 2007).

The following sections discuss the use of a case study approach, presenting Oldham as the research, as well as the different facets in terms of spaces which will be analysed. The methods used to explore these facets will also be discussed in order to contextualise how these contribute to our understandings of BSA Muslim women living in Oldham.

3.4 Oldham- a case study approach

Key to investigating the nature of everyday lives is the importance of situating these in the context within which they are lived. As has been discussed in previous chapters the notion of ‘place’ and the importance of this to individual lives has often been relegated to the background (Ranjendren, 2016, p.165). Yet, places have a deep significance in everyday lives, and with this in mind, the focus here is to provide a brief history and contextualisation of Oldham. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, public debates concerning community cohesion and integration provides an illuminating context for discussions regarding belonging and identity for ethnic minority groups in Britain. Given its unique
history within race relation policies, featuring heavily in both the Cantle (2001) and Casey (2017) review, Oldham is a fascinating case study that can shed light on these wider, political and societal contexts of race and nationalism in contemporary Britain.

Researching everyday lives on a localised level through case study approaches can highlight the often taken-for-granted everyday experiences, and often, as in the case of BSA Muslims, experiences on the local level reflect understandings of minority groups on national levels.

Research in Oldham has covered various aspects of the town’s history and the lives of its minority residents, including low economic activity amongst BSA Muslim women, (Brah and Shaw, 1992; Dale et al. 2002), the changing nature of employment and economic status for Oldham’s male population (Kalra, 2000) the concepts of race and belonging post 2001 ‘race riots’ and 9/11 (Alexander, 2004) as well more recently research into the ‘left behind’ rhetoric of Brexit (Rhodes et. al, 2018). Thomas and Sanderson (2011) have analysed young people’s understanding of their own identity and how this relates to their understandings of Britishness and national identity, as residents of a community defined as self-segregating. Phillips (2009) has explored the concepts of home making and spaces for BSA Muslim women in Oldham, as well as the racialisation of space in Northern towns such as Oldham. This research explores notions of identity and belonging in Oldham amongst second and third generations BSA Muslim women. The study also analyses experiences across spaces within Oldham and looks at how management of self and identity varies as women move between not only wards of Oldham, but sites of home, work and public or community spaces.
Categorised as the ‘most deprived’ town in England according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2016), based on measures for housing, income, employment, education and crime, Oldham has often been described as a ‘ghetto town’ (Kundnani, 2001; Morris, 2005). However, rather interestingly, with a 62% majority voting to leave the European Union in the 2016 EU referendum, citing migration as a prime cause for dissatisfaction with the EU (Humphries, 2016), there appears to be a fascinating relationship developing between the notions of ‘place’, nationality and belonging in Oldham. Geographically located in the North West of England, and the North East of Greater Manchester, Oldham was at one point known as ‘King Cotton’ given its sheer number of cotton spinning factories. Rapid deindustrialisation led to its current status as the most deprived towns in the country.

Immigration to Oldham from former Commonwealth South Asian countries began in the early 1960s with predominately young men gaining employment as manual workers in the town’s numerous mills. By the time these new migrants from former colonies of the British Empire arrived, the textile industry for which Oldham had been world renowned was already in decline. The position of South Asian mill workers was one of low pay, gruelling shifts, exploitation and hostility (Kalra, 2000). Rapid deindustrialisation driven by changing global industries and technological advances meant that by the 1970s, the textile industry of Oldham had fallen into rapid decline. However, in an attempt to revive these industries, proposals to keep the mills operating in twenty-four hour shift patterns meant a demand for South Asian workers, mainly due to their willingness to work unpopular night shifts (Kalra, 2000). The proposals were not successful however, and employment rates continued to fall, hitting the local Asian population particularly hard. Many of the earlier migrants from the
colonies were now ageing and facing long-term unemployment. The figures from the 1991 census showed that over 24% of Pakistani men aged 35-44 year old were unemployed. They were forced to turn to various forms of self-employment as taxi drivers and in the restaurant trade (Kalra, 2000).

The wives and children of these early South Asian male workers arrived later, a movement that was intensified by the 1971 Immigration Act which sought to end primary immigration from the Commonwealth; primary immigration referred to ‘heads of families’ who once settled in Britain had the right to bring their wives and children (Dummet, 2001). Seeking to ‘beat the ban’ to primary immigration the wives and children of these mill workers found themselves in Britain and in towns such as Oldham. Declining textile industries resulted in these South Asian families facing poverty, poor economic prospects, poor social housing and poor health. Originally settling in areas around the town centre and conveniently close to the textile mills, the South Asian population grew in certain areas, namely, Glodwick, Werneth, Coppice and Westwood. Social housing was often used by less affluent members of the ethnic minority community, and in 1981 households from ethnic minority backgrounds comprised 6.9% of the council’s waiting list for a house. Racial policies in housing markets are well documented (Smith, 1987; Solomos and Singh, 1990; Kundnani, 2001) and Oldham was no exception to racist housing policies:

‘a formal investigation by the CRE into the Local Authority’s Housing Allocations in 1991 found that the Council were discriminating against Asian applicants by
segregating them from white households into the centre of town and by placing them into lower quality housing’ (Ritchie, 2001, p.16)

3.4.1 Discrepancies across wards

According to the 2011 Census (ONS, 2011) the ethnic minority population of Oldham had increased from 13.9% in 2001 to 22.5% in 2011. The Muslim population in Oldham accounts for 1 in 9 of the population, with a distinctly high proportion of people with Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds. Oldham’s South Asian population, in particular residents of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage has grown from 4.5% to 6.3% and from 7.3% to 10.1% respectively. This growth can be attributed in part to higher birth rates amongst this population, as well as internal and international migration (Oldham in Profile, 2018).
The above image from the Oldham in Profile (February, 2018) report shows the wards in which the Pakistani and Bangladeshi minority population of Oldham is concentrated, as well as the growth in population. Oldham also has a younger age profile than the national average, with Pakistani and Bangladeshi over represented in this proportion, a profile that is similar to Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations nationally.

These subsequent generations of BSA Muslims in Oldham have not fared better in terms of the poor prospects faced by earlier generations (Finney, et al.2014; ONS, 2016). The 2011 National Census ranked Oldham as the 47th most deprived local authority in England according to axes of multiple deprivation. Whilst towns stand within local authorities and provide local services to the community in the area, the local authority is larger and comprises several towns, and oversees housing, health services, environment, and planning. Several dimensions of deprivation of a local authority are measured within the deprivation index, these include income, employment, education, health, housing and crime rates.

Educational attainment levels of Oldham are similarly well below the national average, with 29.6% of (ONS, 2012) residents aged 16-74 having no qualifications, this is well below the national average of 22.5%. A third of the Pakistani community have no qualification, with just one in six having obtained a degree, and over 40% of Bangladeshi community have no qualifications (ONS, 2012). BSA Muslim women in Oldham show high levels of economic inactivity, reflecting national statistics for this cohort. Additionally, overcrowded or poor housing continues to feature in Oldham with an average of 7.5%, with an increased number of people living in sub-standard housing compared to the national average 7.3% (ONS, 2012). Deprivation varies across the wards of Oldham, the ethnic minority population of
Oldham, Pakistani and Bangladeshi residents are primarily concentrated around the town centre, namely in Werneth, St.Mary’s, Alexandra, Coldhurst and Westwood wards. These are in line with patterns of primary migration, with male migrants settling into these areas in order to access work. These areas are now also amongst the most deprived wards in Oldham. The graphic below shows the level of deprivation across the wards:

This discrepancy is reflected in the statistics from the 2011 Census. For example, the population in Alexandra has less than half its residents in employment (47.6%), and only one in four in full time employment. There is also a high proportion of overcrowded housing in Alexandra. St.Mary’s ward, of which Glodwick is a part, has the largest population in the borough, with nearly half the residents of Pakistani heritage and a significant proportion of Bangladeshi residents. This ward has one of the lowest percentages of employment, and overcrowding affects one in six households. St.Mary’s ward also has one of the highest
percentages of adults (41.2%) without any qualifications. Similarly, Medlock Vale ward, which Coppice is a part of, is one of the mostly densely populated, and with a high percentage of the population suffering from long term health problems. Werneth ward has a sizeable Pakistani population of 48.6% of the residents living there, the majority of the population is also under 40 years old (69.2%). There are high levels of economic inactivity, with a greater number of people claiming out of work benefits (21.4%) than those in full time employment (20%). Residents in Werneth have the poorest health and shortest life expectancy, with over 20% suffering from long term health issues. Coldhurst ward is home to over two-thirds (60%) of the Bangladeshi population of Oldham, has a high proportion of residents out of work (60.4%), and overcrowded households, as well poor levels of education, and second poorest levels of health care and long-term disabilities. Overall, Oldham borough is deprived across multiple indices of deprivation, furthermore the wards of Alexandra, Coldhurst, Werneth and St.Mary’s are amongst the 1% most deprived nationally.

Interviews with the women for this research, showed awareness of the deprivation as well as the ethnic, racial and divisions across the wards. Through anecdotal accounts the women recalled childhood memories of different wards, citing some wards as problematic or sites of safety. The woman displayed knowledge about the different wards that was learned through childhood or experienced once moving to a particular area. The knowledge of, movement across, and experiences within these wards are discussed in further chapters. This discrepancy and settlement across the wards of Oldham indicates the need to take into consideration the intricacies of areas such as Oldham which are seen as both segregated,
isolated communities, and homogenous along racial and ethnic measures. As Catney (2017, p.148) notes, ‘greater sophistication’ is needed in order to discuss the spatial segregation of local neighbourhoods, in particular taking into account differences between ethnic groups, patterns of migration, and settlement patterns as these can illuminate how group characteristics affect the social and spatial dynamics of and between groups within the same neighbourhoods.

3.4.2 Contextualising research in Oldham

The different dimensions of Oldham’s history including post-industrial decline, immigration, and troubled race relations cannot be easily separated. As such, it is necessary to understand how interpretations of ‘place’, and belonging are being formed. How does living/working in Oldham shape understandings of place for BSA Muslim women? In what aspect does the ‘place’ of Oldham feature in everyday lives? In what sense is Oldham understood? The concept of place has been considered in the Chapter 2, here, place is discussed in order to consider how best to contextualise the everyday lives of BSA Muslim women in Oldham.

To this end, this research utilised the concept of intersectional bodies in the everyday place of Oldham as an underpinning theoretical framework. Oldham as a place of ambivalence, of contested belongings and notions of ‘togetherness’ emerged as a key feature in the interviews I conducted with BSA Muslim women. Given that many of the women were what would be considered ‘upwardly socially mobile’ considering what emotional, physical and
historical connections they made with this ‘place’ proved an interesting source of analysis.

Oldham is one of those places everybody assumes they know everything about, yet the plurality of this place is often overlooked.

How best then to represent the place of Oldham with equal consideration for its history, the emotions and connections it gives rise to, as well as BSA Muslim women’s understanding of belonging or not to the town? When considering urban places, towns or cities, it is imperative to note people’s embedded routines in places, the ‘everydayness’ of individual lives, and the ways in which people utilise place (Amin, 2013). Equally essential is considering the notion that for each ‘place’ there is a ‘constellation of entities, networks and systems with their own logics and dynamics that are only ever partially visible and emergent in their combinations’ (2013, p.206). Such a view allows for the holistic, nuanced and complex understanding this research aims for. I have in the previous chapter discussed the importance of place, understood as fluid entities, continually made and remade, contested, enclosed and defended in everyday interactions (Massey, 2005; Cresswell, 2013). Furthermore, the notion of place as one that is concerned with movement and interaction is essential to this research project, which seeks to understand the sense of attachment and belonging to place as experienced by a particular group along intersections of race, gender, religion and locality. In order to understand the sense of place experienced by BSA Muslim women in Oldham it is necessary to consider the town as not just having physical and relational space to which meanings are attached, but crucially, having significance because of the investment and the meanings attached. This notion is further articulated by Gieryn (2000, p.455) who states that, ‘Places are not only materially carved out of space but
interpreted, narrated, understood, felt, and imagined – their meanings pliable in the hands of different people or cultures, malleable over time, and inevitably contested’. It is these pliable meanings articulated through different cultures, interpretations and experiences which resonate particularly with the aims of this research.

Using a case study approach allows for an in-depth understanding of place, as Jones (2013, p.116) notes, ‘Oldham (with other northern towns) has taken on a resonance that fixes it in time as a place of riots and ethnic segregation’ for which the ‘prescribed cure’ has been policy initiatives including the shift from multiculturalism to community cohesion and integration. The local area has repeatedly been described as a community living ‘parallel lives’ (Cantle, 2001), segregated along lines of race and colour. Furthermore, gendered notions of community have particular implications for women. As Worley (2005, p.490) notes, in the immediate aftermath of the race riots, the target of intervention were young, Asian men and their masculinity with ‘activities designed to alleviate tensions between young men’. Muslim women in Oldham were relegated in policy documents to a silent minority who were deemed as having little to no autonomy, holding a, ‘perceived lesser status’ (Ritchie, 2001, p.9). Much of the change needed to ‘create cohesive communities’ (Ritchie, 2001) was seen to be located within the private space of family and home, which served to enforce particular constructions of gender roles and femininity, and reproductions of particular cultural notions with regards to certain religious groups. Thus this research is focused on spaces of home, work and community within Oldham; however this not does mean that the place of Oldham is relegated to the background, rather as Jones et al. (2014, p.4) note, ‘places, on a variety of scales, retain their potency in people’s narratives,
imaginings and spatial practices’ and furthermore, ‘what happens in specific places affects spatial relations’. It is argued that interactions and experiences within spaces of home, work and community are shaped by spatial relations within them, as well as spatial relations of the place of Oldham.

This research intends to highlight the everyday lives of BSA Muslim women living and working in the most deprived neighbourhoods in England as a way of challenging stereotypical notions of BSA Muslim women. Given that both the ‘BSA Muslim woman’ and Oldham remain over determined categories in policy, media and cultural rhetoric, the voices of BSA Muslim women as a marginalised group within an already minority, marginalised community needs to be heard. As research, both academic and policy driven, has focused on the ‘moral panic’ over Muslim men, there is a clear gap in terms of the knowledge regarding BSA Muslim women’s everyday experiences.

3.5 The participants- BSA Muslim women in Oldham

In analysing everyday lived experiences of BSA Muslim women in a community described as economically and socially deprived and divided, it was the purpose of this research to provide a holistic and contextual account of the lives of Muslim women in 21st century Britain, through discussions of everyday experiences. The fieldwork took place over a ten-month period, from October 2015 to July 2016. The participants for this research were second and third generation BSA Muslim women, whose parents or grandparents who migrated to Britain. Engaging with this cohort allows for an analysis of the lived experiences of BSA Muslim women whose primary connections are now mostly UK based. It also allows for an exploration of connection and understandings of place, especially within a
second/third generation cohort who are likely to have different notions of belonging and identity than earlier generations.

In total 28 women took part in this study. They were recruited from varying wards across Oldham including Coppice, Clarksfield, Werneth, Westwood and Glodwick. All the participants were recruited through a variety of personal contacts, purposive sampling and a snowballing technique was used to recruit participants. Researcher details were passed through groups including a women’s only charity group which kept its members informed about activities through Whatsapp group chat. Participants were also recruited at a local soup kitchen at which I volunteered. I also passed my information to the admins of various Facebook groups which focused on and posted information about Oldham, as well as groups that focused on history and nostalgia, and the Facebook group of a previous secondary school I had attended. Ideally it was anticipated that women of both Bangladeshi and Pakistani background would be equally represented. This plan was not realised as it was difficult to engage the Bengali community in my research, despite repeated contact with associations such as the Westwood Women’s Association. As such, the majority of the participants are Pakistani (N=23) with only five Bengali women. This means that it is possible the research doesn’t fully account for cultural and ethnic differences, and indeed that the majority of experiences represented here are of British Pakistani women. It further illustrates that given the multiple, fluid and ‘context-dependent nature of identities’ (Zubair et al. 2012) researchers find themselves in multiple positionalities, so though I may have been seen as an insider with the Pakistani community, to the Bengali community I was an outsider. When I discussed the difficulty of recruiting participants with some of the Bengali
women who took part in this research I was told that there were still issues of trust amongst Bengali and Pakistani communities in Oldham. This might have meant that I was unknown in the Bengali community and as such points to the extent to which intersectional differences between researcher and potential participant can affect the recruitment process.

The age range for the cohort was women between 25 and 40 years old, with the participants coming from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. They were geographically located across wards in Oldham, economically active/inactive, in or outside education, employed/unemployed/self-employed, mothers as well as married women without children, and single women.

The following sections will discuss the range of methods of data collections used, the logic behind the use of each method as well as its practical application in the research field.

### 3.6 Methods of data collection

What methods could be considered feminist? It is wrong to assume that certain methods favoured by feminist researchers are uniquely or inherently feminist and therefore perfectly suited or only suited for feminist research. Techniques such as individual interviews, ethnography or focus groups have been adapted for use in feminist research.

Given the multi-faceted nature of lived realities, discussed above and in the previous chapter, this research aimed to employ a number of methods which could be considered ethnographic. Scott (2009) contend that ethnography is not strictly a method but rather an approach or strategy. The use of ethnography is key to understanding everyday lived
experiences as its primary aim is to provide an in-depth, rich understanding of people’s lives in their cultural setting. Through immersion in a particular ‘culture’, ethnographers attempt to record and observe people and behaviours. When researching race and ethnicity ethnographic methods and the principles behind these helped guide the research process and methods chosen. As Gunaratnam (2003, p.27) suggests, in paying attention to questions to epistemology, research practices and methods, and ‘attending to ‘race’ and ethnicity as socially produced categories, can provide a means of disrupting and challenging’ stereotypical discourses on ethnic minority groups. Similarly, Nayak (2006, p.425) notes that attending to the epistemological and ontological questions is necessary when engaged in ethnographic work which details questions of race, principally because categories are rarely fixed, the multiple positioning of researcher and the researched is a recurring aspect of ‘ethnographic interactions’. Such a fluid, interactive and complex approach to ethnography therefore mirrors the ways in which ethnography can be used to challenge rigid racial categorisations. Therefore, the notion that categories such as race and ethnicity are fluid, contingent and ever shifting provided the guiding principles of this research, essentially because research in the field and our ethnographic interactions are equally fluid, continually shifting, as such reflecting the ‘multiple mappings of a complex and multifaceted reality or realities’ (Nayak, 2006, p.425).

The appeal of ethnography is clear for feminist researchers, because ethnographic approaches hinge on engaging with and thus empowering the voices of those so often ignored. As Skeggs (2001, p.430) has noted, ethnography ‘with its emphasis on experiences and the words, voices and lives of the participants’ is viewed as particularly suited to feminist research. Yet Stacey (1988) argues that ethnographic methods are not without their problems for feminist researchers; the greater depth, interpersonal engagement with
participants and mutuality that encompasses ‘feminist ethnography’ can itself be a deeper form of exploitation. The nature of social science research it is argued often means that, ‘the relationship between social researchers and the people they study has been unequal at best and exploitative at worst’ (Baca-Zinn, 1979, p.209). This principally results because researchers take information, whilst participants give their time and stories with very little in return. Feminist research has thus tried to avoid such unequal relationships, with suggestions on how to negate the exploitative nature of research includes designing research from the basis of understanding social phenomena from the perspectives of women, being reflexive throughout the research process, and being mindful of what the researcher’s intrusion in participants’ lives may entail. These were all aspects of ethnography I was keenly aware of and reflected on throughout the research process.

Stacey (1988) argues that in the writing up of research it is often the ethnographer’s voice which dominates, with their interpretation and judgement taking precedence. However, both Skeggs (1997b) and Reinharz (1992) contest this view arguing that ethnographic methods can present a reciprocal relationship between researcher and participants through giving a voice to marginalised groups. Further charges of exploitation can be counteracted by displaying transparency between researcher and participants through informed consent and reciprocity throughout the research process. Still, this does not refute the fact that in most research the final analysis, and therefore the dominant voice, is that of the researcher despite the fact that participants may disagree with this. I was keenly aware of this throughout this research, and given my previous discussions on the lack of BSA Muslim women’s voices in official research I wished to avoid these issues of exploitation. I described
the analysis process to my participants, explaining how and why the different methods were being used, as well as offering copies of the audio recording and transcription of the interview to participants. One participant was sent the recording, whilst others declined, stating however that they would be interested in reading the final thesis.

I now turn to discuss the different methods of data collection used in this study: in-depth interviews, walk-along interviews, diaries, photographs as well as diary and photograph elicitation interviews.

3.6.1 In-depth interviews

Each participant took part in an in-depth interview that explored ideas of home, belonging, community, issues of gender and experiences at work and everyday interactions within public spaces. Interviews which are semi-structured can provide a vital way of understanding how research participants make sense or meaning out of their everyday lived experiences. Described as a social interaction (De Santis, 1980), interviews can elicit rich and unexpected data, given that they can often shift and flow following the natural pattern of a conversation. As Rapley (2004, p.16) notes, the interview seems to be both simple and self-evident, an extension of the ‘natural conversations’ which occur in daily life. The interview seems to draw ‘on the everyday practises of asking and answering questions and the everyday identities of questioner/answerer and interviewer/interviewee’. Feminist researchers have particularly espoused the interview as a way to break down hierarchies between researcher and participant as the interview can be a socially interactive encounter through which to build rapport. Interviews can be used to develop a deep understanding of a person’s everyday life, transitions and encounters. However, given the nature of unstructured/semi structured interviews the researcher comes away with the words of the
interview, and as such another structural inequality emerges, whereby analysis is carried by the researcher with little to no input from the participant. It is possible then that the ‘reality’ produced in subsequent work following the interview is not a ‘reality’ recognised by the research participant, but rather a ‘reality’ that has been imposed by the researcher and which ultimately carries authority (Wise, 1987).

Oakley (1981) suggests an approach to the interview which encourages establishing reciprocity between researcher and research participant. This is necessary to break down hierarchal boundaries and to mitigate somewhat the power relationship that can occur between interviewer/interviewee. Yet as Ribbens (1998) contends there is always the potential for a hierarchical power relationship in interview encounters; as a PhD researcher it is possible that my professional and educational status placed me such that the interviewee felt they are unable to have an equal, reciprocal relationship, and indeed, some women expressed sentiments where they felt their everyday lives were not interesting enough for an academic researcher or study. In order to mitigate this, I was open about my history and connection with the town, my educational background and the reasons for carrying out the research. Researcher positionality and power dynamics between researcher and the researched are questions I will return to discuss later in this chapter.

The interview process was interesting. I felt women reacted to me either positively or negatively from the outset. There is much to be said for the researcher/participant engagement, even from the initial ‘look’ that is shared when first meeting, before words more than a polite hello and an awkward smile are exchanged and the interview itself has
barely begun. I believe the concept of ‘dress’ and perceptions of dress were crucial in this process. The choice of what I wore to the interview in my opinion influenced how open participants were, or the expectations they had of me. For me, these initial expectations focussed on the essentialisation of the hijab, and the way dress factors into the reading of bodies and difference. At almost all interviews I wore a loose abaya and hijab. My aim was to achieve a relaxed, casual atmosphere during interviews, to which end I wanted to be ‘relatable’, though perhaps expectations of what a PhD student should look like were a little different for some participants. This was my version of ‘dressing down’, and an approach that could be considered informal, which in itself is an interesting connection between hijab and professionalism, a connotation which is referred to by participants in Chapter 5. However, I had not anticipated that interpretations of my hijab, and by extension the visibility of my ‘Muslimness’ would influence my interactions with Muslim women who did not veil.

Two interviews stand out as particularly important in this regard. The first interview, conducted in the café of a local library with a 27-year-old professional woman, Raheela, was perhaps one of the most difficult interviews I conducted, principally because Raheela seemed reluctant to engage with me. Raheela made contact with me after another participant had mentioned my research and shared my contact details with her. Though I tried to steer questions towards her experiences as the only BSA Muslim woman working in her office space, her responses were short and restricted, and she commented on the fact that people seem to pigeonhole her into this notion of ‘Muslim’ which she did not identify with. I suspect that Raheela felt I was also pigeonholing her on the basis of her dress, and
thought perhaps I saw her as ‘less Muslim’ than myself. She did in fact mention during the interview that she’d had experiences of hijabi women suggesting her opinions on religion were less valid as she ‘did not cover’. I did my best to reassure her that this was not the case and I was interested in the intersectional nature of gender/ethnicity/religion rather than religious practices themselves but her initial hesitancy to engage with me continued throughout the interview. The second interview was conducted with Noreen, a 32-year-old secondary school teacher. As a non-hijabi woman Noreen had initially thought my interview would focus on a religious aspect, something she felt was more spiritual for her than the traditional understanding of ‘Muslim’. This interview began with hesitancy, and by the end of the interview Noreen confided in me her reticence had been due to the fact my hijab/abaya presented a religiosity she was not all too comfortable with, saying ‘hijabi women tend to be quite judgemental’.

In all, the reactions of participants towards researchers is something that cannot be overlooked, and the success or a failure of an interview can sometimes depend on those initial perceptions that research participants draw of the researcher. The work of Zubair et al (2012) has also drawn attention to the significance of ethnicity and gender in research; in particular noting how insider/outsider boundaries in the field are negotiated through dress and specific representations of the embodied self. Additionally, opportunities and vulnerabilities experienced in the field by the researcher can be reinforced through the use or non-use of ‘traditional dress’. Common or uncommon bodily senses, the way we dress, our articulations when we speak, and body movements/actions all contribute to the extent to which trust and rapport can be built between researchers and participants. As Nayak
(2003, p.425) notes such similarities and differences are invariably a part of the
ethnographic process, an aspect which could be described as the ‘what we may think of as
the ‘me’ and ‘not-like-me’ of research’.

Additionally, these initial perceptions highlight the way stereotypes or misconceptions
about Muslim women, hijabi or non-hijabi are manifest even within ‘Muslim’ communities.
The way we dress, and what statement this appears to make was something many of the
women I interviewed chose to highlight. The issue of clothes, or dressing respectably,
whatever that meant or however that was interpreted, became a common feature of the
interviews, and as many of the women noted, the expectations of dress were an aspect of
control, a way for the community to monitor behaviour and morality.

Above I have explored feminist approaches to the in-depth interview and argued that
further extending consideration of other nuanced differences such as dress are also
important factors when considering the success or difficulties of an interview. The
intersecting nature of these women’s identities as mothers, students, wives, employees and
carers meant that often interviews were difficult to arrange with dates and times often
arranged around many other commitments. Therefore, I now turn to another important
aspect of interviews, namely the difficulties associated with choosing a setting for the
interview.
3.6.2 The interview- settings

The advantages and disadvantages in using interviews in research have been well documented, however, the importance of considering the place, or setting where interviews take place has not been as extensively considered. As Sin (2003, p.305) notes, it is important to pay attention to interview sites, as ‘these can yield important information about the way participants construct their individual and social identities.’ It was usually the women who chose where the interview would take place, and it was clear, this was more than simply a matter of convenience. For some women, the public spaces of cafes and libraries represented a site within which they felt comfortable and more open. This was especially important when considering whether they shared the house with members of their extended family. In this situation the choice of site becomes vital, as it can embody the spatial relations which reflect the power and positionality of the participants in relation to the people, places and experiences they discuss in the interview itself (Elwood and Martin, 2000).

Who selects the interview location can be interpreted as one aspect of the shifting power dynamics between researcher and participant. Herzog (2005, p.25) notes, that the setting chosen for the interview should not be seen as merely a background to what is discussed, but rather an important part of the social context within which the research is conducted, and further the ‘location selected should be seen as part of the interpretation of findings.’
For this research, interviews predominantly took place in local cafes, the library or women’s homes; each of these locations presented their own problems. Cafes were often noisy and did not offer much privacy. One participant in particular felt that she could not talk openly in the café and so we arranged to meet later at her house. Equally, meeting at the homes of some participants could also prove difficult. Sometimes, the women had children around, and the interviews would then have to be structured around interruptions from the children. The space of the home also presented other difficulties. Cultural and religious discourses regarding guests meant some women felt their homes should be clean and tidy; whilst some of the women commented on making sure their home was ‘presentable’. At times this made the initial meeting awkward and stilted. Being a guest, and invited into a home, could thus mean that the equilibrium of power shifted throughout the interview. The implications for the power dynamics between researcher and participant when carrying out interviews in private homes has been discussed by Longhurst (1996) who considers the home environment as conducive to creating a site where participants feel comfortable to share personal information. Additionally, Oberhauser (1997) and Al-Hindi (1997) have considered the home as an important place for potentially disrupting the hierarchies present in interviews.

Importantly, just as feminist writers draw attention to the power dynamics in the interview process, the site must also be examined in ways which adds to challenge and broadens understandings of the power dynamism in the interview process. Power relations between researcher and participant can perhaps be exacerbated or shaped by the location of the interview, as Elwood and Martin (2000, p.649) note, ‘the interview site itself embodies and
constitutes multiples scale of spatial relations and meaning’, these can affect the power and positionality of researchers and participants in relation to the discussion which takes part in the interview. This is particularly the case when considering the home as an interview site. As Sin (2003, p.306) notes, ‘Interviews are, at least in part, structured by the spatial context in which they are conducted’ and further that, the space in which an interview takes place can yield important information regarding the way respondents construct their identities’. In this research where interviews were conducted in the home, significant portions of the interview discussion focused on family, socio-spatial relations with children and parents, extended family members and the physical spaces within the home, such as bedrooms. It could be surmised that the familiar setting of the home, allowed some participants to feel more at ease with the interview which in turn generated more personal, intimate information from them. Here, it could be noted, that the power dynamic between researcher and the researched is constantly shifting. The participant is on their ‘home turf’ (Herzog, 2005, p.29), whilst the researcher is a guest, and as such the meaning of the interview location factors into the interview dialogue, as both researcher and participant ‘bring their own understandings of place to the interviews and their interpretation’ which consequently affects behaviour within this interview setting. Yet as Elwood and Martin (2000, p.652) note, studies which highlight the inherent power dynamics in interviews focus primarily ‘on the identity and positionality of the researcher vis-à-vis the participants.’ However, there is little discussion of how the site can affect interview participants, and this is an aspect of qualitative research which requires further analysis, given that the social fields in which interviews are conducted can illuminate the relationship between ‘community, individuals or places involved in the research’ and how these shape the interview experience and material gathered.
Interviewing clearly carries advantages for feminist research, as the malleability of the form supports the principles of feminism (Bryman, 2004). Interviews also allow for generation of data about everyday lives, a key objective of this study. However, the process also carries disadvantages, amongst them the fact that they are time consuming as well as rely on participants to be open and forthcoming with opinions (Leonard, 2003). Issues of insider/outsider researcher status, as a researcher who shared gender, cultural, ethnic and religious attributes with participants, as well as the interview setting are all aspects of the interview process affected the data elicited in this research.

3.6.3 ‘Go-Along’ Interviews

Another facet of this research involved the use of the ‘walk-along’ or ‘go-along’ interview method. This method emphasises the need to observe participants’ daily interactions within particular places. To explore the sense of a person in ‘place’ or ‘out of place’ is one of the aims of this study and a key component of this thesis in an examination of the expressions/repressions of particular identities within everyday places. Commenting that traditional ethnographic methods such as participant observation and interviews can have limitations in exploring everyday experiences, Kusenbach (2003) contends that ‘street phenomenology’ or the ‘go-along’ interview is an important extension to ethnographic research tools. Given that people do not usually comment on what is happening in their
‘natural setting’ whilst going about their everyday activities, participant observation can be limiting. Similarly, given that with traditional interviews involve and agreed time and place which often takes place outside of participants everyday activities, it can be difficult to grasp and understand how participants articulate their everyday. As a result, important aspects of everyday lives can go unnoticed. Thus engaging with a hybridised version of both participant observation and interviewing can prove an effective method of exploring everyday lived experiences. Kusenbach (2003, p.463) characterises the research go-along as one where, ‘fieldworkers accompany individual informants on their ‘natural’ outings, and - through asking questions, listening and observing – actively explore their subjects’ stream of experiences and practices as they move through, and interact with, their physical and social environment’. These go-alongs were conducted with BSA Muslim women as they went through public spaces of the community, shared spaces such as parks/recreational facilities, doctor’s surgeries, and spaces in the community. Doing so allowed me to gain an understanding how BSA Muslim women interact with their social environments in their everyday lives.

It was hoped that go-along interviews would be one aspect of ethnographic research which would be particularly useful in drawing out everyday experiences, and this was certainly the case with the four women with whom go-along interviews were conducted. Carpiano (2009, p.264) describes this method as one which is conducted by ‘researchers accompanying individual informants on outings in their familiar environments, such as a neighbourhood or larger local area’. In other words, the researcher is taken on a guided walk through and gains an understanding of people’s experiences of their locality. The walk-along interview could be described as particularly appealing to feminist researchers as the process further breaks down the power dynamics between researcher/researched given that it presents the
research participant with the opportunity to ‘lead’ the interview by acting as the ‘tour
guide’. Furthermore, Brown and Durrheim (2009, p. 911) note, the interactive nature of a
walk-along or mobile interview disrupts the ‘fixity’ of a sit-down interview, possibly leading
to a ‘largely unrehearsed conversation’. I made full use of this, and encouraged participants
to take the lead, whereby I would place the recorder in my coat pocket to ensure privacy
and discretion as the go along interview was conducted.

Crucially, the go-along interview is most effective when used in conjunction with other
methods; and the traditional sit-down interview complemented the method, as I could
explain the purpose of the go-along interview. However, only four participants felt
comfortable enough with and able to commit to a ‘go-along’ interview. On the few
occasions that these go along interviews were conducted, they went extremely well,
highlighting the potential for go-along interviews, as they not only relate to how people use,
negotiate or contend with the spaces/places they inhabit, but how these places are created
by everyday interactions and the routes people take (Ingold and Lee, 2008)

In addition to the four go-along interviews, further observations of how research
participants negotiated various public spaces occurred in conjunction with the research
process. For example in one instance, whilst waiting in line at a café before conducting a sit-
down interview, the server assumed that both the participant and I must be with the Asian
man who had been waiting in line ahead of us. Though I did not immediately register the
mistake, the research participant commented that it must have been because ‘we were
Asian women who can’t go out alone’. On another occasion, whilst interviewing a
participant at the café in a local gym/wellbeing centre, we noticed a group of Muslim women leaving a room after a couple of white, male gym instructors had entered. We observed that a group of pensioners had been waiting to use the room whilst there had been a ‘female only session’ taking place in the room, which was predominantly being used by the Muslim women. As the women’s session had over-run, people had been complaining about the need for this ‘female only’ space, and special treatment ‘for them’, implying for Muslim women. This was an uncomfortable exchange to witness, and was commented on by both myself and the participant.

However, the go-along interviews would have been more successful had more participants agreed to take part. It is my feeling that this type of ethnography is one that requires a deeper level of ‘immersion’ in the environment being researched. There are no doubt limitations to this method of ethnography, as there are with all research methods. These include the weather, the physical health of correspondents and the availability of participants, as well as the time of day the interview takes place (Carpiano, 2009). To this I would add a further limitation which is the need for greater familiarity with a participant; for example with regards to my research, it was unfeasible to assume that women would be comfortable with me accompanying them on everyday activities. Though these may have been seemingly innocuous visits to doctor’s surgeries, or visits to institutions of employment or education, nevertheless these require a level of rapport which cannot be obtained over a single meeting. Rather a deeper immersion into a participant’s life is required, whereby sustained contact over some length of time is necessary. In this way it would be possible to
build up a relationship with a participant where they would be comfortable with a researcher accompanying them on everyday outings.

Though some of the women in this research may not have felt comfortable with me accompanying them to places of work/schools/social spaces they were nonetheless comfortable talking about them in an interview, as well as writing about them in diaries, or in the case of public spaces, taking photographs of them. Assured of anonymity, the women felt more comfortable discussing experiences of these different spaces through the other research methods. It can be surmised that an uncomfortable sense of visibility might also have played a part in some of the women’s reluctance to take part with go-along interviews. Being accompanied by a researcher and talking about their surroundings, which might have been predominantly ‘white spaces’ (as discussed in Chapter 6), could have added to a sense of visibility in these spaces and therefore to a sense of vulnerability. Additionally, as discussed in the previous chapter, and subsequent chapters, visibility in public spaces can be uncomfortable as that visibility may be read through a stigmatising or stereotypical lens. It can be supposed that being accompanied by a researcher and talking about their surroundings in ways which departed from a casual stroll with a friend, might have added to the level of visibility and thus discomfort.

3.6.4 Diary-elicitation interviews

Letters, diaries, journal entries and autobiographies refer to items under the umbrella term of ‘personal documents’ (Bryman, 2008) which are useful as first-person accounts providing
rich details of social interactions and every day practises. Diaries can provide insight into private or personal activities, and taken for granted everyday situations; perhaps crucially for this study, diaries can provide greater depth and insight into the way individuals interpret situations and ascribe meaning to not only their own actions but also to the reactions of others in relation to them. For BSA Muslim women and their ‘visible identities’ as the cogent ‘other’, analysing this cognitive resonance of being ascribed as the ‘other’ becomes a vital aspect of disrupting the ‘grand narrative’ of BSA Muslim women (Alaszewski, 2006). Bolger et al. (2003, p.579) contend that diary entries or reports ‘capture the particulars of experience in a way that is not possible using traditional designs’. Furthermore, the diary method can provide spontaneous, yet deeply reflective accounts of experience.

In this research diary extracts were used as a source of primary data. BSA Muslim women were asked to make short diary entries over the course of two months. They were encouraged to include events they considered significant in their everyday lives, as well as emotions, feelings and anxieties they felt comfortable expressing in a diary entry. The aim was to gain greater understanding of the daily activities, routines, as well as personal accounts of everyday lives. I then conducted diary elicitation interviews with these participants two months later. I asked the participants to bring along their completed diaries, where we read through the extracts written, and I asked women to share their reflections on the how and why of the diary entry they made. Issues of confidentiality are equally an important aspect of the use of diaries. In subsequent analysis and discussion of the diary entries pseudonyms were then assigned to ensure anonymity of the author.
This diary method was moderately successful. The concept was met with initial enthusiasm from all the participants, but in the end however only nine diaries were returned. Though I gave some instructions on what women might wish to record, I did not impose a structure for the diary. As a result, the women were creative in the format of their diaries, and the amount they wrote as well as the number of entries they made. Though these have been uniquely interesting accounts of everyday life and negotiation of space, it would have been beneficial to have a larger number of participants keep diaries as this would have allowed for greater variety of data. Using diaries has been an insightful way to understand how women perceive their daily routines. Diaries are also valuable in revealing the language that participants use. In this project, the style and language used varied, and reflected to some extent the educational level of participants, various approaches towards writing and cataloguing daily lives, as well as the degree to which each woman was able to dedicate time to completing the diary. The women also shared feelings and emotions, they shared details of events and their responses to them, as well as discussing what they considered to be their general ‘day-to-day’ norms. Used in conjunction with the other methods, the diaries showed how the everyday could be shaped by global as well as local events, as some of the diary extracts discussed events such as the Paris attacks in 2015, with women noting down their feelings and responses, sharing fears of how this attack would affect their everyday lives. Such insights demonstrate how useful diaries can be, as well as providing data on how some BSA Muslim women perceive their sense of self in different spaces.

The diary elicitation interviews were particularly illuminating and demonstrate the effectiveness of combining facets in order to provide deeper, richer analysis. As Latham
(2004) notes, the diary-interview offers context that is structured so that the participant can
discuss events depicted in their diary by reflecting on not only the event itself but why they
felt this was noted. In combination the interview and the diary-interview provided in-depth
and introspective accounts of everyday life. The diary-interview method also provides some
solution to the ethical issues involved in interpreting and analysing research materials.
Interpreting and analysing data is a process fraught with tension, questions of subjectivity,
imposing meanings or representation, and, for feminist researchers, carries particular
overtones with the hierarchical nature of power relations in researcher/researched
relationships (Stacey, 1988). Through the diary-interview, meanings and interpretations of
diary entries are made, not by the researcher, but by participants who will present their
own understandings of what has been written and why.

3.6.5 Field diary

As well as asking participants to keep a diary, I also wrote diary entries during my fieldwork.
These included the name, pseudonym and date of the women I met, as well as the methods
they had agreed to partake in. The field diary also gave me an avenue through which to note
my own concerns, experiences and emotions during the research process. The field diary
can prove a vitally important aspect of reflexivity and serves as a useful tool when recalling
details, especially when data is often written up sometimes a year after the fieldwork. As
Punch (2012) notes, the field diary can become an essential part of reflection and analysis of
data, especially as researchers often use field diaries to detail practical as well as emotional, intimate accounts of experiences in the field.

The field diary proved invaluable to me in this context, especially, as is often overlooked, the fieldwork process can be an intensely isolating one for a researcher. My experiences during fieldwork impressed on me how fraught and difficult the process can actually be. Initially when I began the interviews I did not have a structured set of questions, rather I had decided that as I was studying the ‘everyday’ interactions of space and place, and that I would use the ‘interaction’ of the question/answer process to determine what shape the interview would take. Though this had the advantage of being perhaps more ‘conversational’ than a traditional interview, I was unprepared for the emotional investment such ‘conversations’ could entail. For example, the topics of ‘everyday’ and ‘home’ often led to talk about the family and in some interviews women relayed difficulties or tensions within and between family members.

Interviews would on occasion become quite emotional, and I did begin to feel on some level that the interviews were akin to a counselling or therapy session for some of the participants. This had a detrimental effect on my own emotional wellbeing as I found I could not easily disassociate or disconnect from what had been discussed in the interviews. I wrote about this in my field diary, for example in the following extract dated 27th November 2016:
“Met T. today, took a taxi over to her house in Shaw. I had some interesting questions from the, what I’m assuming, Pakistani taxi driver to put up with on the way, his questions about where I was going, and whether it was regarding work, and even my family were intrusive, I guess he thought a woman in an abaya, wearing hijab and travelling on her own needed to be asked. I felt uncomfortable and tried to avoid any more conversation, I made sure I took the bus back. So, interview with T was...interesting. We talked while she worked on a cake for a client, she talked about family and the issues she’s got with her mother in law. T showed me how her home is organised, they’ve got a separate dining room and lounge for her mother in law! She refuses to speak to T and so T’s kids don’t have much to do with the mother in law even though they all live in the same house! So, mother in law turns up as the interview is happening, and the atmosphere just became so tense. I felt so uncomfortable being there I ended the interview and left.”

I was not able to shake the deeply uncomfortable feelings I had experienced during the interview with T, and was reminded how difficult, tenuous and complicated human relationships can be. It cannot be supposed that emotions would not be a part of research where everyday interactions of family, home and place are discussed, yet I was unprepared for how deeply I would be affected. In a number of other field diary entries I noted that I felt tired, and the interviews with the women were becoming difficult. Emotions in qualitative research have long been considered as significant, indeed seeing ‘emotional responses’ as part of the process of collecting and analysing data can help build up richer pictures of participants, as well as giving researchers the opportunity to analyse their own subjective
positions (Copp, 2008). At this point I had conducted around 15 interviews and felt emotionally exhausted, and at my next supervision meeting I discussed the difficulties I was facing. I had found that I was not enjoying the fieldwork process and was unable to muster up any sense of enthusiasm for the remaining interviews. My supervisor suggested I change the interview format from unstructured to semi-structured, because using a few prompts or set questions would allow me to control the interview to some extent.

The importance of wellbeing not only for participants but researchers as well has become something I am acutely aware of. Maintaining regular contact with supervisors, as well as the PGR community is vital especially during the isolating process of fieldwork. Similarly, the field diary proved a valuable resource when I felt the fieldwork was becoming exhausting, and also potentially doubles up as a resource which ‘may be a useful avenue for seeking self-scrutiny and transparency of the context in which knowledge was produced’ (Punch, 2012, p.87).

3.6.6 Visual data

The use of visual data, photographs or film has been a cornerstone of classic sociology and anthropology since as far back as the nineteenth century. For the purposes of this study, BSA Muslim women were asked to photograph areas of Oldham that are important to them and these photographs were then discussed in a follow up photo-elicitation interview. As Pink (2014, p.17) notes, visual data can become a useful method in ethnographic research, and can prove particularly illuminating in discussions with participants, as images are
‘inextricably interwoven with our personal identities and narratives’ and further, ‘inspire conversations’ precisely because of narratives which can emerge in reference to images. Participants were asked in these interviews to share their emotions, feelings or reasons for taking the photographs.

As a researcher I had very little input into what images the women took. Apart from some very broad guidelines, the women were free to interpret the notion of capturing Oldham through images in whatever way they wished. Again, this was a conscious decision on my part, principally in order to, as discussed earlier, hear from those marginalised voices of BSA Muslim women living in Oldham. With the aim of alleviating any potential power imbalances in research projects, I asked the women who shared the photographs with me through Whatsapp to caption them, thus, the meaning attached to any image would be from the women themselves. Using this form of visual data is a vital and resourceful part of opening up ideas of everyday places in Oldham. As Grady (2004, p.19) notes every image, every photograph taken by participants ‘represents a person, object, place or event in the image maker’s psychic landscape. Thus, whatever else they may be- ideology, personal statement or even accident- images can always constitute data for one purpose or another’.

As with the diary interview, photo-elicitation interviews also took place, and discussions of the images presented rich, detailed and highly individualised accounts of BSA Muslim women living in Oldham. As Harper (2002, p.13) notes, photo-elicitation may be based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into an interview, yet the method can produce rich information that evokes, ‘feelings, and memories that are due to the photograph’s
particular form of representation.’ Furthermore, as a participatory process, photo-elicitation is a powerful tool as it allows participants to become photographers, and thus, ‘subjects rather than objects of research’, able to ‘construct images that describe their lives’ (Beilin, 2005, p.60). The photographs shared by the women demonstrated a connection to Oldham that displayed a sense of everyday activity, connectivity, memory and collective history.

The emotions and attachments to the place of Oldham and different spaces within Oldham became central to these discussions where I discussed with participants not only the image, but the words used to caption it. Asking research participants to be photographers is a good way of getting a sense of the meanings that participants attach to the environments in which they live. Asking participants to explain the relevance of particular photographs enabled an analysis the everyday ‘places’ and transitions through spaces for BSA Muslim women in Oldham, that was crucially driven by their views and voice. Latham (2004) contends that giving participants the opportunity to take such an active part in the research allows them to develop their own strategies for telling stories. As a researcher adopting a feminist methodology this is of key importance, and the use of these different facets allows acknowledgement of unequal the power relationship between researcher and the researched, and taking steps to alleviate its effects. Additionally, as Auken et al. (2010, p.375) note, participant-driven photo-elicitation, where the images are provided and chosen by the participant, ‘embodies photo-elicitation’s ability to break down barriers between researchers and subjects, creating opportunities for citizens to be more meaningfully involved in data generation’.
3.7 Researcher positionality

An integral part of feminist epistemology lies in the power and usefulness of reflexivity. Feminist researchers are encouraged to reflect on their own subjectivity as a researcher, understanding that being separate from the research participants, or being ‘objective’, is not a feasible position when committing to research with female participants. Harding (1992, p.458) relates that in order to overcome this traditional social science approach of ‘value-free’ research in which the researcher distances themselves from the ‘objects’ of research, strong reflexivity is required which ‘requires that the subject of knowledge be placed on the same critical, causal plane as the objects of knowledge’. Being aware of one’s own place as a researcher within a disadvantaged and marginalised community requires some values be reinforced; amongst these is a commitment to present the experiences of a group that is marginalised or othered, and to avoid further pathologising and stereotyping of minority communities (Baca Zinn, 1994; Mirza, 1998; Egharevba, 2001; Bhopal, 2010).

The relationship between researcher and researched is an important one, it is certainly one that feminist researchers argue cannot be side-lined or ignored. To that end, creating condition within which research participants can enter as active subjects and tell their ‘own stories’ is fundamental aspect of feminist epistemology (Acker et al., 1983).

Considering the importance of reflexivity for feminist researchers it is necessary to critically reflect on my own research methods and experience. As a BSA Muslim woman living in Oldham, my position could be considered as that of an ‘insider’. Having experienced and lived through similar experiences of being BSA Muslim women in Oldham, it can be argued that this similarity creates empathy, a sense of solidarity and ‘belonging’ between myself
and the women who took part in this research. As Bhopal (2001, p.285) notes ‘our gender and racial identity can and does affect the research process and in some cases women who have some shared experience with researchers are more willing to speak to researchers who reflect this’. There is then a clear advantage to being ‘of’ the community which is being researched; having an already established presence in Oldham, as well as similar physical racial/gender characteristics posited me as a researcher who theoretically, could have been able to elicit more information from research participants than perhaps someone of a different ethnic/racial background or gender. The quality of research elicited is also worth noting, as my ‘insider’ status meant I was privy to information the participants might not have felt comfortable sharing with a white researcher.

I approached the interview process with admittedly some degree of naiveté regarding the town I myself had been born and grown up in. I had pre-formed ideas regarding what the women’s views on the town would be. One of these was an expectation of solidarity across the community. My rather rose-tinted view of a town united along lines of racial, cultural and class solidarity was quickly punctured by the very first interviews with women who expressed a strong sense of sectarian division. Pathan folk didn’t much care for Punjabis, Mirpuris had little to do with Lahoris, and so on. Having been isolated from much of this aspect of division amongst the town’s Pakistani population I learnt from then on to approach the interviews with a sense of being a complete newcomer to Oldham. Though I was keen to share my own memories and experiences of places of Oldham, I did so in an effort to build rapport with participants whilst remaining keenly aware that my ‘insider’
approach also had to be balanced by also seeing myself as an ‘outsider’ who was less familiar with the town as it was understood by my participants.

It became clear that even in this town, considered homogenous in popular discourse, the population is diverse, speaking a range of languages, with various cultural and religious views. This required a deep introspection on my part of my insider/outsider status. As Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p.58) note, though sharing a similar ethnicity, culture or religion, as I did with the women in this research, can be beneficial ‘as it affords access, entry, and a common ground from which to begin the research’, nonetheless such an ‘insider’ perspective can also prove to be a hindrance at all stages of the research from data collection to analysis. Similarly, Bhopal (2010, p.193) also highlights the need for researchers to remain reflexive with regards to their role within the research process when conducting research with marginalised communities, as there is ‘a danger in assuming that an insider status guarantees a more valid and reliable interview situation, when in fact the insider status is ambiguous, complex and fraught’. This was certainly my experience during the research process. Though I did share similar traits to participants, I found myself occupying a strange, paradoxical position. I lived in the area I was researching and was familiar with its surroundings. However, as a researcher who worked primarily outside Oldham, and with no extensive family connections there, many aspects of the place were unfamiliar to me.

I contend that this strangeness strengthened my research approach and practise, as I was neither insider nor outsider, occupying what Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p.60) term the ‘space between’. In this space the researcher is neither completely an insider nor outsider, but
rather acknowledges that some experiences are shared whilst others are not. For example, though I shared gender and an ethnic identity with participants I could not relate to experiences of being a mother, wife or partner. The space between is perhaps one that all researchers occupy, never fully insider/outsider as perspectives are shaped by academic knowledge.

Identities are complex, and as much as we share some aspects of our identities with others, there are differences which must be taken into account by researchers. As a BSA Muslim woman I shared some traits with those women I was researching with. This led on some occasions to cultural assumptions on from both myself and the participants. For example, one of the oft repeated questions asked by participants was about my marital status, and on each occasion, I was forced to consider how much I was willing to share in order to foster a reciprocal relationship which might counteract further the issues of power in research projects. But this power dynamic is not something that should be seen as static because the research process and the positioning of the researcher and participant shifts throughout the interaction. For example, a participant asking personal questions can place a researcher in an awkward position, but choosing not to answer, or deflecting such questions can negatively affect rapport building. Gunaratnam (2003) contends that the power aspect between researchers and those they research is not always hierarchical and in favour of the researcher. Indeed, participants have a degree of agency throughout the process as they can choose to withhold information, or question the researcher in turn, the research process is dynamic, fluid and shifting, it is a continuing process which reflects the ways in
which individuals are subject to multiple positioning and power relations in any given space and instance.

Nonetheless, the dynamics of power remain in place; as an academic researcher undertaking a PhD my role was also one of an ‘outsider’. As Gill & Mclean (2002) note, ‘recognising that the self is intimately connected with the completion of fieldwork is also part of recognising that certain variable such as gender (and of course others including age, nationality, ethnicity, etc.) will influence the outcome of the research’. Remaining critically aware of who speaks for marginalised communities, and ultimately which voices are heard/silenced are parallel concerns which must be addressed by any researcher regardless of gender and ethnicity. Feminist research must necessarily engage with the communities it seeks to actively research. In doing so, I aimed to highlight the everyday lives of BSA women living in Oldham through understanding and interrogating the social structures affecting their everyday lives. It is challenging to be so distinctly connected to a community and still project their voice rather than imposing one that may ultimately be personally or politically inclined. Being so intimately connected with the community in question, as a long term resident and a recognisable face, what influence this may have had on the research and subsequent analysis necessitates reflection. In order to safeguard against this I used as much of the transcript data as possible, reminded the participants that they may request a copy of the transcript at any time, and encouraged them to provide captions and summaries of their diary extracts. This was done in order to ensure that as much of the women’s voices was represented in the research as possible. Although the issues of voice, representation and avoiding pathologizing were issues I kept in mind, nonetheless, analysis
of data remained mine, and the women’s involvement was restricted to acting as research participants.

3.8 Ethical implications

Maintaining good ethical practices throughout any research process is vital in order to safeguard participants’ well-being. A number of key principles have been identified by Hennik et al. (2011) as necessary in order to determine proper conduct on behalf of the researcher and the safety of participants. These include ensuring that participants are well informed at all stages of the research; transparency with regards to the aims and intention of the study and participants choice to take part being entirely self-determined. Additionally, participants should be aware they can withdraw from the research at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was maintained at all times, with data stored on an encrypted USB drive and the anonymity of participants assured through the use of pseudonyms. I provided participants with an information sheet which detailed the research. I reminded participants that their involvement was entirely voluntary, and they could withdraw from the project at any time. I assured all the women that the interview would be completely anonymised, and that I would at all times maintain confidentiality.

Henn et al. (2006, p.92) further reiterate that it is particularly important to remain aware of ethical issues when researching with marginalised groups such as ethnic minorities. In such cases, ‘it is necessary to be aware that what they tell us may be affected by social norms which have been established by agencies in positions of power’ and therefore it is necessary
to remain sensitive to the notion of social discourses, positioning and disadvantage. Issues of power and privilege remain pertinent in any research context, and I have in this chapter detailed not only the research methods, but the ethical issues which are part of the research process.

3.9 Data Analysis

In gathering and subsequently analysing data it is necessary to remain mindful that it is not my voice which should direct the thesis, but the voice of a marginalised group within a marginalised community. This is particularly important when considering how the ‘voices’ of BSA Muslim women in Oldham have been framed or occluded previously. However, this is not to deny the fact that the final analysis, and therefore representation lies with the researcher. Reminded of this, I was careful to include the women’s voices as much as possible. This was possible through including the captions that accompanied images, as well as diary extracts, as well as using direct quotes from the interviews.

The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. The transcriptions were then uploaded into NVivo. I read the transcripts and used NVivo to search through the transcripts in order to find recurring words, themes or sentences. I then used a thematic analysis approach to the transcriptions, with the aims of identifying themes in the data around which to structure the analysis and form a narrative. These themes were used as nodes in Nvivo as a way of organising the data. According to Ezzy (2002, p.88) thematic analysis is inductive and derives primarily from the data, so ‘while general issues that are of interest
are determined prior to the analysis, the specific nature of the categories and themes to be explored are not predetermined.’ Thus, though I had already identified some themes I wished to explore in the thesis, namely spaces of home, work and public spaces I was able to categorise the transcripts according to these themes. However, the richness of the data meant that these became primary nodes in NVivo, whilst other concepts arising from the data, for example emotions, feelings and community, became sub-nodes in NVivo. I had not anticipated these concepts, and it became clear that my broad themes would have to incorporate interconnected, overlapping sub-themes, which in turn became the sub-node. Using these nodes, I was then able to layer and organise my data, whereby sub-themes grew from and elaborated upon the main themes. This in turn informed the way the chapters were subsequently written.

3.10 Conclusion

The multifaceted aspects of ‘everyday’ and the fluid nature of the concept informed my decision to use a variety of research methods, these included go-along interviews, diaries, semi-structured interviews and visual data. My aims for the research centred around questions which would highlight everyday lived experiences of BSA Muslim women in Oldham as way of providing nuanced and complex accounts of everyday lives. This chapter has discussed the extent to which social categories of race, ethnicity and gender as aspects of intersectional identities shape everyday interactions, and how feminist and facet methodology can be used to interrogate and analyse these. Facet methodology and facet methods (Mason, 2011) were also discussed as ways to potentially overcome the difficult
question of ‘how to do intersectionality’ (McCall, 2005), and crucially how to avoid the additive approach to intersectional differences to often seen as hindering research.

The chapter then discussed the use of diaries, photographs and go-along interviews as a way of supplementing the traditional interview, and though this proved ambitious and challenging it nevertheless yielded some intriguing data the analysis of which are discussed in the following chapters. Drawing attention to the importance and use of fieldwork diaries proves its use in discussing issues of power and reflexivity within the research process, as well as the emotional well-being of researchers. The notion of power as fluid and subject to positioning, intersectional differences as well as spaces in which they are experienced was also a central theme in this chapter. With these concepts in mind, this thesis now turns to the empirical chapters of this thesis. The discussion of findings begins with an intersectional analysis on the nature of family, home and belonging for BSA Muslim women, followed by a discussion on issues of employment and workplace environments. The third empirical chapter analyses experiences of public spaces, community and belonging, with an emphasis on the concept of space and visibility for BSA Muslim women.
Chapter 4- Home and Work

4.1 Introduction

‘Home’ is imagined on many levels: through its location, physical structure, decoration or the way spaces are marked and separated within. These characteristics often seem obvious, self-evident, yet ‘home’ resonates deeper, assumed to be a place that is known intimately. Home is nonetheless marked by ambivalence and contention, it is also defined by our relations with those within, and by those we exclude. Crucially, the intersectional nature of the home, characterised by the intersecting multidimensional identities of those who reside in the home space, as well as the various relations and practises which it comprises, must be accounted for in examining the home spaces of BSA Muslim women. There is, however, a danger of assuming the cultural homogeneity of these spaces (Chapman, 2004), especially when considering Muslim women in localities such as Oldham, where the stereotypical perception of Muslim women is that of a silent, oppressed minority trapped within ethnically homogenous enclaves, and restricted by faith, community and family pressures. Instead, as this chapter argues, the relationship between home, gender, ethnicity, culture and religion is an intricate one – and, as evidenced by the empirical data, is a uniquely individual experience.

One of the most common qualities attributed to the idea of home is of a ‘haven’, and this quality is invariably tied to the distinction between public and private spheres. The indoor or restricted ‘home space’, is seen as a closed domain, sealed against the outside world of public scrutiny and observance. Yet, as numerous sociologists have argued, the private/public dichotomy has never been clearly demarcated (Elshtain, 1983; Pateman, 1989; Scott and Keates, 2004). The home has long been connected to the idea of ‘privacy’,
as a space characterised by its distinctions from the public or visible sphere. As Morley (2000, p.25) contends, a sense of autonomy, belonging and rootedness to home derives from a desire for home as a space that offers refuge from the public spheres of work, politics and public life. However, the distinction between public and private spheres is vitally important especially when considering the spatial relations between home and the locality within which the home is situated as contributing to the ‘porous nature’ of what is presumed to be a sealed, private space. Early feminist work in Britain and the USA, into the notion of home sought to dismantle hegemonic notions of the ‘home’ as a place of refuge or safety. By shedding light on the gendered power relations in the private spaces of home, which prioritised the man’s role as breadwinner and supported the continued dominance of patriarchy, such work recast the home as a space of violence, fear or intimidation.

However, these early critiques failed to acknowledge the ambivalence of home and the specific set of social relations which are enacted within home spaces. For example, the significance of home for those of marginalised class or racialized positions was neglected. As McDonell and Sharp (1997) note, experiences of home for working-class women for many of whom the home was an escape from exploitative employers or institutions were notably different than for their middle-class counterparts. For ethnic minority women the home could be a site of resistance as well as a private place of refuge and insulation from public social relations which construct them as ‘other’. As hooks (1991, p.42) explains, the ‘homeplace’ was a ‘small private reality’, one which was not structured by ‘conforming to sexist norms’ but rather the ‘struggle to resist racist domination and oppression’ and to ‘restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world’. However, the
home can also function as a form of exclusion, as those who are unable to conform to the conventional ideals of gender or cultural expectations can be caught up in relational tensions and experience a perpetual sense of unease within the home (Sibley, 1995).

This chapter discusses everyday experiences of home the gendered nature of home spaces and conflation of home and work for BSA Muslim women. Specifically, this chapter addresses the questions raised in Chapter 3, asking if home could be considered one of the more inclusive sites for expression of identity. This concept of an inclusive site is further scrutinised, when considering that ultimately home is not produced outside of the broader relational context of those who reside within, nor is it entirely detached from those outside of it. Similarly, those who reside in the home are enmeshed in relations that extend beyond it. Furthermore, the Pakistani and Bangladeshi homes discussed in this study exist within a particular ward, within Oldham, within Britain. This layered perspective is a useful analogy for the social relations experienced for BSA Muslim women and sheds light on the differing ways BSA Muslim understand home space.

The locality of Oldham often features within national discourses of citizenship and belonging, and oft used as an example of the ‘failure of multiculturalism’. Political and social commentary on its spatial and cultural divides are illustrated with examples of residents from different backgrounds living ‘parallel lives’ (Cantle, 2001). However, popular and political commentary aside, Oldham is nonetheless considered ‘home’, and for some of the BSA Muslim women in this research it is the only home they have known. Though the interpretations of Oldham as a ‘multi-ethnic ghetto of simmering racial tensions’ have been contested (Ludi & Simpson, 2004; Phillips, 2006) the local history of a town marred by race
riots and mistrust nevertheless affects how home spaces are envisioned, framing ‘British Muslims’ sense of self, feelings about where they belong and where they might consider creating home spaces’ (Phillips, 2009, p.25). In particular, community and locality are examined as ‘nested influences’, which act to influence activities, relations and discussions of roles within the home. These influences are pertinent to BSA Muslim women’s intersectional identities, and are encapsulated within expected gender, cultural and religious roles, which, as the research participants described, are in turn scrutinised by the wider community. I situate my studies on British Muslim women and their homes within the intersections of feminist theory, migratory history, religion and culture, as these foreground the multi-dimensional aspects of everyday lives and practises. In short, what happens in specific spaces not only affects our relations to that space, but seeps into every day practises of spaces considered ‘sealed’ or ‘private’.

This chapter also challenges the imagining of home as private and sealed through Goffman’s notions of the ‘performative self’ (1959) and Mead’s ‘generalised other’ (1934). Through situating family members as both performers and audiences, taking their cues and learning roles from each other as well as the wider community, this chapter posits the home as a porous space within which performances are carefully managed, yet learned through a set of relations which are from both within and outside the home space. The chapter concludes by further complicating this ‘private’ space through the discourses and practises of homeworking and home businesses for BSA Muslim women, exploring processes of opening the private space to public scrutiny.
4.2 The Home: challenges to a ‘sealed unit’

Research into the ‘home’ repeatedly refers to terms of family, security and connection—homes are ‘made’ through these notions and embodied by them as well (Putnam, 1990). In discussing home, it is pertinent to pay attention to the relations and interactions between individuals to understand how these can shape experiences within the home space. Far from being a place of solitude, the home is in fact repeatedly infiltrated, connected and reconfigured through its geographical location, wider societal and cultural factors, extended family and friends. However, as Wise (2010) notes, the contention that home operates as a space which is marked and ‘made’ by interactions, does not necessarily mean that the desire for a private space is any less. Indeed, the need to fix on one particular place in the ‘home’ that can provide this ‘private space’ proves all the more necessary. This section focuses on opening up the space of home through a blurring of public and private spheres, with a particular focus on intersecting influences of culture, ethnicity and religion.

If we accept the argument that spaces are relational, and our identities are constituted through engagements within these spaces (Massey, 2004), then the identities of the women in this research are forged through relations within the home and those absent from it. As illustrated by Wilson (1984), Westwood (1984), Afshar (1994) and Shaw (2000) there are cultural, religious and gendered implications to consider when analysing the use of the home space by BSA Muslim women. Additionally, the increased scrutiny and securitisation of Muslim communities in the UK has extended to a focus on the practises that take place in the home. This despite the private/public dichotomy usually rendering the private outside the political purview, however, as evidence suggests, certain groups have long faced public
scrutiny of private home lives, for example in the increased scrutiny of parenting practices working class families, which are often linked to a host of social ills (Gillies, 2008). As Husain and O’Brien (2000) have noted, in scrutinising the practises of Muslim communities in Europe and the UK, part of the focus has been on the micro-level, that of relationships and daily life in the context of Muslim families. There have been changes in the context of home and family for second and third generation Muslim communities, most notably in the shift in household composition from extended to nuclear families. This shift can be attributed to varying factors, including the influence of other cultures, socioeconomic changes, cultural and ideological changes as well as individual preferences. However, despite these shifts, the altruistic nature of Islamic family life focuses on maintaining links with family, kin and community. As Zokaei and Phillips (2000, p.53) note, within Islamic teachings social responsibilities stretch beyond just immediate family members, and consideration for others extends to wider kin, neighbours, friends and community in a ‘widening circle of relationships’. Thus, despite changes in family structures, religious and cultural obligations ensure that the home remains connected to wider networks; the home then, rather than a space that is isolated and private, becomes a node within which these teachings are to be practised. In this way, religious teachings about family maintain a connectedness to those beyond the physical space of home and house.

However, there is a need to be aware of the danger of ascribing singular characteristics to a group as culturally diverse as the ‘Muslim community’. In considering the home, and the family unit through distinct and separate labels—whether religious, cultural, racial or ethnic—can lead to stereotyping, and implies these ‘are the main determinant of
identification for these individuals and their families’ (Sherif-Trask, 2004, p.403). Rather, it is important to remain aware of the intersectional nature of identities and family units, and consider the varying factors of everyday life and practice. British Muslim women and their sense of self are not just rooted in a religious identity, but as Mohammad (2005) contends, across a ‘matrix of discourses’ which include ‘Western’ ideals as well as religious and cultural factors. Muslim women, in negotiating their ‘intersectional selves’ select, combine and discard values and ideals depending on the contexts of workplaces, homes or local neighbourhoods (Mohammad, 2005; Phillips, 2006).

In this research, privacy and the value placed on a ‘private’ space is a recurring theme in the research participants’ notions of ‘home’, and the extent to which this privacy can be maintained depends on how familial relations are managed. The home is also a social space, and social relations which feature in the home space can reflect the extent of cultural, ethnic, religious and community influences. Living close to family, and within the same community as extended family members is a source of ambivalence; the experiences of and ability to maintain the ‘private’ space is often dependent on stage of life, the degree to which a person relies on family support, and the degree to which they have acquired a sense of autonomy. For example, consider the following discussion with 26-year-old Jasmine, who had recently purchased her own property. Jasmine’s new home is a two-bedroom terraced house in Clarksfield, with a small garden, and a few yards from her parents’ home:

I’ve been doing up my own house, and I know it’s just a few doors away from my parents but still, I’m decorating it the way I want, so I’ve just done the bathroom and kitchen, and now I’m deciding on the carpet for the living room. It’s my space, you know...
When prompted to further explain what she meant by her own space she explained how purchasing the property was a way to ensure some private space for her and her husband.

‘I know I couldn’t live with my parents and brothers and sisters, as well as my husband all under that small roof, we, like me and my husband wouldn’t get any time to sit and you know be like a married couple. So it’s my space, but...I’ll still want my family to come over, like my brothers and sisters might want to escape from mum and dad, if they have an argument or stuff, so I’d want it to be ok for them to come over. But, I’ll...I’m putting a lock on my bedroom door, that’s how I’m going to manage them, that’s just mine! Like my dad has keys to the house, but then he helped me out so much you know...financially and with other stuff, so I felt like...yeah, he has keys...’

Home making, such as Jasmine engaged in when redesigning her home, was one way in which she claimed territoriality over that space, that is, to feel that she has chosen this place and that it expresses her individual identity (Scott, 2009). Home making and redecorating have been variably considered as acts of agency, expression and creativity (Clarke, 2001). Though Jasmine had limited financial resources in renovating her home she was nevertheless able to express some of her individuality. She also noted that her family were likely to ‘intrude’ into her home, and as a result such intrusions were managed by designating her bedroom a ‘private space’. This reflects to an extent the way in which spatial relations outside the home bleed into home spaces. As Munro and Madigan (2006) note, the way in which people use the space in their home is affected by their views on family unity and their desire for autonomy and individual privacy. By installing a lock on her bedroom door, thus insisting on a space that is inaccessible to the rest of her immediate family, Jasmine secured her sense of home and identity. In marking out the bedroom as a private space, access to which is under her control, the bedroom becomes a micro space where she is able to assert a personal code and an identity (Phillips, 2006). Creating a separate space within the home is a practice noted by researchers considering the gendered
aspects of home. For Tasleema, a 40-year-old mother of three, conflict with her mother in law has resulted in creating a separate space:

I’ve been independent all my life and so I don’t ask for anything, and that’s why I don’t get on with my mother in law. She wants to be in control, it’s all about control, and they live with us as well so... I designed my house around her, so that’s her bedroom and bathroom, and her living room, it’s almost like two houses.

For Tasleema the home is a space of tension, as social relations are also an important part of home, how these relations are experienced can affect our connection to home. For Tasleema managing conflict and tension extends to creating spatial separation between herself and her mother in law. Tasleema’s household in some ways mirrors earlier generation of migrant families, with extended family members living together, and similar to some of the other women who lived with in laws before moving into their own homes. In maintaining a ‘family unit’ and perhaps in order to meet cultural and religious demands of kinship and family, Tasleema has created separate spaces, in effect a household that is together physically yet separated in order to circumnavigate conflict. Phillips (2006, p.28) notes the ‘distribution of power’ due to gender, age or position in the family can extend to marking out personal micro spaces in order to assert a personal code or identity, yet this does not mean ‘turning away from family’ as regardless of living arrangements, family life and connections remain ‘of central importance’ so much so that, despite conflict, as in the case of Tasleema, a separate space does not necessitate complete separation.
The complexity of identities and the ways these underpin the way home is experienced for Muslim women in this research is further complicated by differences such as social and economic status, education and employment. This is shown in the example of Nazma and Saima below, whose experiences of living close to family is marginally different from both Jasmine and each other. Living ‘too close’ to extended family is not only confined to living with others, as even a separate home space can be subject to difficulties because of close associations with family and nor is this difficulty felt solely by Muslim women. Though all of the women in this research lived in what could be considered their ‘own’ homes, these were never too far from other family members, who lived in the same town, on occasions on the same street, or even next door. For Nazma, a 33-year-old schoolteacher and mother of two, the experience of living next door to her parents was markedly different from the difficulties Jasmine or Tasleema anticipated.

‘My mum lives just next door, which is great, we’re always in and out of each other’s houses, Mum’s always bringing food round, we have keys to each other’s houses, so when I’m working late mum drops off food or pops round to help me clean up…sometimes, yeah I suppose it can get a bit much, we don’t have that privacy, and I think my husband gets annoyed about it, but you know, what can I do?’

Nazma’s experiences of her home, and of those who have access to it, were ambivalent and less than stable, as she admits to her husbands’ annoyance over this continuous intrusion, and the strain the lack of privacy placed on her home life (Phillips, 2006). In this sense, the home space is not a private one and is susceptible to intrusion, and though Nazma feels resigned to this, she recognised that for her husband the lack of privacy is a difficult issue. Unlike Jasmine, Nazma was not confined by socio-economic factors in the same way or limited by financial resources. She presented living next door to her parents as a choice. The practicality of having support in domestic chores and child care was a primary benefit of this
arrangement. Yet, the altruistic teachings of Islam, of maintaining close relationships with family and kin, brings pressures and difficulties for Muslim women that impact on their experiences of home spaces, as illustrated by Jasmine, Tasleema and Nazma’s example. The creation of home spaces, or spaces within these homes is a process of constant negotiation, adapting a ‘range of different subject positions’ in order to compromise, resist or conform to the expectations of family and the wider community (Phillips, 2006, p.27). The pressures of maintaining the space of home can be exasperated by intergenerational conflicts between member of the family.

The prospect of living close to family is one that was reflected on by other women in this research and was seen as both a negative and positive aspect of everyday life. For Saima, a 35-year-old part time receptionist and mother of four, experiences of living next door to her parents have been positive, a factor she attributes to her parents respecting the privacy of ‘her home’:

‘Living next door has been fantastic, my mum and dad don’t interfere, they give us our space but then they’re always there if we need them. The kids love having their grandparents next door, my mum has been in Pakistan this past three months, and it’s been hard!’ (laughs)

In being ‘given their space’ Saima considered the experience of living next door to her parents as beneficial to her family unit, as she could rely on their support whilst ensuring her parents do not interfere in the daily aspects of her home. The articulation of a ‘home space’ which is contained yet open in line with socio-cultural and religious teachings is a difficult, yet important space to maintain. Raheema neatly articulates this dualism when discussing her closeness to her own family:
'None of my family live around here, for them it’s important to be central to everything, but I’m glad I live here, it’s close enough to mum but a bit distant too, but if I lived too close I’d feel like they were in my face all the time and I’d get annoyed. I like my space, and I like to know when they’re coming over, I do like them turning up, but knowing in advance too! I value my privacy, having that space is important to me, they go to my mum’s every evening, my sisters, well I go occasionally, but I’ll try and spend the afternoon with my mum.’

Living close to, yet still apart from the extended family, is one way to negotiate the competing demands of kinship whilst maintaining a private space. Though family remains a central part of these women’s lives, nonetheless having a space beyond the extended family unit is one way to manage everyday living. Separation does not extend to moving beyond the locality however, and close associations are still maintained and promoted by frequently visiting family, this is one way in which Raheema compromises. The way that the women in this study negotiate these issues further illustrates the porous nature of home, as well as the transitions they make between independent living space and the former family home.

As this section has shown, home is a variable concept, one replete with intrusions, contradictions, ambivalence and constant negotiation. Though, the women here all shared similar ethnicity, religion and culture, their expressions of and experiences of home living were rooted in individual articulations of self and in particular negotiations of family relations. The following section focuses on gender and how patriarchal roles become re-inscribed for Muslim women in the home space. In looking at the wider socio-cultural context which influences notions of ‘home’ for Muslim women, the perceived boundaries of this ‘sealed space’ are further troubled.
4.3 The gendered home

Within many religions and across cultures, the notion of home and of the roles within are still largely understood along gendered lines. Within the homes of some of the women in this research, traditionally conservative views of gender roles ensured women are largely responsible for domestic and caring duties. However, for the Muslim women in this study the home could also provide a domain where patriarchal gendered relations were challenged. For example, for Ammna, the home space was one where Pakistani women could be ‘in charge’ of managing the home; though in maintaining the gendered conflation of women and home, the extent to which this could be considered as challenging patriarchy is contentious. However, in articulating it as ‘their space’, the home becomes an area of authority that is gendered in ways which are determined by women:

I think us Pakistani women we define our spaces into our house, because it’s our space, that’s where we’re in charge really! (laughs)

Domestic spaces and activities were commented on by the women in this research and also featured in the photographs women shared. The women who submitted these described them as illustrative of their everyday lives and spaces, or what was considered part of their identity. For example, Suriya, a 40-year-old, Bangladeshi full-time mother of four, shared the following pictures of her plants at her recently bought home. With three of her older children at boarding school, Suriya talked about the nurturing aspect of caring for her plants:
I purposefully wanted a conservatory, this little area, so I could have all my plants. My family tease me that I’m always overwatering them, putting all my love into them (laughs).

Farah, a 28-year-old mother of one, considered the home as a personal space within which to indulge her hobbies, some of which included baking and reading. As a Muslim woman who recently began wearing niqab, or the full face veil, Farah attached an inherently ‘British identity’ to the activity of baking. Through Farah’s comments it is interesting to note the permeable nature of the home in contrast to a separation of private and public spaces, in the practises of self and identity in the home. Questions of Britishness and identity in public spaces are often mapped onto bodies, particularly for Muslim women who veil, who are seen as representing the ‘cultural other’. An awareness of this mapping, and how their veil embodies them as ‘other’ in public spaces is reflected upon in the private home space by BSA Muslim women. For Farah this reflexivity is acted upon through attaching her niqabi identity to what she considers the quintessentially ‘British act’ of baking.
“Niqabi baker! Just made choc chip muffins! I’m a right British girl under the nijab!” (Farah, 28)

Farah’s contemplation of her position in British society as a niqabi is contemplated upon in the home. Here, she actively uses this space to counter stereotypical and racist views, as well as articulating for herself the notion of Britishness.

However, this is not to say the ‘home’ as a sphere of domestic bliss or comfort is an inherent feature of every woman’s life. The home is also associated with confinement, a micro-management of behaviours, expressions and attitudes, and a self that is not true or even desirable. Zaira, a 32-year-old, full time mother, described her home as a space that offers little variety or comfort. When we met at a local café she spoke of always wanting to ‘be out’, to ‘meet up’ and socialise with friends. Currently volunteering, Zaira spoke of wanting to find work in order to ‘escape’ the home:
‘I think I do enjoy that sort of stuff, it gets me out and stuff, I get very depressed and bored at home, every day at home, how much cleaning can you do, or cooking, how much can you do? It gets a bit much, doing the same thing every day gets hard.’

Domesticity, and the role of home maker offer very little opportunity for Zaira. The monotonous nature of home-based tasks, which are still considered a gendered responsibility by many of the women in this study, presented Zaira with a restrictive sense of belonging, or with the sense of ‘being tied’ to the home. Zaira’s experiences are also reflected in research on the gendered and oppressive nature of household labour (Oakley, 1974, 1985; Walby, 1990; Baxter, 2002). Zaira’s feelings regarding home and its restrictions featured in the diary that she kept, where she repeatedly referenced wanting to socialise and take part in activities outside the home as being able to do something for herself. References to being at home and occupied with domestic chores were accompanied with words including ‘boring’ and ‘depressing’ (Blair and Lichter, 1991; DeVault, 1991). In speaking of the gendered nature of her home, Zaira described the independence she had developed:

‘Yeah, my husband doesn’t do much; he’s useless I’ve only got him as a husband, just the name only really, I do all my housework myself, if there’s DIY I have to do that myself, with my kids I do everything, if there’s shopping I do that myself as well, he just comes like a lazy Asian guy, he comes, eats, sleeps and back to work again, that’s it. He doesn’t know, like if somethings broken or needs fixing I need to sort, he has no idea. So I’m quite independent in that way...’

Zaira displays a profound sense of disconnection between her expectations of a partner and the behaviour of her husband whose lack of interest in ‘housework’ ensures that the responsibility of maintaining the home is left with her. The duties or expectations of maintaining the home has led to Zaira asserting an independence that is borne out of
necessity. Mohammad (2015) notes that in some traditional Pakistani or Bangladeshi households the strongly demarcated gender roles ensure a hierarchical position between partners, with men expected to adhere to the traditional role of male breadwinner and women to the homemaker role, which can often lead to frustration and resentment.

For some BSA Muslim women in this research the responsibility of nurturing, raising children and maintaining a care taker role in, whether from a religious or gendered aspect, shaped experiences in households. A few women noted that this was part of Islamic discourse—religious teachings place emphasis on mothers as not only prime guardians of ‘modesty’ and izzat in the home (and by extension behaviour outside the home)—but also as guides, religious teachers and maintainers of an ideal home setting. This is meant to be conducive to a comfortable, familial nurturing atmosphere (Kandiyoti, 1989; Afshar, 1994; Shaheed, 1999). Such a view was espoused particularly by 33-year-old Rana, who had recently divorced and was returning to work:

‘You know what it is, I’ve learned...I know...in an ideal world, in the back of my head I still want to be married, to have a husband and to be taking care of children, because I don’t see anything wrong, because...well my mum was a housewife and very proud of it.’

Caring, and home making are seen as a natural part of her ideal role by Rana, who considers motherhood and mothering as an aspiration. This idealised view of Muslim women and womanhood is generational, and a practise that is learned, and the re-inscription of this domestic responsibility is seen by some women as essential to maintaining a traditional Muslim identity. However, as part of the younger generation of Muslim women, Rana accepts this ideal, even if she is not living it. The expectations of this second and third
generation of wives, mothers and women are entangled within complicated and overlapping discourses of gender, religion, culture and notions of ‘duty, care and responsibility’:

‘The thing is, I’m liberal but very traditionalist as well (laughs) it’s not a bad thing! (laughs) Jannah is at your mother’s feet, you’re going to get questioned about how you treated your children, in all seriousness, the thing from a Muslim woman’s point of view, if you’re at home, you taking care of your husband and children is a way to gain sawaab (blessings). No matter how advanced we become, a woman is a woman at the end of the day, a woman’s hands are made for nurturing, the child’s nurturing is in your hands, we’re designed to be like that, it’s part of our nature.’

Rana describes herself as both liberal, yet very traditional. Though part of the workforce herself, her ideas regarding women’s roles in the home have not shifted significantly, and in fact are aligned with traditional views held by previous generations of Muslim women. Such traditional views espoused the idea that a woman’s ascribed role in an Islamic home is that of ‘mother’ or ‘nurturer’ (Phillips, 2008, p.28). Becher (2008, p.104) has noted that being at home and ‘taking care of family’ were imbued with themes of domestic chores, nurture and maintenance for Pakistani women. Additionally, within some South Asian Muslim families, religion features as a key component in understanding the ‘natural’ role of motherhood. As Scourfield et al. (2013) have also noted, in general it is mothers who are much more heavily involved in child care, and this extends to the reified importance placed on the mother role, with Islamic teachings speaking of ‘heaven at a mother’s feet’.

In an Islamic perspective, the ideal role of mother is also what dominates and indeed consecrates the notion of ‘femininity’ (Kristeva, 1980). Bouhdiba (1998) describes this as a ‘cult of motherhood’ in Islam, with mothers placed in a ‘lofty position’ (Schleifer, 1996). This characterises the mother as one that aligns herself to both responsibility and
caring/nurturing emotions. Siraj (2012, p.188) further articulates that the respect awarded to a Muslim mother is explicitly related to her ability to care, her active participation in the domestic realm and the way she manages the responsibilities of home and family. The burden of upholding this idealised notion of motherhood and femininity falls to the women themselves, and the ‘good Muslim woman’ is then one who manages the various aspects of perfect femininity.

4.3.1 Performing gender roles

Analysing the ‘family practices’ of BSA Muslim women in this study through an intersectional lens can illuminate the regular, every day practices of women’s lives in the home, as well as allowing for critical analyses of these everyday day practices. Morgan (2011, p.3) notes that though these practices may be interpreted in different ways, nonetheless in carrying out these everyday family practices ‘social actors are reproducing the sets of relationships (structures, collectivities) within which these activities are carried out and from which they derive their meaning.’

Critically analysing family practices within some BSA Muslim women’s homes highlights gendered divisions through which everyday interactions are then shaped. For example, consider the description of ‘family practices’ presented by 25-year-old Maya, who describes clearly demarcated roles between ‘jobs’ for female and male members of the family:

My household would probably still be gendered; I’d still end up doing housework. At home, my brothers don’t do any housework, my sisters or mum or I do it, so if one of us is cooking we’ll cook for everyone. But if like, something goes wrong with my car, or it needs washing, or taking for a service or one of my sisters needs picking up from
somedewhere my brothers have to do that, they have to do it, my dad has told them that’s their job, to take care of us.

Crucially, Maya contends that this learned, and gendered division of labour is something that will likely remain in her own future household. Performing domestic labour again becomes a feature of women’s duties, one that is expected of female members of households but not of their male counterparts. In exchange, Maya’s brothers commit to other jobs, seen to be more in line with the male, patriarchal role of provider and protector who maintains ‘practical’ jobs such as servicing cars. The Muslim women in this research spoke of the enormous pressure placed upon them from other family members and extended family to maintain an ideal home space. The practicalities of this ‘ideal’ involve commitment and ‘perfected’ home spaces, with the domestic chores of cooking, cleaning and nurturing seen as an essential part of womanhood. This was illustrated by Raheema, a who spoke of the extent to which gendered expectations meant she relied on outside help. Raheema spoke of needing to hire a cleaner to attend to some of the household chores:

‘I do get a lot of stick about keeping my house clean, looking after the family and making sure the foods up to scratch, and that’s mostly from my mum and family and in laws! And you know what, I’ve come to a point in my life where I don’t give a toss, I just feel you have to be a little bit selfish, if I need some help…’

Raheema presented her need of help as subversive and almost clandestine, and repeatedly sought assurance that the interviews would be anonymised. Sara, a 30 year-old-working mother of two children also spoke of needing help. This ‘help’ in the form of ‘homemade handis’ (curries) was something that Sara felt would be seen by other family members and her local community as her having failed in her ‘mother’ role. As such there was a need to maintain secrecy over the fact:
'On Sundays, keep this to yourself, have a lady who makes handi for me (laughs). There’s another lady who does it too, we’re both working mums so we have this woman who makes handi for both of us, it’s homemade, so I’d rather pay for that nice, homemade handi, my husband will be happy, I’ll be happy, less pressure so I’m happy to pay for that. But I haven’t told anyone that’s what I’m doing, if I told them that I get handi made and a cleaner they’ll be like ‘well what on earth do you do?’

The ‘good housewife’ is one that is able to manage the roles, expectations and demands placed upon her. Skeggs (1997, p.46) notes that in the quest to obtain what is touted as ‘feminine respectability’, respectability becomes ‘organised around a complex set of representations and practises’, of which maintaining the home and domesticity is part of this wider formation of femininity and family values. In order to understand how this impacts on Muslim women’s lives it is necessary to also contextualise the cultural representations of the Muslim ‘housewife’ which constituted everyday lived practises and behaviours. These representations are established not only through cultural and religious expectations, but categorised as norms by the wider, local community. Thus ‘correct’ private behaviour in the home is subsequently monitored and reinforced by expectations held by those outside the home, thus rendering what happens at home a matter of public concern, and more specifically, the concern of the local community. As Mills (2007) notes, the public and private can exist simultaneously and can exert different pressures for women living in the same neighbourhood. Spaces such as Oldham are ones which ‘embody tensions between individuality and conformity with neighbourhood norms’ (p.337) through social, cultural and gendered expectations. As BSA Muslim women living within neighbourhoods of Oldham, women like Raheema and Sara who struggle to maintain the roles of nurturing, successful home makers are made to feel guilty and likely to increasingly scrutinise their ability to manage their multiple roles in the home.
However, it would be wrong to assume there reigns a consensus among the women interviewed in this research regarding the gendered aspect of Muslim households. There are differences, and households are structured according to personal attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. For 25-year-old single woman Razia, for example, who was living at home with family, gender differences were not as acute, nor was there a stringent expectation for the daughters of the family to take on the majority of the housework. Nonetheless Razia acknowledges that her mother took on the majority of domestic roles:

‘My brother is more of a cook, he likes to experiment, like four in the morning he’ll be making food, and you’ll smell it and just say, oh he’s cooking again (laughs). I do help out with the household chores, but not much, because I’m working, and I’m not really expected to. Cooking wise my brother is the cook, like once a week I might vacuum the house (laughs), none of my sisters have ever been expected to do housework, I think my mum does too much.’

Similarly, for Saima, the domestic and nurturing duties are shared with her husband, something she acknowledges is unique:

‘He makes breakfasts for the girls, when I’m busy, so they’re ready for school and we all leave the house together, he’s a very hands on dad, definitely, the baby’s milk is ready, the girls food, and my tea, he loves giving her that first bottle in the morning, because she’s very excited in the morning and he enjoys it, he’s a good man, I’m very lucky.’

Though gendered divisions and unequal labour practises in the home have been well documented (Oakley, 1985; Chapman, 2004), the unique intersection of culture, religion and ethnicity warrants deeper analysis especially with regards to the everyday lived realities of British Muslim women. Analysing the home space reveals this to be one of independence and comfort, yet also ambivalence and restriction. Proscribed gender roles are shaped by wider socio-cultural expectations and are then practised in the home translating into an
unequal share of ‘duties’ or responsibilities, which adversely affect Muslim women’s sense of self and ability to manage these duties.

The next section focuses on the women’s sense of self, looking at the home as a relational and social field, where ‘performing’ and performances become part of a negotiated everyday life for Muslim women.

4.4 The social field of home: expressions of a ‘self’

The myriad meanings attached to the home show that the attachments people form with home are equally diverse, ambivalent and unique. This space is perhaps especially important for BSA Muslim women, for whom the dichotomy of the private/public can have particularly powerful implications in terms of their sense of belonging, comfort or expressions of self, as discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6. Our sense of home is shaped by many factors, both within and outside the ‘self’. Within Western constructions of home this space is seen as an extension of who we are, or who we choose to be, as such, the home, in its physical sense, ‘represents a metaphorical embodiment of memory and thus identity’ (Morley, 2000, p.19).

4.4.1 Outside the home- ‘front stage’

In an ‘Outline of a Theory of Practice’ Bourdieu (1979) argued that society is made up of ‘socially ranked geographical spaces’, which we all inhabit. These ‘social fields’, containing both the space itself and the interactions within it, are negotiated on a daily basis. As a result of moving within and through these fields people develop a particular habitus, that is, habitual ways of managing and acting in the world, which also informs their way of seeing it. Bourdieu (1990, p.53) categorised habitus as ‘a system of durable, transposable
dispositions’, that is, a sense of one’s own and others’ place and role in their lived environment. The assortment of social fields each person navigates is made up of various contexts, situations and interactions. Thus, our habitus reflects these various social fields we habitually negotiate. Knowing the rules for a social field means we are able to negotiate it with relative ease or comfort, meaning that we can be ‘ourselves’ – because the space and interactions within it are familiar and ‘fit’ our habitus. Furthermore, habitus is formed through a process, and is a product of social conditions. In sum, it is learned and crucially, not in isolation.

As individuals move through and come into contact with a variety of social fields, within each we perform different aspects of our self, and in some fields this performance is self-consciously done, in others less so. According to Goffman, the self is constantly being reconfigured to fit a particular performance. Thus, the self is repeatedly produced and maintained, in what Goffman describes, is similar to actors performing on a stage. This continuous re/production of the self requires both a front stage and a back stage; ‘there will be a back region with its tools for shaping the body, and a front region with its fixed props’ (p.253). The fixed props can be defined as appearances and manners, where the self must be aware of social conventions and Goffman noted that this was a crucial aspect of performing to an audience. The extent to which one is able to ‘perform’ on the front stage determines how successfully one is able to negotiate the social world. The social world then becomes a stage upon which we enact our identities. Goffman contends that the way in which people control their myriad selves in any differing social situations and settings constitutes ‘impression management’. We wear masks to confirm to ourselves and others our competence in conforming to social conventions in everyday interactions.
This was neatly illustrated by the experiences of home for 25-year-old Maya. Having worked in very public settings as a sales assistant, and currently completing a PGCE course, Maya remarks on the way she manages her performances of self:

‘Sometimes you have to work harder to keep the mask up, most of the time I don’t work at it, it’s almost become natural to me, to have these different identities, I get up, get dressed and be the person that I need to be that day. I have separate drawers in my room, so one drawer is just Asian stuff, one is work stuff and other drawer is for stuff to wear out and about. I know, when I go to work I’ll only need to open one drawer, they’re all kept separate, my life is very compartmentalised. It’s almost automatic, I have to dress in this, I have to talk like this, I have to wear this makeup, and on weekends, I’m different, more myself, relaxed. That’s normal for me, I don’t see anything else, being different people at home, with friends, at work...’

The physical separation, and what Maya considers her compartmentalised life, is something she considers natural, and automatic. However, what this physical separation highlights is the intersectional nature of everyday lives. For BSA Muslim women the separation extends not only to mannerisms but also appearances, and the props that Goffman mentions. For Maya the performance she enacts on the front stage is necessarily compartmentalised, divided into identities to the extent they involve clothes and make up. Though she admits to having to sometimes work harder to maintain the mask, the physical separation of her identities is a feature of her everyday life.

If the switching of roles and exchanging of masks is constant, this means that a person’s self comprises a variety of characters, acting in accordance to a specific location, or, to use Bourdieusian language according to the social field they enter. For BSA Muslim women, the front stage could be surmised as the everyday public spaces where they are continually
required to engage in a performance upon which hinges whether they can be considered successful, integrated citizens by a majority white audience. For each of the social fields we enter we necessary adapt a different aspect of our social identity or persona, a different self that is required and is in line with the rules of that social field:

‘I’m quite confident in myself, and that comes from having worked in so many different places with so many different people, I can read situations quite well, and can figure out which behaviours or which one of my masks I should be wearing. It sounds so faked, but it’s how my life works...’

Maya described this performance as an ability to ‘read a situation’ and she considered herself a confident performer, able to figure out which behaviour or which mask is suitable for the occasion. Reflexively judging and acting on the requirements for each social field she enters Maya performs well precisely because she is able to gauge the social field effectively enough to afford her a sense of belonging. Her mask involves not just her behaviours but includes clothes and makeup, the various components serving to present the whole, a coherent, competent ‘self’. In short, BSA Muslim women are aware of the performances required of them in public spaces outside the home, and necessarily adapt their sense of self to suit. In the home the props are used, as is exemplified by Maya in order to successfully navigate the performance in public spaces.

Further explorations of this awareness, the performative and shifting selves are explored in Chapter 6. The following section in this chapter focuses on considering what Goffman described as the ‘back region’ and here the home is discussed as the backstage where BSA Muslim are theoretically able to express their sense of selves which is more comfortable and natural.
4.4.2 At home- ‘backstage’

Goffman contends that in the constant re/production of self, there is a necessary front and back stage. The backstage is where actors relax, and the performance is ‘dropped, he can drop his front, forgo speaking in his lines, and step out of character.’ Bourdieu (1996) has also described the home as a ‘backstage’, a sealed, private space, where individuals perpetuating its intimacy behind closed doors through ideal models of human relations (p.20). The family unit, enclosed in this private spaced of home, becomes ‘common sense’, part of our habitus, and therefore the performance of family for some BSA Muslim seems comfortable and natural. Additionally, given this intimate knowledge of the home space, and family as habitus the performance within the home could be considered as one committed to with most effort in order to maintain this family unit.

If we consider homes as spaces where BSA Muslim women (who are routinely ‘othered’ in the public sphere) may feel comfortable with their identity, then the home could be considered as the ideal ‘social field’. Here our habitus fits the field, we are aware of the rules of the game, and as such we become unaware of the habitus because it feels natural:

‘…you can go anywhere but your heart is where your family is, and you can be anywhere in the world but...home...it doesn’t feel like home when your family’s not around. I think that’s how we’ve been brought up, as, like for Muslims, kinship, family is really important to us, and we value that to its core’ (Robina)

BSA Muslim women in this research in facing this ‘othering’ in public spaces do consider home as a safe space, and participants in this research did indeed consider home as a space of comfort and belonging. Home is a more than just a place, a site of living, it is an idea, and is imbued with feelings of belonging, safety and authenticity. It is the place where ‘the self’
can be safely displayed and practised, illustrating the critical connection between home and identity. The home can be a particularly important place for British Muslim women, given that participation in the public sphere often involves closer scrutiny, as hyper-visible subjects, the home becomes a space of respite (hooks, 1990). As Phillips (2009, p.25) argues:

‘Muslim women’s sense of self and views of home as spaces of belonging are likely to be influenced, at least in part, by local and national media and political discourses, which have variously constructed Muslim women as victims of an oppressive Islamist regime and unaccommodating cultural ‘others’.

It is important to note the psychological and emotional connection to this home space, as it is when these spaces become invested with meanings and attachments, that they become a place of comfort and belonging, a way of situating the ‘self’. The feeling of liberation and comfort which can be derived from the home was commented on by several women in this research. For example, for 33-year-old Sania the home space was one of comfort and relaxation:

‘Home for me means where I’m comfortable, where I can do what I want, I can relax, where what I want…it’s my home, my space.’

The home can then function as ‘back stage’ – the place where the audience is absent and hence the performance is dropped:

‘It’s a mask, this outward appearance, I’m probably the complete opposite at home, it feels like a mask…I can take it off. I do feel like that a lot, that it’s not the real me…’ (Maya, 25)
The home was considered a place where, for some, the ‘self’ could be expressed. The social field of home could be considered the one BSA Muslim women are most intimately familiar with, as they are aware of the rules, and have a ‘feel for the game’. In the back stage of home, other family members, are perhaps an audience for whom it is easiest to perform to. In Maya’s case it could be argued that the performance has become so well-rehearsed that the role appears or feels comfortable. As noted by Bourdieu (1979), habitus is ingrained to such an extent that it feels natural. Using the metaphor of a mask adopted by Maya, once the mask is ingrained as to constitute one’s habitus, the person does not identify this as wearing a mask, but rather as an aspect of self.

The next section of this chapter focuses on further complicating readings of home. If we contend that the home is indeed a social field, with its own rules and codes, then it is possible for the home to become yet another front stage for some BSA Muslim women. As further discussion shows we must consider why it becomes necessary for some women to feel the need to perform at home, and how this affects a sense of self and home space.

4.5 Home as front stage

For some BSA Muslim women the home becomes yet another space that required constant performance, or the presentation of a ‘self’ they were not comfortable with. As this section explores, this is partly because the home is a relational space where identities are formed through interaction with others. Bourdieu (1996, p.20) describes this as a domestic unit, which is founded on ‘cognitive presuppositions and normative prescriptions about the
proper way to conduct domestic relationships’. In some BSA Muslim families the proper way of conducting domestic relationships involves hierarchical roles, gendered expectations, patriarchal systems, extended family roles, and the centrality of religion and culture in everyday lives. Just as the home could be considered as inter-relational –where identities are forged in and through relations with others - the social field of the home and the habitus formed there is a product of shifting dynamics, structures and interactions. The complexities of these engagements are reflective of the complex identities of each of these women. Thus, analysing the home through an intersectional lens which includes gender, ethnicity, culture and age, complicates notions of home as ‘back stage’.

To some extent, the performance in the private space of ‘home’ was as much a conscious act as were performances in public spaces. The need to present an acceptable self, one that is in line with socio-cultural, religious and gendered expectations of Muslim women contributes to the difficulties of negotiating spaces both private and public. The habitus of BSA Muslim women in the social fields of home are imbued with expectations of gender differences, roles within the home, the notions of piety and izzat, and ideal womanhood. Given that habitus can be surmised as feeling far from natural, the seemingly comforting space of home necessitates a conscious performance, where knowing the rules and norms does not automatically engender a feeling of belonging but of performing a self which conforms to those norms in order to belong. In essence the home is as much a front stage as are public spaces, albeit with different expectations regarding the performance. It is here where Bourdiesian language can be used to complicate the notion of public and private selves. If the home is a social field as any other, then this is governed by norms, which for BSA Muslim women may be religious or gendered norms. The home is not then ‘rule free’
and it is with this consideration of social fields that we can challenge normative considerations of home spaces.

Feelings of ‘being’ and expressing the ‘self’ are not uniformly experienced across all groups of BSA Muslim women. Articulations of home are ambivalent, and require women to employ a range of strategies, compromises and resistances precisely because of the intersectional nature of identities which include gender, age, ethnicity and religion. Some felt that because their performance in the home was restricted by socio-cultural norms or gendered and cultural obligations, they could only express a ‘true’ self, outside the home. For Raheela, this was certainly the case. She did not see home as a liberating facet of everyday life, rather she experienced the home as a place where she was forced to enact a self that did not feel comfortable to her. In contrast to Goffman’s theorisation of the home as backstage, where the performer is at ease, the home becomes the front stage, where some Muslim women must then consciously perform:

‘At home...no...I’d say I was more relaxed when I’m outside the home, whereas when I’m at home I feel as though there are certain things I can’t say or express myself in certain ways, whereas...because I work, I’m just that young Asian girl at work, it’s quite strange....you’d think there would be a lot more...well at least a few, but it’s good in a way because I don’t feel like I’m being watched as much or judged as much when I’m outside so I can be myself more, and express myself more.’

With uneven power relations in some homes the self can be restricted, depending on gender, age or position within the household. Young, single Muslim women can find themselves disadvantaged, conforming to an ideal self that is a conscious performance.

For Raheela being watched or judged is more of a facet of home than in everyday public spaces. This contradicts hooks’ (1990) articulation of home spaces, as ones where minority women transform into subjects rather than objects of oppression or racism. In contrast, at
home Raheela is subject to discourses that serve to curb the ways in which she can express herself, while it is in public spaces that the prospect of being watched or judged is lessened. These discourses originate from outside the family unit and pertain to the expected morality and social norms dictating ‘correct’ behaviour, both outside and within the home. Goffman (1956, p.77) contends that ‘we must keep in mind that when we speak of front and back regions we speak from the reference point of a particular performance, and we speak of the function that the place happens to serve at that time for the given performance.’ If we consider the performance given in the home for some BSA Muslim women it becomes clear that influences and expectations regarding dress, behaviour and respectability often become part of the necessary performance when the outside intrudes into the home:

So the conventions would be...maybe...I wouldn’t say dressing in a certain way, cause I don’t really wear Asian clothes as much...but I’ll just wear my jeans and a t-shirt, and like if people come over people expect you to dress like a bit more respectable around them, but I don’t do that anymore because I just hate having to do something for the sake of other people and to change myself for the people around, I mean obviously I wouldn’t stay in my pyjamas (laughs), I will change if someone comes over, but I don’t see why I have to put on airs and graces just because somebody’s come over, especially if its someone I hardly see, or like either.

For BSA Muslim women living in the close-knit community of Oldham these norms illustrate how porous the home can be. Rather than a hermetically sealed unit, the need to perform in the home space is driven by the intrusion of those outside it and expectations shaped by their cultural norms. These norms maybe shared by older, and extended members of the family. The sense of being a ‘self’ is managed differently in different spaces and power relationships in the home can serve to render the home space as confining rather than a space within which to belong. For Raheela, a single woman in full time employment and living at home with parents and younger siblings, the expectations of her as a daughter and
older sister impacted on the extent to which she felt comfortable in the home space. When asked what her ideal home situation would then be, Raheela spoke of a space within which she could comfortably be ‘herself’:

‘I guess my ideal home life would be….just...being able to express myself, I guess, I mean...I don’t know how to say it...I don’t know how to answer that...I guess just...not being made to feel I can’t say something for fear of a backlash, yeah...I guess....you can cope with outsiders saying something but when it’s your own family it’s just a bit more difficult, when you have support from your family, it doesn’t matter if other people think something about you, but if your family kind of believe in that it just feels...that it...it just makes it worse...’

The performance in the home is shaped by community expectations which Raheela feels drives her unease, whether this is in relation to needing to ‘dress respectably’ when visitors enter her home space or paying careful attention to the things she says. This scrutiny gives rise to the anxiety of maintaining respectability in order to avoid discord within the family unit. During the interview Raheela gave a sense, that as a single Muslim woman she felt pressured by family members to adhere to conventions, that were shaped by wider community expectations of young Muslim women but policed by family members:

‘..like my family expect me to start behaving a bit more differently and conventionally as opposed to maybe ten years ago, which is a bit more difficult because I am who I am now and can’t really change that. When you live in a close community like this one you’re just expected to behave a certain way because you’re always being judged and matched against other people like, ‘look at them, look at what they’re doing, why aren’t you doing that’, like they’ve just got married, why aren’t you married by now?’

Raheela’s feelings of the home as the front stage where performance was contested, and where she feels a sense of dis-ease over the need to manage such performances.
For other BSA Muslim women, the confining expectations of home ensured that they sought to express various identities and maintain their passions outside the home space. This was the case for Farah. Having struggled against what she considered cultural and traditional misinterpretations of her religion, she shared details of her difficult first marriage which ended in divorce:

I didn’t see myself as confident or dealing with it. I was on antidepressants, I was self-harming, there was a lot of psychological issues I went through following my divorce and the five years of horrendous marriage to a typical paki bloke’

She explained how her love of books and education had allowed her to adopt an identity outside her family home, which in turn was fundamental to her recovery from anxiety and depression:

I started writing, poetry, monologues, performance poetry and I was actually part of a poetry performance band for about three years. It was like open mic nights, through Uni, it was so cathartic, I could adopt this whole different persona cause no one knew my real name and on mic night I went under the name of ‘Le Vampire’…yeah, I know! (laughs) I was a goth, a massive one, I’ve still got my velvet cape! Everyone knew me on the scene as ‘Le Vampire’, I was very risqué shall we say with my performance pieces, so there was always double entendre and puns, but that was amazing…I could be who I wanted to…”

Farah sought an identity and a way to express ‘self’ outside the home, and in doing so took to the actual stage. She maintained this identity as one that was completely separate from the self she expressed at home.

‘It was like being two different people…that Western identity and then your cultural identity of being a Pakistani daughter isn’t it, it’s like where do you draw the line? Cause my parents didn’t know anything…this me being in performance poetry…’
The ‘cultural identity’ of a Pakistani daughter meant that Farah continually performed at home, with this performance aimed at those who were most intimately connected with her, namely her parents. Both Raheela and Farah attribute their discomfort at home to cultural expectations, and what these entail for them as Muslim women:

‘I was never seen as an individual, I was always seen as someone’s daughter, someone’s niece...never my own person. We’re always taught that when you’re born you’re someone’s daughter, then you’re someone’s wife, then someone’s mother, you’re always defined by your relationships...’

Mills (2007) explains that in some communities, the space of the neighbourhood or street extends into the home space, further blurring the distinctions between private and public space. As neighbourhood practises are culturally gendered, within areas such as Oldham the expectations of Muslim women still rely heavily on expectations of them as mothers and wives. A single, professional woman like Raheela, or a divorcee such as Farah, fall outside of these gendered, cultural norms, which impacts on their relationships within the home space. For Raheela judgements based around her status as a single woman, which she contends is more prevalent from the female members of her family:

‘Sometimes it comes from both, the pressure from male and female family members, but I think because I spend more time around the women I see it more and feel it more from them, and it’s a shame when women perpetuate these beliefs...’

When considering divorce Farah described how her relationship with the rest of her family became strained, especially with her mother:

‘It was a difficult time, I became anti-marriage at one point, I was completely against marriage, did not believe in it ever. I mean my parents did a lot of trying to talk me
around, especially on my mum’s part, she played the emotional blackmail game, mothers are great at it.’

The private is never truly separated from the public, and for BSA Muslim women the community is always present, especially when determining correct behaviour in the home. For example, family members in the home may represent our intimate relations, but they also represent the community and the practises which are expected in order to be part of this community, as the following quote from Raheela shows.

‘Yeah, you’re constantly being judged, you feel like you can’t do or be anything other than what they perceive you as’

Therefore, when BSA Muslim women perform, they do so as a form of learned practise. Mead’s (1967) theory of the ‘generalised other’ helps us understand how people come to learn culturally appropriate ways of thinking and behaving. Mead argued that the actions of individuals take part within a social context. Thus, BSA Muslim women become socialised by first of all learning what their parents and relations in the home teach them about being Muslim women. They are then taught to belong to a wider community, with the roles and norms of these groups then being internalised to the extent that they inform notions of ‘correct behaviour’. Individual acts are aligned with the judgements and expectations of others, and through interpreting meanings of the actions of others, individuals learn what they must/must not do (Blumer, 1994). ‘Taking on the roles of others’ or ‘playing the game’ were part of what Mead (1967) described as learning and internalising the perspective of others. Given that ‘we are aware of what others think or will think about our actions’
(Crossley, 2006, p.89), self-monitoring in light of the perspectives of others is always prevalent in our internal dialogues:

‘It just feels as though I have to...like put on another hat, another guise for everyone else, and it’s not good, having to keep quiet, or lie and hide part of yourself, it’s very frustrating and so exhausting and you just feel, ‘why am I doing this?’ (Raheela)

Furthermore, power balances, such as those experienced by BSA Muslim women in the home can impact on the ‘self’ that is performed within home spaces, ‘our relations with others, qua relations, involve interdependency and thus a balance of power, and when we are disadvantaged in such balances our liberty are restricted.’ (Crossley, 2006, p.89). This is clearly illustrated in the experiences of Raheela and Farah. As young BSA Muslim women, their cultural, ethnic and religious identities intersect in ways which restrict the sense of liberty and comfort they experience at home. Precisely because of the relational nature of home, and the altruistic nature of cultural and religious teachings regarding maintaining ties with extended family and the wider community, both Raheela and Farah have felt the home as a front region with performances expected of them that are uncomfortable with their sense of self. Generational differences between individuals in the home, can invoke as Goffman (1956, p.79) notes, ‘some discretionary limits’ on ‘freedom of backstage activity’.

The home and family become part of our habitus, socialised and inculcated within us in a particular way. Precisely because the home is constructed as ‘normative’ and ‘natural’ the need to perform and prescribe to the roles within the home, despite discomfort or a sense of performing against the self, becomes a matter of its preservation (Bourdieu, 1996). Performing at home then becomes an act of ‘sustaining the self’, of mutually agreeing with and acting in a relational scale with a team, that is the family, in order to portray a
‘creditable self’ (Goffman, 1956, p.76). As Goffman (ibid. 79) notes, players are invested in their performance and the team, ‘when the audience is not present, each member of the team is likely to want to sustain the impression that he can be trusted with the secrets of the team and that he is not likely to play his part badly when the audience is present’.

Goffman’s categorisation of presentation or performative self has been criticised for considering people as cynical performers (Gergen, 1999). However, Garfinkel (1967) contends that rather than simply being a cynical performance, people are invested in ensuring their presentation of self is accepted by others, and considered ‘genuine’, not least because we are not only performing for others, but to our ‘selves’, and the ideal self we are striving to live up to. It therefore does not follow that performances by BSA women in home spaces are insincere, but in order to solidify and conserve the ‘home’ and family unit—deemed so natural—and avoid fission the performance in home spaces becomes vital (Bourdieu, 1996, p.22).

Indeed, Tseëlon (1992) summarises that a different reading of Goffman’s ‘front stage/back stage’ metaphor, or the concept of ‘impression management’ might interpret the presentation of self or selves not as an act of manipulation but rather a process of negotiation. In other words, for the women in this study, their performances at home were not intended to fool for some ulterior motive, or to misrepresent, but instead were an important part of the process of maintaining the family unit. Rather, the performance is the act, the attempt is not to manipulate others’ impressions of the self, but to manage the self, to represent or convey a self in light of the space which is being experienced and the performance required in this space. Thus, it is not a question of where the presented self is most sincere, but which mechanisms that must be factored into this construction of self.
The notion of habitus (Bourdieu, 1996) as something that is learned and transmitted provides an illuminating context within which to understand how concepts of home and the ‘natural’ aspect of home and family are learned. This process starts externally, and social expectations and understandings of self are shaped within and by the wider social field of community. Because of the porous nature of home what is then expected outside, the cultural/gendered aspects of behaviour, filter into the home.

As Goffman (1956, p.77) notes with regard to performances, ‘performers may be sincere- or be insincere but sincerely convinced of their own sincerity’, the BSA Muslim women in this research are certainly invested in the space of home, to the extent that even when they are aware of performing a self, their performance is intended to maintain this ‘natural’ space. To understand the performance, or this ‘masked self’ we must reflect on the stage upon which the performance is being enacted, to understand the social and power relations. The home in which BSA Muslim are presenting a ‘self’ and the intersectional identities of culture, gender and religion shape the way home is experienced. As Franceschelli (2016, p.16) notes, home does not exist in a vacuum but ‘is influenced by specific historical and socio-economic conditions.’ Therefore, it is naïve to assume that gendered codes and experiences of belonging in the home are not similarly influenced by the wider societal context in which they are situated.

As illustrated by both Raheela’s and Farah’s experiences, the task of maintaining relations in the porous space of home space masks the work that is involved in maintaining relations in this field precisely because the family and home has been constructed to appear natural. As Munro and Madigan (2006, p.107) note the notion of home is prevalent with heavy ideological burden’ particularly in relation to the idea of family and domesticity. Given
symbolic power relations in the home, and gendered cultural expectations placed on some BSA Muslim women, the maintenance of a cohesive home environment becomes a complex and difficult process, which can be far from natural. This difficulty was further illustrated by Rabia, who spoke of the demands faced by Muslim women and the pressures of maintaining the home:

‘Let me tell you it’s harder, taking care of a house, a husband, children, their upbringing, taking it upon yourself to make them civilised human beings, not ignoring them, listening to them and being the best wife and mother is a lot damn harder than being out there, not even batting an eyelid whilst doing it?’

Home is not necessarily the ideal social field for all BSA Muslim women; it does not automatically follow that these women, othered through racialised or gendered discourses in wider, public spheres, are able to find a sense of ease or familiarity within the space of home. Intergenerational conflict, relational conflict and the gendered, patriarchal norms of some BSA Muslim women’s home lives places a strain on their everyday lives. Phillips (2009) notes that the intersection of family and self, social differences of age, locality, ethnicity or class all work to affect the spaces Muslim women inhabit and establish themselves. The reading of home spaces provides valuable insight into the gendering of and conflict within home spaces, as well as highlighting the complexity of identities and expressions or negotiations of self within intimate, private spaces. The next section further disrupts the boundaries of public and private spaces, exploring how the notion of homeworking ‘opens’ up the space of the home to public scrutiny.
4.6 Homeworking or ‘my home is my business’

The literature on the concept of homeworking is both detailed and varied and includes Sherry Ahrentzen’s (1997) analysis of the meaning of home as a workplace for women. Noting that the places we live in are as much psychological and social constructions as they are physical, Ahrentzen points to the traditional discourse which supports the ideology of a separation of ‘home life’ and ‘work life’, which positions the former in the private and the latter in the public sphere. Strictly demarcated, the ideological separation of home and work often overlooks the many varied interpretations of home, its meanings and uses, which in turn are shaped by gender, race, class as well as individual situations. The use of an intersectional analysis to contextualise BSA Muslim women’s experiences of homeworking further illustrates the porous nature of home spaces, given that, private spaces of home are necessarily opened up by these women to the public. Here the intrusion into the home space must be managed in a way that is in line with presenting a self that is both professional and competent.

When the ‘home’ is used as an occupational workplace people’s experiences of home are different precisely because they are shaped by factors both within and outside the public/private dichotomy. This increased complexity mirrors women’s own experiences, and as Ahrentzen (1997, p.78) notes, ‘contradictions in those experiences are expected to occur because our lives within them [homes], and the home’s role in society, are complex and fluid.’ The distinctions between separate spheres are after all not so tenable, certainly for immigrants, racial and ethnic minorities, or working class women, many of whom perform paid and unpaid working roles in the home. The value of this work has ideologically been constructed as less than, or unequal to that of men’s work. This is certainly the case in
Western countries where notions of patriarchy and the value of men’s paid work is seen as essential to the economy, to men’s sense of self-worth, and to the identity of their families. Women’s work, whether paid/unpaid or inside/outside the home has been considered supplementary, an extra and often chosen endeavour (Tingey, et al., 1996; Halford and Leonard, 2001). However, there are distinctions between countries, for example, culture and values which underpin family and work differ between countries such as Sweden, Netherlands and the UK. Flexibility and part time working patterns are encouraged and indeed have been policy goals in Sweden (Wallace, 2003) with Netherlands having the highest part-time working hours for women. Additionally, in the UK and Netherlands mothers work approximately half of fathers’ working hours, while in Sweden the difference in hours between parents is much less distinct (Tang and Cousins, 2005).

With regards to work in the home this is generally perceived as lacking credibility, and as a form of work that routinely exploits workers, and offers no economic stability (Moore, 2004). If we take the popular characterisation of work as a place where ‘serious work’ is done, and home as that where one retreats to after the ‘day’s labour or hard work’ (Ahrentzen, 1997) what occurs when both the space of serious work and supposed rest or leisure become one and the same?

For ethnic minority women involved in waged work at home, the literature presents a bleak picture of depressing exploitation, isolation and vulnerability. Felstead and Jewson (2000, p.77) have noted that migrant and ethnic minority groups are over represented ‘among the most disadvantaged types of home-based productions’ and ‘Asian communities in general and Bangladeshis in particular provide a major part of the labour pool from which homeworking employers draw’. Located largely in the clothing trade, working well below
the minimum wage, and often exploited due to a lack of language skills, or knowledge of workers’ rights, these working women would routinely find themselves isolated, overworked and with a less than stable income. As Massey (1994, p.208) notes, ‘for women in one way or another tied to the home, or to the very local area’, homeworking becomes increasingly the only available option. Employers then take advantage of these women’s lack of opportunities and use them as cheap female labour, who are made to work long hours whilst rarely being properly paid. Harrison (1983) explored the concept of ‘homeworking’ within industries such as clothing, seeking to understand how the sexual division of labour in the home, led to increased isolation and of course exploitation of homeworking women who were paid below the average national wage. Homework, Harrison (1983, p.84) notes, was the only option for a variety of women, including those women who perhaps ‘disliked the discipline and timekeeping of factory work’, as well as ‘Muslim women observing semi-purdah.’ Though there was the prospect of a wage, homeworking women rarely left the sphere of the family, did not make independent friends or contacts, nor could they establish a ‘separate sphere’ away from the context of the home.

Culturally viewed as being of low status, repetitive and exploitative, homework, domestic or otherwise, paid or unpaid, was and is a stressful factor in the lives of homeworking women (Anderson, 1988). Yet, women have long developed strategies to challenge these characterisations and enable adaptations to the home in order to accommodate complex roles (Ahrentzen, 1997). This is certainly the case for the BSA Muslim women in this study, and it is interesting to note that the ‘homework’, and the homerule businesses of these
women are both different to, yet somewhat similar to the homework their mothers or
grandmothers were doing. In the quotes below both Zaira and Umaira recall the type of
homework their mothers were engaged in—routine, manual work that required little skill.
Such work was often characteristic of the repetitive and mundane labour carried out by first
generation migrant women in Britain (Wilson, 1984; Westwood, 1984; Brah, 1994; West and
Pilgrim, 1995). In addition, these women worked long hours, often at a detrimental cost to
the physical health of workers:

I remember my mum working at home, she used to sew different things,
like...trousers and shirts, school uniforms, she would sit on the ground, and that’s
probably why she has a bad back now, and she would just sew all day, I would sit
with her on the floor playing, I must have been only four or five, but I remember that
so clearly, she...it wasn’t easy for her...looking after us and sewing all day...’- (Zaira)

‘When we were young my mum used to fill Christmas crackers, with those...you
know those cheap plastic toys... we’d help out, sometimes all of us were working on
these crackers, I just remember our house used to be filled with sacksful of that
crap!’- (Parveen)

In contrast, the homework done by the women in this research is not one of routine
exploitation, and in fact showcases the women’s entrepreneurial skills, including notably the
use of social media and personal networks to grow and promote businesses (Dhaliwall,
1998). Yet, as comments from participants show, working from home still requires
negotiations of gender relations, family expectations and parental duties within
contemporary society. The circumstances by which these women arrived at working or
running business from home are varied, often involving economic constraints, childcare
duties or lack of employment prospects. Something that was displayed and repeated
throughout the conversations with the women was an entrepreneurial spirit, a capacity to
adapt and manage multiple responsibilities, as well as the use of home spaces often deemed intimate or private.

Voluntary redundancy, a change in economic or family circumstances were all cited as reasons for changes in employment patterns. Successive policy and academic reports have shown that BME employees suffer disproportionately in times of economic crises, are often hardest hit by redundancies, and suffer economic hardship as a result (Li and Heath, 2008; Work Foundation, 2015; Runnymede Trust, 2017). Six of the twenty-eight women interviewed could be considered ‘home workers’ or ‘homerun business owners’. Out of the six women, five were married and also mothers, two of the women also had part time jobs outside of the home, and working from home was used as a secondary, supplemental income. They were all living with family or in their own homes with a partner and children. The youngest was in her mid-20’s whilst the oldest was in her mid-40’s. The women also had a varied education and employment history, three of the women had completed University degrees, whilst others had begun traditional employed work straight after leaving school.

One of these interviews was with 34-year-old Khadija, a mother of two, who narrated her journey to being employed as a chartered surveyor outside the home, to making the decision to work from home. Khadija’s decision to take voluntary redundancy was partly due to the discrimination she felt she experienced in the work environment after she started wearing hijab:

‘So when I started wearing it I realised...saw how people were different with me, even some tenants that were...you know I could tell they were being a bit funny with me, then I stopped wearing my suits I started wearing long dresses and loose trousers and stuff like that...’
The notion of visible difference in forms of dress and experiences of work environments will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter; nonetheless it is interesting to note here the effect such experiences can have on Muslim women’s participation in employment outside the home. Khadija also considered her role as a new mother as central to her decision in leaving employment:

‘I got married and got pregnant soon after, and they were having a restructure at work and I applied for voluntary redundancy...because you know I wanted to bring up my child myself...I did not want to take my child to the nursery or dump them anywhere, I wanted to look after my child myself, it was my choice to have this child so it was my responsibility, so I wanted to bring this child up.’

Parenting, or being a physically present mother featured in the women’s accounts, and was the most common reason for changing occupations, either to part time work or to being employed within the home. Turning to part-time, or leaving employment is a feature of women’s working patterns regardless of ethnicity or cultural background (Elvin-Nowak, 1999; Dillaway and Parè, 2008; Kanji, 2011; Morgan et al. 2013). However, more particularly, the role of ‘mothers’ and the reified notion of motherhood as has been discussed in this chapter are in part shaped by cultural and religious expectations of BSA Muslim women. Therefore, it is key to remain aware of the intersectional identities which shape BSA Muslim women’s experience of work, including socio-economic factors, religion and gender, as well as wider community expectations of the role of women and mothers.

There are no exact figures for South Asian women in self-employment, because the research that has been conducted has been gender-blind or tended to focus on South Asian men (Raghuram and Hardill, 1998). This work on self-employed South Asian men has been discussed in varying ways, as an example of entrepreneurial spirit, as an aspect of self-
reliance, and as a reaction to economic, social and cultural disadvantage and exclusion (Metcalf, Modood and Virdee, 1996; Clark and Drinkwater, 2006, Clark, 2015). The poverty prevalent in Oldham has been discussed in Chapter 2, with high rates of unemployment and poor upward social mobility, affecting Oldham’s male and female population, these can act as push factors into self-employment (Bridge at al.2003). Indeed, self-employment continues to increase amongst Oldham’s Pakistani population (ONS, 2011).

Earlier work by Dhaliwal et al. (1998) considered the ‘hidden women’ in entrepreneurial roles, subsumed as they were in the ‘family business’/- a role often encouraged by male members of the household due to the potential for ‘free labour’ and the cohesion and strengthening of family life that could be maintained through a family business. In studying the experiences of South Asian women setting up businesses, Dhaliwal et.al (2009) also noted that children played a pivotal role in the life courses of these women, by shaping the times at which they could work and how they managed this work around family expectations. This was certainly the case of Khadija who changed her working patterns to accommodate her role as a mother. Khadija described her transition from her previous employment, to her successful cake making enterprise. In recalling the economic hardship that her family endured, as a result of her husband also being made redundant, and the lack of financial help available, the need to work on her own terms was rooted in economic necessity, but also in her desire to be a ‘good mother’.

I couldn’t go out to work because I had to look after my husband and my son and...er...it was just really, really hard, financially we had no...because I’d already got the redundancy package they wouldn’t give me any benefits I was only living off like £20 a week, that was my child benefits.
In order to meet her family’s financial needs Khadija took on a part-time job, on top of which she found herself working long hours to build her own business, whilst still maintaining a household, and familial duties.

My husband was at home, I’d go work in the morning, come home feed my husband take care of my son, and by the time I’d put him to bed and cleaned the house that’s when I’d start my cupcakes...sometimes I was up until 2-3 in the morning finishing off cupcake orders. Then at 7 I’d be up again to get my son ready and take him to school...I was like a zombie!

Khadija’s accounts of having to maintain the many facets of her identity, including mother, primary carer and home business owner challenges claims that mothers who work from home have a better work-life balance (Crosbie and Moore, 2007). Though the ‘clash of roles’ that the literature on working mothers has identified—resulting from the difficulties in managing roles as employees and mothers—the notion that these dualities and difficulties are eased once homeworking is established is difficult to maintain. Though the primary attraction for home-based business models may be the ability to better combine work and caring roles, this is clearly not without detriment to personal wellbeing. As research from Walker et.al. (2008) shows, in having to balance domestic responsibilities, swapping mainstream employment for home-based entrepreneurship is not always the best option. Indeed, the attraction of being able to manage domestic and economic roles is often unmet in reality.

Nevertheless, the attraction for BSA Muslim women for establishing home businesses lies in the convenience the home space can provide, largely due to the hope of managing the roles of mothers and partners. Zaira spoke of her enthusiasm for make-up which led her to take a
beautician’s course. She then utilised this through the setting up of a home business which allowed her to manage child care alongside work:

“I really love working with make-up, and would love to become known for being a great beautician, but I think whatever you do it takes time, and I think that’s why a lot of women do the course. I’ve got my own room in my house, with all my make-up and stuff set up, I do get quite a lot of clients that come round I work from home and it’s better for me with my boy.’

In particular, the desire to be a ‘present’ parent, but also of gaining financial independence and economic security are primary motivations for home-business initiatives. Take for example Tasleema’s experience, a 40-year-old mother of three, she considers herself one of the first to join, as she considered it, the ‘trend of Asian women with home businesses’.

Tasleema attributes the growth of home businesses amongst the BSA community in Oldham to a mixture of what she considers women wanting to transcend beyond the gendered domesticity of the home and sate consumerist urges.

“It’s Asian girls bored at home and have nothing to do, and they want money so like before women used to make do with what they had, people don’t want to do that anymore, they just want want, want, want, and if that’s the case you have to work for it, and the thing is husbands don’t want to pay so much.

In this sense, the prospect of business ownership is a way of seeking self-fulfilment and ambitions outside the family sphere, and it presents women with an opportunity to explore not only economic independence but independence from the strictly demarcated gender roles of mother and wife (Buttner and Moore, 1997; Jurik, 1998). However, what was largely described in this study was an attempt to manage a multiplicity of roles, as entrepreneurial business women as well as the proscribed roles of partners and mothers.
Tasleema, a successful baker, has extensive experience in operating and maintaining a business, having been employed in traditional employment outside the home. She explained that opening up her own ‘space’—that is a business in the town centre—was a long held ambition.

I used to work for the benefits agency, I did that for 14 years, it was my first job straight after school, then I opened my own sandwich bar in Oldham on Union St, I used to do lasagnes and pies and stuff like that. I did that for two years, but it was too much, with the kids and everything, I was just constantly cooking all the time, or buying ingredients, or doing this and that, it was busy all the time so I just couldn’t manage it. During that time my dad passed away and that was it, I thought no, I’m not doing this anymore.

However, the conflicting responsibilities of being a mother, business owner and carer for her parents meant that she struggled to manage her competing roles. The loss of her father had a significant emotional impact on Tasleema, and she re-evaluated her business as less important, stating instead that she chose to prioritise her children. Her reasons for wanting to begin and maintain a business from home, rather than one in a public space, was a decision notably different, yet similar to Khadija’s, namely the need to prioritise care and mothering as her primary role:

I was just wanting to be at home with the kids, that’s it really, I was sick of asking people, especially when I ran the sandwich bar, to look after my kids, I thought I’m not doing this anymore, but I need to do something where I can be at home, and this was it.

However, unlike Khadija, for Tasleema there was no economic incentive to start a home business. Tasleema’s circumstances were different because she was older, and with a longer employment history, in addition to which her husband was also employed. The desire to merge her roles—as a mother and as a successful business woman—was managed by
returning to the domestic sphere and using the space of home as a place where she could perform both roles.

4.6.1 Adapting the home space for work

The use of the home space as one that accommodates and allows for a multiplicity of roles and ambitions was also noted on by other women who had started home businesses. Take the example of Raheema, a successful occupational therapist, who offers holistic treatments in her home. This allows her to manage her familial duties, as well as divide up the space in her home to accommodate the complexity of mother/work roles:

This space isn’t just my home, it’s my business as well, which is great because I do tend to take appointments when kids are at school, if my daughters off school, I can have an appointment in the house, so I know she’s ok for an hour, I don’t have to worry about childcare, or that she’s in someone else’s house. I reduced the number of clients recently as well, because of this other job as well, so it works out ok, I don’t have the pressure financially.

As well as working part time, Raheema manages her home environment and home space in ways that allow her to separate the work sphere from her family life. This spatial and temporal separation has been noted by Sullivan (2000), who has researched the spatial experiences of home workers. Specifically, the psychological work-family boundary, traditionally accented by the conceptualisation of work and home as spatially different, is challenged by homeworkers’ utilisation of the home for business/work. Given the conventional understanding of spatial distinctions between public work spaces, and private domestic home spaces, the conflation between the two presents an interesting insight into
the spatial organisation, relations and practices within these spaces, and when the home/work space is the same (Seymour, 2007).

In the case of Raheema, receiving work-related visitors into the home can challenge the dynamic of the family unit, and relationship with other family members. This ‘intrusion’ meant that family members were required to change behaviours, and household routines were changed, or micro managed to ensure that certain spaces were reserved for paid work.

Even when they’re home at the weekend they’re in the other room, so, but they know mums working so they don’t interrupt me, if they need anything they’ll ask their dad or knock on the door and I’ll come out. Generally, it’s good, this room is dedicated for my work, so we don’t use it for any other purpose. It’s in the house but in a way it’s also separate, so it actually feels really good.’

The micro management of the home is further explored by Ahrentzen (1997, p.85), who notes that women who work from home ‘constantly make behavioural and social efforts to either blur or augment boundaries between the occupational and domestic activities occurring in the home’, in order to individualise spaces so the role of work is separated from that of mother and partner. This separation can feature as a separate space in the home, a room that is understood to be distinct, and sometimes out of bounds to other members of the family as such, family practices are affected.

However, not all of the women who operated businesses from home were mothers managing partners and family. Take for instance the example of 25-year-old Robina, who, in addition to completing a degree in psychology, was also a qualified beautician, who offered treatments from her parents’ home. Robina’s choice to run a business from home was
largely due to financial constraints. Unable to afford to rent business premises she had begun to treat women in the space of her own bedroom.

Beauty school was my plan B, so as I was volunteering in my psychology field I was earning money by doing treatments for women. So I got the experience and everything I needed to set up on my own, and I knew there was a niche in my community, I know that a lot of Asian ladies can’t go out to clinics, or afford the treatments there, the prices are quite high, so I invested in a machine and thought I could potentially offer women in my community treatments at a lower price, from my home cause there wouldn’t be rent to pay...

For Robina the advantage of working from home was matched with a desire to provide ‘affordable treatments’ to the women of Oldham. She was well aware of the social and economic disadvantages of the area, and saw providing affordable beauty treatments as one way to help local women with self-care, likening it to a form of social enterprise:

I do the treatments a lot cheaper than at the clinic, and it was something I wanted to do, cause I wanted to make it accessible to the Muslim Asian community. I’m from an Asian area where mothers can’t get too far for treatments, or the clinics are too expensive and this is what really drove me, cause I thought I can do this for my people. Like my mum didn’t get this luxury when she was younger, but I can do it for other generations, or even my mother’s generation who now deserve to be pampered, and most of my clients during the day are mothers that drop kids off to school and then come for every treatment.

Robina uses her bedroom, a very personal, private space as both her place of work and rest. However, much like Raheema she must manage this space carefully, to ensure that minimum disruption is caused to the rest of her family. Though Robina explains that her family is supportive, nonetheless she necessarily ensures appointments for clients are kept during the day ‘when everyone else is at school or work’:

I get people knocking on the door all the time, and my parents are really supportive about it, I suppose it does get a bit much...but they are really understanding, sometimes mum and dad are my secretary, they open the door and offer clients tea! (laughs) You know, it’s never been a problem for them, and usually when everyone’s
at school or work, it’s quiet during the day, I suppose in the evening it gets crazy, but they are supportive.

The use of a private space in such a way is not without difficulties, and many of the women who operated a home business spoke of the complexities involved in managing the time of day and week of their business activities to fit with the working and educational patterns of other family members in order to minimise disruption. As Sullivan (2000, p.199) notes, ‘physical space- and the construction of physical boundaries-appears to be important in the maintenance of psychological boundaries’, however these are not so easily to separate, especially with regards to women who work from or run businesses from home. The physical separation of spaces and times dedicated to work or family is not easily managed and can lead to additional pressures. Feelings of isolation and exhaustion, and the laboured management of roles can be a process that is not easily configured. Robina articulates this as feeling unable to ‘escape work’. Her ‘lack of space’ is keenly felt as the private space of her bedroom is doubly used as both her place of refuge and her place of work:

The downsides would probably be the lack of space....like I wake up and I’m basically at work, there’s no escaping it really, sometimes you need that escape, when you have the setup like this in your own home it can be difficult to get that break from it like you normally would if you went and worked like in an office or something.

Though the prospects of homework and home businesses may offer women greater flexibility to meet family responsibilities, as well as accomplishing ambitions as entrepreneurs, nevertheless the use of the home and the blurring of distinctions between home and work spaces can present difficulties. This further reveals the porous nature of home, for Raheema and Robina a portion of private space must be set aside for business
purposes. The individual circumstance of owning a home, as well as age and marital status means that this slightly easier for Raheema, as the space she sacrifices is a room specially adapted to include this intrusion of others. For Robina, the space is limited in the family home she shares, and the space which she opens up to the public, namely her bedroom, is perhaps more acutely felt as this room is one that is usually reserved as the most private, intimate space.

Some BSA Muslim women, especially those engaged in homeworking must open up their homes, and what Bourdieu (1996, p. 20) has described as ‘a secret, sacred universe’, to those outside of their immediate family units. This is done both physically, and through the use of social media and social network sites, where images of women’s skills and a presentation of their professional self is a necessary aspect of modern home businesses. Home businesses rely on extensive social networks, family networks, and generally word of mouth as a way of generating income and increasing revenues. Some of the women in the study discussed this use of social media, where every aspect of the business, and by extension their homes, must be advertised in order to increase revenues. Social networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and web pages are increasingly used as a means to share details of the products women sell, or services they provide. In South Asian communities such as Oldham, such social networks, including ‘word of mouth’ as Robina describes are crucial part of growing businesses (Porter, 1998):

...something that got the ball rolling for me is that once people knew I had this knowledge they’d randomly ask me for advice on their skin and hair...way before I even set up, so I started getting these enquiries, and my parents would get, people would ask my sisters, so really it was word of mouth, it was the women in the community that became my incentive for setting up at home...’
BSA Muslim women must necessarily open up many aspects of their lives, including private spaces, merging and adapting business strategies in creative ways that make use of the small local communities they are a part of. These social networks are a crucial part of homeworking women’s everyday lives and livelihood. Relying on ‘word of mouth’ to generate business ensures that women are required to perform a self that meets clients expectations, yet, as noted by some of the women in this study involves multiple roles. As Robina, who has a degree in psychology, describes below, these multiple roles can include confidant and therapist:

‘I’m a makeup artist, but people really don’t see how much goes into it, like when clients come in I’m also like a therapist, offering them advice, so you’ve got to play different roles, a therapist, agony aunt…all of that’

Similarly, Zaira, a hairdresser and makeup artist, contends that she must pay careful attention to clients’ needs, always aware of her role as someone providing a service and maintaining a boundary that is professional, yet friendly. Crucially, she notes that in such a small community she cannot be seen to ‘trade in gossip’ as this would negatively affect her reputation and consequently her business:

‘It depends on that person, if they want to talk about personal stuff, if they want me to zip my mouth and just do it I’ll keep quiet, there is...like you have to watch what you talk about as well, especially around here, cause you don’t want them to think you want to know all their personal stuff, or think you’re trading gossip (Zaira, 33)

The home for homeworking women functions as a space within which to conduct business, and further blurs the lines between private and public, as the private sphere becomes the front stage where BSA Muslim women must again perform. The reasons behind women
taking up homeworking are varied and can only adequately be analysed through an intersectional framework which takes into account age, local employment rates, ethnicity, culture and motherhood. The porous nature of home becomes further evident when the extent to which homeworking women rely on their local community networks in order to succeed as businesswomen become clear. BSA Muslim women homeworkers rely on this porousness, and in effect use it to enhance and grow their businesses. Nevertheless, this is not without its own difficulties, as using home spaces ensures there is a need to perform a role even within this private, intimate space. Given that these women’s businesses are located within the local community, the role performed must be carefully negotiated with community expectations.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the porous nature of ‘home’ and troubled the binaries of public/private so often attributed to this space. Through an intersectional analysis of home spaces for BSA Muslim women, home was far from a space which could be considered private. Instead, because of intersections of gender, ethnicity, culture, age and religion, the home, and experiences within it were shaped by a variety of discourses. Examining this everyday space presents a counter to the stereotypes of isolated, segregated BSA Muslim women trapped in homogenous communities, and stereotypes of home as ‘safe haven’ and instead presents the notion of home as a contested, ambivalent and fluid space. Through analysing entrepreneurial uses of home space BSA women were seen to make use of their community and networks to grow successful businesses. The nature of performances in the home challenged the notion of home as a safe, comfortable space, as use of Goffman’s
concepts of front and back regions showed, some BSA Muslim were required to perform a self that was in line with cultural, religious and gendered expectations which were not in line with their sense of self. This chapter contributes to the exploration of spatiality in the home and asks that it is necessary to pay attention to the intersectional identities of BSA Muslim women living in particular localities. Home spaces are socially and relationally constructed, and as gendered and racialised individuals, spatial relations within home spaces for BSA Muslim women can form an important part in which these spaces are experienced and understood. As Seymour (2007, p.1098) notes, emphasising the concept of spatiality allows for the consideration of fluidity and dynamism of spaces as well as acknowledging the ‘agency of the individual or group while acknowledging the structural and spatial constraints they may experience.’ As such, this chapter has illustrated the ways in which home spaces are experienced as spaces of safety and inclusion, as well as spaces of gendered relations, power imbalances and sites of constraint or conflict.

As this chapter showed meanings attributed to home are myriad and contested, therefore it is necessary to challenge the discursive ways home is discussed, and instead highlight the complexities associated with the space of home. In order to understand how the home is experienced by BSA Muslim women in Oldham, it is necessary to attend to the spatial, to understand the local, how the home connects to the wider community, the social and political meanings which shape experiences within the home, as well as social relations which influence both within and outside home spaces. The latter is particularly important, when considering the often ‘taken for granted nature’ (McGregor, 2004) of interactions arrangements in the home. As Walker (2002, p.823) notes, drawing out relationships between home spaces and social dynamics outside the home shows how ‘dominant ideas
and assumptions about social relations around gender, class, and “race” get translated into domestic space, embodied in the home, and represented in its spatiality.’

This chapter began with an analysis of family intrusions into the home, and the different experiences of living with or close to extended family members. The gendered nature of home was then discussed, with an analysis of delineated gender roles influenced by cultural and religious interpretations of nurturing and caring duties. Interpretations of the home as a nurturing space, and religious configurations of altruism and family ties contribute to understandings of home situated within wider contexts of community. In turn, these aspects of the home ensure that this space is far from private, and instead is porous with repeated interruptions from extended family.

I then applied a Bourdieusian framework and Goffmanian analytical concepts in order to consider the home as a social field, and the nature of performances in the home. Using Goffman’s analogy of masks, the home was considered a field in which the performance felt natural because the habitus of home and family feels natural. The notion of performances and the extent to which BSA Muslim women were required to perform in the home was also discussed. These performances varied in accordance to intersectional identities, and discourses which framed the concept of family and home as natural were seen as pivotal for the need to perform. Consequently, the act of performing to maintain a familial unity was seen as all the more taxing for BSA Muslim women, precisely because of the requirements of the habitus in the social field of home. Considering this social field through an intersectional lens highlighted the extent to which religious, cultural and ethnicity influenced experiences in the home, as well as providing a more rounded understanding of BSA Muslim women’s home spaces.
The nature of working from home and home businesses formed was also explored in this chapter and was used to illustrate the different uses of home space. The experiences of BSA Muslim women who were self-employed and working from home were analysed as contrary to popular discourses which posit Muslim women as oppressed and inactive. This section also discussed the difficulty in managing home spaces when they are used as places of business given the notion that home and work are located within separate physical spheres. The combination of home spaces and work spaces further illustrated the porous nature of home and blurring of the private/public dichotomy. The next chapter will consider experiences of BSA Muslim women in workplaces outside the home. Goffmanian concepts of performance are further explored in the context of BSA Muslim women’s intersectional identities, and how these selves are shaped by and react to workplace settings and experiences.
Chapter 5- Work and Home

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the experiences of home and presentations of self in home spaces. Home was explored as a space that provided an aspect of safety and comfort for some BSA Muslim women. Yet, home also required constant negotiation of the self, particularly with regards to relationships of and expectations of others. Experiences of home working were also discussed, and the use of an intersectional analysis illuminated the extent to which ethnicity and culture impact upon BSA Muslim women’s changing work patterns and decisions to work from home.

Whilst intersectional studies focus on the different and overlapping identity categories of gender, religion, ethnicity and class, this thesis adds further complexity to understandings of these intersectional identities by analysing how they operate in and are perceived across different spaces. In this chapter the consideration of work spaces and interactions within these spaces provides an additional layer to earlier arguments regarding the need to present different selves in different settings. Crucially this chapter explores the everyday intersectionality of gender, ethnicity and religion in the workplace to contextualise the experiences of Muslim women, highlighting daily lived experiences as ones that challenge homogenous notions of passivity and submissiveness, and offer a more holistic and rounded understanding of Muslim women’s lives.

According to McBride et al. (2014, p.331), even though the workplace is replete with potential for intersectional analyses, given that the sociological aspects of race and gender factor into spaces of work, the use of an intersectional analysis ‘remains relatively limited
within studies of work and employment relations.’ The use of intersectionality encourages
the analyses of lived experiences, and to understand the dynamics of power in relations
between and within groups. The workplace allows for an analysis for an examination of
institutional practises, relations and navigations of them. Though the predominant discourse
on BSA Pakistani and Bangladeshi women relates to their non-participation in employment,
this chapter focusses on what happens when BSA Muslim women do enter the workplace.
Furthermore, an intersectional approach challenges these stereotypes of economic
inactivity, and asks policymakers and employers to consider BSA Muslim women’s
experiences in order to foster inclusion and challenge discrimination in the workplace (Tariq
and Syed, 2017). Though there is a vast amount of literature citing economic inactivity rates,
the changing patterns of such and factors affecting rates of employment for BSA Muslim
women, there is a distinct paucity of literature with regards to Muslim women’s experiences
‘at or of work’. Which aspects of their identity are salient? How are gender, ethnicity and
religion negotiated by these women at work?

The following sections focus firstly on the importance of local labour markets and the
positive and negative effects these have on BSA Muslim women’s participation in the labour
market. The chapter then moves on to discuss BSA Muslim women’s experiences at work,
including working relations with colleagues, as well as expectations and interactions within
work environments. The chapter concludes with an exploration of mothers at work, noting
the gendered experiences of managing childcare with work commitments and how this can
affect working patterns, as well as impact on relationships within the home. An
intersectional analysis complicates understandings of BSA women’s employment
experience, which allows for nuanced theories of multiple, emplaced selves shaped by the
unwritten rules of spaces such as the workplace.
5.2 The importance of region

As has been discussed above and in the previous chapter, the history and articulation of a particular ‘space’ cannot be overlooked when trying to understand the experiences of BSA Muslim women’s work experiences. The economic decline, unemployment and deprivation in Northern towns resulting from de-industrialisation accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s and has affected subsequent South Asian communities in Oldham, leading to long term unemployment and redundancies. Second and third generation South Asians, the children and grandchildren of those initial migrant labourers, are still affected by the economic decline that befell towns like Oldham. Unemployment rates remain above the national average with further negative effects on health and housing. Local labour markets across the North, in towns such as Oldham, could therefore still be considered in decline (Pike et al. 2015), a factor that is important to take into consideration when trying to make sense of low economic activity rates for South Asian Muslim women living in these areas. Similarly, Yeandle (2006) shows that the circumstances of local labour markets can act as a constraint to employment opportunities for women. Dale et al. (2002) further build on the need to consider locality in relation to job prospects and employment rates for Muslim women, an aspect Massey (1984, 1994) has also noted as important for understanding how changing patterns of employment, spatial structures and divisions of labour are affected by changing economies across the UK.

Botcherby et al. (2005, p.2) have focussed particularly on this aspect of local labour markets and the effects on economic activity for ethnic minority women. Given that ethnic minority communities in the UK are often clustered in particular districts, and as such, ethnic minority women often ‘rely upon their local labour markets for employment; in some cases,
this narrows their effective labour market to a few square miles from their homes’.

Additionally, for ethnic minority women, patterns of labour market participation are affected by age, generation, ethnic group, marriage and presence of children (Dale et al., 2002; Dale and Ahmed, 2011). Crucially, Botcherby et al. (2005) contend that relying on national level analysis based on statistics, whilst ignoring local labour market differences, leads policy makers to ‘extrapolate inappropriately’ from a national picture of employment. This, in turn, produces conclusions about ethnic minority women’s employment which rely on stereotypes and reinforces simplistic understandings of entire groups of women. Analysis at the level of district shows disparities even within the same broad regional location and differences not only between majority groups and minority women, but also between minority women themselves. Such findings are key to challenging simplistic and stereotypical understandings about minority women’s labour market participation.

5.3 Choosing to work

As Dale et al. (2006) have argued, differing stages in life trajectories affect the employment patterns of BSA Muslim women. The experiences of women who took part in this research reflected the effect of life stages on a number of occasions; these included negotiating employment prospects initially with family, with a prospective partner after marriage, and then adapting work patterns or remaining in employment at after having children.

‘Work’ and ‘going to work’ are tangible aspects of everyday life for BSA Muslim women. The process of choosing to work, arranging childcare, travelling to work and managing relationships with work colleagues further enriches the tapestry of everyday life. Attending to these mundanities is a means by which the narrative of a ‘silent minority’ and the
‘overdetermined Muslim woman’ becomes further troubled. A focus on work provides another layer of intersecting identities adding further complexity to BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives. Analysing work spaces also provides another social field within which to contextualise how BSA Muslim women present an acceptable ‘self’. Though these narratives may seem linear from the analysis below, everyday life is messy, it is contingent, it flows in various directions and weaves patterns that are difficult to follow, and even harder to write.

I begin by exploring the different negotiations that research participants described as having to consider with regards to prospective employment. These decision processes reflected both cultural expectations and negotiations with other family members. These processes are an aspect of everyday life which demonstrates not only the continuation of culturally configured gender roles of ‘women at home’ and ‘men at work’ but also how this articulation is being contested, challenged and subverted by BSA Muslim women. Take the following account from Maya, a young, single Mirpuri woman living with her parents. Currently studying for a PGCE with ambitions to teach in secondary schools, Maya recounted the issues she had with ambitions for wanting to work:

“I started working when I was 17, basically straight after school. My parents did not want me to work, my dad especially, they argued with me all the time, like why, what do you want to buy, we’ll buy it for you? I was like nothing, I just want to work, my dad was proper strict... as we were growing up we weren’t allowed to have friends, he didn’t like it, he said oh they’re a bad influence, because he came from that time where girls didn’t work, and stayed at home.”

In many ways the negotiations recalled above present a cultural shift noted by Modood (1997), Dale (2002) and Kalra (2002), as well as intergenerational differences between first generation migrants to Oldham and subsequent second and third generations. Paid employment is a source of contention, and one that particularly affects some BSA Muslim
women. The employment choices for some young BSA Muslim women in Oldham are not only affected by structural and labour market prospects but by the cultural and gendered expectations of family members (Dale, 2002). Maya’s account of her parents’ and especially her father’s objections to her plans to enter the labour market show a continuation of patriarchal attitudes noted by Brah & Shaw (1992) and of traditional gendered ideologies which delineated the expected roles of men and women in society. As illustrated by the data in this chapter, amongst South Asian communities, and some Muslim groups in particular, the specific gender roles of men and women and behaviours attributed to each, including going out to work, were determining factors in whether young Muslim women would become economically active. Such contentions certainly seem to reinforce policy and media rhetoric of these women as an ‘isolated, oppressed minority’. Her parents’ questioning of why Maya would feel the ‘need to work’ when she would be provided for, indicates that her wish to work would be challenging the male provider role which is archetypal in some BSA Muslim families. The prospect of young women going out to work could undermine this provider role, as it would be seen as, ‘a signal that the men of the household are not able to provide’ (Brah & Shaw, 1992, p.17).

Yet, as Brah (2001) has argued the right to employment is one that has long been supported by BSA Muslim women, despite their own economic inactivity, and the ambitions of first generation migrant women for their sons and daughters are being in some ways realised by second and third generation Muslim women. For some first generation mothers these aspirations for educational attainment and employment were rooted in their wish for daughters to gain economic independence (Brah, 1993; Dale, et.al 2002). Crucially it is important to emphasise that strict gender roles are not uniformly maintained amongst South Asian communities in Oldham as there are considerable differences amongst sects,
ethnicities and socio-economic groups. This general shift in South Asian communities regarding women’s employment is reflected by the young Muslim women interviewed during this research. Working whilst studying, or employment after studying was supported by either one or both parents, as was the case with Robina who explained that her mother had been the primary carer, and housewife, whilst her father had worked a variety of jobs including manufacturing. She described her parents as encouraging both her and her siblings to find employment:

I worked, cause I needed the money, I didn’t want to ask my parents, I wanted to be independent, and my mum and dad brought us up with a good work ethic and they supported working, which I’m really glad about cause it pushed me to want to achieve in my life, instead of sitting around waiting for handouts. We were never wrapped in cotton wool, we had to go out...so yeah I used to work 4 days a week, and college as well on five days. I just remember being exhausted all the time.

Robina’s experience of working whilst studying is shared by a number of other women, including Tasleema who has worked consistently since leaving school. Tasleema noted that it was primarily her father who encouraged her to study, and to find employment.

My dad really pushed me, he was my best friend, honestly, more than my mum...he wanted me to be able to stand up for myself

Economic independence and an understanding of ‘how the world works were reiterated as reasons why women were encouraged by parents to work. In addition, having a skill set that included work experience was seen as ‘insurance’ for the future. The notion of ‘change’ and ‘changing times’ was used by the women to discuss how their experiences and opportunities differed from their parents. These ‘changes’ were described as affecting cultural and gendered attitudes towards women and work. Malia, a 40-year-old single mum
of two describes here how having different ethnic backgrounds and the attitudes of this community affected the lives of young Muslim women like herself. Here she describes how ‘different’ her family were in relation to members of her Pathan community:

You won’t find many Pathan women working, I mean when my mum decided to send us college our community were in uproar, they weren’t happy about it, we were like the first Pathan girls to college, and most of the Pathan girls were taken out of school at 12, 13...I mean it used to happen with the Punjabi girls as well, but it was more the Pathan community, 12 or 13 and married off or whatever, so because my mum always dreamt of going herself I think she was living her dreams through us, my mum was educated to a certain level so that feeds in and stuff, so she took on the community when she decided to send us college.

Malia considers her mother as a driving factor behind her attending college and eventually seeking employment. Crucially, for Malia, it is the struggle her mother faced in ‘taking on the community’ which resonates for her. Additionally, she states that because her mother was ‘educated to a certain level’ she could realise her own ambitions through her children. Furthermore, the notion of Muslim communities as overly patriarchal is also challenged by the experiences of these women, as for some their fathers proved a greater influence in ambitions for work, as Robina recounts:

When I turned 16 dad was keen for me to work and that’s when I started to work, he really wanted me to do two days, but I did four hour, because to be honest the money was good, and when you’re young and there’s money coming in like that, you can see your bank account saying £1000, you can say yes, I’m making money! And it was nice cause I could buy those things I never got as a child, there were seven of us for our parents to feed and clothe, but when you’re young you want the best

In the following account from 25-year-old Razia, a Bengali woman from the Chadderton area of Oldham, Razia credits her father for being the more supportive parent in her choice of career, and her eventual ambitions to become a psychologist:
My dad doesn’t want me to give up on my career, he’s really pushing me, my mum not so much, she doesn’t have that preference but my dad really wanted to go to Uni himself, but the only reason he couldn’t was because my grandfather was pushing him to work, so he started working full time when he was 14. I mean...I can see my dad doesn’t really enjoy the work, he...has ambitions...

Contrary to policy reviews and media reports which point to patriarchal restrictions placed on BSA Muslim women by family members, in both Razia’s and Robina’s family, it was particularly their fathers who encouraged their career ambitions. Additionally, it is the women themselves who are challenging, subverting and overcoming ideologies of strictly demarcated gender roles (Brown, 2006). This is by no means novel. Indeed, attitudes described above, whereby parents are encouraging daughters to enter employment and gain independence were consistent with research carried out by Afshar (1989), Brah (1996) and Dale et al. (2002). However, given the prevalence of the discourse of Muslim women not participating in the labour market such narratives by Muslim women challenging stereotypes to realise their own ambitions are often lost. Indeed, as Westwood (1988) noted, parental commitment to and encouragement with regards to education and employment is a reaction to pressures of racism and hostile environments. Additionally, as Brah and Shaw (2000) have pointed out, there is no simple correlation between cultural attitudes and experiences of paid work, as employment patterns differ across life courses of women of all ethnicities, cultures or religions.

Maya narrated her own challenge to the traditional proscribed gender roles espoused by her father and the positive effect that her challenge has had on the experiences of her younger sisters:

“Eventually they just got over it, now they’re not bothered, I’ve been working for the past eight years, and that’s been a positive influence, my sisters work part time as
well as college, and I think because they’ve seen me go through it, they’ve wanted those opportunities as well. It’s independence, like what they earn they’re not allowed to spend, they’ve saved that, probably for their wedding and stuff, but it’s still earning and understanding the value of money. I don’t regret the arguments, dad would always say why does she need to work, what does she need the money for, what are people going to say, like apne kuriya ko kam karane (making their daughters work), but back then not many girls worked, it was just coming in.”

For some BSA Muslim women challenges to paid work can indeed arise as a consequence of community and patriarchal expectations. The initial reluctance from Maya’s father is attributed to the statement that ‘back then not many girls worked’ as well as the factor that the notion of a woman working affected the status of the male provider in the wider community. Shaw (2000, p.63) states that as well as the traditional notions of masculinity and ‘bread winner’ ideologies, the additional notions of izzat (honour) and sharam (shame) work to further constrict women’s roles outside the home, ‘for a man with a working wife would lose izzat (respect, honour)’. From Maya’s comments it is clear that the notion of daughters working is perhaps just as ‘shameful’, because not only is this challenge to masculinity an affront to male members of the family, it is also of note to the wider community. ‘What are people going to say’ as well as the notion of ‘making daughters work’ speaks to the general fear of losing izzat, the virility of fathers and husbands as providers is brought into question when daughters and wives are going out to work. Tariq and Syed (2017, p.51) further contend that ‘some Muslim families fear that a working woman may bring shame on them’ as this seems to reaffirm the inability of the male members of the family to provide sufficiently (Hopkins and Gale 2009). Maya’s comments regarding the community as bearing influence on her parent’s reluctance to allow her to work reflect in part Malia’s remarks regarding the Pathan community. Both women’s accounts consequently also reflect some of the changing attitudes towards work in some ethnic
minority communities. Although Maya notes that her sisters have been positively influenced and are working, there is still the issue of who has control over their wages evidenced in the comment, ‘they’re not allowed to spend, they’ve saved that, probably for their wedding and stuff’. This issue of patriarchy in the home and control over wages is clearly still prevalent.

However, as highlighted previously there is by no means a consensus regarding paid employment amongst the South Asian community of Oldham, and for many Muslim women entering paid employment was almost expected. In the comments below from Raheela, the idea of the masculine ‘breadwinner’ role is not one that is strictly maintained in Asian households and is in fact one that has on some level been reversed.

I think I’m seeing a lot more successful Asian women, in my family the women are financially doing better than the men and it’s the women who are essentially the breadwinners.

The dominant narrative of South Asian Muslim women as subservient, oppressed subjects of patriarchal culture and religion does not easily hold with these second and third generation women. Instead, it has been consistently argued that using an analysis which focuses on women’s different life stages (Brah, 1993; Bhopal, 1998; Dale, 2002) is a more accurate measure of economic inactivity, as is consideration of generational differences in levels of employment between earlier migrants and subsequent generations. Dale et.al (2006) have analysed the prospects of economic activity for South Asian women by focussing on location in time and place, including cultural backgrounds and linked lives, that is cultural and familial influences on women’s roles; as well as individual agency, namely choices made on an individual basis in respect of education, employment and family formation (cf. Giele & Elder,
All three aspects are interlinked, and all three feature in BSA Muslim women’s decisions regarding employment. With regards to familial influences, a strong belief in family roles, including mothers’ responsibility for bringing up children prevails despite the subsequent decline in family sizes (Lindley, et al. 2004; Brown, 2006). Crucially, Dale et.al (2006) note that amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi South Asian women, maternal care and children are seen as the priority, with a decrease in economic activity after marriage and childbearing. Similarly, as Brown (2006, p.424) notes, drawing on an Islamic identity allows some BSA Muslim women to argue that Islam presents women with a choice between employment or remaining housewives, the valorisation of family and motherhood enables Muslim women to insist that their work as mothers and housewives is valued, and that it leaves them the choice to enter into employment and further education’.

Such a view was espoused by some of the young, single women such as 25-year-old Hana, who expected changes to their economic activity after marriage, who would consider being a full time housewife once having children:

"Definitely I think women need to be more educated, working as well it gives you a sense of independence too, but like if I was a mum I would not work, I’d be a full time mum until my child was old enough and then work"

Whilst some women, such as Hana, espoused the benefits of education they nonetheless prioritised family and children over paid employment, and stopping work for a while to care for children. However, this is not a prevalent view, for some BSA Muslim women such as 35-year-old mother of two, Mina, returning to work once children are older does not contradict their ideas of their roles as mothers:
Managing kids and family is fine, I mean my kids are 10 and 12 now, so they’re not babies, and it’s important for me to go out and work, I like to do my own thing...how people portray us as sat at home, cooking all the time isn’t really true, we like to be independent as well, and we’re capable of doing it so why not?

Interestingly, as evident by the comment above from Mina shows, BSA Muslim women are aware of the stereotypes which shape understandings of the economic inactivity of Muslim women. However, as comments from some of the women in this research show, attitudes towards combining work and caring roles have and are shifting. For example Raheela, who wanted to carry on working after marriage, and presumably after having children, prioritised finding a partner who will support this choice:

Like I know I’m in a good position, I’ve got a good job, I can have that experience and continue with my career, that’s my one condition on getting married, to have someone who supports that, and accepts my career goals. Maybe not work full time, but I’d still like to work, I’ve dedicated so much of my time to my studies, and I don’t want to waste that

As evident from the comments above, there are differences in BSA Muslim women’s expectations and potential employment patterns after marriage and children. Pakistani and Bangladeshi women’s commitment to paid work is managed alongside understandings of family life and roles of partner and mother. In many respects this denotes the generational shift noted by Dale et al. (2002), with women considering combining work and family commitments. However, for the married mothers who took part in this research seeking employment meant having to first consider their duties as primary carers. For these women part-time employment was considered an option that would allow women to manage their roles as mothers as well as potential employees:
I do really want to go back into work, but I can’t really do it full time, you know because of my boy, wherever I go into, I mean I have to be ready to leave and see my boy if he needs me, it’s a bit of a dilemma whatever I do, but I just want to, for now my plans are to just get out of the house and get stuff going, get myself out really.” (Zaira)

I’m not working at the moment, I’m a full-time carer for my daughter, but I am looking for a part time job now because my youngest has started nursery, I’ve got a few hours free so it’d be nice to get out the house and stuff. (Rabia)

Given the comments above it could be argued that BSA Muslim women’s attitudes towards working after having children are becoming aligned with white British women’s experiences of returning to part-time work after children. Employment was also seen as a way to manage duties as primary carers, but also to ‘get out of the house’ as noted by both Zaira and Rabia. As Thomson (2011, p.8) notes, for some women the decision to return to work involves ‘associating employment with independence and good mothering.’

The next section of this chapter now focuses on the experiences of women who are parents as well as working, either full time or part time.

5.4 Mothers at work

As Kanji (2010) states, mothers who return to work as full-time employees constitute a minority in the UK, regardless of cultural or religious factors. Yet, research with BSA Muslim women working full or part time is limited. ‘Mother’ is one of the intersecting identities of some of the women taking part in this research. When this intersection is analysed alongside configurations of gender, religion and ethnicity the notion of Muslim women who work, presents an interesting perspective on their everyday lives and negotiations within everyday spaces such as work. Six of the women interviewed for this research were married,
had children and were working either full or part time. One woman was divorced, had two children and was working full time, whilst another was married and did not have any children. Two other women were single and working full time.

The notion of ‘motherhood’ is a powerful social construct, with Connolly (1989) considering the concept one that centralises women’s engagement in activities which are primarily geared towards nurturing and caring for children. ‘Motherhood’ is an ideological concept which, despite cultural variation in its meaning, promotes an image of the ‘perfect mother’ which leaves many women striving for this ‘ideal’. As May (2008, p. 471) notes, ‘motherhood is part of a powerful nuclear family ideology that permeates all of society and is defined and delineated by strong social norms.’ The concept of mother in Islamic and cultural tradition is reified further still and has long been considered a factor contributing to low economic activity rates of Muslim women. The implications for Muslim women of the reified identity of ‘mother’ were discussed in the previous chapter—the focus of this particular section lies on the intersection between motherhood and work, and how this in turn intersects with ethnicity and religion.

Despite equal parental involvement in household work, including childcare gaining popularity as a cultural ideal in the UK, it is still easier for men to opt out of these than it is for women (Cunningham, 2007). As Dillaway and Pare (2008, p. 438) notes, for women and particularly mothers, the choice between home and paid work is often dichotomised so that they are constructed as ‘either mothers or workers but not both’, which in turn infers a dichotomy in physical location ‘either women are at home or at work, but not both.’ Further, Roos (2008, p.58) notes, that in portraying this separation between women as
either at home as caregivers or at work as employee ‘reflects a “separate spheres” imagery that is still morally and culturally relevant today.’

Similarly, a work identity is still more compatible with fatherhood than it is with motherhood, precisely because of the dualisms in gendered ideological understandings of men/provider and women/care giver roles. Boyd (2002, p.466) describes these as historically situated discourses which rely on constructions of the ‘male public world of work’ and therefore a separation from the ‘so-called private care of children.’ Such traditional gendered expectations towards motherhood and home making continue to contribute to gendered divisions of labour in both white majority and ethnic minority households in the UK (Shirani et. al. 2012). Furthermore, Miller (2007, p.337) notes that discourses on motherhood and parenting are often oppressive and relate to assumptions made about mothering as ‘natural’ and ‘instinctive’. Such discourses have often also failed to take into account diverse experiences, and the cultural, ethnic and religious influences which can come to bear on the concept of motherhood.

For Muslim women, the essentialised notions of motherhood and gender ensure that the notion of working and being a mother is one that is met with resistance from the wider community and also the extended family. As Siraj (2012) has noted there is a distinct lack of literature on the way Muslim women construct and manage their feminine identities, and similarly very little research exists into how Muslim women’s identities intersect with motherhood. Although the discourse of femininity and womanhood constitutes how women become gendered and the ‘sorts of women’ they should be (Skeggs, 1997), the effects that different social, cultural and religious environments may have on the way that femininity is constructed requires further exploration. Motherhood is central to the constructed ideal of
a woman’s role (Walby, 1990), the ideal role which involves nurturing, and caring is supposedly the role to which women are most suited. This ‘natural’ expectation of ideal ‘femininity’, as caring, selfless and nurturing is perhaps articulated most succinctly by the discourse of mothers and motherhood, which then has an impact on how women’s labour market participation is viewed.

This ‘burden’ of upholding an idealised femininity is perhaps most acutely felt by Muslim women who are also in paid employment. The role of mother from Islamic perspectives has been discussed in the previous chapter. Within BSA Muslim women’s homes the discourses of motherhood influences women’s opportunities to seek work outside home, and subsequently their experiences at work. For a number of women in this research managing work also included managing family expectations, and often involved an independence from and resistance to relying on extended family for help with childcare. 33-year-old Parveen displayed a wish to stay independent, stating how she placed her child in nursery rather than relying on family for childcare when she returned to work. In her own words Parveen contends this is unusual and not the ‘Asian’ thing.

It works well, at the moment I’m doing 7.30 to 11, that’s only because my youngest is at part time nursery, so I need to get back in time to pick him up, I haven’t got no one to pick him up, me and my husband do it between us, we don’t like getting family involved, because personally I’m working, and obviously you’re Asian and my mum’s like ‘what’s the need to work’ and I’m like no mum, I want to work, so we work it out, even though I’ve got people and family we’d rather do it ourselves.

Below she recalls the conflicting advice she received from her parents. Parveen considered her mother as pushing her towards a more traditional role in the home:

It’s more cultural, you’re a mother now, that’s your job, and my mum, when I didn’t have kids she’d say stop working and make babies, and when you make babies stop
working and look after the babies, but that’s why me and my husband choose to do it ourselves, because no one can say anything then, no one can say ‘oh you left the kids with us whilst you went out to earn money’, we do it between us, he’ll take him to nursery, I’ll pick him up so we job share. My dad always supported, he said, ‘let her work, so what’ but when I had my first child everyone was like, stop working, there’s no need, no one in my family worked, like my cousins, everyone, when you have your child you stop working, but I carried on working, nine months I took out, got my young child into nursery and went back to work. Masha’Allah I’ve got four now so with all of them I went back to work.

The initial expectation to reproduce, and thus achieve femininity through ‘motherhood’ is followed by an expectation to give up work and maintain the ideal of perfect femininity by managing the domestic realm and attending to childcare duties. It is interesting to note, that despite discourses which describe Muslim women as oppressed by overbearing patriarchal interactions in the home, Parveen’s husband was supportive of her right to work and shared in the responsibilities of childcare.

Parveen’s mother, as a migrant to Britain worked from home in a low-skilled, manual job enabling her to attend to the more traditional gender roles of wife and mother in the home space. She thus had similar expectations for her daughter. There are however clear generational differences between first and subsequent generations, partly driven by the opportunities available to them, and in part due to economic considerations. For Saima, the desire to work and carry on working did not come from her parents, as her mother was a housewife. Saima attributed her need to work to having married abroad and the process of organising her partner’s settlement visa in the UK. As is often the case with an overseas spouse and newly settled spouses, there is often a challenge in finding work straight away, especially work which could potentially support a wife and children (Shaw, 2000a).
Transnational marriages, such as Saima’s, present a reconfiguration of gender relations in households. Given the legal stipulation for sponsoring a spouse, which includes probationary periods and no recourse to public funds for two years, this is having the effect of seeing an increased number of young women entering the public sphere and work (Mohammad, 2015), and thus ‘serves to counter the conventional gender division of labour of the male breadwinner and female homemaker within Pakistani societies’ (Mohammad, 2015, p.601). Although, for some Muslim women this may mean they are only in paid employment until the visa is obtained, for others economic independence is valued and can be maintained by carrying on working once the spouse has settled in Britain. Saima articulated this as having a separate salary from her husband which gave her a sense of security and ‘control’. She sees this as an aspiration she would want for her own daughters:

I want them to get an education and to be out there working, that didn’t come from my parents, my mum was at home, but I think because from a young age I started working, and whatever I wanted I worked for and bought. I know women who are on benefits who don’t get to buy what they want, I’ve never had to do that, and you could only do that if you have your own salary coming in, I wouldn’t be comfortable asking my husband for money, having to provide justification and ask to buy stuff, I’ve not done that and I wouldn’t want to do that, it’s given me more independence, you’re in more control, all the bills used to go from my account, he had come from Pakistan I had done all the debits from my account, and it was always the case that I could do it, pay the bills, with my money and do everything myself, it gives you that security, rather than relying on anyone.

Nonetheless, paid work had to be carefully maintained alongside what were considered their primary duties as mothers. Many women felt that arranging childcare was a difficult process and they were often dependent on help from their extended family. Inevitably, relying on parents or extended family changes the dynamic of these relationships, and although some women valued the support, for others the help was a sign of having failed as a mother. Thus, a sense of guilt over being a working mother was a persistent and visceral
feeling for some of the women. Take for example the following comment from Humaira, a 33-year-old mother of one. Degree educated and working since finishing her education, she married in Pakistan and was recently joined by her husband. She confided that since becoming a parent her priorities had shifted, and the struggles she felt had shaped her experiences of being a mum:

‘I’ve been lucky that I’ve got my family and parents, my husband’s come and he’s earning a bit, so maybe it’ll shift further down the line, when he’s settled in a job, maybe I won’t have to work full time, maybe I could work part time. It is something I’d like to do, work part time, so I can spend more time with my son.’

As Guendouzi (2006) notes, the common perceptions of motherhood are discourses perpetuated, internalised and discussed by women in their everyday lives. These discussions are perpetuated by comments from family, wider community and between women themselves. Humaira, also wrote in her diary wrote about the difficulties faced by mothers who work full time:

‘I find working full time very challenging, tiring, exhausted. But, equally do find working as a HR advisor rewarding and challenging —exciting—meeting new people, various conversations and potentially good career prospects.’ (Humaira, Diary entry)

In a separate entry Humaira wrote:

‘Sometimes feel I don’t give quite enough attention to my son or household chores, challenging to meet all the expectations of a wife, a Pakistani Muslim wife.’

When, we talked about her diary entries in a follow up interview, Humaira spoke of these expectations as culturally driven and of the demands such expectations placed on women:

‘I feel the demands are too much, I’m expected to be a wife and responsible for the upbringing of my child, which is fair enough, but on top of that I have to do all the household chores, cooking and cleaning, and everything else....it’s just too much, but it’s difficult to change the mindset of this culture that is embedded in many people’
The feelings of guilt about not spending enough time with a child or not maintaining the home are certainly to a certain standard are certainly not exclusive to Muslim women. The assumptions and beliefs attached to the ‘natural and instinctive’ role of ‘good mothers’ is one that can be difficult to resist (Miller, 2007). Similarly, Oakley (1979) noted that the socialisation of women into the mother role was one deeply rooted in cultural expectations. What constitutes a ‘good mother’ is learned, and therefore to an extent reflects mothering ideals of previous generations. However, given the cultural and religious significance attached to the mother role in the South Asian community it may then be supposed that the socialisation of women into their roles as mothers is more rigorously enforced.

Juggling motherhood and a career is not without much difficulty for the women in this study. Not being able to maintain that balance between work and home meant having failed in the face of family and community expectations. These expectations are such that women understand managing conflicting pressures, and the struggle to do so as their own failures, and as ‘bad mothering’, and thus consider changing their working patterns so as to better commit to their roles as mothers, as illustrated by Sara who considered switching from full time to part time work. Sara also talked of the guilt she felt, and how comments from family compounded this feeling.

I feel guilty...like working full time, and it doesn’t help that my sisters say it...even in a nice way...I feel that as well, whilst my child is young I want to be around rather than leaving him to nursery, or family...’

Additionally, the strongly demarcated gender roles within some South Asian households can add to the pressure of maintaining an ideal family life and home. Humaira further articulates this struggle of being the perfect mother, stating the notion of a husband staying at home—
in effect a reversal of the male breadwinner/female housewife roles—would be unheard of in her Pakistani ‘culture’.

It’s difficult, I know some people do it, I know in some situations it’s like that, the man is at home now, but in our culture…it’s just not…it doesn’t work like that, I mean like me, I’m trying to do everything, it’s impossible to be the breadwinner, to be a full time mum, as well as the housework, I mean that’s why I’m like this..(laughs)...all over the place’ (Humaira)

Muslim women such as Sara and Humaira are often torn between their responsibilities, between work, children and managing a home, and consequently struggling to maintain a sense of self. For many of the women the notion of a working Muslim mother had not been particularly well received in the community, and they cited the negative comments they have received. For example, Malia considers the Asian community as having a particular stereotype regarding Muslim women who work.

“A lot of people they have this stereotype that ‘oh well, she doesn’t do housework, she just goes to work and that’s it, and she’ll just go out with her kids and that’s it’ I wish it was like that! (laughs) I think often, especially housewives, they really have this stereotype, not about single parents particularly, but about people who work, they see it as ‘oh these women are getting a break whilst we do all our housework’ whereas we still do the housework and we work, and often the case with working is it’s out of necessity.”

Similarly, for Saima, comments from other non-working women seem to imply she is failing in her role as a good mother. It is important to note from Saima’s comments, that whereas women such as Sara and Parveen may have had to endure comments from family regarding their responsibilities as mothers, here these ideas are perpetuated by peer networks and wider cultural discourses:

“Every now and then I used to get the comments about being a working mum, negative comments, mums who were at home thought they were better mothers than me, they were like we’re better at home, we can give our kids more attention,
but I've just done nearly a year and half at home, and I don’t think that makes you a better mother, I still do the same amount of cooking, cleaning, I hate cooking but I still do it! (laughs) Staying at home watching daytime T.V. does not make you a better mum, I feel anyway.”

As Guendouzi (2006) has noted, the social construction of a good mother is one of presence. Muslim women who work are thus breaking the social requirement of being present, nurturing mothers, yet the Muslim women in this research are able to resist this discourse of intensive parenting. Saima contended that simply being ever present for her children is not enough. By working she is able to provide them with financial security as well as setting an example, especially as she has four young daughters whom she wishes to encourage to break from the traditional, culturally inclined notions of female housewife:

“If nothing else I used to walk past Sainburys or through town everyday and I’d get my girls something, so when they came home from mosque they’d have a bit of a surprise, and working meant I had more money so I could do things with them, take them out. You can't feel that just because you’re sat at home you’re doing better. I feel I'm a better mum by working, if I had a choice between sitting at home or work I’d choose work, I think a working mother is better, you’re an example to your kids, so many people said to me why don’t you leave work, but with having daughters I need to show them that you need to go out and work, if you want something out of life you have to work or it.”

In the next section of this chapter I look at the experiences of BSA Muslim women in the workplace, seeking to analyse what happens when hijab enters the workplace.

5.5 Discrimination at work

5.5.1 Experiences after 9/11

Almost all the women interviewed for this research expressed a desire to work, whether that was part time or full time, as is common with findings of previous studies. As is often
the case with policy reviews into the economic inactivity of BSA Muslim women, less credence is paid by policy initiatives to the real and debilitating experiences of discrimination, nor the fact that successive economic recessions have the greatest impact on BME communities (Runnymede, 2010; JRF, 2017). Reports have consistently shown BME women face discrimination across the whole spectrum of employment, from the initial recruitment process to discrimination at work, including issues of training and promotion (OSI, 2004; APPG, 2012; NAWO, 2016). As Lindley et al. (2006) note, there is a danger that solely attributing cultural assumptions as impacting upon women’s economic activity is an oversimplification. Furthermore, attributing economic inactivity rates to ‘cultural factors’ neatly evades issues of discrimination, instead locating the problem with the women themselves and to a larger extent the communities they reside in.

A 2016 report into social mobility (Social Mobility Commission, 2016) found BME women were particularly concentrated in low pay sectors of the UK labour market, with extremely limited chances of improving these situations. The report also highlighted the geographical factors influencing labour markets, with the North West featuring as one of the regions where lowest pay is experienced. Additionally, successive economic recessions and subsequent austerity measures continue to impact on low income Black and Asian women, as ‘in every income group BME women will lose the greatest proportions of their individual income’ (Runnymede Trust, 2016). Notable gender gaps in the labour market, and the lack of BME women in managerial, ‘top role’ professions have also been highlighted. Crucially, a report from Demos (2016) suggests that workplace discrimination negatively disadvantaged Muslim women, preventing them from achieving, gaining, or being promoted to managerial positions.
Applying an intersectional analysis to workplace discrimination highlights the ways in which the everyday experiences of BSA Muslim women in work spaces is affected, and takes into account the complexity of age, religion, gender, ethnicity and other markers of identity.

Crucially as Tariq and Syed, (2017, p.511) note, intersectional analysis is key, as ‘a focus on one category alone does not offer a holistic and realistic picture of the challenges which may impede Muslim women’s careers.’ Discrimination was indeed a factor commented on by the women who took part in this research. Through an intersectional focus on the intersections of gender, ethnicity and religion in the workplace, the research discusses how issues of dress, socialisation, management and colleague interactions within work spaces become a process of negotiation, reflection and self-management.

The crux of this thesis is the notion that there are no spaces which are entirely neutral for BSA Muslim women, and that within each space contains unwritten rules which BSA Muslim women must navigate. The space of work is no exception to this. Indeed, as BSA Muslim women are entering the workforce in greater numbers, they are entering a space already replete with meanings, norms, routines and relationships. As Puwar (2004, p.8) has noted, the entrance of women and racialised minorities into spaces previously denied to them has presented both illuminating and contradictory paradoxes, as, ‘social spaces are not blank and open for “anybody” to occupy’. The ambivalence attached to the presence of certain bodies within particular spaces is repeatedly built, reinforced or contested over time. The women in this research worked in a variety of roles, as administrators or nursing professionals, as carers, teachers, shop assistants or office workers, and all of them negotiated with and experienced their spaces of work differently. The work space itself with hierarchies of management, contact with public, or with other colleagues, is a space which is not hermetically sealed. For example, global or national events affected what was
experienced in the space of work. This is particularly illustrated by events such as terrorist atrocities, experienced on a global level, which affected interactions in local work spaces.

In the case of BSA Muslim women those experiences are further exasperated by the ‘triple penalty’ of race, gender and religion; in a post 9/11 and 7/7 context BSA Muslim women have often felt excluded further:

“I remember when 9/11 happened, I know how I felt when I went to work next day and how hard it was, the hushed conversations, the looks I got, everything...for a few months it was so difficult, I was wearing hijab then as well. I've worn it for the past few years, we got the looks for a couple of months, and every time I went into the office, they'd all go quiet so you knew what the discussion was.” (Saima)

Rana who was working at a clothing store at the time, felt that after 9/11 there was a profound shift in attitudes towards Muslims in the workplace, whereby Muslim minority groups felt stigmatised and othered by their colleagues. Here Rana recounted her experiences:

The atmosphere changed after 9/11, it did, I've always been a gormless person, but back then I hadn’t seen the news and had no idea what had happened, but at break time, in the staff café everyone was watching the news, the morning...one of the security guard, I've always got on well with, but in that instant all I heard was Muslim terrorist, he just looked at me, and for the first time ever I didn’t see a colleague, and someone who knew me for three years, but I saw some form of disgust and hate on his face, and I wasn’t even wearing a scarf...that’s the first time I was made to feel different...’ (Rana)

The emotional and psychological impacts of being considered ‘other’ in the workplace can invoke feelings of humiliation, fear, worthlessness and rejection. Here, Jasmine talked about the more recent 2015 Paris attacks:

“You know when those attacks happened, I was sitting in this like lounge we have, for lunch and stuff, I was having my lunch and they were showing it on the news
channel...and I just...I wanted to get up and run away, you know? I just felt like everyone else in that canteen was looking at me, it was horrible.” (Jasmine)

Jasmine’s uneasiness, and the feelings of wanting to ‘run away’ are illustrative of BSA Muslim women’s very real, visceral reactions to being ‘seen’ and the extent to which Muslim women are internalising the ‘burden of representation’ (Morey and Yaqin, 2010, p.153). It also, as Chapman (2016) notes, highlights the nature of social identities as dialectical, constructed through and against how others represent ones’ social groups. The reduction of the veil into a set of ‘religious symbols and visible otherness’ (Williamson & Khibhany, 2010) has implications for Muslim women in their everyday lives and the spaces with which they interact. As the visible minority group they are subject to a set of social and cultural codes which places them under greater scrutiny as outside the ‘accepted norm’. Subjected to this hypervisibilty and collective suspicion, Muslim women are more vulnerable to feelings of exclusion and anti-Muslim hostility.

The comments from Saima, Rana, and Jasmine illustrate how BSA Muslim women experience and analyse not only their own behaviour, but the reactions of others to their presence in the workplace. Here the intersections of race, gender and religion clearly impact on BSA Muslim women and their engagement with work. Holvino (2010) has reiterated the need to consider intersectional identities when looking at organisations and employment, stating the need to publicise the ‘hidden stories’ of ethnic minority women, and how intersecting identities impact differentially in the everyday. Holvino (2010, p.262) calls for a theoretical intervention, contending that within organisational practices of work it is necessary to see race, gender and class as simultaneous processes of institutional and social practise, as well as a process of identity. For example, understanding the way in which
identities are produced and how these define the way individuals see themselves and how others see them in organisations is key to understanding individual interactions with social practices in work spaces. Additionally, an awareness of institutional practices affords analyses of the way in which stratifications of race, class and gender are already embedded in organisational processes and ways of working, which reproduce inequalities and privilege. Holvino (2010) further contends that processes of social practices and beliefs outside of organisations and at wider contemporary societal levels can influence attitudes and inequalities within organisations. In other words, stereotypical discourses surrounding Muslim women in popular discourse, which depict them as ‘submissive’, ‘docile’ and ‘alien’, infiltrate workplaces and affect the way BSA Muslim women experience relationship in the work space. Given the intersectional nature of inequality it is necessary to recognise these processes, in a manner that simultaneously breaks apart these processes, whilst connecting and articulating their connectedness (Holvino, 2010).

One aspect of this infiltration is succinctly detailed when considering attitudes towards BSA Muslim women in the hijab, and what it means when the ‘hijab’ enters a workplace. The hijab in places of work remains a contentious subject across Europe and beyond, with France in 2004 banning the headscarf in public institutions, with many private organisations also extending the law to ban the hijab at work or moving hijabi women to areas or offices where they do not have contact with the public (Rootham, 2015). Similarly, Germany has also imposed bans on Muslim women wearing hijabs in public institutions such as schools. Though no such ban exists in the UK, nonetheless the image of the hijab has come to stand for particular understandings of Muslim women’s identities and their right to belonging and citizenship in Western countries. For BSA Muslim women the wearing of hijab at work can
lead to discrimination and feelings of alienation (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). An Equal Opportunities Commission report published in 2006 found that one in five Pakistani or Bangladeshi employees experienced negative or derogatory attitudes towards them because of dress. More recently, a report published in 2016 by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR-EU) found that not only did Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim women face the most acute penalties in terms of unemployment and over-qualification, more than half the women surveyed for the report felt they had missed out on opportunities for progression in employment because of religious discrimination and wearing the hijab (ENAR-EU, 2016).

5.5.2 The question of professionalism

In 2012 the Leadership and Cultural Identity report found that almost 90% of ethnic minority women felt they needed to leave their cultural identity behind in order to progress in the workplace. Additionally, 40% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women felt the clothes they wore for religious reasons shaped the ways in which they were seen and the assumptions that were made about them. As Syed and Pio (2009, p.118) note, in a study on workplace diversity Muslim women’s employment experiences should be contextualised through their intersectional identities, as ‘different social markers, such as gender, ethnicity and religion, form contingent relationships with multiple determinations and implications’. Furthermore, acknowledging that experiences in the workplace are shaped by wider societal contexts, organisational policies and codes, as well as individual choices situates every day work spaces and experiences within a multilevel macro, micro and meso framework. Syed and Pio (2009) consider the macro-societal level as including institutional structures, wider social
differences and codes. A meso level analysis of work spaces means taking into account organisational approaches to diversity, promotion and evaluation. A micro level analysis then focuses on the individual experiences, identity and performance of self in the work space. Within work spaces there exist codes of behaviour, professionalism and interaction which determine the extent to which Muslim women may be included or excluded. These operate simultaneously on macro, meso and micro levels. Macro societal discourses on difference and on the Muslim woman as ‘other’ filter into the meso organisational, impacting on how organisations accept, promote or adapt to Muslim women. Finally, both macro and meso affect Muslim women’s experiences, their interactions with colleagues, management and the wider public.

Additionally, as with any other space, work spaces are replete with issues of power and hierarchy. Through applying a Foucauldian concept of power and knowledge to areas of management and work space institutions, Townley (1993, p.539) contends it is possible to see how work space institutions are replete with ‘meanings and discursive practices are constant sites of struggle’. Furthermore, a Foucauldian analysis allows us to question where, how and why particular discourses ‘of required habits, rules, and behaviour and socially constructed definitions of the norm’ become accepted knowledge within work spaces. In particular Foucauldian analysis (Foucault, 1972, 1991a) of these norms allows for an exploration of questions regarding the production and legitimation of knowledge, by interrogating, ‘who is accorded the right to speak, the institutional sites from which discourse derives its legitimation, the position in which it places its subjects, what is recognized as valid, and who has access to the discourse’ (Townley, 1993, p.240). Through connecting power and knowledge with analysis of workplace practices and norms, it is possible to see how these norms can be used exclude, isolate or other individuals who are
seen to unable to unwilling to adhere to these norms. This may include aspects of dress, collegiality, interactions with management or socialisation with colleagues.

The question then remains, what are the implications of this for gendered and racialised othering of minority groups. For example, within work spaces there are both formal and informal dress codes, which often pertain to what is appropriate, suitable or in line with norms of that particular work place. Therefore, individuals are attuned to what is considered ‘professional’—through learning from the cues and reactions of others and constructing an image which is then in line with these professional codes (Goffman, 1959; Trice and Beyer, 1993). Given this ‘professional dress code’ it can be surmised that considering the extent to which discourses surrounding the hijab posit veiled Muslim women as ambivalent and outside belonging, in the workplace the hijab is similarly, albeit tacitly, implicated as being outside what is considered part of ‘professional’ dress codes at work.

The concept of professionalism and being anxious to ‘fit in’ in the workplace were concerns remarked upon by a few of the women in this research. The women in this research were all too aware of the difficulties they faced when looking for employment, and factored this into their own expectations, to the extent where they were willing to ‘change’ their religious dress to secure employment. Consider the following account from Razia, who had recently completed a Masters degree and had secured a research assistant position at a university. Here she recounts her thought process whilst preparing for the interview, and her decision to change her appearance, clearly making the distinction between what accounted for ‘professional’ and what might be seen as lacking in this regard. The contention between what is considered professional and how certain modes of dress may be considered as
unsuitable are long standing negotiations faced by Muslim women. In the following quote Razia talks about needing to change in order to secure a job, and why appearing different might make a difference to her prospects:

In my old work place I never thought about my appearance, but because my old work wasn’t something I wasn’t really intending to stay long term in, or to supplement my career, but this job, I really, really wanted, it’s going to give me good experience that I can put on my cv, and I know that I’ll be part of publications which will definitely contribute towards my career. So I really cared about my appearance when it came to this job, so...yeah...I did feel like I needed to change, I felt like that. I think because I felt that it’s quite a professional job isn’t it, it’s not something...I wouldn’t consider the abaya unprofessional, but the way I wore the skirt, I mean it didn’t look any different to how I normally wear my abaya, I wore a long cardigan on top, and it just felt like I was covered as normal...I think I was just thinking too much about it, what would people think and if it would affect me getting the job...but it was fine, and now I wear my abaya at work and it’s good... I don’t know why I felt like that...every single job I’ve had I’ve always dressed loosely, it was just for that interview I thought it might make a difference.

Razia’s feelings of ‘needing to change’ or adopt more suitable dress are just part of issues affecting Muslim women’s employment across the UK and have been echoed in various reports including the National Alliance of Women’s Organisation (NAWO, 2016), Muslim Women’s Network (MWNUK, 2016) and the Race at Work study (2015). According to the NAWO (2016) report, the current climate of Islamophobia in the UK means that Muslim women face stereotypes in the recruitment process and consequently many feared being stereotyped, while others have also been prevented women from applying for certain jobs or progressing in their career. This stereotyping is attributed to dress such as hijab, and the vulnerability Muslim women feel when dress presents an immediate indicator of religious affiliation. Razia’s experiences and previous research cited above neatly illustrate the macro, meso and micro frameworks which operate within BSA Muslim women’s everyday work experiences. Similarly, in the following account, Maya, who was completing a placement at a school as part of her PGCE, talked about wearing hijab at work for a few months:
I think like the way you dress...I try to, sort of like not get backed into that corner, so I like I wore hijab for two or three months last year, cause I was like I'm going to try wearing it. The whole experience was so weird...Some of the kids were like we don’t think we can approach you now because you’re in hijab, I was like, ‘what do you mean? I’m still the same person’ and they were like no, you’re more...how can I put it, like cold, like serious. I think in the scarf they also thought I was more vulnerable and they thought they could take advantage of me.

Maya recounted the reactions of students to her hijab, in particular the way in which the stereotypes regarding veiled women affected the extent to which students thought her approachable. Discourses surrounding the veil and Muslim women posit them, as silent and oppressed, yet also distant and unwilling to integrate. It is interesting to note the extent to which these discourses had been inculcated by Maya’s students. Maya, also commented on the fact that as a veiled woman, her students saw her as more vulnerable. As Dahinden et al. (2014, p.332) noted, the oppressed veiled Muslim woman has become a powerful symbol in Western societies. In their work with young adults in Switzerland, this stereotype was reproduced in everyday lives, and these dominant discourses on Muslim women had become ‘appropriated and interpreted by young people’ in ways which shaped their understandings of ‘oppressed Muslim women’. Maya also recalled the attitude of other professionals to her hijab and compared the way she was spoken to both before and after veiling.

And teachers, they weren’t as warm, they’d talk to you like you were stupid, I could see the difference in the way I was treated, from not wearing, to putting it on, I could see how people’s behaviour changed towards me.

For Maya the distinction was clear, the intersection of religion and gender shaped colleagues attitudes towards her, especially when displaying a visible religious identity by wearing hijab. Maya considered these attitudes as indicative of the stereotypes they held
regarding veiling Muslim women. Such everyday interactions highlight the ways in the representations of ‘oppressed, passive’ woman drives understandings, and therefore reactions to Muslim women. Additionally, given the issues of power and knowledge in workspaces, the preconceived notions of veiled BSA Muslim women shared by Maya’s colleagues, allowed them to dismiss her and resulted in them interacting with Maya in ways she felt were disrespectful. In the end Maya decided not to wear hijab, though it is unclear the extent to which her negative experience at work influenced that decision. Below she succinctly notes states the way she felt seen and othered:

   It was like one day I was an alien, the next day I was normal...

The association between veiled ‘alien’ and non-veiling ‘normal’ highlights to some extent the ways in which the discourses on Muslim women have come to have an affect on the negotiation of self and identity management in workspaces. Chapman, (2016, p.363) notes, ‘as Muslim women engage with outsiders’ perspectives, they must negotiate not only the stigmatization of minority Muslim identity but a specifically gendered form of that stigma—one that treats them as “docile bodies”.

Some of the women in this research also expressed the view that veiled women Muslim women would not ever be considered for particular roles. The perception that only particular jobs are available to Muslim women is one that was expressed by Nagina, a paediatric nurse with the NHS. She felt that well-paid, or politically active jobs such as Members of Parliament are not available to all Muslim women, because only ‘one type of Muslim woman’ is accepted into such public and national institutions such as the Houses of Parliament. Crucially, this is not the ‘visible’ hijab wearing Muslim woman. Indeed, fears of
being stereotyped, or discriminated against is considered a reason for the absence of Muslim women in some jobs and their over concentration in others (EOC, 2006).

“I think all that being seen in a particular way because of what you’re wearing affects which jobs you can get, I mean do you see any hijabis in parliament? There may be Muslim women there, but they don’t wear hijab, so it’s one type of Muslim woman.”

Reeve et al. (2012) have noted that Muslim women wearing hijab have become ‘stigmatised’, and affiliations with a particular form of dress, ethnicity or appearance has negatively affected them in terms of health, housing, education and employment. ‘Stigma’ refers to those personal attributes which are considered flaws within certain social contexts; having or displaying such characteristics leads to exclusion, or to being seen as belonging to a less desirable, stereotypical group (Revin, 2008; Link & Phelan, 2001). Goffman (1963, p.3) articulated that having these ‘stigmas’ could discredit individuals, ‘reducing him or her from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one.’ Stigma may be linked to group membership, physical appearance or behaviour. In places of employment, being stigmatised in such a way can relate to interpersonal discrimination, being treated negatively by customers, work colleagues or management. Hopkins and Patel (2006) found that Muslim women adopting hijab in the workplace were more likely to report discrimination in the labour market, than those who would adopt a more ‘Western appearance’. Indeed, adopting a Western appearance was considered a survival strategy in managing and accessing the labour market. Negative reactions towards wearing of hijab or ‘traditional’ clothing were noted by many of the women in this research process. The following account from Jasmine, an administration professional working at a local bank, demonstrates how negative attitudes and harassment from managers and work colleagues can have a profound effect on Muslim women’s own sense of self and ability.
“A lot of my friends say, oh you’re so lucky you can wear your own clothes, there’s no like uniform, but you know it’s just as hard, they have no idea how other people there look at me, because I wear hijab and my salwar kameez. Like, because I train new starters, you can see on their face straight away, when they see me…there’s no respect, they don’t believe that I have the knowledge to do my job, like I can’t…that I must be thick or something...even the manager, like my line manager and above I feel like they don’t really respect me...that has a knock-on effect.”

Experiences such as Jasmine’s illustrate neatly Holvino’s (2010) theorisation of the interconnected and simultaneous nature of race, class and gender in social, institutional and identity practises within organisations. Wider societal narratives relating to Muslim women and hijab function to influence opinions and being ‘looked at’ in a way which denotes a lack of confidence in or respect of BSA Muslim women is a common experience. That the lack of respect is felt from managers, and the ‘knock-on’ effect this has on other colleagues, displays the hierarchical nature of organisations, and the ways in which stratifications in such organisations can perpetuate inequalities.

5.5.3 Managing self at work

Bowlby (2002) has noted, employers are likely to only employ those individuals who are ‘socially acceptable’ in the workplace, both to employers and co-workers; in other words, individuals who do not display ‘stigmatising’ attributes. Further, shaping the gender, ethnic and class makeup of a workplace against those who ‘would not fit in’ through discriminating practices ensures the work space is kept homogenous and closed to potential ‘space invaders’ (Puwar, 2004). Employers in some occupations looking for ‘socially safe’ employees will adhere to the ‘white, English and middle class’ model. Despite such legislation as the Equality Act 2010 making overt discrimination illegal in the workplace, nonetheless implicit
bias takes place in the recruiting and promotion stages (Wood, et al. 2009) which affects BME minority groups both entering and progressing in the workplace. Successive reports show that BME graduates are 5–15% less likely to be employed than their White British counterparts six months after graduating (Zwysen and Longhi, 2016) and that BME groups often face an ethnic pay penalty, where they are likely to be paid less than White British employees (Longhi and Brynin, 2017; JRF, 2017).

The stigma attached to the women wearing hijab then means that they cannot represent this ideal model employee. The work space can be one of exclusion and BSA Muslim women can find that certain social practises of the work environment can negatively impact on the level of engagement with colleagues and management. This was commented on by Saima, who noted the ways she had felt excluded from the social aspect of work spaces:

“...I think with my work as well, certain things about the work environment, like people going out to drink after, it’s difficult, when you’re trying to have that working relationship there’s certain limits you have when it comes to socialising, and it’s difficult to communicate that to someone who doesn’t share that view. So, they’re out socialising and talking about work having those conversations, but you’re excluded almost. I always find that difficult, I mean I’m quite open, but I don’t want to be in that environment, I want to be more respective of my religion, and to do that I don’t want to place myself in certain environments like pubs. It’s difficult because you try and tell your colleagues it’s nothing personal, like not that I don’t want to socialise with you or anything, it’s like that office environment, where it gets difficult”

As Samani (2013, p.99) notes, some workplace environments lack of cultural and religious awareness, which leads to awkward and difficult exchanges with colleagues, especially with regards to the role of after work drinks or socialising pubs. Not only can this be interpreted as an unwillingness to integrate within the workplace environment but, Muslim women
often find themselves missing out on conversations outside of workplaces. Given that these post work drinks can be a source of networking, Muslim women ‘can lose out on economic opportunities that may arise during such work socializing.’ In research with Moroccan Muslim female employees in Netherlands, Berger et al. (2017, p.1129) note, being Muslim, female and religiously observant can lead to having to do more identity work in order to manage belonging in the work space. Manoeuvering to fit Islamic values within ‘white organizational practices’, can either mean putting a professional identity before religious practises, or, as in Saima’s case, putting religious values above a professional code at work.

The BSA Muslim women who took part in this research were pragmatic, and all too aware of the discourses which shape negative stereotypes of Muslim women. There is almost an expectation that this not only negatively affects their career prospects and progression, but that they will remain subject to comparisons with colleagues. In the following comment, Sara, who does not veil relates the remarks she has heard in the workplace, which compare perceptions of hijab wearing women with other Muslim women who do not veil. As a non-hijabi Sara nonetheless felt judged for wearing, what she described as, loose, Western clothing:

“One of my colleagues, like I dressed in Western clothes, I wore simple make up day to day, she compared me to this girl who wore heavy makeup and skin tight clothes, I wore loose clothing, covering the rest. This particular girl wore very low neck top, so this other colleague commented that she was very modern, that she probably had more choice in her life, that was the perception, that she was more ‘free’ to do what she wanted, whereas like people with hijabis aren’t, this was a conversation I overheard. Certain people had a closeness to her, they were more open to her, they had this perception of her, this modern girl thing, they treated her, and the hijbais differently.”
It is evident that visible religious markers of dress and appearance can negatively affect the everyday experiences of Muslim women in employment, as Bowlby and Lloyd-Evans (2009.p.46) note, ‘Muslim women are often perceived by employers as ‘not fitting in’ with corporate identities in terms of dress, appearance and styles of communication’. They often manifest themselves in outright discrimination or through micro-aggressions and every day racism. Polarising political and social debates which have firmly posited the Muslim as ‘other’ are affecting Muslim women’s interactions with colleagues and management in the workplace. As detailed by Scott and Frantzmann (2007), Muslim women in the workplace often experience discomfort, insecurity and discrimination in their daily working lives. BSA Muslim women such as Nagina, a nurse working for the NHS, who do not veil were nonetheless perceptive of the different ways colleagues interacted with hijab and non-hijab wearing co-workers, as well as the way the general public reacted:

“There’s a girl who wears it, and there’s no difference...but then...I understand where you’re coming from, I have seen patients being less open with them, and in other places where they’re less involved, like other nurses won’t involve them as much, they feel that they’re not sociable, not willing to get involved, that’s what it’s like...and this is an opinion I heard from others, when they talked about this hijabi.” (Nagina)

For some women, such as Jasmine, the everyday racisms encountered in the office where she works were attributed to a ‘feeling’, a sense that certain looks from colleagues resulted in feeling ‘out of place’. This perceived negativity is a form of interpersonal discrimination that Ghumman and Ryan (2013) stress can be as detrimental as verbal discrimination. Such low level, routine negativity is likely to have a cumulative effect on an individual’s sense of self, their sense of belonging to a place, and their expectations of being accepted (Knowles, 2003).
They might never be outright nasty, but you know it’s just that look you get from them where you know you’re out of place, and it shouldn’t be like that’ (Jasmine)

For example, here Rana, who worked at a retail store and did not veil, felt that interactions with colleagues were more difficult than those with the general public:

I had some issues with the public, but it was more the staff, there were some, that... well they’d give an air of they didn’t really like someone who was a Muslim, even though they played team with you, you knew there was certain jabs they would take at you, I never wore hijab at work, but when there were a few girls who started who did...I could tell that when it came to Ramadan and other things they were looked at very differently, they always had ignorant questions...they weren’t really interested in learning, but just asked silly questions, like ‘why are you wearing that?’

Where the women encountered the public on a daily basis as part of their employment, they did witness and become targets of further discrimination. Consider the following account from Parveen, who works as an administrator with the NHS. Recounting her experiences of work and work colleagues, she commented on her routine need to prove her ability to fit in and her capability and suitability for the work she was doing. Parveen also mentioned that despite training and guidelines, she repeatedly witnessed her colleagues, and other NHS employees, discriminating against patients based on perceived non-Britishness, ethnicity, religion or colour.

“But I can’t say much, with me working there and rules in the NHS, but where I need to give it I do, I don’t give a shit I’ll say my piece and walk off, but I do see a lot of racism, the way they perceive Asian women, all of it, and you wouldn’t expect it, especially in the NHS, but because they’re such a tight team, I mean they will say it amongst themselves, they’ll forget that there’s an Asian sitting there listening so they will say it amongst themselves, thinking that we should join in because we’re part of the team, but it doesn’t work like that.”

Parveen’s experiences are perhaps reflective of how organisations are embedded within and part of societal structures, and here exemplify the ways in which narratives which originate outside of organisations influence attitudes within them. Experiencing or witnessing racism and not being able to ‘say much’, as Parveen stated, can have a detrimental effect such as feeling powerless or being expected to join in as ‘part of the team’. This in turn indicates the coercive, and insidious nature of inequality in organisations. The Race at Work (2015) report, surveying over 24,000 employees found that racism is still a constant feature of everyday working life for ethnic minorities in Britain. This was commented on by Rana:

‘You know we have these codes of conduct at work we’re all supposed to be professional towards each other, so basically that prevents someone outright lashing out of me because I’m Muslim, but that doesn’t stop people making others feel like...unwanted...like crap basically, with the looks and snide comments, and that’s harder to deal with.’

Essed terms these feelings of being unwanted as a form of ‘everyday racism’, with routine interactions in the normal, routine everyday manifesting in subtle forms of discrimination. Moosavi (2015, p.49) extends this concept to consider ‘subtle Islamophobia’ as part of everyday experiences of Muslims, where Islamophobia is present in ‘less blatant ways’. Essed (1991) explains that ‘black people can identify subtle forms of racism because, over time, they generate an understanding of what behaviour is normal and abnormal in given situations’. Moosavi (ibid) contends that, the same applies for Islamophobia, and the experiences that Rana relates above, of being made to feel unwanted, are part of BSA Muslim women’s understandings of self as racialised other, and their recognition of this is subtle Islamophobia is ‘rooted in intuition and insight’.
Nevertheless, as the women in this research contend, not all encounters in the workplace are negative ones. As the changing trends in employment patterns show, increasing numbers of Muslim women are taking up employment, and finding ways of being Muslim women in work environments. This may be through making lasting friendships with work colleagues; on other occasions humour is used to recount stories and to inform other colleagues or employers about actions that would contravene with their Islamic values. As the comment below from Sara states, having understanding colleagues or management who take into account cultural and religious practices makes a substantial difference to office environments and feelings of being accepted in work spaces:

I can’t cope with a full week during Ramadan, normally in the past I’ve always taken the final week off, but during the other three weeks I would get migraines, trying to do a full week. My manager suggested taking the last two weeks off, as that helps, I think it works out...having that understanding and knowing what the other is going through, it keeps you going (Sara)

Additionally, the importance of seeing another Muslim woman in a management or senior role in a work environment cannot be overestimated as the comment below from Humaira illustrates:

My manager is now a Muslim woman, you still maintain that professional relationship, I mean you have things in common, cause you share the same religious beliefs, cultural values, but working wise there’s no difference to other colleagues, you’ve still got to the job and be professional. I’ve not seen her much this week, it’s just been really busy, but I admire her so much though, she’s a manager, and she’s worked up to that role, but she’s a mum as well. She’s a senior manager, and she’s quite outgoing.

Humaira, who spoke of feelings of guilt and difficulties of managing her role as an employee and mother saw her manager, a fellow working Muslim woman and a mother as a source of aspiration. Seeing someone with similar cultural, religious values provides a certain level of
collegiality and understanding. For Humaira seeing a Muslim woman who is seemingly able to manage the multiple roles she considers herself to be struggling with elicits feelings of admiration. This representation of BSA Muslim women in management or senior roles is vitally important for ethnic minority women in employment. As findings from the McGregor-Smith Review (2017) into race in the workplace shows, relatively few numbers of BME employees are in top management positions, with fewer than one in ten in management roles. As such the lack of ethnic minority groups in senior roles can negatively impact on progression and BME employees (Catney and Sabater, JRF, 2015) as they lack the mentor roles to provide support and advice.

Furthermore, it does not necessarily follow that Muslim women more identifiable by hijab are alone in facing difficult situations at work. Indeed, some of the non-veiling Muslim women who worked also cited experiencing or witnessing discrimination at work, with one of the participants taking her previous employer to an employment tribunal for discrimination. There is a clear need for further research into the ways intersectional identities function in environments of clear structural and social hierarchies within organisations, as well as understanding how power/knowledge (Foucault, 1991a) effect BSA Muslim women’s experience of work spaces, their sense of self and their social and collective identities within work environments. Empirical studies of discrimination and difficulties faced by Muslim women within the workplace are crucial to analysing and understanding the everyday self, and more precisely which ‘self’ is acceptable at work.
5.6 Conclusion
In this chapter an additional complexity in intersectional studies was explored by analysing how the identity categories of race, gender, ethnicity and religion operate across work spaces. By using an intersectional focus to challenge the stereotype of economically inactive BSA Muslim women, and by including aspects of gender, culture and local labour markets, this chapter has been able to contribute to a richer, more holistic understanding of BSA Muslim women’s lives and prospects for employment. The prospect of paid employment outside the home was discussed as a process of negotiation with family and partners and changing work patterns to manage childcare duties. It was shown that in contrast to dominant discourses of the oppressed Muslim woman denied access to wider society by patriarchal constraints, the Muslim women in this research both challenged such discourses and often found support amongst family for seeking employment. A particular focus on BSA Muslim mothers in employment showed that the identity of working mother was considered as particularly challenging with regards to negotiating competing demands of work and home. However, the desire to return to work after having children, at least part time, reflects changing patterns amongst BSA Muslim women, many of whose views concerning work are becoming aligned to those of white British women in the UK.

The chapter then moved onto to discuss the experiences of BSA Muslim women at work, analysing the everyday experiences and difficulties faced in a work environment. The interactions in the workplace were seen to be influenced by both local and global events. This chapter contributed to the discussions on spatial relations within workspaces by considering the extent to which discursive narratives on BSA Muslim women affect their experiences and interactions within workspaces. In other words, the macro societal level which filtered into organisations and influenced the way BSA Muslim women were
perceived. It was shown that stereotypical discourses of submissive Muslim women influenced BSA Muslim women’s interactions with managers, colleagues and the wider public, with women citing lack of respect, belittlement and sometimes racist exchanges or incidents. BSA Muslim women were often subjected to everyday racisms and microaggressions. Such experiences were more likely for hijab wearing women, who referenced a difference in attitudes as well as behaviour towards them compared to non-veiling women. However, those women who did not veil, were also subject to discourses which positioned them as restricted or ‘unmodern’, and often found themselves facing unfavourable comparisons with other hijabi and non-hijabi women. The findings in this chapter show that in workspaces BSA Muslim women must manage self in a space that is repeatedly infiltrated by wider discourses of Muslim women. Stereotypical discourses on Muslim women and global events on a meta level shape interactions and experiences with colleagues, management and the wider public in work spaces. As Scott and Franzmann (2007) note, the hijab has become the stereotypical way of speaking about Muslim women, despite the fact that, as this chapter has shown, BSA Muslim women’s experiences of accessing work are not limited simply to the issue of veiling. However, the hijab has become the way for the wider public to identify Muslim women, and as such dominates understandings of them in the workplace.

The next chapter will look at the everyday experiences of BSA Muslim women in public spaces, and spaces within the community. The idea of community is also explored in the next chapter, and asks questions including what influences shape BSA Muslim women’s understanding and experiences of their local space? How are women excluded from public spaces, and in which ways does this shape their understanding of self and how to manage this self across a range of experiences and encounters.
Chapter 6 - Public interactions and belonging in public spaces

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4 I explored the home, considering how the ‘social field’ of home becomes ambivalent, especially when taking into account intrusions by family, and how this challenges the notion of home as a ‘sealed’ space. The focus then expanded outwards in Chapter 5 to cover work places, analysing how narratives of submissive, docile Muslim women affect BSA Muslim women’s experiences in these settings. In this final empirical chapter, the thesis expands further outwards to explore the experiences of BSA Muslim women in a range of public spaces such as doctor’s offices, hospitals and supermarkets, as well as parks and shopping centres. This chapter then moves on to analyse ‘community’ as a public space, challenging the normative assumptions regarding ethnic minority communities in places such as Oldham, which are often depicted as ‘close knit’, ‘isolationist’, or ‘failed’ communities. This multi-level analytical approach to studying experiences across different spaces allows for a detailed insight into how being seen as ‘Muslim women’ is spatially and relationally interconnected. In effect, this chapter explores how the same body can be seen differently according to the space being navigated. Additionally, it examines how this ‘being seen’ is driven by wider, hegemonic and over determined representations of BSA Muslim women, as well as how BSA Muslim women respond to, challenge and negotiate these representations.

I begin by outlining key theories in understanding the racialised nature of everyday spaces and how these impact on, and are negotiated by, those considered ‘other’. Employing concepts of hypervisibility, invisibility and double consciousness, I draw attention to the ways in which all three concepts impact upon and affect BSA Muslim women’s experiences of public spaces. The chapter then focusses on BSA Muslim women’s interactions in formal institutions, and in particular the discourses which frame the ways they are understood by professionals in spaces such as hospitals or doctor’s offices, as well as analysing interactions in more open, less formal spaces such as parks,
supermarkets and public transport. The experiences discussed range from verbal or physical abuse, discrimination, to non-person treatment. The final section examines ambivalent understandings and experiences of community, highlighting the complex connections and feelings attached to the notion of belonging to ethnically homogenous spaces. This chapter will explore the concept of multiple selves across spaces, and will discuss how intersectional identities are emplaced, shaped and experienced in nuanced and complex ways in different situations and settings.

6.2 Belonging in Oldham

Through a critical reading across academic disciplines on the concept of belonging Antonsich (2010, p.644) contends that it is necessary to analyse belonging as both a ‘personal, intimate, feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place (place-belongingness)’ and as a discursive framework that ‘constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging).’ In this chapter belonging is analysed through a similar approach, whereby the concept of belonging is considered as both a private sentiment, which is fostered and experienced in the everyday, as well as a public-oriented form of membership, through which individuals could be considered as outside belonging (Fenster, 2005). In the comments from the women who took part in this research this dual aspect of belonging, as a private sentiment, and as an aspect of being othered in everyday experiences becomes clear. For Aneela, a young professional woman, travelling between places and the act of coming back to Oldham, which she describes as home, has both an emotional and physical aspect:

Coming back from Manchester, there is a point, like a boundary, when I’m back in Oldham and I think, finally I’m home. That feels like, relief…it feels comforting, whereas going the other way, going out of Oldham...sometimes that’s a bit...like
worry...panicky... I mean there is that feeling, because you feel people are different, I don’t know the streets, or people...but like when I get back to Oldham, I’m thinking I know this place, it’s fine, if anything happens it’s fine...I’m home...there is a difference...relief...calm, I can relax, definitely...

The feelings of relaxing, a sense of relief or calmness at being ‘at home’ are paramount in Aneela’s mind. Though she recognises that there is still the potential for something to happen, there is a greater sense of being able to deal with it. Ideas of home often invoke a sense of belonging and place which are intimately connected with a sense of self (Blunt and Varley, 2004). The issue of safety also featured in Maya’s sense of home and belonging:

I live in Clarksfield, I think a lot of people stay in the community because they’ve got no choice! (laughs) It’s about being safe as well, I think people feel safe here, it’s where we belong! (laughs)

As Besten (2010, p.181) notes, ‘people develop relationships with their neighbourhoods’, given that place is a central site around which everyday lives revolve. Such relationships can help contribute to a sense of belonging, in turn this is important for people’s sense of belonging, wellbeing and identity (Parr, 2006). Emotions are also intimately tied to this process of naming a home, and as the comments from the women show, these feelings can be of happiness, familiarity and comfort. These words were repeatedly used to describe Oldham, and these situate the notion of belonging and home within a geographical place. As Mee and Wright (2009, p.772) note, ‘people ‘long’ (Probyn, 1996) to achieve these types of connections’, and ‘to ensure that the ensemble of objects, human and nonhuman animals, practices, and ideas that accords with their version of belonging is achieved or maintained.’ For Razia this shared connection brought feelings of familiarity and comfort:
‘Home for me is about…I mean I’ve always lived in Oldham, I live in a community that’s mostly Bengali, and I think that also gives me a sense of belonging, because of familiarity and comfort…I think for me community is having that sense of belonging, knowing that you’re accepted, knowing that the person living next door has similar outcomes, expectations, will look out for you and shares your ideas, I think I feel that comfort. I think that familiarity helps, because of that I feel that I’m in a community where I belong, I’m at home.’

This desire for connection and belonging to place is felt by women across different ethnicities and ages, as illustrated by the comments from Razia, and Ammna below. Both women mentioned the importance of being accepted, and how a shared sense of familiarity with others helps situate a sense of belonging. As Probyn (1996, p.19) notes, belonging implies ‘the desire for some sort of attachment, be it to other people, places or modes of being’.

‘I’ve always lived in Oldham, the same area, I don’t think I could ever leave Oldham, I feel like…I know everything, I can go everywhere, the people, I think…I don’t know if it’s because I’m old, but you know when you’re in Oldham, people walk past me that I don’t know and they say salaam to me, and that feels good. It’s familiar, I know people have changed, like moved out and new people have moved in but I still…I feel happy, I like the environment...’ (Ammna)

However, though Aneela, Ammna and Razia describe Oldham as home, and have an emotional connection to it, nonetheless, when the ‘social-spatial inclusion/exclusion’ politics of belonging (Antonsich, 2010, p.644) is considered, they are often categorised as unable to belong. As the empirical data show challenges to their right to be considered Oldhamers’ results in exclusion across a variety of spaces. The following sections of this chapter will analyse the different ways and spaces in which this exclusion takes place using a range of sociological concepts, including white spaces, invisibility/hypervisibility, the reading of spaces and body-politics. Using the concepts of white space, the ‘reading’ of space and the body-politic, to consider the racialised nature of spaces, it is possible to begin to understand how BSA Muslim women’s embodied intersectional differences, of which a
visible religiosity is a part, affect the way the spaces the women in this research inhabit are used, produced and navigated. Being made strange, and, processes of social exclusion that work to ensure a space is ‘white’, ensure that BSA Muslim women’s bodies are seen as being unable to belong to this space.

6.3 The (im)possibility of belonging

One of the ways in which BSA Muslim women are excluded from belonging is through the racialised understandings of Oldham’s history and the configuration of the town as a white space. In everyday spaces BSA Muslim women are made strange, because despite Oldham’s perceived ‘ghettoisation’ (commonly attributed to the high proportion of ethnic minorities) White British remain in the majority. Statistically, with a ‘significant Pakistani and Bangladeshi’ population, 77.5 % of the population of Oldham is still white (ONS, 2011). Consequently, Oldham, notwithstanding its label of ‘Muslim ghetto’, remains replete with white public spaces such as GP offices, the local hospital, restaurants, workplaces, schools, neighbourhoods and associations (cf. Anderson, 2015). Regardless of these figures, Oldham is still perceived and described as a ‘Muslim ghetto’ (Morris, The Independent, 2005; Phillips, 2005) and therefore, by implication, no longer a ‘white space’ (Anderson, 2015).

Anderson (2015, p.13) coined the term ‘white space’ to describe spaces whose distinctive features were an overwhelming majority of white people and a lack of black people. More particularly, such spaces are perceived as ‘white’, and the whiteness of these spaces is seen by whites as normative and unremarkable. Moreover, the whiteness of these public spaces is taken for granted (by white people), while ethnic minority people must be reflexive and
aware of their presence, carefully managing their entry into white space, and actively performing in order to pass through such spaces.

One way in which the white majority have responded to such perceived shifts in Oldham and in other similar places is by fearing the loss of status and of some idealised form of ‘Britishness’ (Rhodes, 2009). With all the connotations the term ‘ghetto’ implies, the definition negatively impacts on perceptions of the space as well as those who reside there. As Phillips (2008, p.179) notes, ‘the persistence of minority ethnic clustering, particularly within poorer inner-city areas, tends to be read as evidence of the failure of migrants to follow normative paths towards social and spatial integration’. Being segregated, isolationist, inward looking and a threat to ‘common British values’ have all been used to describe to Oldham and its non-white community (Webster, 2003). It is hard to imagine that such views do not influence Oldhamers’ perception of their selves or indeed Britain’s perception of them. As Ta’Neheisi Coates (2015, p.5) reminds us, policy initiatives, media discourses and social exclusion all land heavily on bodies which are ‘othered’, ‘the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body’.

Ahmed (2013, p.6) states that even spaces described as the ‘ghetto town of Oldham’ are still white, because whiteness can pass through unremarked, ‘as spaces take shape by being orientated around some bodies, more than others’. She goes on to say that this is a living effect of whiteness; ‘effects that allow white bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape, spaces in which black bodies stand out, stand apart, unless they pass, which means passing through space by passing as white’ (Ahmed, 2004b, p.1). One way to consider the dynamics of everyday spaces is to explore the encounters and interactions...
that take place between ‘strangers’. However, it is equally important to situate these interactions within a wider framework, because as Amin (2012, p.60) notes, the dynamics of bodies interacting in urban space is more than simple co-presence. Rather, myriad of influences, including cultural, global connections, social habits and pre-formed dispositions are part of the ‘mingling in urban spaces.’ It is difficult to disentangle the history or perceptions of a space from the everyday experiences of it, because, as Lofland (2003, p.64) notes, spaces are ‘individually or collectively well known, or known about.’ This could certainly be surmised to be the case with regards to public spaces in Oldham. A number of women made references to Oldham’s industrial past, and the derelict mills which serve as visible reminders of their own personal connection to the town. An example of this is figure 6.1, a photograph taken by 32-year-old Noreen, who described what feelings about Oldham the image invoked:

Figure 6.1: Image of Hartford Mill in Werneth, taken by Noreen

‘Oldham could be described as a town that is stuck in time...The saying comes to mind...”let go or be dragged”...can’t remember who said it now. The buildings are old and worn out, kind of like how parts of Oldham are stuck back in the 60’s. As a child I grew up surrounded by many of these derelict buildings they hold such character too...’ (Noreen)
Similarly, in figure 6.2 below, Rana also references this industrial history.

**Figure 6.2 Image of a cotton mill in Failsworth taken by Rana**

Oldham town had one of the best cotton industries in the world, all the mills, there’s so much history that’s being neglected. (Rana)

However, Rana’s awareness and knowledge of Oldham’s industrial past is tempered by her contention that she, as a BSA Muslim woman, is excluded from this history, and the right to claim this as her own. Intersectionality is therefore not just about the present, but also encompasses the past. As Weedon (2004, p.24) notes, in Britain, as with other Western countries, ‘dominant narratives of history play an ideological role’, and further, these are often used to ‘feed prejudice, exclusion and discrimination’. Stereotypes formed by the white majority of towns such as Oldham, and its ethnic minority inhabitants can rule perceptions of, and attitudes towards minority groups (Anderson, 2015), which in turn isolates those who are perceived as ‘other’.
Both Noreen and Rana make references to Oldham’s history, and in particular the cotton industry which holds such prominence in both local and national history. Their photographs also reflect the effect that urban decline has had on the town which now houses a number of derelict or repurposed buildings. As Nayak (2003, p.8) has noted, quite often the manufacturing heritage of Northern towns ‘is wrought into the very architecture of the landscape’. These buildings serve as reminders, not only of many of the women’s immigrant heritage, but of a past they do not have access to. This exclusion is noted by Rana in both her photographs and the photo-elicitation interview where we discussed the photograph she shared:

‘I think the Asian community is rejected from that history, like they’re not allowed to be part of it, we don’t know about Oldham history, we’ve grown up here but we don’t know about it (Rana)

Not being allowed to be part of the history of the town these women have been born in, and spent most of their lives in, is an example of the extent to which they are excluded from local, and by extension national narratives. History and narratives which frame knowledge of a particular space are part of the interconnectedness and can ultimately determine understandings about that space. As Blokland (2003) notes, within each space, there are internal borders and ‘exclusionary practises’ in order to establish a community and an ‘other’ which is in opposition to it. There is a need to situate the concept of ‘white space’ in a historical context, especially with regards to towns such as Oldham, which, through its industrial past has a particular place in the collective memory of the nation. Local memories are particularly important here, as they contribute to a sense of national identity, which Byrne (2007, p.509) notes, is ‘produced through forms of myth-making and narrative production which depend on particular constructions of time and space’.
Rana’s assertion of not being allowed to be part of this history illustrates the fact that ‘white spaces’ are not just concrete, tangible spaces from which it is possible to be excluded from, but they also entail exclusions from the imaginary space of collective belonging expressed through notions of being an Oldhamer. As Wemyss (2008, p.1) notes, ‘past events contribute to the construction of highly racialised local and national politics of belonging in the UK’, and as such, the Industrial Revolution and the construction of Oldham’s place in the nation’s manufacturing history is imagined as an event that is exclusively white. White space is historically contextualised, and as Hubbard (2005), Neal and Agyeman (2006) and Holloway (2007) have noted, when discussing rural idylls of England as quintessential to the identity of the nation, it can be surmised that former industrial towns across England have also become imbued with a mythical place in the national imagination which emphasises a racially exclusive narrative. The contextualisation of Oldham as a white space is important as it allows for an analysis focused on how the spaces are inhabited, made and remade through racial interactions and processes (Neely and Samura, 2009). It also implies that the extent to which one is allowed to inhabit a space is the result of complex processes of knowledge, power, domination and subordination (Massey, 1993). As Brann-Barrett (2014, p.16) notes, the history of local places plays a significant part of understanding belonging, and the extent to which individuals feel dis/connected from/to this history is an ‘important factor that shapes how they see themselves’. Additionally, as Inwood and Yarbrough (2009, p.300) note, ‘race is manifest in all aspects of cultural life, including the construction of a place’ and it’s racialised boundaries. So, though women such as Rana and Noreen are in fact a part of Oldham’s history of industry, colonialism and post-industrial decline, they are excluded from the collective narrative of an imagined Oldham and from being able to claim a part of that history.
Considering the relationship between BSA Muslim women’s embodied intersectionality and the spaces which they must navigate, necessitates viewing these spaces as interconnected (Foucault, 1980). If we take into consideration Foucault’s concept of power and discourse, the BSA Muslim woman’s everyday experiences are shaped by this knowledge of the discourses that defines what it means to be ‘Muslim’ and a ‘woman’. As the marginalised ‘other’ BSA Muslim women’s social interactions across spaces are shaped by this ubiquitous inequality of power and social roles. What this entails is seeing the extent of spatial interactions as existing upon a plane, whereby the power and knowledge of a space and its history operate within and between bodies. Considering this interconnectedness means seeing the nature of spaces in Oldham as made up of various categories, complicated by what is both tangible and intangible, questions of ‘self’ and ‘other’, categories of belonging and exclusion, of being and being seen (Philo, 2000). Consequently, if, in collective imagination, Oldham, and by turn, those who are considered as belonging there, are formed from a collective imagining of the town, and the consideration of these as ‘white spaces’ then those who are ‘other’, and consequently antithetical to this white space are made all the more hypervisible. When a space is collectively imagined as ‘white’ the consequence for an ‘other’ is being seen as a body out of place, non-white bodies ‘become hypervisible when they do not pass, which means they ‘stand out’ and ‘stand apart’, and furthermore, such standing out ‘re-confirms the whiteness of the space’ (Ahmed, 2007, p.159).

The next section analyses this hypervisibility, and how this affects everyday experiences of BSA Muslim women in Oldham.
6.4 The embodied other in everyday racialised spaces

In Chapter 2, I introduced the notions of hypervisibility and invisibility. In this chapter I use these in conjunction with theoretical concepts which help illuminate the nature of everyday spaces and interactions, and the way embodied differences affect the way BSA Muslim women experience spaces in Oldham. When thinking of ‘being seen’ and the public gaze it is useful to consider Ahmed’s (2000) analysis of the body-politic. According to Ahmed, the construction of a society is modelled on bodies which are considered ‘unmarked’, and therefore ‘at home’ or belonging. Though described as ‘unmarked’, these usually white, male, middle-class and heterosexual bodies are privileged. Bodies which fall outside this model are in fact excluded from the body politic—they are out of place and cannot belong.

The entrance of these other bodies into public spaces becomes a source of anxiety, and the body which does not fit must then be managed, contained and excluded if necessary which in turn demonstrates the ‘intimate connection between the particular body and sociality, or the imaginary social body’ (Ahmed, 2000, p.46) This social body, imaginary as it is, nonetheless reinforces boundaries, between those who fit within this imaginary social body, and those who do not. Intersectional differences of bodies mean that they are not ‘structurally equivalent’ (p.48), and cannot equally belong, therefore it becomes necessary to pay attention to the ensuing inequalities and how they drive interactions in social spaces as well as being shaped by them.

A focus on the notion of hyper/invisibility provides a useful framework with which to analyse BSA Muslim women’s everyday experiences as it provides an insight into the processes by which the ‘other’ becomes named. This social construct of the ‘other’ highlights ways in which phenotypical differences, such as skin colour come to be used as
markers of visible difference, and therefore categorise individuals as visibly ‘other’.

Throughout this thesis the argument for an intersectional approach to the concepts of hypervisibility/invisibility is considered crucial. This means not only looking at how race, gender, ethnicity, religion, class and so on attribute to degrees of visibility, but how this is contextual, dependent on and shifting with time and place (Leinonen, 2012). Here, it is also important to highlight that hypervisibility cannot simply be juxtaposed with invisibility and that it is possible to be ‘hypervisibly invisible’ at the same time, as discussed below.

In discussing the concept of visibility, the question of power and privilege must also be addressed. As Leinonen and Toivanen (2014, p.164) point out, it is necessary to remain aware of ‘who is in the position to observe and label someone as different or similar, and who are the objects of observing labelling’. The ability to label the other, and by extension render their visibility as outside an accepted norm, is indeed a privilege. As bell hooks (1989) observes, hypervisible groups are often not only understood through racial or cultural stereotypes, they are marginalised, and by extension rendered ‘powerless’. Crucial to the process of visibility is racialisation, whereby an individual’s physical characteristics, as well as other markers of difference such as class, language, or in the case of veiled BSA Muslim women, dress, becomes factors in categorising them as ‘other’. The visibility of the other then is an embodied process, closely tied to physical, bodily features and to how that body is perceived. The way these differences are interpreted and received is socially constructed, and shaped by socio-historical context (Claasen, 1997). In short, the extent to which individuals become hypervisible is dependent on the extent to which they are seen to be different. Al-Saji (2010, p.875) has used the concept of racialisation to understand how the ‘Muslim veil’ has come to be represented. She argues that there is a representational structure which underpins the image of the veil, and that these representations are not
about Muslim women, but rather have a different function. This function, she contends, is to provide a negative mirror against which ‘western construction of identity and gender can be positively reflected’.

6.4.1 Hypervisibility

In an increasingly Islamophobic atmosphere since 9/11 and 7/7 the veiled Muslim woman in British public spaces has become an overwhelming preoccupation for the state, mainstream media and the general public. As Mirza (2013, p.5) notes, through an analysis that explores embodied intersectionality it is possible to see how the ‘regulatory discursive power to “name” the Muslim woman in the ‘West’ as either dangerous or oppressed is lived out on or within the body.’ The question then of how anti-Islamic hostility impacts on the Muslim female body gains increasing impetus (Mirza, 2012). In post 9/11 and 7/7 contexts the Muslim woman’s body continues to be replete with meanings of threat or fear, and as Ahmed (2003) notes, such discourses serve to secure the ‘truth’ about the ‘other’ and constructs bodies as ‘fearsome’ or potentially violent. For the Muslim woman her gendered difference also marks her as a potential victim of verbal or physical abuse. Gendered Islamophobic abuse is shaped by gendered identities and stereotypes, and ‘looking Muslim’ through phenotypical features, dress, or language can result in abuse. Crucially, public spaces, such as parks, public transport, footpaths and streets are often the site for such abuse (Hopkins, 2016).
BSA Muslim women’s hypervisibility in Oldham contributes to their exclusion from spaces, and reflects national concerns about the place of Muslims and Muslim women in contemporary British society. This hypervisibility is an aspect of their social interactions that Muslim women are all too aware of and reflect upon. Below Raheema and Nazma related their understandings of being seen:

‘We do stick out like sore thumbs in the community, and when we go to other places, we are more visible, and yeah especially hijab wearing women’ (Raheema)

‘I’ve worn hijab for a long time, and I think attitudes have hardened, I mean people will stare, even if they don’t say anything it’s the looks you get.’ (Nazma)

For Nazma, attitudes towards Muslim women in hijab have ‘hardened’, and the public gaze has intensified, something Hussain and Bagguley (2013, p.28) describe as ‘funny looks’. Additionally, it is this look, and the social and political factors which shape the gaze that can affect everyday encounters. Even if there is no verbal exchange, a hostile gaze can be enough to inspire feelings of uneasiness. In the following diary extract from Razia, she described how being ‘looked at’ is an uncomfortable aspect of her daily routines. Here she related her experience of taking public transport after the terrorist attacks on June 12th in 2016 within her diary entry:

It’s the morning after the Orlando situation and today on the bus I felt that people were somehow like aware of me...like staring at me. There were other Asians and Muslims and me, which made me feel “safe”. Like I was not alone. I hate how horrible incidents make me feel. Like I have to explain myself.’

Goffman (1963, p.83) describes this as a ‘hate stare’ where ‘it is possible for one person to stare openly and fixedly at others, gleaning what he can about them while frankly expressing on his face his response to what he sees’. The one who is stared at is often not
privileged in the same way as the one who is staring, indeed the act of staring is an act of power and dominance of the majority over the ‘other’. As Manning (2013) further explains, the ‘hate stare’ is a pointed act, and used to make the object of the look feel uncomfortable, because, just as inattention to strangers is a part of everyday life, the stare is a deliberate form of othering.

Hostile stares can also be considered a type of microaggression (Sue, 2007), which, whether intentional or otherwise, communicate hostile attitudes that serve to demean those who are the object of such microaggressions. Though neither Nazma nor Razia were subject to verbal or physical abuse, as women wearing hijab they are nonetheless subject to Islamophobic discourses which categorise them as ‘other’ or threatening. An example of the ‘grand narrative’ affecting the lived reality of BSA Muslim women is observed by Haw (2009), who describes the ‘mythical feedback loop’ experienced by Muslim women. Haw (2009) contends that media representations which present Muslim practises such as veiling as ‘backward’, impact not only on the Muslim community but on the Muslim woman as an individual, both her internal ‘self’ and her sense of self in wider social and public settings. ‘Sticking out like sore thumbs’ as Raheema describes is part of the everyday lives of hijab wearing Muslim women, who embody intersectional differences. Understanding microaggressions from a sociological standpoint is crucial as this combines the micro, intimate and individual experiences of discrimination with macro level analysis of societal and structural racism. As Essed (1995, p.185) has noted, the othering of individuals is not just a factor of structural discrimination but is reinforced in everyday interactions. She goes on to state that processes of marginalization and problematisation operate in everyday lives under ‘specific historical, socioeconomic, and political conditions’. The specific socioeconomic and historical contexts require us to remain aware of the specificity of each
place, and of how these shape social interactions between individuals. In towns such as Oldham, less sprawling and not as super diverse (Vertovec, 2007) as major cities, this ‘seeing’ and ‘being seen’ is perhaps further exaggerated. Oldham is no less shaped by wider political and social cultural factors, for Muslim women their experience of ‘normalcy’ and every day space in the town is often marked by their differences, whether gendered, racial, ethnic or religious (Johnson and Miles, 2014).

In some social interactions the intersectional identity of BSA Muslim women, especially if ‘visibly Muslim’ can lead to verbal abuse. Here Khadija recalled a frightening incident during a trip to her local supermarket:

‘Because I had Islamic attire on, this jubba and headscarf on, he didn’t even see my face! He was screaming at me whilst looking at my back! He didn’t even see my face...this is the worst thing, when he went past me saying you fucking bastard paki, my back was to him, he hadn’t even seen my face. I had a scarf and jubba on and that was enough for him.’

In this account Khadija repeated the assertion that the abuse she faced was not based on her ethnicity but on the ‘Islamic attire’ she was wearing. The conflation of race, religion and culture is evident in the abusive terms used – ‘paki’, and given, as Khadija asserted, there was no opportunity for her attacker to determine her ‘Pakistani’ ethnicity, it can be assumed that in the process of racialisation, religious clothing acts as a signifier. In the process of the racialisation of religion (Meer and Modood, 2010; Selod and Embrick, 2013; Garner and Selod, 2015), racial meanings are assigned to phenotypical or cultural characteristics, including language or dress, and as such ‘Islam has been confined within narrow and rigid racial boundaries as a “Brown”, foreign, and non-Western faith’ (Galonnier, 2015, p.571).
It is not necessarily physical or verbal abuse however which ensures Muslim women are made to feel excluded or unwanted. In the accounts from the women who took part in this study, everyday encounters were replete with instances where their bodies, and their intersectional identities as BSA Muslim women marked them as being considered out of place. Here Aliyah, a niqab wearing 30-year-old mother of two recounted a particular experience at the local supermarket.

‘Once or twice, like Asda shopping, if their kids have bumped into the trolley and I’ll move the trolley and apologise, whereas it’s their children’s fault for being wild and running round the aisles and whatever, and one woman actually turned around and said, ‘well it’s people like you that are getting in our way, isn’t it?’ And this is in the middle of Asda in Chadderton, and I just stood there looking at her thinking, did I really just hear that?’

For Aliyah, there was a deep sense of shock and disbelief at being spoken to in such a way. In the exchange above Aliyah was reminded she was outside the majority through invocation of nationalistic claims of belonging which serve to not only other her, but to accord the white majority the sole right to belong and consequently to claim a public space. It is these interactions during everyday, ordinary habitual acts of shopping which become instances where boundaries are enacted and BSA Muslims, both generally, and in this study, are denied informal citizenship through words such as ‘you’ and ‘our’. BSA Muslim women’s experiences at supermarkets are riddled with instances where their bodies are judged and used as boundary markers. As Aliya’s experience shows, differences are read off bodies, and in such encounters instantaneous categorisations characterise the Muslim woman’s body as ‘other’ (Lobo 2015). Yuval-Davis (2013, p.14) notes, that in everyday narratives borders and boundaries involves, ‘symbolic social and cultural lines of inclusion and difference, material and imagined, physical and cultural’ to delineate between self and ‘other’.
This chapter has so far considered the various ways in which BSA Muslim women are excluded from belonging in Oldham. White spaces are considered to include historical narratives of local spaces which serve to exclude those considered as outside this narrative. As a hypervisible minority group BSA Muslim women face exclusion. Their hypervisibility – subject to a gendered and racialised gaze— in everyday spaces produces anxieties of a body that is out of place, such that they come to be seen as ‘space invaders’ (Puwar, 2004). The following section focuses on the notion of invisibility, and how this too can be used as a basis of exclusion.

6.4.2 Invisibility and uncivil inattention

Invisibility, that is, the ability to pass through everyday interactions unnoticed, without having one’s right to belong questioned due to any phenotypical feature, can also be considered a form of privilege. In Western societies, it has been argued that ‘whiteness’ is the invisible norm against which other groups are measured (Andersen, 2003). Thus, in public spaces ‘whiteness’ is a form of privilege which allows for some to pass through unnoticed. If we return to the notion of embodiment, as Puwar (2004, p.58) notes, ‘the ideal representatives of humanity are those who are not marked by their body and who are, in an embodied sense, invisible.’ This is not a privilege available to BSA Muslim women, who must, as the analysis shows, endure regular comments about their bodies.
The terms ‘ordinary, routine and habitual’ are often used to refer to the use of and experiences in ‘everyday’ spaces – yet, it is within these everyday spaces that the ‘simultaneity of differences’ (Highmore, 2001, p.94) takes place, it is through the variety of everyday interactions and encounters that precisely challenges the taken-for-granted aspect of everyday lives (Smith, 2014) This section turns to examine how the concept of hypervisibility, seemingly paradoxically, contributes to the invisibility of BSA Muslim women. This section explores how the discourses which frame stereotypical images of BSA Muslim women inform the backdrop to their interactions in everyday public spaces. For example, the twinned experiences of hypervisibility/invisibility come to the fore in the ‘open’ space of the supermarket, as is detailed in Suriya’s account below:

Cashiers and people don’t really tend to talk unless I speak first, they ignore you, like the other day I was in Sainsbury’s, I was putting stuff in bags, the cashier speaks to my husband usually, unless I say something first they just assume I won’t talk. They assume you’re a suppressed housewife, or typical Asian who doesn’t speak English, or someone who doesn’t want to integrate. (Suriya)

In this situation Suriya describes her ‘invisibility’ as the cashier does not directly engage with her but speaks with her husband instead. Discourses framing the Muslim woman as ‘silent and oppressed’ allow for the cashier to ignore her. The lack of interaction between Suriya and the people she encounters is because her presence is dismissed, unless she chooses to speak first. Importantly, she is well aware of and reflects upon the discourses which frame the way she is seen, as oppressed, lacking English skills or unwilling to integrate. This invisibility is the result of visible differences, namely clothing, which informs and drives this interaction. Suriya is hypervisible wearing the veil and all that the veil represents; just as the racialised body cannot be seen as anything other than inferior, so too does the veiled body become representative of gendered oppression (Al-Saji, 2010). Such assumptions then
inform the interaction, or more particularly lack of interaction, contributing to the marginalisation of BSA Muslim women. In the following quote from Farah, again illustrates the extent to which visible differences drive the othering of BSA Muslim women:

‘...people can have this preconceived idea about who you are. I’ve found a lot of the times when I’ve been to doctors or hospital appointments with my husband, or if I go for my husband with him, and they’ll be talking to him and just dismiss me completely, until I open my mouth, and when I do start speaking I can see the shock on their face, they’re stunned that a woman dressed the way that I am could speak perfect English in a white accent shall we say!’

In everyday interactions it can be all too easy to overlook the role that other selves, or other subjects have in the construction of our self. The stereotype of the ‘silent, submissive’ Muslim woman is powerful and socially reproduced in everyday life. This image of the ‘imperilled Muslim woman’ finds much traction and translates into a dismissal of Farah’s presence (cf. Dahinden, et.al. 2014). When accompanied by her husband, Farah is hypervisible as the subject of discourses which present her as the subjugated ‘other’ and victim; yet her presence does not warrant being acknowledged and she is ‘dismissed completely’ and is thus rendered invisible. She is in effect a non-person (Goffman, 1959), seen only through the veil and what the veil is believed to represent. The hypervisibility of the veiled Muslim woman’s body contributes then to her invisibility. Rather contradictorily, the niqab increases BSA Muslim women’s visibility as it marks her Muslim identity (Zempi and Awan, 2016), yet that same visibility is subsumed within discourses which deny her agency. In effect, Farah’s and Suriya’s identities are invisible under the veil, or, more precisely, how the majority view the veil. Al-Saji (2010, p.891) describes this as de-subjectification, whereby the hypervisibility of the veil further contributes to the assumed invisibility of the Muslim woman. Further, as evident in Farah’s comments regarding
speaking in a ‘white accent’, it is clear that the only way a veiled body can overcome the hypervisible/invisible contradiction in order to gain some sort of subjectivity or recognition is through adopting behaviours which allow for access to this white space. This performance is, as Anderson (2015, p.13) points out, an act by the minority ‘other’ to overcome the ‘deficit of credibility’ which can be ‘minimized or tentatively overcome by a performance’. Anderson describes this as a ‘dance’, the aim of which is to show that the stereotypes do not apply. Here Farah is keen to show that the stereotypes of ‘silent, submissive’ Muslim woman, unwilling to integrate and unable to speak English do not apply to her. It could be argued that she performs to be accepted (cf.Anderson, 2015).

That the degree to which BSA Muslim women face ‘othering’ is based on the clothes they wear was also noted by Sania who compared the differences in people’s perceptions of her and her non-veiling sisters, and the extent to which stereotypical images drive understandings of BSA Muslim women:

I go out with my sister, who don’t even wear a headscarf and I’ve seen the difference in the way we’re treated, they tend to approach her more than me, like if we’re out, I’m the brick wall, I’m not there. Like in shops or out, I’m invisible but they’ll talk to her (Sania)

Sania describes her ‘invisibility’, in which interactions are limited because of the stereotypes associated with her Islamic dress. Though Islamophobic physical and verbal abuse of Muslim women has been well documented (Allen 2015; Hopkins, 2016; Zempi and Chakraborti, 2014), this profound psychological and personal impact of being silenced, ignored or excluded has yet to be fully explored.
Aliyah also compared the different ways she is ‘seen’ compared to friends who wear the headscarf:

‘There is a difference between the way we’re treated, between my non veiling friends and myself, like if they’re wearing a scarf they’re only slightly different and they’re still a bit normal, and then you’ll see extremist niqabis, like me (laughs) and they’re like yeah definitely, she’s an ISIS supporter, cause I’ve got it written all over me, this is how people think.’

Both hypervisibility and invisibility result in BSA Muslim women being treated as ‘non-persons’, which in turn has a profound effect on their sense of ‘self’. If, as Goffman describes, offering a cursory glance rather than an invasive stare is an act of social interaction and mutual amiability, what then is the effect of not being regarded at all? What is the effect of, as Sania describes, being ‘the brick wall’ and ‘not there’? In an unequal society, ethnic minorities can often endure treatment which is distinctly more hostile than polite ‘civil inattention’ and instead endure being treated as ‘non-persons’ treated ‘as if they were not there at all, as objects not worthy of a glance’ (Goffman, 1963, p.83). If identity involves acts of recognition, then the effect of only being recognised through narrow, stereotypical understandings (such as Farah) or not recognised at all as is the case with Sania, must be profound. Laitinen (2010) notes that all individuals to some degree require adequate recognition, for to be recognised ensures that there is some sort of reciprocate reaction, which in turn implies that one is significant enough to warrant regard and acknowledgement. Not being considered worthy of recognition can result in feelings of inadequacy, and of being unworthy of respect, autonomy or esteem, feelings which are then internalised. Being ignored by cashiers, and indeed by doctors, seems in effect a case of ‘uncivil inattention’, whereby deliberately ignoring the presence of a person acts as a form of exclusion. Honneth and Margalith (2001) provide an insight into the extent and impact of
being deemed ‘invisible’; being overlooked or ignored is a form of humiliation for the one who is made ‘invisible’.

However, it is not only veiled Muslim women which experience exclusion or invisibility in Oldham’s public spaces. In the account below from Raheela, a non-veiling single woman, the assumption regarding her Muslim identity is enough to ensure she is treated differently:

‘I don’t know...I actually assume...well I am Muslim anyway, because I’m brown maybe, people just think well she must be because Asian equals Muslim...and it’s stupid that I remember this, but I think this was after the Paris attacks, but we went to the market, you know the indoor one, anyway, normally this guy is really friendly, this white guy, my mum buys all her shoes from him, anyway he was really rude that day.. I asked him, I think about a different size and he just ignored me and walked off...I know he heard me, it was just that...walking off, I felt so, embarrassed. I told my mum we’d buy her shoes somewhere else, and we left, I’m not buying anything from him again.’

Raheela contended that it is her brown skin, or her Asian appearance which equates to being recognised as Muslim. For BSA Muslim women, their intersectional identities are experienced in the everyday through such acts of categorisation that render them as ‘other’ on the basis of race, ethnicity or visible religiosity. The acts of recognition which attach various signs to Muslim women’s bodies, either phenotypical or through clothes, invariably stick and thus ascribe an identity. Ahmed (2000, p.24) defines recognition as the process by which bodies are read and differentiated between those who belong to a space and those who must be excluded from it, ‘recognition involves differentiating between others on the basis of how they ‘appear’. However, in the case of BSA Muslim women ‘misrecognition’ (Ahmed, 2000, p.6) takes place, this serves to fetishise the BSA Muslim woman's body, to exclude her, and therefore the danger she represents.’ Misrecognition on the other hand
‘constitutes the subject’ (p.23) because through dominant exclusionary discourses, the subject is already known, already considered other and ‘assigned a place—out of place—as ‘suspect’ (p.23). Therefore, through the demarcation and enforcement of boundaries the Muslim woman’s body is differentiated at the very point that it is subjectified. The Muslim woman is already considered ‘out of place’ from the moment that she is recognised as the visible ‘other’. Crucially, the power and privilege to recognise, misrecognise and ascertain the ‘other’ lies with the majority as it is the ‘normative white body’ (Lobo, 2015, p.55) which is considered as belonging within the discourses of nationhood and citizenship; as such recognition and misrecognition become processes of ‘inclusion and exclusion.’

Ultimately hypervisibility/invisibility are complicated processes, intricately connected and interdependent. BSA Muslim women become visible in different contexts within their everyday lives, and the various meanings attached to their embodied intersectional differences are fluid and shifting. What is evident in the examples above is how difficult it can be for the white majority to overcome this preconceived notion of the subjugated and silent Muslim woman. Not only must these women manage their sense of ‘self’ they must also actively reflect on and manage other people’s preconceived notions of who they are seen to be. In effect they must contend with the twinned hypervisibility/invisibility that is imposed upon them and that robs them of full personhood (Black, 2007). These are two processes of lived experience faced by BSA Muslim women, and both are intertwined, given that they are shaped by similar, exclusionary discourses; Muslim women are both hypervisible, yet invisible. The dehumanizing aspects of hypervisibility deny agency and individual personhood, rendering the person invisible because they can only be known through their hypervisibility as members of a stereotyped group. Feeling ‘embarrassed’ or like a ‘brick wall’ are part of the everyday experiences, and banal racism which contribute to
what Knowles (2003, p.25) describes as the cumulative effect of racism, because ‘racial orders are in fact composed of myriad and ordinary everyday social processes’.

Evidently bodies are perceived and thus accepted/rejected based on the extent of their visible otherness. They are not only seen as ‘belonging to a different culture but they are also seen to be culturally determined and inferior as a result’ (Al-Saji, 2010, p.890). In the instances described by Farah, Suriya, Aliyah and Raheela, it is their visible differences, of skin colour, gender and religion which serve to ascribe a singular identity, that of the oppressed, silent Muslim woman or ascribing to a violent ideology. As Piekut et al. (2014) contend, these visible differences in everyday spaces can often lead to social exclusion. BSA Muslim women’s experiences in public spaces enjoin a complex form of the concept discussed above, as through being ‘hypervisible’ subjects, they also become the invisible, subjugated minority. Considering BSA Muslim women’s intersectional lives in everyday spaces is a vital and crucial step in understanding the nature of holistic, lived identities. Analysing everyday encounters and experiences allows for insight into the way BSA Muslim women encounter, navigate and challenge the dominant discourses which frame understandings of them.

6.4.3 Double consciousness and reading spaces

There is, inevitably, a reflexive element to consider when discussing hypervisibility/invisibility. Those who are made hypervisible are acutely aware of the stereotypes they are seen through, and as such work to actively contest, negotiate or
challenge these one-dimensional representations. BSA Muslim women are no exception to this, and this chapter details some of the reflections they make as hypervisible subjects negotiating everyday spaces. This process, whereby Muslim women reflect on the discourses which shape the way they see social interactions and they themselves are seen, was categorised by Du Bois (1965) as a form of racial ‘double consciousness’. This double consciousness refers to an awareness with which an individual recognises their racialised status, and consequently their place in a society that is racially ordered. Du Bois (1965, p.8) considered those who were racialised as having a sense of ‘two-ness’, as living in

“…a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others…”

Further, the racialised ‘other’ must view the world from behind a ‘veil’ – and is forced to view themselves through the negative perspectives or discourses framed for them. As Black (2007, p.394) notes, ‘having two antagonistic identities means that a lot of time and energy is spent negotiating and enduring the conflicts between who one is as a person and how one struggles to live with the misrepresentations of the outside world.’ This is the twoness that Du Bois described, the conflicting idea of the self, and the way that an ascribed, imposed self from the outside world dominates interactions and perceptions. The concept of a self that is both performed and reflexively acted upon can be applied to experiences of BSA Muslim women. Considering the intersectionality (of gender, ethnicity, religion and culture) of BSA Muslim women, critiques of the ‘self’ from a feminist and racial discourse are vitally important. It is here where intersectional analyses of the lived experiences of everyday
converge with the concepts of everyday spaces and selves, necessarily because the self is always situated and happening within various spaces. Crucially, this double consciousness is filtered through every aspect of BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives, becoming a central part of the way in which they negotiate, contend with and articulate the differences they encounter in public spaces. In negotiating their everyday spaces BSA Muslim women employ strategies that manage and minimise the perceived danger they represent, whilst remaining aware of their racialised and gendered identities. Looking at oneself through the eyes of another means knowing what one’s ‘otherness’ has come to represent, for BSA Muslim women, that ‘otherness’ is namely an adherence to a hostile and dangerous ideology (Meer, 2010). This awareness can have a profound effect on the way BSA Muslim women perceive themselves and the extent to which they feel excluded, because as Taylor (1994, p.25) notes, as our identity is partly shaped by the recognition of others, a person can ‘suffer real damage’ especially if people or society ‘mirror back to them a confining, demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves’.

Double consciousness involves internalising negative values and attitudes about the self, presented from the other side of the veil, so that individuals develop two, often competing identities – that corresponds to different social roles, the one behind the veil and one who is viewed by others from the other side of it. The two views of the Self ensure that Muslim women are torn in two. Managing this twoness then becomes a matter of reflecting on their behaviours, and the norms and expectations in social encounters. For BSA Muslim women this involves doing so through a veil. For the veiled Muslim woman the self becomes a site of contention. In the everyday, questions begin to arise over accessibility and space. The cognitive processes within which the self begins to understand the place it can inhabit relates to the conscious/unconscious perceptions of daily life and experiences. If BSA
Muslim women begin to judge themselves with the same ‘outsider’ criteria with which they may be judged by the majority, the self begins to find the ‘space’ within social interaction/space as increasingly restricted. In the British context the ‘national identity’ appears to be at odds with and rejects the veiled Muslim ‘other’, as illustrated by the experiences related by participants in this study. BSA Muslim women came to understand their own position through double consciousness, as the ‘other’. Well aware of the discourses which attribute their otherness, the Muslim women in this study worked to offset the threat they were seen to pose. Remaining critically aware of the discourses which shape understandings of the ‘other’, and despite the contradiction to their sense of self, BSA Muslim women were ‘uncomfortably aware of looking at themselves through the veil’ (Rawls, 2000, p.244). According to Du Bois, this twoness contributes to the self of the racialised minority being discordant.

Not only were BSA Muslim women always conscious of the stereotypical views through which they are perceived they must manage the perceptions of them in order to navigate everyday encounters. In fact, BSA Muslim women’s awareness of and reaction to views of them neatly illustrates DuBois’ notion of double consciousness. It is this awareness which coupled with Lofland’s (1972) theories of the reading of public spaces and Anderson’s (2011) ideas of ‘white spaces’, illuminated succinctly the tense negotiations that form the basis of BSA Muslim women’s interactions in everyday encounters:

‘There is a perception of niqabi women, that they’re going to be difficult or they can’t speak English, it’s exactly like that, it’s like a scan, I scan other people and they do the same to me, I can see that tension...’ (Sania)
For Sania this awareness was likened to ‘scanning’, and she considered being viewed as a two-way process whereby she assesses possible interactions and is assessed in turn. However, she notes the tension prevalent in interactions, and as a veiled woman the stereotypes regarding niqabi women are ever present in her mind. Just as Lofland (1972, p.98) explains people develop ‘a set of techniques—behavioural guides’, that are ‘interactional tactics—which help to neutralize or minimize the dangers of “stranger-filled public settings”’. Likewise, BSA Muslim women have learned that scanning is a vital tool in increasingly hostile and Islamophobic public spaces. Some BSA Muslim women managed these expectations in ways that relied on their understandings of religion, and Islamic teachings about etiquette. As Hana stated, as a niqabi woman she is often aware of displaying a character, of being ‘extra nice’ to off-set some of the stereotypes:

‘I do try to be...you know my character, I do try to be extra nice because I wear niqab...because...erm...that for me is a way to show them, but still they have the view that you are oppressed, no matter, as nice as you are... My personality is open and friendly anyway, smiling is Sunnah after all...’ (Hana)

Being ‘open and friendly’ gains added significance, and Hana related this back to the teachings of religion to show how this can be used to ‘show them’, despite the fact that notwithstanding her openness she may still be seen as oppressed. Throughout social interactions niqabi women rely on careful management of behaviours and attitudes in order to safely navigate public spaces. So, not only have BSA Muslim women like Safiya come to view themselves through the discourses surrounding ‘veiled’ Muslim women, but this twoness—how she views herself -- and how others view her -- has come to influence her behaviour in public spaces. For some Muslim women in this study there was the need to make a concerted effort to challenge ‘myths’ through personal behaviour. Johnson and
Wilson (2014, p.1897) have noted that this desire to challenge myths is driven by a need to offset the isolationist trope attributed to Muslim women and instead to ‘project successful assimilation into the host society’. Being visibly Muslim means that BSA Muslim women feel an added responsibility, to remain conscious of their behaviour as visual representatives of their faith as described by Ammna below:

‘I do actively engage with people, even more than I did before wearing niqab, a lot more. Definitely with non-Muslims, because it’s more important, to dispel these myths and stereotypes that are coming across that all Muslims are terrorists…’

The twoness described by Du Bois is an inherent aspect of this self-conscious act, being extra nice, engaging actively in social situations is a deliberate form of self-presentation. Part of this is a need to challenge the discourse of Islam as an extremist faith, which ensures they must behave in a way that challenges such stereotypes. For further examples of this we can return to Aliyah’s encounter in the supermarket and her reaction, which she described:

‘Is that what us Muslims are, if we retaliate towards every little thing, then what sort of image are we giving about Islam? We’re just feeding into the stereotype that we are violent, we do retaliate, it is, like there is a need for Islamophobia, there is a need to be fearful of us. Yet if we just humbly accept it and say ok fine, it was my fault, smile and move on, then that gives a far better impression. But it’s so frustrating, it really gets me wound up, it gets to me…’

According to Aliyah, behaving angrily, or countering attitudes in a seemingly negative way only works to reinforce Islamophobia and negative perceptions of Muslims. In viewing social interactions from behind a veil, a piece of clothing, which is increasingly stigmatised, Aliyah uses her knowledge of these discourses to present a self diametrically opposite to such stereotypes. As the cases of Aliyah, Hana, Ammna and Sania demonstrate, awareness of this negativity can lead them to change or manage their behaviours in ways that will negate this
negativity. It is, as Du Bois noted, one of the ways racialised subjects internalise, understand and negotiate such discourses in their everyday lives. There is however frustration involved in this process, as evidenced by Aliyah getting ‘wound up’. The twoness here involves firstly, striving to maintain an ideal, which encompasses an ‘open, friendly’ personality, and is in line with religious teachings of humility and kindness. The second aspect of this twoness is feeling as though one has to do so because of the ascribed ‘self’ imposed on BSA Muslim women, and the effort required to counteract such negative stereotypes. In short ‘one thought and striving is self-defined while the other is imposed from the outside’ (Black, 2007, p.396). Such contradictions can have harmful effects as the conflicting perspectives of being ascribed a self which does not fit with a self-definition becomes a feature of daily, everyday encounters.

6.4.4 Reading space for safety

As an ‘inscriptive surface’ (Grosz, 1994) the body and its differences inform ways of being and being seen in public spaces. For BSA Muslim women, this embodied difference can and does lead to threats, verbal and sometimes physical violence. Here, the gendered, racialised and visibly Muslim identity of the ‘Muslim woman’ becomes a site upon which violence can be enacted, as she is ‘seen as the physical embodiment of all that is considered to be problematic and threatening about Muslims and Islam per se’ (Allen, 2015, p.287). Furthermore, as Zempi and Chakraborti (2012, p.269) have noted, the stereotypes of Muslim women’s subservience, coupled with the ‘visibility’ of the veil as an unmistakeably ‘Muslim identity’ makes Muslim women the “ideal subjects” against whom to enact anti-Muslim hostility.’
Public spaces are constructed partially through popular and political discourses which construct the Muslim woman ‘as a social, economic, physical and/or moral threat’ (Mohammad, 2013, p.1804). The dynamics of these public spaces are influenced by a complex variety of politics, human and social interaction. Essentially, innocuous places such as streets, parks and supermarkets become less innocuous for those deemed outside of the social body. In public spaces individuals will read the public setting they are about to enter and make appropriate judgements regarding the behaviour necessary to negotiate the space. Lofland (1973) describes this as a process of ‘reading’, public spaces ‘involve perpetual encounters between people who are not personally known to each other’ (Lofland, 1973, p.15) and it is within these encounters between individuals in public spaces that boundaries, both spatial, and those imagined on a wider national scale determine who is allowed to belong and who must be excluded.

Extensive research on the way gender affects how women access and use public spaces has explored the considerations of safety and comfort in various spaces. Gardner (1989, p.43) has noted the need to rethink Goffman’s perspectives of the everyday from a gendered perspective:

We must consider public places from a feminist point of view not only to understand how women behave in public places, but more fundamentally to understand the nature and substance of public places in the first place.

Furthermore, paying attention to the nature of public spaces means taking into account the patriarchal power relations within such spaces, which are culturally and gender related (Fenster, 2005).
Spaces are not neutral and are certainly not experienced as neutral by BSA Muslim women. The otherness that is ascribed on their bodies ensures that in the complex network of power in human interactions, they are often cast as the least powerful. As Nast and Pile (1998, p.409) have noted, it is not just that these networks re/produce racial patterns, but that they also ‘frame the feelings, encounters and actions that comprise everyday life, in place and through the body.’ BSA Muslim women in this research consider their visible otherness marks them as outside the norm, or trespassers within public spaces (Puwar, 2004). Furthermore, this knowledge, and understanding of their bodies as vulnerable and likely to be targeted leads to a ‘reading’ (Lofland, 1973) of spaces that forefronts personal safety for BSA Muslim women:

‘I mean with park, yeah maybe on weekends, or family gatherings I would go, or maybe if I had a man with me I would go, but not at certain times, like early in the morning I wouldn’t go, probably in the afternoon.’ (Sania)

‘In town centre I have to be more aware of my surroundings, I avoid walking past places like pubs, it’s automatic, I have had insults thrown at me, you know like those pubs on Union St, we used to go home walking, and when it was nice weather, when we’d walk past the pub they’d say stuff, so it’s become an automatic response I automatically do, without even thinking about it now’ (Aliyah)

BSA Muslim women negotiate public spaces with the knowledge that their intersectional differences may cause them to become victims of verbal or physical violence. This in turn implies a form of self-governance, with regards to which spaces can be accessed and at which times, based on an understanding of the ways their ‘otherness’ will be perceived and received. This spatial awareness translates into the way women manage their bodies, and the way they consider the safety of such spaces.
Feminist research into women’s understanding of personal safety has discussed this negotiation of public spaces. Social encounters routinely subject individuals to a public gaze, thus in seeing and being seen individuals become mindful of their similarities and differences to others. BSA Muslim women, because of their intersectional identities, are acutely aware of ‘being seen’ and this awareness is an example of the ‘double consciousness’ that is an aspect of their daily lives. It can be surmised that such ‘double consciousness’ works to inform BSA Muslim women over ‘appropriate behaviour’, management of the self, change or modifications in behaviour within particular spaces to off-set any potential danger. Khadija, the victim of racist abuse discussed earlier, describes the way she has since modified her behaviour since her experience:

‘But I don’t go shopping now or anything on my own, anywhere. I won’t even go out a lot, if I do go out I’ve noticed people looking at me weirdly... I don’t go on my own... I did everything...now I don’t go on my own, I go with my husband...’

As Valentine (1989) has noted, strategies employed by women include making mental maps of the areas which are considered un/safe in order to safely negotiate their everyday lives. In the case of BSA Muslim women, understanding the nature of this negotiation involves taking into consideration their intersectional identities, and how these shape perceptions of them as ‘other’. For Farah, a young niqab wearing woman, open public areas were often negotiated, assessed for safety and sometimes avoided:

I have noticed the places that I go to, I don’t want to deal with situations where I'm going to have to deal with conflict, if I can stay away from that sort of potential situation then I will stay away, because sometimes you’re just asking for it then aren’t you? If you’re purposefully putting yourself in that situation when you know there could be possibly conflict, so why even bother? Public places, all of that, I mean I've been meaning to go into town for the past three weeks now, and I can't keep putting it off thinking never mind. I'd feel comfortable going with someone and
not on my own, and it’s both a safety issue and the fact that I don’t want the hassle. So I’ll usually go with my husband…”

Farah’s concerns were shared by Hana, who commented that public, shared spaces such as the local park could not be accessed easily and considerations of being able to access the area unaccompanied became part of the process of ‘reading’;

I don’t go to the park on my own, that’s a public space I don’t use, I wouldn’t go there in my niqab on my own, or even with my mum, cause she wears it too, then you’re just asking for it, it’s not safe. I don’t feel safe, I would not feel safe going into town on my own, if I do go I take someone with me.’

Furthermore, public spaces, such as parks can act as sites where spatial relations and social interactions are unequal and ambiguous, becoming less inclusive and ‘exclusionary spaces in which social distrust, anxiety and senses of vulnerability mean they are avoided’ (Neal, et al. 2017, p.58). Sania, Khadija and Farah referred to being accompanied by a male, either a husband or other family member when negotiating spaces that may be considered unsafe. Rather paradoxically, this reproduces stereotypical discourses of Muslim women being unable to access spaces without a male companion, when such patriarchal relations are in fact being reinforced because of BSA Muslim women feeling unsafe in such spaces because of the racism they encounter from the supposedly ‘liberal’ and ‘liberated’ white majority. As Fenster (2005, p.218) has noted, discussions on everyday belonging and use of spaces must take into account the way gendered exclusions factor into women’s lives, and how access to spaces is affected by ‘issues of fear and safety’. As Delaney (2002, p.7) notes, space socially reproduces hierarchies of knowledge and power, including some whilst excluding others, which in turn ‘conditions the experiences’ of BSA Muslim women as they move through these spaces:
‘In Oldham, like even now, like sometimes if I’m going out especially with the little one in the pram, if we’re in Primark or whatever, we’re waiting for the lift, you’ll see like some white, young mums with their kids in tow, I hate to be stereotypical, but they just really look down at us. It’s that impression they give, like as if to say, we’ve got more rights here than you, so I just wander round until the lifts clear or whatever, or if the space is empty, so I’ll think yeah, now we can go, but there’s times where I’ve actually given way to people’ (Farah)

As the words from Farah illustrate, boundaries can be enacted through social interactions, and the BSA Muslim woman in this research often show an astute knowledge of and reflect upon the social hierarchies which shape spatial dynamics in public spaces. Given that public spaces are where social interactions and spatial dynamics are reflected through understandings of collective social norms and values, such spaces can become spaces of ambivalences and exclusion. The spaces through which BSA Muslim women must navigate are woven with complex intersections of race, ethnicity and religion, and knowing when to avoid, or how to behave within these spaces becomes a reflexive part of BSA Muslim women’s lives. Additionally, given dominant discourses of BSA Muslim women as oppressed and isolated at home by familial pressures and ‘misogynist attitudes’, as this research illustrates, it is in fact the wider social polity that adversely affects which spaces BSA Muslim women feel safe in, able to access and belong to. Furthermore, it is their intersectional identities which further marginalises BSA Muslim women in public spaces, as public spaces of parks, supermarkets and town centres are increasingly spaces of exclusion, social ordering, unequal social relations and securitisation (Mitchell, 2003; Iveson, 2007) thus interactions within these spaces can transform them into ‘territorialised, exclusionary spaces’ (Neal, et al.2017, p.58)
6.5 BSA Muslim women’s hypervisible bodies in non-white spaces

6.5.1 The notion of a canopy

When theorising a neutral setting, a particular space under a ‘protective umbrella’ Anderson (2004, p.21) describes this a ‘cosmopolitan canopy’; this heterogeneous area is where a mixture of groups can come together under mutual conviviality, where diverse groups can relax and let down their guard. Here I attempt to transpose particular aspects of the ‘canopy’ to explore how the women in this study experienced their ‘community’ spaces, spaces which ostensibly should be one of mutual conviviality. Though I drop the notion of cosmopolitan from Anderson's original formulation, I nonetheless utilise the notion of canopies as particular spaces which protect minority groups from negative attention and reaction, where ‘people go about their business, at times self-consciously on good or “downtown” behaviour, working to “be nice” or at least civil to the next person they encounter’ (p.21). Under these canopies, Anderson contends that people exact a form of social control in expressing civility, working to ‘dance around one another’ and ‘avoiding potential conflicts and collision’. It is these dimensions of the canopy that I transpose here in order to see how they can be used to describe community spaces in Oldham. The canopy I refer to is set in spaces populated largely by a largely homogenous—rather than heterogenous group—namely British Pakistani and Bangladeshi people. I use the concept of the canopy to describe connections, feelings and emotions towards a community.

Anderson (2004, p.105) contends that the canopy allows individuals to partake in and interact with situations and people who may be of a different socio-economic or ethnic
background, and where common civility is encouraged and practised. However, within these spaces there is also the nature of performance, (Goffman, 1959) as discussed in chapter 5, given that the canopy is a ‘front stage’ where individuals are required to perform and behave within ascribed norms. Though people may ‘relax’ and be solicitous, nonetheless, the canopy becomes a space where ‘people watching’ occurs, and a type of urban tourism unfolds when people enter the canopy specifically, in order to experience ‘urban pilgrimage’, and thus performances are adapted to match expectations. As such, individuals, those who visit the canopy expecting a performance and those who perform to expectations, enter into a social bargain, there is an expectation of and reciprocity of civility. So, in effect, in order to gain acceptance within this space, some individuals must perform ‘civility’, whilst others perform ‘to order’ putting who they are ‘on public display’ (p.22), because under this social bargain performances are ascribed and civility expected given the nature of the cosmopolitan canopy. In order for the canopy to remain civil, individuals must adhere to these proscribed roles. When individuals step outside of these, or do not adhere to the implicit agreement of civility, tensions arise. Therefore, though the cosmopolitan canopy maybe considered an area of relative ease and conviviality, in theory the canopy is not entirely without complications, as there is still the need to present a public self.

The following sections analyse the nature of this unspoken agreement, under a canopy which is not heterogenous. What happens to the nature of performance within these spaces? It may be surmised that under a homogenous canopy the need to ‘perform’ (Goffman, 1959) does not carry much importance; however, given that Goffman asserts we are always performing, it may be the case that under these canopies the setting is so familiar and comfortable that the performance seems almost natural. The need to present a public self here is driven by a complex set of intersectional influences which vary in contrast
to cosmopolitan canopies. A cosmopolitan canopy is a ‘neutral social setting’ (Anderson, 2012, p.275), where common civility and intimacy of the space makes people feel connected, a space not exclusively for one particular group. In my analysis of the canopy the emphasis is on the notion of canopy as a protective space, and the characteristics and interactions prevalent in a space inhabited by similar ethnic and social groups.

Oldham has repeatedly been described as an isolated, segregated town with groups living ‘parallel lives’. What is not often reflected in the public concern over such segregation is the sense of security that ethnic minorities can gain from spaces where their own ethnic group represents the majority. As work from Bècares et al. (2012) and Dustmann et al. (2011) shows, minority groups living in ethnically concentrated areas are less likely to suffer racial harassment (leading to lower levels of poor mental health) and display higher levels of social cohesion than their ethnic minority counterparts in less ethnically concentrated areas. Furthermore, such urban spaces with large ethnic minority groups, although they might be socially deprived, nonetheless have value for providing solidarity, a sense of wellbeing and ‘ethnic identity formation’ (Reynolds, 2013, p.484). However, in the ever-increasing pursuit of cultural homogeneity and the mythical sameness seemingly only obtained through an emphasis on ‘British values’, the ethnic enclave or ‘Muslim ghetto’ (Phillips, 2005) becomes a threat to national cohesiveness in ways that white spaces can never be.

The BSA women who took part in this study often described areas within Oldham where they felt ‘at ease’ or able to relax in ways which are not possible when moving through spaces which could be considered ‘white spaces. For example, in the comment below,
Noreen considered a ‘balance’ was necessary to the area that she lived in. This balance was where a mix of individuals could live together, something she related to as ‘integration’:

‘So, in terms of living in the community, because I’m quite outgoing I don’t have an issue with people, no matter what race they are, so I feel comfortable in that sense, at the same time I do like the balance, I’d feel uncomfortable if it was an all white area, and if it was an all Asian area too, so I like the balance, cause it’s about integration isn’t it, we live in this country so we have to integrate.’

The spaces that acted as ‘canopies’ for BSA women in Oldham, which has areas of dense Asian populations, are in fact relatively homogenous, and residents there share similar culture, ethnicity and language. For some women, such as Zaira, this homogeneity, can be a sense of familiarity and comfort, contributing to a sense of ‘home’:

I think my area is quite nice...I do like it...I don’t know, like when we go away to my aunty’s, she lives near Birmingham, I feel a bit homesick, I want to come home, I mean I like it there, it’s a break for me but after a few days I’m done...you’re more comfortable around your own zone, I like to come back, when I get back to Oldham it’s like shukur (thank God), I’ve come home, I’m more comfortable, even when we go to Birmingham or Peterborough I just love coming back to my own town, I think it’s just like that with everyone. I feel at home....

Both Zaira and Noreen mention a sense of ease or comfort in terms of community and living in Oldham. For Zaira there is a sense of longing and a visceral connection to the town that extends to homesickness when she is away too long. Essentially it is the ease and familiarity which for these women act to shape Oldham as a canopy of connections and safety.

Even in the homogenous canopy there are ‘performances’ as further sections of this chapter will illustrate. Yet, as Anderson notes, these performances do not carry the same implications or have the same consequences for ethnic minorities as performing in a white space might involve (2015). However, as my analysis below shows, the canopy, even one
that is homogenous and considered a protective space, for BSA Muslim women, the performances do not have just racial and ethnic dimensions (as in the white space) but also have a strong gendered element.

6.5.2 Gendered belonging

Because of the intersectional analysis within this research, gender is an important element to the consideration of community and the extent to which gender affects feelings of community space as a canopy. It is necessary to remain aware of the ambivalence associated with the term community. An intersectional analysis provides us with the analytical tools to understand community through a lens which takes into account gendered, cultural, generational and social implications to belonging. Despite community being as Alleyne (2002, p.608) describes it ‘so fundamental a concept’, that it seems almost self-explanatory, nonetheless the term ‘community’—especially when used, as is common, with ethnic minority groups, can be problematic. In British public debate, the term community has come to mean different things, depending on which community is being discussed. In current dominant discourses on national identity and belonging, ‘community’ is differentiated. Communities comprised of the white majority, that is, populated with white bodies and spaces are considered representative of the white English idyll, deemed the ‘norm’ and quintessentially English. These are often contrasted with what are deemed problematic ethnic enclaves, rife with poverty and extremism, home to a foreign element against which the national idyll must be protected (Hall, 1996). This exclusion, for those groups who are othered by the majority, can also be a source of solidarity; however, it should not be taken for granted that ethnic minority groups necessarily feel most secure
amongst those with a similar ethnic or cultural identity. As Alleyene (2002) points out, when thinking of community it is necessary to be reflexive and to remain attuned to the many nuanced, complex and ambivalent connections any group may have to the notion. It is crucial also to remain aware that boundaries are drawn within communities, and in analysis of the BSA Muslim community in Oldham these internal boundaries are drawn along lines of ethnicity, caste and particularly relevant to this research, gender.

The ambivalence of belonging to a community was certainly a recurring theme for the women who took part in this research. Feelings of living in Oldham encompassed ideas of belonging and safety, family and shared history, the connections BSA Muslim women felt to this space were profound and deeply felt, as illustrated by the comments from participants:

I’ve always lived in Oldham, born and bred, I don’t know the ward I was on but yeah from Oldham definitely (laughs). When it comes to Oldham, Alhamdulillah a lot of people know me and it’s a good feeling to have where you know a lot of people and you have support and love from people, whenever there’s a wedding or funerals we’re all there for each other, in happiness and sad times.’ (Aliyah)

I think I came back to Oldham because of family, I lived in Bristol for two years, I did enjoy myself there, but there’s no place like home. I think my roots are here, family keeps me here, they’re part of my support network, I place high value on that. You never know tomorrow I might meet a multi-millionaire and jet set around the world (laughs), but I’ll always come back, it’s home, even though it’s quite dark and grey, there’s no place like home. Family, friends, walking round places I’ve lived, there’s a strong emotional, sentimental connection. (Noreen)

There are however power dynamics at play also within communities, and the questions of who comes to be included, and how, as well as the processes by which those included can become excluded are all intricacies worth interrogating (Vukov, 2003). Oldham has established Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups residing across different wards of Oldham,
predominantly in the areas of Glodwick, Werneth, Coppice, Westwood and Coldhurst. Each area is in turn served by a variety of mosques, halal food stores, fabric shops and beauty salons. The notion of community and belonging in each of these spaces encourages differing interpretations and connections relating to familial connections, migratory history, language, shared relations or ethnic kinship. Women in this research spoke of differing experiences across spaces of Oldham, which was attributed to experience of childhood memories or experiences of exclusion. For example, Nazma shares her knowledge and perceptions of different areas, an understanding that she attributes to being taught as a child:

‘...when we were younger in Coppice, we used to leave our doors open, and we could do anything, but we were always told we couldn’t go into the Werneth area because the pathan are there, and you can’t go to Glodwick cause it’s full of drug dealers! (laughs) And we used to be safe in Coppice because it was quite posh...’ (Nazma)

As Ahmed and Fortier (2003, p.252) have noted, the question of community opens up further lines of inquiry such as the issues of whose community, where and within which context, and importantly, ‘what it is that community might mean for those who are already recognized as “others”.’ The wards of Oldham are divided along ethnic and regional lines, though all have a significant proportion of BSA Muslims of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, nevertheless each ward has significant differences, adding to the complexity making up each area. Culture, ethnic and differences are part of the intersectional complexity which feature in the experiences and BSA Muslim women’s understanding of the wards. This extends to being made to feel out of place, as Farah, a Punjabi woman who had moved to Oldham after marriage felt living in a predominantly Pathan area:
‘It’s Werneth area…but, we’ve had a lot of trouble, I’ve had my kitchen windows smashed through…it’s mainly Pathans and they do not tolerate any other Asian, I’m Punjabi, so they do not tolerate anyone else, massively.’

As Farah’s comment shows demarcation along lines of ethnic or regional differences is a feature of discrimination and isolation within Oldham’s seemingly homogenous community.

The maintenance of a community requires emotional labour, to invest in a community, by residing there and maintaining social relations, individuals commit to this emotional labour. The nature and extent of an individual’s commitment to community can determine the extent to which they are included/excluded. As this study shows, the emotional labour can come at a cost, because, as Ahmed and Fortier (2003, p.257) note, ‘community is not always a desirable project for all’. For example, community can also be about tradition, family ties and an attempt at ‘intimations of past lives’ which as the examples from the women in this study show, is not what all second and third generation young women wish to pursue, thus highlighting a strained generational gap between older and younger BSA Muslim women living in Oldham.

For Mina having extensive connections and family within the community ensures greater acceptance, and can lead to the exclusion of those considered outside this biradri:

I think the community attitude towards women...well if you’re related to a lot of them you’ll get a lot more respect than if you’re not, having lots of relations, and those kinship. The more ties you have, it’s like that birdari stuff, everyone knows each other, and it shouldn’t be like that, you should treat everyone the same. I’ve seen it, like going to events or courses in the community you’ll see them huddled together, all cliquey, and they’ll leave out people who are not related, which is unfair. (Mina)
Such differing connections remind us that ‘community’ is rarely common ground and includes necessary interrogations of the nature of exclusion, as in constructing ‘community’ boundaries are drawn, which necessarily involves the process of exclusion (Ahmed and Fortier, 2003). What this then means for BSA Muslim women, as this study shows, is a connection to community that can be contradictory, difficult and fraught with tension. In the quote below Rana talked about feeling disconnected from Oldham, despite sharing a language and race with the community she lives in:

For me Oldham has gone downhill, I would move out if I could, yes I’m connected to it and was born here, but when I look around at our community, I can see some good things, but I feel disconnected from the people, when you live in an area, and you feel isolated in an area full of people that speak your language, and are basically the same race as you, and you still feel disconnected then you just feel lonely all the time.

The women who took part in this study indicated that for BSA Muslim women living in Oldham the ability to move through such community spaces is of vital importance. There is a level of familiarity, both with the surroundings, and the people inhabiting these spaces. In many ways, these spaces which may be religious or cultural, or sites for social gatherings, become, as Anderson (2004, p.15) described, a canopy, an area in which ‘people can feel comfortable enough to relax their guard and go about their business more casually.’ In the account below, Aneela talks about her participation in mawlids, which are religious gatherings which involve talks, singing discussions and sharing food. For Aneela this space is one where she indulges her creativity, feels comfortable and can take a rest from the stressful aspects of her life. As a young, single woman living in Oldham and studying in Manchester, Aneela discussed taking part in mawlids as spiritual, and a space that can be shared with other women. Given Muslim women’s marginality in public spaces, having a
space within which it is possible to feel a kinship is important and a central aspect of belonging:

‘I go to Mawlids, I’ve got practising and non-practising friends, I’ve got quite a few friends who come to that, we have something in common, it’s something quite spiritual, through it I feel like I’ve grown so much and met so many sisters. The mawlids, like even when there’s small gatherings it’s really nice, I could fit my musical side in, I felt comfortable with my religion and my music coming together, it started off in homes, now it’s bigger, and once a week it’s held in a centre. It’s been nice, I feel like I can have fun with it, and enjoy and explore my creative side within the boundaries of my religion. Mawlids are my outlet for that, it’s such an important part of my life, when study is stressful I’ll go to a gathering, and it’s the sisterhood part of it that keeps me sane.’ (Aneela)

Mawlid is celebrated in gendered groups with separation between men and women, oftentimes taking place in women’s homes, or in centres such as the one Aneela describes. Below she shared a photograph of the daff, a type of drum, which she plays at mawlids.

Fig 6.3 Image of musical instruments taken by Aneela
Similarly, Mina also referred to a religious space, specifically classes at a local mosque where she could connect with other women and have a separate space that was not part of her work or home environments. Though the spaces are considered religious, or having a religious context, both women emphasised the connection with other women, and the solidarity that is established in these spaces:

‘I’ve been going to these classes in mosque, learning about Islam...I love that...it’s great, I can connect with so many other women when I’m there, it’s like once a week and it really helps you know, being in that place away from work and home...!’ (laughs)’ (Mina)

However, it is not necessarily simply religious spaces where BSA Muslim women in Oldham feel able to connect or feel at ease. For 25-year-old Bushra, who works in a beauty salon, the ability to provide such a space is important as it allows women to participate and enjoy a space which is catered for them:

‘We get a wide range of women, from all ends of the spectrum, it’s just, you learn how to speak to people, learn all about different types of people, and I like the job for that reason. It shows you...like women come here, it’s a salon, it’s supposed to be a safe place, they can relax, get pampered so they share things about their life, and it shows you how different people’s lives are...’

Bushra considered the salon, an all-female environment, a safe place. The salon carries a sign at the entrance which requires men to ring the doorbell, at which point they will be addressed through the intercom. For women, there is no such requirement, and they are encouraged to simply enter. Nonetheless, this is not to say that men respect this requirement as Bushra herself notes:

There’s a sign on the door that says men have to ring a doorbell, we get so many men just barging in, we’ve noticed in this field of work the men are quite...intrusive...just knocking on the door, they’ll knock and they’ll want to look inside, and
sometimes we have women sat here who’ve not got their scarves on, or tops on, or they’re getting changed, so it’s not…it’s really not a nice thing that they can’t respect the space…and you get some idiots who will try and get in…’

The spaces described by Aneela, Mina and Bushra, namely spaces which are spiritual/religious in context or beauty salons, are highly gendered. In these spaces, the women talk about connecting with other women, at times in the context of the physical exclusion of men. These are described as safe spaces, where women are protected from the gaze of others. Furthermore, Bhimji (2009) notes that spaces in local mosques are discursive spaces which are about more than religious rituals. They are also spaces where Muslim women can feel empowered:

‘in traversing these religious spheres, women transform them from male dominated sites to spaces wherein feminine, political and cosmopolitan identities are expressed’

(Bhimji, 2009, p.365)

The gendered and patriarchal elements of community are also part of everyday living for BSA Muslim women in Oldham and factor into their use of space and their connection to the community. For example, during a walk along interview with Rana as we walked to her home from the town centre, Rana explained she took a circuitous route in order to avoid a confrontation with her ex-husband. Recently divorced against her family’s wishes, Rana felt isolated by the community’s reaction to her divorce. In turn, this meant she avoided taking the most direct route home, carefully negotiating her use of the community spaces she has known all her life.

‘The areas and spaces I can go into I have to be careful that I don’t run into him, I’ve been living in this area all my life, and now the amount of times I’ve seen him in town, and he’s been wanting to approach me is ridiculous, even sometimes I’m a bit
sceptical of going home a different way, because he lives just down there...I go through back alleys to avoid seeing him and I shouldn’t have to do that where I’ve lived all my life.’

Rana’s careful negotiation of the spaces she walks through are an example of the fraught nature of everyday living, often strained by everyday relationships and interactions. The BSA community in Oldham is one that has been forged over a number of years. Many of the second and third generation BSA Muslim women living in Oldham have lived there all their lives, with parents and grandparents settled as early migrants. The ‘close-knit’ BSA community has a shared history of migration, values, and cultural roots; though this can lead to cohesiveness it can also lead to feelings of control, restriction and surveillance. For Rana this translated into very public judgements being made on her decision to seek divorce:

‘I remember going to fabrics shop, and this is the mentality of our women, I went there and you knew they could tell I wasn’t with my husband, they turned around...and were basically giving me advice...they were saying kids nowadays have it so easy, our parents wherever they sat us down we stayed there...whatever husband they gave us, black, white, short, fat, thin, round whatever he was we accepted it without questioning it, girls now have it easy they can leave their husbands and what...they were saying that to me…’

For Rana this intrusion into her personal life is keenly felt. In refusing the cultural and gendered norms that are discussed in the fabric shop Naima has seemingly also rejected the normative femininity associated with family and marriage. As such her presence in that space is worth reflecting upon:

‘I’ve noticed this, in our culture, in this community you feel more stifled than if you went and lived in an area with nothing but white people. They are more understanding, they don’t judge you based on whether you’re a divorcee or a widow, but here they judge you harshly, and because I left him they can judge me even more harshly.’
Rana showed particular understandings of the cultural norms she is seen to be challenging, and as such considers the community, and in particular other Muslim women of that community, to make judgements because of the choices she has made. This knowledge is in effect another aspect of Muslim women’s double consciousness, in which their hypervisibility is again related to their otherness, which is generational and gendered. This otherness is also multi-sited, in seemingly homogenous spaces, sharing similar race and ethnicity, BSA Muslim women experience otherness which relates to their gender and marital status. As illustrated by Rana’s example above, Mohammad (2013, p.1810) notes, marriage is required and indeed seen as the preservation of izzat (honour). Therefore, the BSA Muslim woman who, as in Rana’s case, fails to maintain this izzat is then ‘policed and regulated at different scales’. Furthermore, for BSA Muslim women living in such close communities, their ‘location within a complex web of relations’ is always precarious. Monitoring or judgments on their behaviour extends out from the family to community, and as such can limit their spaces both socially and spatially (Mohammad, 2013). This precariousness was also commented on by Malia, as a divorced woman and single parent, she felt policed on a scale that reflected on her status as a divorcée and therefore falling outside the gendered norms of marriage and family:

‘You’ve got to be careful, that’s the negative side of this community, everyone knows everyone else and all their business, they know what time you’re coming in, when you’re going out, what your kids are doing...’(Malia)

In such a close, tight-knit community some BSA Muslim women are required to maintain rigid gendered, cultural and religious norms which can vary from space to space. My data show that this then causes women to vary their behaviour as they negotiate these spaces. In the following account, 33-year-old Rabia describes the way she changes her behaviour.
Living outside what she called the ‘traditional, all Pakistani’ area, Rabia travels into Glodwick to visit her mother. Here, she describes the changes she makes to accommodate expected behaviour for BSA Muslim women:

‘It’s like in Glodwick, everyone knows my parents, my pupo (aunt) lives there, my mamu (uncle) lives there, everyone lives there, it’s like you know when you go you’ve got to turn your music down, have your dupatta (scarf) on properly, you’re driving properly and not looking around…’

Ensuring that her ‘scarf is on properly’, and her music is turned down Rabia is keenly aware of the ‘monitoring gaze’; importantly, this gaze is familial in that the judgement of Rabia’s behaviour in public spaces reflects not only on her but also on her family. She is required to assess and then change her behaviour in accordance with what is a learned and required morality. Here, the body becomes an expression of an acceptable self, and as Mahmood (2005) has noted, the fixing of the scarf, or hijab becomes a way to exert a moral disposition. Here the hypervisibility of the veil functions in the community as not only a restrictive basis for morally acceptable behaviour, but the visible embodiment of it. Just as the veil has come to be fixed as an example of ‘extremism and gender subordination’ in public discourse, in BSA communities such as those in Oldham the veil positions women in a different way, as the embodiment of morality and piety. As such, BSA Muslim women in Oldham, both those who veil and those who do not are subject to very narrow, proscriptive understandings relating to dress, and are routinely positioned according to how/if they veil, and, more specifically, their behaviour is accordingly measured by this standard. In short, the veil has become the measure of ‘Muslimness’: while in white spaces the veil is used to measure the degree to which BSA Muslim women are ‘other’, in BSA spaces the same veil translates into degrees of piety. In fact, the concept of ‘covering’ has become so conjoined
with the notion of the ‘good Muslim’ that many of the women who took part in this study
and who did not veil felt the need to explain this to me. In one of my interviews Raheela was
anxious to explain that she was ‘not particularly religious’ and that she might not fit into the
research as a result:

‘Can I just ask, I know how you put you want to talk to different types of women, 
does that include religious and non-religious?’

The good/bad Muslim trope has traction in both wider public settings and homogenous
communities such as Oldham. As Jackson (2017, p.32) notes, following the 2001 race riots,
community cohesion discourses served to produce and enforce the good/bad Muslim trope.
The ‘good Muslims’ ‘could be integrated and embraced, while “bad Muslims” represented
everything the nation was not’. Following events such as the race riots, 9/11 and 7/7
bombings in London, the Muslims in Oldham were further categorised as ‘bad un-
integratable’ Muslims ‘whose tendency towards self-segregation threatened British values
and social cohesion’. As such, bad Muslims were taught to be good through initiatives which
discouraged ‘speaking native languages at home, tightened immigration controls to make
trans-national marriages and the importation of foreign cultures more difficult, and
compulsory citizenship courses for established migrants.’ Subsequently, within popular
discourse the ‘good Muslim’ is one that engages in and is integrated within contemporary
society, embracing ‘modern’ ideas and is thus distinguished from the ‘bad Muslim’ who is a
potential extremist. Through such discourses BSA Muslim communities within such places as
Oldham are excluded whilst simultaneously reprimanded ‘for failing to integrate into a
national and local culture’ which regards them as inherently ‘other’ (Kassimeris and Jackson,
2012, p.179).
Within communities such as Oldham the ‘good Muslim’ trope has become similarly polarising, a good Muslim woman is one who guards her modesty, ironically most ostentatiously displayed by the extent to which she veils. Therefore, in Shabnam’s view religious or non-religiosity is ascertained by the practise of veiling. In the comment below, Nagina explained she understood what ‘hijab was for’ but ultimately wearing it would mean she would have to pay attention to every aspect of her behaviour. Thus religious obligation is ascribed with a prescription of ‘perfect behaviour’. It could be surmised that for Nagina the veil is also a set of prescribed behaviours which are determined by the premise of not ‘doing anything wrong’:

‘I know I should wear it...like I know the reasons behind it...but like...you can’t do anything wrong if you wear it then, do you know what I mean? You have to be perfect, you can’t then just decide to take it off...’

Similarly, Malia asserted that she was more spiritual without wearing the hijab and that the veil was an inscriptive ‘surface’ which did not reflect her understanding of faith:

‘I think I’m more spiritual without it, you know I used to be part of a women’s Islamic circle, I used to wear the whole jilbab like thing...but you know, I realised, a lot of it was on the surface, I went through some stuff...now...I have a lot more appreciation for my faith now, it means a lot more to me even though I don’t cover...’

From the quotes above it could be surmised that for women such as Malia, veiling is not an expression of self, but rather a self that is required by and for others, as she contends that her religiosity is not tied to a visible marker of faith, such as the veil. Maya further contends
that adjusting her clothes and behaviour are what is required of her in this community space, especially given that women who veil are perceived as pious:

‘It’s just the way our community thinks, oh she wears a scarf, oh she’s really shareef [pious], but no it’s not true…’

As Maya noted, BSA Muslim women must employ a habitus which is culturally legitimate, which in turn relies on hegemonic understandings of gendered forms and understandings of piety. Employing such a ‘gendered habitus of piety’ ensures that BSA Muslim are then judged according to their level of piety, which is attributed to the wearing hijab (Rinaldo, 2008). Interpretations of the ‘good’ Muslim woman, interpretations which are crucially not theirs, place an obligation on Muslim women to veil in community spaces of Oldham. If the veil is the indicator of a ‘good’ Muslim woman, ‘conversely, not veiling seems to indicate being a bad Muslim woman’, and further, ‘familial expectations and peer and environmental pressures seemingly reinforce this dichotomous religious interpretation’ (Cole and Ahamdi, 2013, p.54). The BSA Muslim women in the present study expressed a sense of obligation to behave in accordance to the space they enter. For example, when visiting her mother and aware of other extended family members living in the area, Rabia adopts what she feels what will be expected behaviour and dress. In certain spaces within Oldham, particularly areas that the women in this research identified as ‘predominantly Asian’, by virtue of their clothing women are the most noticeable and most noticed bodies in their community (Rinaldo, 2008). Their hypervisibility is no less simply because they are in a community with a shared ethnicity, or socio-cultural tradition. In fact, as the women reflect, their behaviour is yet more scrutinised and vilified in this space than it is in white spaces, albeit in different terms, if it is seen to fall outside of the proscribed norm. This feeling of surveillance and policing was noted by Raheela:
‘They’re watching you all the time, that’s how I feel, like I’m being watched more from my own community than non-Muslims, that they’re judging me, like they’re trying to figure you out, when it’s no one’s business.’ (Raheela)

The hypervisibility of the veil and the veiled body dictates the way we understand, see and contemplate Muslims and Islam in the West. As such, ‘visible features such as dress’ define what it means to be Muslim, and often, ‘as a result, other ways of being Muslim, and of being a religious Muslim, are neglected’ (Jeldtoft, 2014, p.50). Thus, BSA Muslim women find themselves in an unenviable position: through Islamophobic discourses they are cast as unable to fit in Western society and wider public spaces, yet in their own communities their gendered and cultural identities means they are still subjected to higher levels of scrutiny than men are. As Winchester (2008, p.1773) explains, ‘Hijab, in other words, is not just a symbol of an already sexually modest person; it is a central practice through which such a personality is cultivated’. This ‘moral modesty’ is learned, it becomes an ingrained part of everyday life, and forms part of the habitus of BSA Muslim women. The hijab becomes the way Muslim women are seen to embody their gender, and in turn, the morally acceptable behaviours concomitant with the ‘good Muslim woman’. Such behaviours extend to everyday acts of walking, as noted by Farah below, who considers her behaviour as sometimes falling outside of the expectations others hold for niqab wearing women:

‘There’s a perception of what purdah women do or don’t do, like on the way back from work when I’m pushing the pram down a slope, and I run and laugh with him and I see people walking past looking, like what on earth is she doing, and I’m like I don’t care, I’m having fun.’ (Farah)

With regards to access of spaces in the community there is a process of negotiation as in some spaces, patriarchal and hyper masculine expressions mean that some BSA Muslim women avoid certain spaces in which they feel uncomfortable. In the extract below Nagina
talked about avoiding her local Asian food stores. As a space she frequented as a child, this has now been ‘invaded’ and means her body is now subject to what she describes as ‘those looks and that judgement.’

‘I think there are some spaces in Oldham, and Glodwick that I don’t like, these stores…I don’t like going into those stores cause I feel threatened by it. I think it’s because of all these Asian men, and people they sort of invade your space, I think they’re in your face, and this is my perception, you know I feel like they invade your space. I feel like that’s a space they’ve taken away from me, like I can’t go to those stores anymore because of those looks and that judgment.’ (Nagina)

The result of this is a restriction of spaces, BSA Muslim women will avoid those areas where they feel subjected to intense monitoring and the male gaze. Farah described a similar negotiation of spaces:

‘I just didn’t feel comfortable, even after that, if I can avoid Glodwick I will, I don’t like it, even in Manchester...like Levenshulme or Longsight which are predominantly Asian areas I used to hate going there, or going into Asian shops with my mum and dad, cause it was full of Asians, full of Pakis and that cultural thing. When my ex used to accuse me of being too Westernised I used to think yes I am, because I don’t like these kind of areas... . It’s very gendered, like men ruling....looking at women that way... The male gaze and control with that is still the case in some areas here...’ (Farah)

Intersectional analysis shows that there is a greater complexity to communities, clearly evident when considering the ways BSA Muslim women access, negotiate and manage public spaces within community spaces. Though community spaces may provide some respite from racism, and act as a canopy for BSA Muslim women, nevertheless the intersection if religion and gender show that even with seemingly ‘safe’ community spaces BSA Muslim women must negotiate their sense of self and belonging.
6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has utilised the concepts of ‘white spaces’ (Anderson, 2011), as a key concept to understand the ways in which BSA Muslim women become excluded from different spaces in Oldham. Crucially the concept of white space was extended to consider a historical implication to the nature of white spaces. The discussion of ‘white spaces’ (Anderson, 2015) was extended to consider how white space is not only a physical, tangible space but in fact is also encompasses a form of racialised nostalgia. Towns such as Oldham have a historical place in the national imagination, which is then crucially configured as shaping with who is seen to belong to that space.

This chapter further explored what it means to be hypervisible in these ‘white spaces’ and how the politics of recognition affect the everyday lives of ethnic minority people, as well as how hypervisibility can lend itself to experiences of invisibility. I argued that BSA Muslim women’s everyday experiences were contextualised by a duality of hypervisibility and invisibility. Furthermore, ‘invisibility’ is also used as a form of punitive discrimination, and invisibility is not just a lack of privilege experienced by Muslim women but is actively used against them in ways which renders them ‘non-persons’ (Goffman, 1959). Importantly, this invisibility is connected with the hypervisible, because it is through the latter that Muslim women are not seen. Al Saji (2010, p.886) notes that this is the ‘paradoxical’ position Muslim women face, as veiled Muslim women are ‘not merely invisible to the Western gaze, but are made invisible as subjects.’ It is precisely because of the dominant discourses of Islam and by extension, the hypervisibility of Muslim women, that Muslim women are only visible as subjects or interlocutors of an oppressive, backward religion.
The use of Du Bois’s (1965) concept of double consciousness highlights not only the need to consider individual encounters, but also the importance of linking this micro, lived experience in the everyday world, and the racialisation which takes place there, with the macro structures of a racialised world in which BSA Muslim women are perceived in overdetermined ways (Itzigsohn and Brown, 2015). Doing so allows us to understand how everyday encounters with formal institutions come to mirror those in public spaces, and how discourses informing interactions in these spaces are driven by stereotypical and homogenous understandings of BSA Muslim women. Within encounters in public spaces BSA Muslim women show a reflective understanding of dominant discourses which shape understandings of them, and the twoness they reflexively engage with engenders a conflicting sense of self as they often have to consciously perform (Goffman, 1959) in order to pass through these spaces successfully as an ‘integrated citizen’. The influence of dominant discourses was made visible in interactions in which white people clearly operated under assumptions of BSA Muslim women’s ‘submissive, oppressed’ nature. Interactions were also driven by discourses which posited BSA Muslim women as the ‘visible other’ who posed a threat, a source of anxiety, or in some other way antithetical to the ideal British citizen. As such, their embodied differences provided a figure upon which to enact acts of violence, racial abuse or incivility.

Space is pivotal to this understanding. Whether formal and regulated or more informal spaces, the body becomes re/produced in different ways depending on the type of space it enters. Exploring these spaces, it becomes clear that BSA Muslim women’s intersectional identities, their bodies, clothes, ethnicity and visibility place them at odds with the spaces they pass through and interact with. In community spaces within Oldham, the BSA Muslim woman becomes the subject of discourses which frame her morality and determine correct
behaviour. I used Anderson’s (2004) notion of a canopy, adapted from the notion of cosmopolitan canopy, to further analyse these women’s experiences of their ‘own’ community spaces. Particular elements of the canopy, namely as a space which serves as protective space for ethnic minority groups, were visible in Oldham. Through an intersectional analysis however, the canopy, interrogated from a generational, gendered and religious perspective, becomes layered with further complexity. Gender and cultural obligations mean that even under this homogenous canopy and the supposed ‘safety’ of ‘community spaces’, BSA Muslim women can experience these as less than comfortable because of the need to perform (Goffman, 1956) as ‘good Muslim women’.
Chapter 7- Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In this thesis I have sought to engage with concepts of intersectionality, spaces and the everyday in order to challenge the stereotypical and dominant discourses which often frame understandings of BSA Muslim women. This research aimed to explore what it means to be a British Muslim woman in contemporary Britain. More particularly the study was located in Oldham so as to understand how experiences in local places can reflect official narratives and broader concerns often articulated through policy and public discussion. Oldham was chosen because of its sizeable Pakistani and Bangladeshi population leading to popular media depicting the town once known as ‘King Cotton’ as a Muslim ‘ghetto’. Its recent history has also included race riots, and, as discussed in Chapter 3, Oldham is further characterised by socio-economic deprivation. All of the above has led to the town having been the specific target of a number of policies related to multiculturalism, community cohesion and integration.

Pakistani and Bangladeshi women within communities such as Oldham are oft positioned as victims of cultural and religious practises (Nandl, 2018, Cantle, 2001, Ritchie, 2001, Casey, 2015). This study is interested in challenging hegemonic discourses on BSA Muslim women, often prevalent in public and policy discourse nationally, but also reflected in discussions around BSA Muslim women locally. This includes the themes of imperilled BSA Muslim women, which also featured in a number of policy reports, following the 2001 Oldham riots. Researching BSA Muslim women’s lives in Oldham from an intersectional approach brings into focus how these stereotypical discourses can be challenged. Through layering concepts
of the self, space and the everyday allows for the consideration of selves as multiple and emplaced. This in turn encourages a holistic understanding of BSA Muslim women’s lives through an exploration of the way in which identities and experiences shift according to the space or interaction within which they are experienced.

Exploring BSA Muslim women’s lives from their perspective is key to challenging common depictions of them as passive, isolated or oppressed. The narratives from the women who participated in this research showed their lives were rich tapestries of complex, rich and intricate stories. Indeed, as reflected upon in earlier chapters, some of the difficulty in writing this thesis was containing these narratives so that they appear coherent. Yet, everyday life is rarely straightforward, ordinary or routine (Neal and Murji, 2015). How best then to attempt to capture some of this complexity? For example, how to adequately account for the ways in which relationships, interactions, conversations, confrontations are experienced by individuals across spaces? And, how to account for how these interactions and experiences are affected by intersecting identities of race, gender, ethnicity, religion and so on? And further, what do these interactions tell us about the way social relations in the everyday are shaped by wider societal discourses? These featured as the starting points for my research, and indeed shaped the focus of this research, namely how do BSA Muslim women understand their own sense of self, and their sense of being seen as ‘other’ across different sites in everyday spaces and interactions?

A study of everyday life entails not only paying attention to the micro, but also to the meso, and macro levels of individuals and contemporary society. This can be articulated as the way ‘big’ folds into, shapes and is constituted by the ‘small’. In other words, ‘the micro, the slight, the most mundane, and the banally ordinary practices, emotions, social relationships
and interactions also reflect convergences with and manifestations of wider societal factors, forces, structures and divisions’ (Neal and Murji, p.813, 2015). It is with these considerations that this research sought to engage, in order to explore how these wider social structures are reflected in the everyday lives of BSA Muslim women. More particularly, in this study considerations of the seemingly ordinary were used to shed light on the everyday of BSA Muslim women living in Oldham.

In the sections that follow I will summarise the key content of this study, including the theoretical concepts used, the methodological approach as well as outlining why the study was approached in this way.

7.2 Theoretical concepts

The intention of this thesis was to challenge the sweeping statements and overdetermined stereotypes of imperilled Muslim women, through foregrounding the wide range of women’s voices, their experiences, their everyday interactions and relationships to move beyond the ‘official’ and narrow frameworks under which understandings of BSA Muslim women labour. I wanted to explore BSA Muslim women’s sense of self, their understandings of being Muslim women and living in Oldham, their perceptions of being ‘othered’ in British society, and the way they challenged, negotiated and shaped these understandings.

Given that this research repeatedly foregrounded the notion that identities intersect and are shaped by each other, the concept of intersectionality was key. With the aim of challenging stereotypical notions of BSA Muslim women, and of more fully elucidating their experiences, the research added to the literature on intersectionality through the inclusion
of considerations of religion, and space, the self, space and place and the everyday. This thesis has argued that the inclusion of religion within intersectional analysis not only informs ways to understand BSA Muslim women’s everyday encounters of gendered Islamophobia, but also challenges wider social discriminations and the racialisation of religion which frames Muslim women as outside belonging. As the thesis has shown, affiliation to a religious identity, and in particular an affiliation that is visibly written on the skin or body can lead to anti-Muslim abuse (Littler and Feldman, 2015) both verbal and physical. Including religion and understanding discrimination or ‘othering’ based on religion, as is explored in this thesis, includes understanding how religion is enacted in the everyday through lived practices such as veiling. Furthermore, exploring how these practices situate BSA Muslim women as a problematic other furthers our sociological understanding discrimination of BSA Muslim women based on racialised and gendered differences.

However, this study also encouraged a more holistic exploration of Muslim women’s voices, with a view that moved beyond one focusing solely on a religion. Given that BSA Muslim women’s experiences are often framed through the lens of Islamophobia, an intersectional approach complicated this as it allowed for an analysis which considered a range of multiple identities of which religion was simply one. In this study the notion that religion intersects with other identities formed a key part of the analytical approach. Rather than simply adding religion to the multiple identities that people hold, Silvestri (2011) notes, this research asks in which spaces different aspects of identity become salient, and what these intersections tell us about how identities are negotiated and managed across different spaces. Though Islamophobia is of course a factor in the everyday lives of BSA Muslim women, affecting employment, experiences at work, in public spaces and the ways women
are discussed in public media, nevertheless this study contended that merely focusing on Islamophobia can also flatten identities, and contribute to a one-dimensional understanding of Muslim women (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood, 2005). Additionally, far from being a homogenous group, the participants in this research were from different backgrounds, ethnicities, social class, and age, therefore it would be naïve to assume that they would have shared a similar interpretation of ‘being Muslim’ or experienced religion in the same way. This thesis, through an analysis of different spaces, and the complex interwoven nature of moving between and across these spaces, attempted to move beyond the flattening of identities and see religion as just one aspect of BSA women’s lives, and also paid regard to way culture, ethnicity and

Furthermore, the study was able to shed light on how BSA Muslim women perform different identities depending on the type of situation and space within which they are experienced. Whereas previous studies may have focused on one or other of these spaces, this thesis argued that by looking across these spaces, it is possible to see how BSA Muslim women negotiate a sense of self, as well as how different spaces affect the way women see themselves and ways they are seen. Similarly, as identities are performed differently according to space, therefore the intersectional identity of a BSA Muslim woman is likely to encompass different meanings across these spaces. It was argued that layering the concept of space to intersectionality emphasised the fluidity and multidimensionality of identity, and analysing experiences across different spaces allowed for an understanding of these experiences as context-specific. A focus on spaces also showed how intersectional analysis can highlight wider social discriminations and daily lived experiences, as each space was shaped by ‘unwritten rules’ which governed access to, as well as the experiences and
interactions with others in that space. Consequently, depending on these unwritten rules, mundane, simple, everyday acts of shopping, taking public transport or even crossing the street become acts which are punctuated with a sense of othering for BSA Muslim women. More particularly, these unwritten rules and norms were shown to be influenced by dominant discourses which in turn affected the way BSA Muslim women interacted with and experienced these spaces. These discourses shifted according to the spaces within which they were observed, and had varying effects on the way participants challenged, negotiated or understood these unwritten rules. For example, discourses on the veil in public spaces can often dominate discussion, yet the veil is perceived differently according to either wider public, or community spaces. Whereas in white spaces the veil may be used as a measurement of BSA Muslim women’s otherness, within community spaces the veil may be translated into degrees of piety, of the ‘good Muslim’ trope.

As has been discussed, the aim of this study was to explore the concept of intersectional identities across different spaces. This research used the notion of intersectional selves as a key aspect, namely how people present different selves according to different space or social situations. Layering of different aspects of the self involves considering intersectional selves as multiple, emplaced and affected by social hierarchies. Different aspects of self included the relational self, which explores the ways in which self is understood by observing the judgement of others. A multidimensional self further considers the notion of individuals reflecting on an and employing an appropriate self which is suited to the space or social situations, thus engaging in multiple aspects of the self in their everyday life. Additionally, it was further contended that traditional sociology focusing on the concept of the self had inadequately accounted for race and ethnicity when considering the notions of
performative and relational self. A focus on issues of race and racism as affecting BSA Muslim women’s sense of self in the everyday was necessary in order to contextualise how an individual’s sense of place in the world is affected by social inequalities in everyday life.

### 7.3 Methods

Considering the layered and complex nature of the concepts of intersectionality, space, the self and the everyday necessitated a methodological approach with which to explore how these are experienced and managed across different spaces by BSA Muslim women. Key to this approach was to explore this marginalised group’s experiences but also to explore ways in which they become marginalised. This meant an analysis of not only wider social structures and institutions but also of interactions between individuals on the local, everyday level. The methodological approach to this research considered the practicalities of doing intersectional research that avoided the ‘additive’ approach to social discriminations and instead focused on lived experiences in everyday spaces to explore deeper understandings of BSA Muslim women’s lives. This study used a feminist methodological approach, in order to foreground women’s voices and experiences. Just as social groups are not homogenous, individuals within the same social group do not experience daily interactions in a homogenous way. Therefore, it was not enough to know that BSA Muslim women are ‘othered’ in contemporary British society; in order to explore how this othering affected the daily lives of BSA Muslim women across a variety of spaces, it was necessary to employ a variety of methods of data collection which could reflect the complexity of women’s individual experiences of living in Oldham. Given the multi-aspects of this research study and the multi-faceted nature of the everyday, it was argued that a number of methods must be used in order to build up a richer narrative of BSA Muslim
women’s lives. Facet methodology was used in order to illuminate these experiences, the research study was BSA Muslim women living in Oldham and this was contextualised as the overall enquiry. The different spaces of home, work and community became the research fields which utilised a variety of methods in differing combinations but altogether contributed to the overall enquiry (Mason, 2011). Methods of data collection included in-depth interviews, walk-along interviews as well as photographs and diaries. Each method was carefully chosen and worked to varying degrees of success as is discussed in Chapter 3.

The question of methods and approaches to analysis of empirical data is part of the challenge of intersectional research. As McCall (2005, p.1772) has noted, the complexity of methods and methodologies in intersectional research arise when the ‘subject of analysis expands to include multiple dimensions of social life and categories of analysis.’ The difficulty in this research thesis was researching complex, layered concepts of intersectionality, identity and the everyday across different spaces. In order to deal with this complexity this research adapted an inter-categorical and intra-categorical approach, which analysed not only how intersecting identities (race, gender, ethnicity) affect daily lives, but also how certain social identities become excluded or othered. Such an approach allowed for an exploration of social structures on macro and meso levels, for example how public policy and media discourses may impact on organisations such as work spaces. An inter-categorical approach and intra-categorical approach also allowed for micro level analysis of BSA Muslim women’s identities and interactions in everyday spaces (Winker and Degele, 2011).

This chapter also discussed researcher positionality. The question of power is a particularly relevant one as the aim of the research was to use the narratives of participants to
challenge stereotypical portrayals of BSA Muslim women. Although sharing similar, gender, ethnicity and cultural background to the participants, it is nonetheless vitally important to remain aware of who speaks for marginalised communities and which voices are heard. The issue of ‘insider/outsider’ aspect of researcher positionality was also discussed in Chapter 3. It was noted that though the research tried to recruit an equal number of Pakistani and Bengali BSA Muslim women, the participants were largely of a Pakistani ethnic minority. The difficulty of recruiting from the Bengali community illustrates the limitations of a seemingly ‘insider’ perspective. Though sharing a gender and religion, recruiting from the Bengali community was nonetheless difficult, pointing to regional and ethnic differences within Oldham. This chapter also discusses the issue of insider and outsider perspectives, and explores what advantages and disadvantages are afforded for researchers by such a position.

7.4 Everyday Spaces

This thesis explored multiple spaces, including the home, work and community spaces to add layers to the notion of intersectional identities, and to further explore aspects of BSA Muslim women’s everyday lives.

The first of the spaces discussed in this thesis was home. Given the ‘othering’ of BSA Muslim women in public spaces, it could be assumed that the home would be one space in which Muslim women would feel able to comfortably manage their identities. Within black feminist writing (hooks, 1991) home is perceived as a significant space to provide a site of safety, comfort and resistance for minority groups who are excluded and othered in wider,
public spaces. Yet, as the analysis showed, the home was for some participants, far from a particularly stable or comfortable space. The home was discussed as a site of nested influences, a porous space into which cultural, religious and gendered expectations of Muslim women filtered and affected relations between the women and others in the home. Rather than simply categorising Muslim women’s homes as spaces where they are oppressed or confined (Ritchie, 2001), this thesis showed that the home is an ambivalent space, one that offers safety and comfort, but also presents complicated negotiation of the self, or a self that is required by and for others. Further work would benefit from more in-depth exploration of the interconnected nature of the home, blurring distinctions between public and private and the influence of public and community expectations. Critically analysing the notion of home as a site of safety is necessary in order to acknowledge the different and unequal ways home can be experienced, and further writings will explore this in relation to BSA Muslim women. Interactions, relationships and unequal power relations can all contribute to a sense of discomfort at home, additionally the importance of connecting the home across ‘spatial scales’ (McDowell, 2008, p.19), to consider community, the local and global contexts within which the home is situated, as well as family interactions provides a rich avenue for exploration of BSA Muslim women’s reflections on home. As Samah (2008) points out, an individual’s understanding of and meanings attributed to home shift according to life stages, and therefore it is important to remain aware of space, location, time as well as intersectional identities when critiquing home.

The distinctions of public and private in relation to the home, is further blurred when considering BSA Muslim women’s use of home as a workplace. Establishing a successful home business was seen as illustrative not only of BSA Muslim women’s ability to adapt to
changing financial and employment needs, but also in managing multiple roles and responsibilities as mothers, partners and businesswomen. Furthermore, the examples of participants in the research working from home challenges stereotypes of economically inactive BSA Muslim women, and instead shows an ability to adapt to working in what could be considered non-traditional work sites. It would be beneficial in further work to explore the spatial implications, including emotional and physical labour invested of using home and work as a single location. Working from home and entrepreneurship further illustrates the way the homes of BSA Muslim women are not contained or sealed spaces. The practical implications of this, not only for BSA Muslim women, but for their families is worth further analysis especially when considering how everyday routines are adapted to factor in business obligations alongside family practices.

Chapter 5 discussed work environments as another space requiring negotiation and considerations of identity and interaction for BSA Muslim women. Dominant discourses regarding BSA Muslim women have often featured concerns regarding economic inactivity and an absence from the labour market. As this chapter argued, such discourses shape understandings of Muslim women being unwilling or unable to take up employment, because ‘in some communities, cultural attitudes and behaviours are holding women and girls back from fully participating in society’ (Casey, 2015, p.14), and thus reinforce stereotypes of women victimised by culture or religion. Additionally, shifting discussions of economic inactivity on issues of culture neatly sidesteps questions of real and perceived discrimination in recruitment, in workplaces, and real progression and promotion in employment. As the research showed, notions of cultural or religious barriers to employment are simplistic and ignorant of the way that intersectional identities affect BSA
Muslim women’s employment patterns. For example, changing attitudes toward motherhood and employment have led to an increasing number of women remaining in employment, or changing to part time working patterns after having children (Dale et al. 2000) and these general patterns were also visible in the present data. Discrimination however affected the type of employment the women in this study felt they would be accepted into, to the extent that some of them changed their work patterns, or their dress, while some left work altogether. Dress, particularly the hijab brought up issues of professionalism at work. Questions of what would be considered professional affected the way women both interacted with and interpreted the behaviour of colleagues and management. An intersectional analysis of social identities of gender, ethnicity and religion at meso levels in organisations highlights ways in which discourses on macro levels, such as public and policy discourses on the veil have affected the way Muslim women experience work spaces. As the analysis showed women in hijab were viewed on occasion as incapable, or unwilling to interact, or, even on occasion as backward, and oppressed by colleagues, management and clients. The importance of researching and detailing BSA Muslim women’s experiences in the workplace is clear when considering the extent to which Islamophobia impacts on the recruitment, progression and promotion of Muslim women. Further work focusing on BSA Muslim women’s experiences in the workplace, including microaggressions, interactions with employees, feelings of isolation and questions of professionalism are all areas which are pertinent for research. The spatiality of work spaces, including the question of power relations, social interactions, and the unwritten rules which govern behaviour in and access to these spaces affect BSA Muslim women’s experiences in work spaces should form a necessary aspect of further research (Massey, 1994).
Wider public spaces and the concept of community were the subjects of the final empirical chapter. As the interactions of participants in this research showed, discourses that depict Muslim women as silent, oppressed victims sometimes shaped interactions between the white majority and BSA Muslim women. Notions of double consciousness (DuBois, 1965) illustrated how participants internalised and reflected upon how Islamophobic discourses affected interactions in their everyday lives. This in turn showed how the self may became subsumed within a hierarchy of knowledge, as the women not only reflected on these discourses, they recognised their otherness as Muslim women and, on some occasions, modified their behaviour in order to offset any negative connotations attached to their religious identity. Further research could explore the extent to which double consciousness affects BSA Muslim women’s sense of self and interactions in public space, including the experience of veiling women that further explores how discourses of ‘vulnerable-dangerous’ other Muslim woman as affects mundane, everyday encounters. Additional work would explore further how Islamophobic discourses manufacture meaning for/of the self rather than from the self for BSA Muslim women, and how those affect identity formation.

In this research popular and political discourse were discussed as contributing to narratives which participants felt made it simple for the majority other to know the BSA Muslim woman precisely because she had been over identified and marginalised as a particular group. This ‘knowing’ then shaped interactions between the majority other and BSA Muslim, for example, ‘uncivil inattention’ was seen as a way which the contentious Muslim woman could be excluded and vilified. Across public spaces, whether in doctor’s offices or supermarkets the women in this research found themselves infantilised, isolated, ignored or othered because of being identified as Muslim women, which did not always entail visible
religious markers of difference such as hijab. Future work would benefit from exploring this extension of Goffman’s theorisations on the presentation of the self, to further analyse the mental and emotional effect of ‘uncivil inattention’ on BSA Muslim’s women sense of identity. Such research would further explore these ‘uncivil’ everyday occurrences in order to contextualise the nature of these interactions, which are layered with assumptions regarding Muslim women’s national identities, and how the right to belong, or right to use particular spaces are repeatedly brought into contention.

The concept of place and more importantly the meaning attached to places was also explored in this chapter. As the overall plane of enquiry, Oldham, as a former industrial town, was considered to have a particular place in local imagination. Consequently a ‘racialised nostalgia’ regarding Oldham and those who may consider themselves as Oldhamers’ further ensured that BSA Muslim women were placed outside of the racial boundaries which formed the collective narrative of Oldham. This chapter considered ‘white space’ as not only a physical location, but also a form of racialised nostalgia where places such as Oldham existed in the national conscious as a town that is fixed at particular points in the national imagination, it could be argued that these fixed points include Oldham’s historical place in the industrial revolution, and the more contemporary civil disturbances, or race riots of 2001. Future research into this area is needed to explore the effect of exclusion for ethnic minority from such racialised nostalgia, and how this may affect a sense of belonging and identity for BSA Muslim women. Furthermore, given such exclusion from Oldham’s history, it is worth exploring how second and third generations BSA Muslim women understand nostalgia, and how connections to such spaces are made. In what ways
are these women making sense of their history in Oldham, what memories or attachments are made? And how are these maintained, fostered or understood by BSA Muslim women?

Community and belonging also featured in this chapter, and community was analysed as ambivalent, fluid and shifting. The notion of a canopy was applied to discuss South Asian spaces in Oldham, with reference to areas with high concentrations of Pakistani or Bangladeshi groups including Glodwick, Coppice, Werneth, or Westwood. Such spaces might be considered protective, where the homogeneity of a group under the canopy lends itself to familiarity and comfort. However, paying consideration to gender, religion and culture, and the particular ways these intersect for BSA Muslim women, highlighted the ways in which community spaces could become areas of contention and negotiation. Far from being a homogenous, segregated and closed space as discussed in policy and public discourse, community was seen as a site of power imbalances, tradition, collegiality and isolation. This imbalance was analysed from a gendered perspective, where Muslim women in particular felt disconnection from, restriction within or ambivalence towards community. Paying attention to age, social class, ethnic difference and even the particular area in which participants lived in presented varying interpretations of community and belonging. Despite sharing a race, ethnicity, caste or language, a number of participants in this study had a strained relationship with experiences of and notions of community. Although having a shared history of migration and cultural roots did elicit feelings of comfort and safety for some participants, for other women in this research the same shared cultural roots evoked feelings of restriction, control and surveillance.
7.5 Concluding remarks

Although this research utilised a variety of methods and thus generated a rich data set, which was an exploration of the everyday lives of BSA Muslim women, nonetheless given the small sample size and conducted within a short time frame this thesis cannot claim representativeness. The study would benefit from a more sustained, longer period of research, and comparative studies across other former industrial towns in the North would allow for further exploration of the way local places can reflect questions of belonging. However, this thesis has demonstrated the usefulness of applying an intersectional lens which expands its areas of theoretical concern to include concepts of religion, the self, the everyday and space. These are the key contributions to the theoretical approach to research with BSA Muslim women, and it is hoped that further research with this minority group will benefit from utilising the theoretical and methodological concepts applied here. Certainly space, and transition through spaces has great potential for understanding the fluid, complex and interwoven aspects of everyday lives, and would mark the advantage of focusing on the micro levels of BSA Muslim women’s sense of self through a nuanced exploration of the very local and intimate spaces explored in this thesis. Additionally, greater attention to racialised notions of place, in particular racialised history and nostalgia of place would further illuminate the experiences of ethnic minority groups and their sense of connection and belonging.

What this thesis has demonstrated is that there are indeed no neutral spaces for BSA Muslim women. Throughout their everyday lives’ women are required to negotiate, manage and challenge dominant discourses which shape interactions across a variety of spaces. When considering the extent to which selves are multiple and emplaced, it becomes clear
that adequately analysing BSA Muslim women’s experiences requires an approach that
takes into consideration this multiple, complex and often convoluted messiness of daily life.
This is the strength of this thesis, recognising that the literature on intersectionality and
Islamophobia can be added to by considering the notion the self as multiple, situational and
interactional. In short, the same body, as it moves across different spaces experiences a
variety of interactions which are in turn shaped by complexity of intersecting identities,
power, knowledge, belonging and exclusion. This type of research, which applies
intersectional analysis across macro, meso and micro levels utilises the concept of
intersectionality to its potential. In asking questions of social discourses, power relations,
and identity this research understood intersectionality as a tool to understand social
inequalities, and to challenge stereotypes through individuals’ everyday narratives of being
and being seen.


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### Table of Participants

Appendix 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AGE/ETHNICITY</th>
<th>INITIAL CONTACT</th>
<th>METHODS USING</th>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>BRIEF INFO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humaira</td>
<td>33 Pakistani</td>
<td>10/10/15</td>
<td>Int/photos/diary/walk</td>
<td>Coppice</td>
<td>Married, 1 child, husband from Pakistan, working in admin, recently changed jobs, now working for Muslim woman manager.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Re-Interviewed-12/02/15</td>
<td>along</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nazma</td>
<td>33 Pakistani</td>
<td>18/10/15</td>
<td>Int/diary</td>
<td>Coppice</td>
<td>Married, 2 children, working full time, school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Date of Interview</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Khadija’</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>20/11/15 Re-Interviewed-18/12/15</td>
<td>Int/diary/photos</td>
<td>Gladwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saima</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>30/10/15</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Gladwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parveen</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>21/10/15</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaira</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>29/10/15 Re-interviewed 16/12/15</td>
<td>Int/photos/diary/walk along</td>
<td>Clarksfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>10/10/15</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Clarksfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hana</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>13/10/15</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Gladwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malia</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>13/10/15</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Hathershaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bushra</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>28/10/15</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Gladwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rana</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>18/11/15 Re-interviewed 30/12/15</td>
<td>Int/diary/photos/walk along</td>
<td>Gladwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>29/11/15</td>
<td>Int/diary/photos</td>
<td>Freehold</td>
<td>Re-married,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Background</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farah</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Re-Interviewed-25/01/16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mother, Punjabi background. Wears niqab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sania</td>
<td>33 Pakistani</td>
<td>06/12/15</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Clarksfield</td>
<td>Married, mother of 2 children, niqabi wearing, teaches at local mosque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raheela</td>
<td>27 Pakistani</td>
<td>02/12/15</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Clarksfield</td>
<td>Single- working for local paper Mirpuri, lives with family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>30 Pakistani</td>
<td>03/01/16</td>
<td>Int/walk along</td>
<td>Coppice</td>
<td>Married, mother of three, working as data analyst for a company in Thamside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasleema</td>
<td>40 Pakistani</td>
<td>05/02/16</td>
<td>Int/observation</td>
<td>Shaw</td>
<td>Married, previously worked for council, three children running cake business from home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mina</td>
<td>35 Pakistani</td>
<td>16/02/16</td>
<td>Int/photos</td>
<td>Glodwick</td>
<td>Married- two children, working as home care visitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robina</td>
<td>25 Pakistani</td>
<td>13/02/16</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Glodwick</td>
<td>Single- qualified with psychology degree, qualified beautician, home business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aneela</td>
<td>25 Pakistani</td>
<td>20/02/16</td>
<td>Int/photos</td>
<td>Glodwick</td>
<td>Single, Studying as dental nurse, plays daff and teaches children to play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabia</td>
<td>33 Pakistani</td>
<td>15/03/16</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Middleton</td>
<td>Full time mother of three, and carer of child with physical disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagina</td>
<td>33 Pakistani</td>
<td>05/03/16</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Coppice</td>
<td>Married, paediatric nurse with NHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raheema</td>
<td>40 Pakistani</td>
<td>12/03/16</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Clarksfield</td>
<td>Married, mother of 4, running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>--------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noreen</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>13/04/16</td>
<td>Int/photos</td>
<td>Chadderton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ammna</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>22/04/2016</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Westwood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>01/05/16</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Coppice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suriya</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>12/05/16-Bengali</td>
<td>Int/photos</td>
<td>Middleton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razia</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>07/05/16 Re-interviewed 18/06/16</td>
<td>Int/diary</td>
<td>Hollinwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliyah</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>01/07/16</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>Chadderton</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant information Sheet

Appendix 2

University of Manchester
School of Social Sciences

Participant Information Sheet

What is the title of the research?
‘Under the Umbrella of Grand Narratives’: Researching everyday interactions of the ‘overdetermined’ BSA Muslim woman

Who will conduct the research?
Research will be conducted by Rashida Bibi, a postgraduate research student with the University of Manchester

What is the aim of the research?
The aim of the research is to understand/analyse what effects, if any, the narrative of the ‘over determined’ British South Asian Muslim woman (as the silent, yet ‘knowable’ sub-minority within a pre-determined patriarchal culture), has on the ‘everyday’ routine/daily interactions of BSA Muslim women.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen because you suit the criteria of a BSA Muslim woman living/working/studying in the areas of Oldham.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
You will be asked to keep a short daily diary extract for 10 mins per day over two months of any daily activities you feel are important. You may be asked to participate in follow up interviews or to take part in focus groups. The researcher may ask to observe your daily routine, eg travelling to and from work, your activities at home with family or your attendance at schools/college/university.

What happens to the data collected?
The data will be stored on a password protected USB device and on secure servers on University of Manchester computers.

How is confidentiality maintained?
All information collected from you during this research will be kept secure, all names and any identifying material will be removed in order to ensure anonymity.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is entirely your decision to take part in this research and you will be asked to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. You can request the deletion of your data without giving a reason at any point up to the point of submission of the PhD thesis.

What is the duration of the research?

Participants are asked to record their feeling/emotions/events in a diary on a regular basis for up to 2 months. Focus groups and interviews are likely to take up to 45 mins to an hour.

Where will the research be conducted?

The research will be conducted in local cafes, community centres, faith centres and similar public places. Research may also be conducted in your home, work or place of education.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

It is anticipated that the research may, at some point, be published in a journal or report. However, should this happen, your anonymity will be ensured, although it may be necessary to use your words in the presentation of the findings and your permission for this is included in the consent form. Pseudonyms will be used throughout any material consequently published.

What benefit might this research be to me or other subjects of the research?

The benefits of this study include deeper understanding of BSA Muslim women living, studying and working in Britain. The research aims to understand to what extent narratives of the BSA Muslim woman as over determined ‘silent victims’ may affect behaviour in various institutions including the home, place of work or educational institution.

What if something goes wrong?

In the first instance, please contact the researcher, whose details are below.

If you do not receive a satisfactory answer, please contact her supervisor at the University of Manchester:

Dr. Virinder Kalra: virinder.kalra@manchester.ac.uk

Dr. James Rhodes: James.Rhodes@manchester.ac.uk
If there are any issues resulting from the research which you would prefer not to discuss with the researcher or his supervisor, please contact:

The Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator:

Email: Research-complaints@manchester.ac.uk  Tel: +44 (0)161 275 758

Contact for further information

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