



musawah
For Equality in the Muslim Family

Musawah Global Life Stories Project

UNITED KINGDOM COUNTRY REPORT

**Documenting Women's Life Stories
Relating to *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*:
Lived Realities of Muslim Women in the UK**



MUSSURUT ZIA

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**This report, which was submitted to the Musawah Secretariat by Mussurut Zia,
has been lightly edited by the Secretariat for format and style**

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Chapter 1: Socio-economic Conditions of Women in the UK

Introduction

Every ten years since 1801, the United Kingdom has set aside one day for the census – a count of all people and households. It is the most complete source of information about the population of the UK. The latest census was held on Sunday 27 March 2011.

Every effort is made to include everyone, and that is why the census is so important. It is the only survey that provides a detailed picture of the entire population, and is unique because it covers everyone at the same time and asks the same core questions everywhere. This makes it easy to compare different parts of the country.

The information the census provides allows central and local government, health authorities and many other organisations to target their resources more effectively and to plan housing, education, health and transport services for years to come.

- ❖ In mid 2012, 15 months after the national census of 2011, the population of the UK was estimated to be 63.7 million, up from the estimated 63.3 million in mid-2011.
- ❖ In the UK, there were 813,200 births and 558,800 deaths occurring in the year to 30 June 2012. This is the largest number of births seen since the year to mid-1972.
- ❖ The population aged 65 and over was 10.8 million (17% of the UK population) in mid-2012.
- ❖ The estimated flow of international migrants to the UK in the year to 30 June 2012 was 517,800 and estimated outflow for the same period was 352,100. This means that UK net migration was 165,600 in the year to mid-2012.
- ❖ The population increase of the UK in the year to 30 June 2012 was caused by 254,400 more births than deaths (61% of the increase) and 165,600 more international migrants arriving than emigrants leaving (39% of the increase).
- ❖ The mid-2012 population of the UK ranks third, behind Germany and France when compared to other member states of the European Union.
- ❖ The absolute increase in population of the UK was greater than that of any other European Union member state during the 12 months to 30 June 2012.

A voluntary question on religion was included in the 2011 census, which yielded the following results:

- ❖ The number of people who identified as Muslim were 2,706,066
- ❖ Christianity had the oldest age profile of the main religious groups.
- ❖ The number of Christians has fallen and this was largely for people aged under 60.
- ❖ The number of people with no religion has increased across all age groups, particularly for those aged 20 to 24 and 40 to 44.
- ❖ In England and Wales, over nine in ten Christians (93 per cent) were White and nine in ten (89 per cent) were born in the UK, though the numbers have fallen since 2001.
- ❖ Nearly four in ten Muslims (38 per cent) reported their ethnicity as Pakistani, a 371,000 increase (from 658,000 to over a million) since 2001. Nearly half of all Muslims were born in the UK.
- ❖ The majority of people with no religion were White (93 per cent) and born in the UK (93 per cent), and these groups have increased since 2001.
- ❖ People with no religion had the highest proportion of people who were economically active, Christians and Muslims the lowest. Jewish people had the highest level of employment, and Muslims the lowest level of employment.
- ❖ The main reason for Christians being economically inactive was retirement, for Muslims economic inactivity was mainly because they either were students, or because they were looking after the home or family.

Demographic information

General demographic information regarding the UK is displayed in the following table. This shows a breakdown in terms of age, population growth rate, birth and death rate, sex ratio, ethnicity, religion, and language.

Age structure	0-14 years: 17.3% (male 5,625,040/female 5,346,815) 15-24 years: 12.8% (male 4,158,813/female 3,986,831) 25-54 years: 41.1% (male 13,250,434/female 12,807,328) 55-64 years: 11.5% (male 3,589,345/female 3,680,392) 65 years and over: 17.3% (male 4,877,079/female 6,073,497) (2013 est.)
Median age	total: 40.3 years male: 39.1 years female: 41.4 years (2013 est.)
Population growth rate	0.55% (2013 est.)
Birth rate	12.26 births/1,000 population (2013 est.)
Death rate	9.33 deaths/1,000 population (2013 est.)
Net migration rate	2.57 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2013 est.)
Urbanisation	urban population: 80% of total population (2010) rate of urbanization: 0.7% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)
Major cities – population	LONDON (capital) 8.615 million; Birmingham 2.296 million; Manchester 2.247 million; West Yorkshire 1.541 million; Glasgow 1.166 million (2009)
Sex ratio	at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female 0-14 years: 1.05 male(s)/female 15-24 years: 1.04 male(s)/female 25-54 years: 1.03 male(s)/female 55-64 years: 0.97 male(s)/female 65 years and over: 0.8 male(s)/female total population: 0.99 male(s)/female (2013 est.)
Mother's mean age at first birth	30 (2006 est.)
Infant mortality rate	total: 4.5 deaths/1,000 live births male: 4.93 deaths/1,000 live births female: 4.05 deaths/1,000 live births (2013 est.)
Life expectancy at birth	total population: 80.29 years male: 78.16 years female: 82.54 years (2013 est.)
Total fertility rate	1.9 children born/woman (2013 est.)
Contraceptive prevalence rate	84%
HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate	note: percent of women aged 16-49 (2008/09) 0.2% (2009 est.)
HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS	85,000 (2009 est.)
HIV/AIDS - deaths	fewer than 1,000 (2009 est.)
Drinking water source	improved: urban: 100% of population rural: 100% of population total: 100% of population (2010 est.)
Sanitation facility access	improved: urban: 100% of population

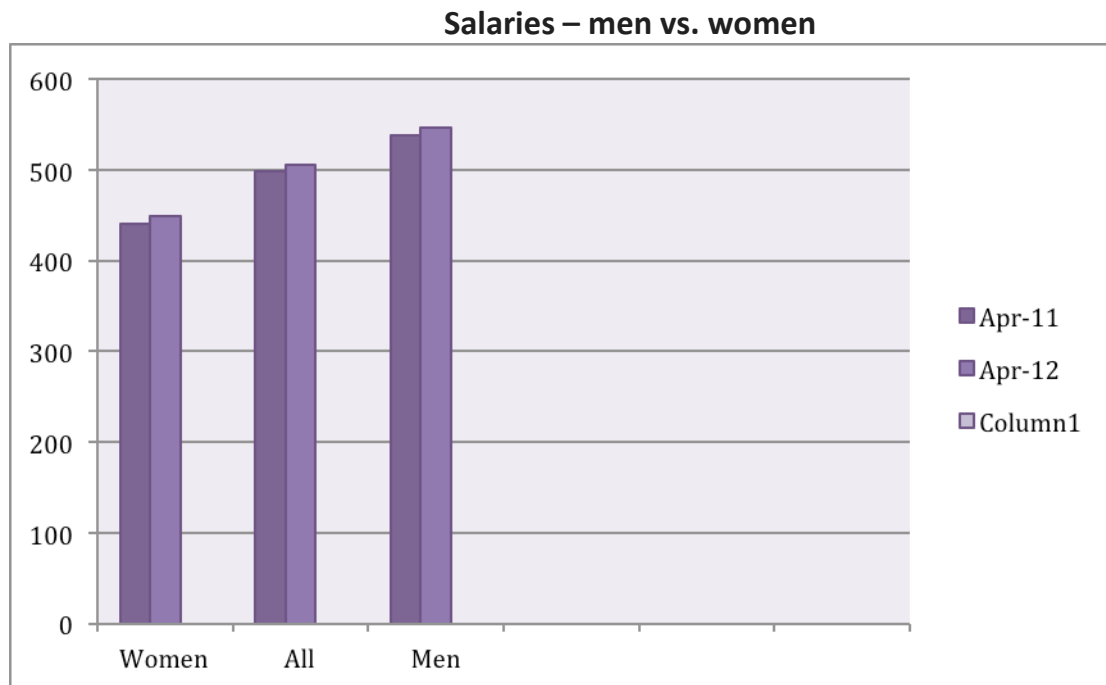
Ethnic groups	rural: 100% of population total: 100% of population (2010 est.) White (of which English 83.6%, Scottish 8.6%, Welsh 4.9%, Northern Irish 2.9%) 92.1%, black 2%, Indian 1.8%, Pakistani 1.3%, mixed 1.2%, other 1.6% (2001 census)
Religions	Christian (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist) 71.6%, Muslim 2.7%, Hindu 1%, other 1.6%, unspecified or none 23.1% (2001 census)
Languages	English note: the following are recognised regional languages: Scots (about 30% of the population of Scotland), Scottish Gaelic (about 60,000 in Scotland), Welsh (about 20% of the population of Wales), Irish (about 10% of the population of Northern Ireland), Cornish (some 2,000 to 3,000 in Cornwall) (2012)
Literacy	definition: age 15 and over has completed five or more years of schooling total population: 99% male: 99% female: 99% (2003 est.)
School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education)	total: 17 years male: 16 years female: 17 years (2010)
Education expenditures	5.6% of GDP (2009)
Maternal mortality rate	12 deaths/100,000 live births (2010)
Health expenditures	9.3% of GDP (2011)

Although the UK has a high literacy rate, it has been identified that there are fewer males at university than females. An article in the Guardian newspaper dated 29 January 2013 stated that in 2010-2011 there were more female (55%) than male fulltime undergraduates (45%) enrolled at university, and claims that there are no signs of this trend abating. The latest statistics released by the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) <https://www.ucas.com/> revealed a 22,000-drop in the number of male students enrolling at university. This meant that last autumn women were a third more likely to start a degree than their male counterparts, despite the fact that there are actually more young men than women in the UK.

Despite the fact that there are significantly higher numbers of female under-graduates, the UK is still lagging behind when it comes to the scope and fairness of women's employment. According to a survey of 27 member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) <http://www.oecd.org/>, the UK ranks 18th in the overall record on women's participation in the labour market. The latest index measured the gender pay gap, women's participation rate, unemployment rates and proportion of women in full-time, rather than part-time, employment.

While the UK has made progress in equalising earnings between men and women and getting more women into the workplace, the slow pace of change has seen it outstripped by other countries since 2000. The difference in pay has diminished from 26% in 2000 to 18% in 2012 in the UK – slightly worse

than the OECD average differential of 16%. While the proportion of women in the UK who work is above the OECD average, the percentage holding full-time jobs was lower than in all but two other countries. The research indicated that Europe's economic crisis had particularly set back the advance of women in the workplace, with pay disparities and female unemployment rates increasing in Portugal, Spain and Greece in 2012. Furthermore, a separate European commission report calculated the pay gap between men and women at 16.4% across the EU, with the UK still one of the worst offenders.



Source *Office of National Statistics*

Despite equal opportunities legislation, men and women do not earn the same pay for the same job. The gender pay gap (i.e. the difference between men's and women's earnings as a percentage of men's earnings) has gone down - but it is still 9.6%, a change from 10.5% in 2011.

Unemployment figures recorded in November 2013 show total unemployment at 7.2%, male unemployment at 7.6% and female unemployment at 6.8%. Women are also disproportionately higher in the informal labour market of the UK, than men. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation <https://www.jrf.org.uk/> states that informal work is undertaken by people who live in poverty, who fear going without basics such as food and heating, or facing mounting rent arrears. Four out of six informal workers are female who have a range of reasons and issues that necessitate them taking up informal work rather than formal employment. Research has shown that reasons for opting into informal work include childcare, which presents a major barrier to formal working where jobs tend to be inflexible, the difficulty in making the transition from being a full-time mother into paid work outside the home, health needs, debt, and a lone parent family also feature heavily. 400,000 families were headed by lone fathers in 2012, representing 13.5% of all single-parent households in the UK according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>. With an average family size of 2.32, that figure represents 927,000 people in the UK, however, the number of families headed by lone-women tend to be slightly higher, meaning that 6.7 million people were part of a household headed by a mother in 2012.

One area where women fare better than men is state paid maternity leave. Currently, Statutory Maternity Leave is 52 weeks, and is made up of:

- 'Ordinary Maternity Leave' - first 26 weeks

- 'Additional Maternity Leave' - last 26 weeks

A woman does not have to take 52 weeks but must take 2 weeks' leave after the baby is born (or 4 weeks if she works in a factory). Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) is paid for up to 39 weeks, and a woman will receive:

- 90% of her average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first 6 weeks
- £136.78 or 90% of her average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks

SMP is paid in the same way as wages (eg monthly or weekly). Tax and National Insurance will be deducted.

Men who wish to take time off because their partner is having a baby or adopting a child might be eligible for:

- 1 or 2 weeks paid Ordinary Paternity Leave
- up to 26 weeks of paid Additional Paternity Leave - but only if the mother / co-adopter returns to work. They may not get both leave and pay.

The UK does not differentiate between males and females when it comes to matters of buying land, property, setting up a business or participation in the political realm. However, there are currently only 147 female MPs, out of a total of 650 members of parliament. These MPs gained their seats at the 2010 general election and at by-elections held since then. The Female FTSE Reports indicate a slow pace of progress for women into corporate boardrooms in the last decade, from 6.9% female directorships on the FTSE100 in 1999 to only 11.7% female directorships in 2008. A report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en> (2008) suggested that at the current rate of change, it will take more than 70 years to achieve gender balanced boardrooms on the UK's largest 100 companies. And over time, the Female FTSE Report has also noted that the figures for female directors are worse in the smaller listed companies. Gender inequality in the public sector begins with differential participation in elected political bodies and persists in public administration roles. The low representation of women in political life and the civil service affects the pipeline to public appointments. Throughout Western societies, parliaments tend to be male-dominated. A report by the European Commission (2009) showed that the UK counted only 19.7% women Members of Parliament and about 23.9% women in the top jobs of public and voluntary sectors (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2008).

Although the UK does not rule differently for the purchasing of land or property by individuals, tax and property rights can be affected by life events such as marriage and divorce. The most recent figures from the Office for National Statistics show the average age at which men get married is 30.8 years, while women are typically aged 28.9 years.

On the face of it, day-to-day life may not change dramatically for those who marry, however marriage does bring about some significant changes, and there is a lot to consider. For some, getting married or entering into a civil partnership (same sex marriage), means combining finances for the first time, however when it comes to tax planning, marriage and civil partnership can simplify things. Each spouse retains his or her capital gains tax (CGT) exemption, too, but they may also transfer assets to each other.

Some key facts relating to marriage in the UK are as follows:

- In 2011, the provisional number of marriages in England and Wales increased by 1.7% to 247,890, from 243,808 in 2010.

- In 2011, the male marriage rate remained at 22.0 marriages per thousand unmarried men aged 16 and over. For women, the rate decreased to 19.8 per thousand unmarried women aged 16 and over, from 20.0 in 2010.
- Civil ceremonies accounted for 70% of all marriages that took place in 2011, an increase from 64% in 2001.
- The greatest number of marriages were for men and women aged 25 to 29.

The largest percentage increase in the number of marriages between 2010 to 2011 was for women aged 55 to 59 and for men aged 60 and over, rising by 6.9% and 6.5% respectively.

It must be noted that the above figures may be a little distorted due to the fact that marriages which take place according to religion or belief ceremonies are not recognised by the law of the land. People in such marriages are considered to be co-habitees or common law partners, not spouses in a marriage or civil partnership.

Polygamy is not recognised in the UK, and is against the law, however anecdotal evidence exists to suggest that there are a significant number of polygamous marriages within the Muslim communities of the United Kingdom, however due to the illegitimacy of such marriages, there are no statistics available.

Violence against women and girls is a huge issue all over the world, and the UK has its fair share of such violence. The UK ranks among the worst countries in Europe when it comes to women being violently abused, coming fifth worst in terms of violence suffered by women in their lifetime (defined as being since the age of 15). The proportion of women affected, at 44 per cent, is far above the European average of 33 per cent. The only countries worse than Britain are the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark.

According to the Violence Against Women report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) <http://fra.europa.eu/en>, which was released in March 2014, out of the 28 countries that make up the European Union, Britain ranks:

- Fourth worst for physical and/or sexual violence by a partner – with almost a third [29 per cent] reporting this, compared to the EU average of 22 per cent.
- Sixth worst for women avoiding places or situations for fear of being physically or sexually assaulted - two thirds [64 per cent] admit to this, a higher proportion than the EU average of just over half [53 per cent].
- Sixth worst for sexual harassment - more than two thirds [68 per cent] have suffered this, compared to the EU average of 55 per cent.

Chapter 2: Lived Realities of Muslim Women in the UK

Life Story #1: Rafeeqa

My name is Rafeeqa. I was born in Burnley, Lancashire, on the 26th of June 1970. I am the eldest of five children, born to immigrant parents who arrived in the UK from Pakistan in the 1960's. I realised from a very early age who the head of our family was, I must have been about 7 years old, I remember wanting to go on a school trip, and my Mum said, "ask your Granddad." I felt angry even then as did my sisters, we were always saying you are our parents, why do we need his permission? It felt as if the whole world had to ask his permission! It felt as if my Mum was scared to ask anything, she never spoke up at all. As I grew older I realised this man was not all he seemed, and this realisation was justified when he started to sexually abuse me at the age of 10.

Even to this day I feel anger and resentment at the abuse, and the hypocrisy - he taught me the Qur'an, at the same time he was sexually abusing me. I still question my parents about it and ask why he was allowed to be the head of the family until his death. It made me sick. He had so much respect from everyone yet he was not a very nice man, looks are deceiving, he pretended to be a religious man, but we all knew what he really was. My father's younger brother was also abusing me sexually, and my sister too, but nobody seemed to want to know or care. I couldn't believe that my parents were more concerned about the neighbours and what they would say than their own daughter, I felt so hurt, angry and upset, I wished I had been adopted into a caring family, a family that would love me, not hurt and abuse me. I felt so alone, I couldn't talk to anyone about how I felt, all the time I kept saying to myself, there will be justice one day *Insha'Allah*. What was this honour that they were going on about? Who defines it? Was it against my religion to speak up for myself? Where was the sense of belonging that I craved?

My father constantly followed me everywhere in case I spoke out of turn, my friends from school were always talking about their dads, and what they were doing at the weekend, and I longed for that same closeness with my parents. My father used to call me the best girl in the world until I was about ten years of age, what did I do to make him hate me so? Confused was not the word, my mental state began to deteriorate, I prayed for peace constantly, I began to hear voices telling me to hurt myself, as they were always telling me I was bad. Good Muslim girls listen to their parents, *Allah* punishes the bad ones all the time, wear your scarf, the *shaitaan* urinates on your head if you don't! I felt so guilty about everything, I was torn.

My Granddad was head of the family and as such he taught me, my siblings and my cousins the Qur'an. He always had so many privileges, it was as though he was some kind of wonder man, he was fed first, wore the best clothes, always spoke for everybody. It was as if he was the core of the family. I hated it, and as I grew older I started to understand what his intentions were. He abused his position of trust, he knew no one would question him, as he was the eldest, and the head of the household. I knew as I got older what kind of man he was, but never dared to talk about it, for fear that no one would believe me, after all I was just a woman! As I grew older I realised not only had he sexually abused me, he had also touched many other people inappropriately! I always felt an injustice had been done towards me, I felt cheated of my life, my childhood, and my dreams. He held so much power he would look at me and I would freeze, I was so scared of him. The men in my family also seemed to hold him on a pedestal, high up, as if he was a god! Hatred is what I have. To this day I do not believe in heads of the family or community leaders etc.; who are they to be given such a status? Why? I can think of many women who deserve this honour. Society also seems to think men have more power, you can see this all the time on the media, advertisements etc. my family made him more powerful as they let him get away with everything.

The sexual abuse wasn't limited to my Granddad; my father's younger brother had also abused my sister and me sexually when we were younger. When he got involved with a distant female cousin of ours, who had two children, we felt we had to report the abuse, and if necessary go to court. We felt we had to protect those children from him. I thought my parents and other family members would understand our reasons for speaking out. Sadly, my parents never understood why we were doing it; they tried to protect him and not us. My father was more angry that we had spoken up and that everybody had found out about it, he said we had shamed the whole family and the good name of the family! I said no one had a good name and they were only trying to cover up what was really happening in our houses!

When we finally went to court everyone stopped talking to us, we were looked upon as troublemakers and all young girls were kept away from me, in case I educate them, give them a voice! I don't want others to suffer the same fate as me, if we can save one girl we have won! What makes parents turn against their own flesh and blood in such a way? *Izzat*? Honour? Well I'm so glad I don't care with my own daughter, as long as she is happy that is enough for me! We spend hours as parents, lying awake worrying about our children, then do we toss them aside like trash? Not me! To me Islam means caring, sharing, laughing, Allah *SWT* gave me a voice for a reason, I am here to fulfill a purpose, who knows what that is? To me I make my own honour, culture can be a beautiful thing, but all I saw was pain and misery, why is there such a divide in generations, we all need to make a change, to stop making our own feel like they are not even related! Love your children no matter what they throw at you... Speak up or forever be silent...

Our appearance at the trial lasted three grueling days; my emotions were everywhere. I took time off work and buried my head in the sand for a while to heal. The hardest part for me was having to tell my husband the whole sordid tale. Luckily, *Alhamdulillah* he is a very understanding man and patient too. He was there for me, when no one else was.

Despite the difficulties and pain, I'm so glad I decided to speak up, as we won the court case and my uncle cannot be around children anymore. Why should he be allowed to get away with it! Allah knows best, surely Islam teaches us to speak up about wrongdoings not hide them. My parents kept saying its best to hide people's faults, but in this case, he had to be taught a lesson! It took everything out of me, emotionally I was dead, I felt like my parents had already died, as they were never there for me, I longed for their approval and support but it never came. The English people, who are non-Muslim, were there for me, the Pakistanis, who were supposedly good Muslims, were just talking about me, or trying to persuade me to drop the court case.

Where was this sense of community that Muslims had? I hadn't experienced any of it! Only twitching curtains and whispers behind my back! Was this the real Islam? Did I only know Pakistani culture and nothing else? What was this *izzat* that my parents lived by? Surely, I was a good person. When my sister and I decided to go to court, the hatred and animosity really intensified. I received threatening messages from a lot of my family saying bad things would happen to me if I went to court, surely Islam teaches us to tell the truth? Why was no one following the life of our beloved Prophet Mohammed *PBUH*? When I listened to the stories of the Prophet Mohammed and his companions, I wished I lived in that time, many hundreds of years ago! Was I doomed because I was born in the UK? Why did my parents come here?

My own parents went to the social worker and testified against me, saying I was a well-known prostitute in the local area, and I was asking for it! I was so upset by this, I was 10 years of age when the abuse began, what did I know? I began to resent my community, Pakistanis and the whole meaning of Islam; why were we not protected? Does *izzat* mean staying quiet? Put up and shut up? Then we are seen as good girls who don't make a fuss and listen to their parents? I was constantly asking my parents why they cared more about everybody else and not me? I needed them but they shunned me, my people let me down, the only people that were there were those who had no religion, who believed in

being kind first, I wasn't allowed to breathe, I felt suffocated. I felt I would burn in hell for every little thing I did! I suffered terrible anxiety and depression for years, and also panic attacks, while my family just said I was lying to get attention!

My family always listened to what others said, and followed what everybody else from their community did. They never thought outside of the box, they thought protection meant from boys, society, culture, television, sex, etc. Provision of food and clothing was always there, *Alhamdulillah*, although only my dad worked, but protection wasn't. I felt cheated, as the hints they gave regarding what they were supposedly protecting us from, was happening in our home. After my Granddad died nobody really took over the role of head of the household, and the whole family as they understood it, seemed to fall apart. In reality, none of them stepped up to the mark to resolve anything, no one spoke about any issues, it was as though nothing really mattered, or that by ignoring things, they would go away. There were so many arguments within the household about education for girls, females working, seeing friends etc, but nobody cared about our fulfilment and everyone just got by. Us girls always tried to fight our corner but were told to shut up, women don't speak. As an adult on my own I speak up for anyone, any injustice, I will never be silenced again.

Things didn't get any better and I had a forced marriage at 15 years of age. My parents had always said daughters are never ours to keep, they are somebody else's property, I hated this saying, it made me feel less adequate than a man. My Granddad did mine and my sisters' engagement, we knew nothing about this. My *Nikah* was in Pakistan, I had no idea I was about to be married. It was early evening and I remember trying to escape to bed then one of my aunties said, "you are getting married in a minute, you can't go anywhere." That's when reality sunk in, and I felt sad. I just remember being ushered into a little room with a big veil on my head, in my nightclothes, and asked to repeat some verses of the Qur'an, there was no one to represent me; I began to cry, no one would look at me or answer my questions. I was too young to be married, my father was present, my Mum was in the UK. I remember signing a document in a blur, and then everybody was rejoicing, and giving thanks to my dad. I felt utterly helpless, and sad. The whole experience for me was a negative one, it made me question the whole of Islam, I was so angry and felt guilty all the time. No one listened to my aspirations; I was just a woman with no voice, screaming silently. This was not what I had imagined marriage to be like: every girl dreams of a big happy wedding. It took me a long time to trust people again, and to this day I cannot forgive my family for what they did to me. There were no negotiations with me, only the elders would talk elsewhere, nobody asked me how I felt.

There was never any negotiation about anything within my first marriage. My ex-husband was also a very abusive man, spoke harshly and thought I was there only to be used and abused. My ex-husband always talked about divorce, he would always say *talaq* twice to me and on many occasions, threaten to say it three times. I ended up running away after he tried to kill me. I fled to the police station in the early hours of the morning with nothing but the clothes I had on, and my daughter, no shoes or belongings, I stayed in a place of safety, but was constantly harassed by family members to return to him, I ended up going to the *Sharia* council for a divorce, an awful experience and very insulting. No one really cared or listened to my story, I went through the court system getting an injunction, to stop my ex-husband from harassing me. My family were angry I had taken it this far; they wanted me to grant him a permanent visa for the UK. I had sole custody of my daughter, he didn't really care, as she was a girl, he always wanted a son. I didn't receive much assistance from anyone. It was a very lonely dark time, I wanted to send him back to Pakistan but he stayed here. I never received anything in maintenance from him, and to this day I have not.

My daughter was only 2 when I ran away, so hopefully she has not seen too much, and because of my own experiences, I began to work in a women's refuge, where, to this day I speak out and empower females. Following my escape from my forced marriage it was very difficult for me to settle anywhere. My family disowned me, they didn't have anything to do with me at all, and my siblings and cousins were not allowed to stay in touch either, particularly my sisters and girl cousins. I felt very alone, and

had a little girl to take care of, even though I was very young myself. I was also very lonely, and went into my second marriage with my eyes closed. It wasn't love, it was a need for company, and I left him when I realised that he didn't really want to be with me, all he wanted was to gain legitimate rights to remain in the country, or citizenship. Of course, leaving a second marriage brought even more dishonour to me, and I became even more of an outcast from the Pakistani Muslim community, which didn't really matter too much to me at the time. A few years later I met another man, who I thought was the right person for me, a life partner and companion, and agreed to marry him.

Once again, this marriage failed due to his perversions, and I vowed I would never get married again, I didn't need a man. However, just over five years ago I met the most wonderful man, and after a lot of thought, I agreed to marry him. Praise and thanks to Allah, he is all I could ask for, considerate, romantic, loving and uncaring of gossip and rumours. He is also second-a generation Pakistani, and although his family are still not happy with our marriage, he has not given in to their wishes to leave me. In my marriage now, we share roles and responsibilities, and these are task specific, as to who takes the lead, I feel this has impacted greatly on our children as they see strong role models.

Looking back, I recognise the high regard the wider community had for my Granddad. In their eyes, he was fulfilling his role to lead and guide his family, and protect the women; however, what they didn't know was that he was a wicked man and regularly tried to abuse his power and position. Nobody (females) was allowed to go to college, or be educated, we all felt cheated and very angry. I made sure after I left everyone I educated myself. No one was encouraged to pursue anything other than maybe a new recipe for the evening meal! The only reason I was allowed to work was to bring my ex-husband into the UK, otherwise I would have suffered the same fate! I felt everything was there to inhibit me, we all felt the same, not protected! I do feel protected now and secure within my marriage, nothing is used against me now, it's all safe. I remember all the women of the family also felt obliged to join in with the abuse and control, even though most of them were being abused by their men. Now I feel free and able to speak up, I feel protected not because I need that protection, but because I deserve it, a husband should fulfil that role as should I. It's a two-way thing, no power between us, we are equals within our own right. He respects me as I do him. Women are seen to be these little flowers all limp and weak, we are not! We just need to be heard and understood, men need stability and security too, why do they make us feel weak at times, we are strong! I need a husband who loves and respects me, not makes me feel insecure, and needy. Violence is used to keep us in line! Sometimes I feel that if you don't know the proper Islam and what women's rights are then you are an easy target, as education gives power and freedom. I expect to feel secure within all my relationships, not just with my husband, I learnt a long time ago that no one is there for you just Allah SWT, and this keeps me going, I am blessed to have found a good man, someone who makes me feel protected, there's a difference in that, he doesn't abuse his position, he is not higher than me. It took me ages to agree with that statement ha-ha! I felt needy before, I believed only a man would help me, because that's the way I was brought up, you must get married to have honour or standing or even identity. I guess that's why I went from one horrible relationship to another, I didn't recognise my own self-worth, and didn't understand that I had my own identity. I was taught that without a man I am nothing, and after a failed marriage, I was useless, I was rubbish, dirty and soiled! We are not second-hand goods, or all the other words used to harm women in society to tarnish us as second-class citizens. No, we are not! Power and peace!

In my family at present there are no obligations placed on, or by, any of us, previously yes obedience was a massive issue for the women, it was as if only women had to be shy, quiet, not judging, not talking loud, or laughing, so many things placed on us, by whom? Obviously back then my Granddad! We weren't allowed to go out anywhere or talk to anyone, we had to stay inside and cook and clean, it was as if he had a magic hold over everyone and we weren't allowed to speak up or question it even if we disagreed. The impacts were always harsh, and I saw a lot of sadness, resentment, and anger. Men always seem to get the last say, it's as if they are conditioned that way, or at least that is what I thought. Also, religious leaders are all men, why? Are they more religious than women? Do we not say the same prayers daily? Who determines these gender specific roles? Why are we supposedly not allowed to

question them? The law is different, we all listen and abide by it, I guess my mother always let my dad do everything related to bills and external matters, she was a housewife as was everyone else in the family who was female. I refused to be just a housewife, that's when the arguing began, why could I not be like the others and stay quiet! Always, always, more pressure on women than men.

I have always felt as if I was being punished just for being a woman. My family were uneducated and of working class, they cared more about honour than anything else. As women, we were never acknowledged or represented, we were just expected to do household chores, we had no freedom. I have two sisters who also suffered the same; to this day the impact is massive. I guess being a Muslim you look towards Allah *SWT* for answers and guidance, you become angry that Muslims can do this, culture can take over, honour is more important than family itself! At times, I felt like I could not carry on, felt suicidal, but knew this was *haram*. I began to take medication for depression, and had stress and dark nights and days. I received help from an English non-Muslim friend of mine, my own people and community gave me nothing but stares, and resentment. I even went to a local Masjid to talk to an *Imam* but was turned away. My daughter still resents the whole family, she cannot believe Muslims would do such a thing, she saw me go through such a tough time, alone. I hid my tears from her as much as I could, but as she grew she knew. I still speak out on many issues, my father does not talk to me this has been the case for over ten years, my family call me the black sheep, I never felt protected within my family, they hurt me the most. I felt as if everything was taken away from me, I was just a woman so I deserved this treatment; my Mum had suffered the same, and she thought Allah *SWT* would reward her for her silence.

In my marriage we are equals, my husband is an educated man who does not put these traditions into practice, a lot of my family would probably think he was under the thumb but that's not the case! A marriage is to be shared, I don't really discuss anything with a lot of my family as they are all stuck in loveless, meaningless marriages, but stay in them for the sake of honour and culture etc, I speak out at any opportunity against those who argue for these traditions, it took me years to gain the confidence to do so, but *Alhamdulillah* I do. Society still places a lot of traditional roles on women, expecting them to carry the burden of household chores etc, but I don't want our children to be brought up like this so we share everything. Why should men feel they have authority over us! It angers me, I have fought so hard for my freedom and independence, I will not be giving it up lightly! My favourite saying is "if you don't like me then move on " my children share my level headedness. I do not want the same or even similar experiences for my daughter; she is at college, getting an education. She dresses how she wants, and has many diverse friends. I support her in her choice of future career in the art world, although this is seen as dishonourable amongst my family and the community, but I don't care. I just want her to be happy and fulfilled, and for her to always remember she is a human being in her own right, not because of a man!

A family with shared values, responsibilities, respect, love, and kindness, would be an ideal family. It is so easy to just let everyone get away with doing nothing, for example, household chores, who defines the person who cleans and cooks? I love to look after my family, and I love to cook thankfully! Equality is so important, a sense of not being taken for granted, not just being a housemaid! Each family member has a role to play, I would love my daughter to be able to cook, she hates this, but it's so important, not because she's a woman, but to get through life. Family is a lovely word but I resented it for so long. My friends were my family, the Christians did more for me than my fellow Muslims, they understood me, and listened. As women, we face so many challenges on a daily basis, we need to stay strong and stick together, that's what family means, not being isolated and alone. I still want justice for what happened to me, maybe one day *Insha'Allah*.

Analysis of Rafeeqa's story

<p>What have I learned from Rafeeqa's life story?</p>	<p>The main thing to capture my attention was the complicity of family members in the sexual abuse of Rafeeqa and her sister. It is often stated by many so-called community leaders and representatives, that sexual abuse and incest does not occur within Asian/Pakistani/Muslim families, however we know this is untrue. I have learned that entire families collude to keep the abuse a secret, and also to maintain an outward semblance of honour, dignity and responsibility. Even when Rafeeqa decided to disclose the abuse to protect others, the reaction of her family and community is typical of the community she is associated with - there is a general understanding that you should never talk about such things, regardless of the damage they may have caused. This makes it easier for communities to believe that such things don't happen in their homes or localities.</p> <p>I have learned that there is a need to work towards eliminating familial sexual abuse of young girls and women from the South Asian community of the UK. I am aware that Rafeeqa's story is not typical of the majority of Muslim women living in England, however it is reflective of a significant number. Until there is concerted effort from within these communities to expose this abuse, young women such as Rafeeqa will continue to be abused by their "protectors".</p> <p>Rafeeqa's family lived as an extended family unit, with the eldest male being the overall controller of everyone and everything. This appears not to have been questioned or challenged by anyone during his lifetime, even when it would have been apparent that he was abusing his position. There is a strong patriarchal system in evidence in Rafeeqa's family and this is being enforced and perpetrated by males and females. The strong control over the younger females is due to the perceived honour or <i>izzat</i> of the family, but is justified as protecting them from the evil influences of society. Control over females regarding their education, career, dress and friends is very obvious, however what I found hypocritical was the fact that Rafeeqa was allowed or made to work in order to support her first husband's visa application. Again, this was not a consideration of Rafeeqa, rather a means to an end.</p>
<p>Is there anything specific to say about the following topics:</p>	
<p><i>a. how the dominant (articulated in codified and non-codified law) interpretations of qiwamah and wilayah impact the choices Rafeeqa has made in her public and private life?</i></p>	<p>It is clear that the non-codified laws of Rafeeqa's family and community are far more meaningful than the law of the land. Important life choices related to <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> were denied her. One such choice not available to her was the right to marry through preference. She was unable to say no to an arranged marriage at a very young age and this affected her life course in many ways, resulting in an abusive marriage, domestic violence, having to leave this marriage through a lot of pain and conflict with her family and the spouse, and the fact that her ex-husband chose to have nothing at all to do with his daughter. Rafeeqa has made many remarkable choices. Her strength of character was noticeable from early age, as was her strong personality. She didn't sit back into the role of a victim, rather she tried to do something about the horrible trials and problems she found herself in, including her taking her uncle to court, standing up to her husband, escaping to a women's' shelter, and seeking help from a <i>Sharia</i> Council.</p>

	<p>Non-codified traditions and laws are in further evidence when Rafeeqa voiced her intentions to go to court, and the subsequent attempts to thwart this on the part of her family and community. Rafeeqa chose to disclose the sexual abuse in order to protect someone else from suffering the same fate; this indicates that while there are <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>-based issues in this Rafeeqa's life, neither the sexual abuse, nor the resistance on the part of the family to acknowledge it have anything to do with <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>. Secondly, the fact that she decided to come forward when it happened to someone else and not earlier when it happened to her, again demonstrated her strength and willingness to challenge patriarchal norms and traditions. Sufferers of abuse and violence cope and manage differently; Rafeeqa suffered serious abuse at the hands of her grandfather and uncle, and it took a great deal of courage and significant risk for her to go through with the process of reporting it and standing up against the perpetrator. For whatever reason Rafeeqa didn't report the abuse for retribution for herself, which could be due to a number of reasons, possibly the fact that that some of what she was led to believe as a child, i.e., that women are useless, they have no value without men etc., may have taken root and led her to believe this on a sub-conscious level, or that she wanted to leave the memories of the abuse behind and continue with her life. However, her strength of character and belief compelled her to try and prevent someone else from being hurt and abused as she was, and it is possibly this that led her to make the choice to report the abuse historically, and then to go to court.</p> <p>The impact of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> has been significant in the career choice made by Rafeeqa. When telling her story Rafeeqa never mentioned any future aspirations regarding a career, possibly due to the fact that education was denied to her, however her experiences led her to a career where she is part of a key service for women who have suffered or are suffering abuse.</p> <p>The power of non-codified interpretations of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> is demonstrated once again in Rafeeqa's marriages. The messages she received apropos the insignificance of women without a man, may well have had an impact on the sub-conscious, leading to Rafeeqa to prove her significance, standing and identity, through marriage. Even after one after another of her marriages failed, indeed even after she had vowed not to marry again, she doesn't appear to relent in her quest to find a husband. Whilst this is unrelated to <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>, it does raise a number of questions, for instance did she consciously try to choose partners who would take care of her? I don't believe she did, as she has demonstrated that she is more than capable of taking care of herself. Did she feel restricted and unwanted in the community and wanted approval in the community through marriage and being the wife of someone? From Rafeeqa's life story it is clear that she wasn't overly concerned with community opinions, therefore she wouldn't be seeking validation through marriage. I believe her multiple marriages were borne from the simple desire to seek a meaningful relationship and loving, compatible partner.</p>
<p><i>b. how such interpretations have contributed in shaping Rafeeqa's sense of self and affected her capacity to enjoy her human</i></p>	<p>Issues such as <i>izzat</i> and forced marriage to relatives from the parents' home country are evident, however these are directly related to non-codified cultural interpretations and understandings rather than <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>. Although it appears that the women in Rafeeqa's family relate to the religious principle of guardianship and protection, this hasn't been justified on religious grounds. Factors motivating forced marriages are based on issues such as increasing the legal capital of the family member through residency in the UK, and him</p>

<p>rights (civil and political; economic, social and cultural rights)?</p>	<p>becoming a long-term economic resource for his family in the home country, rather than the guardian, protector and provider for his wife, as defined by religion.</p> <p>I believe Rafeeqa’s family’s interpretations of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> have had a hugely detrimental effect on her. In the first instance, there is a concerted effort to erode any sense of self or individuality from Rafeeqa. Secondly, it has been instilled in her that she, and the women in her family are worthless; their identity is solely due to the men. Her capacity to recognise and begin to exercise her human rights only came to the fore after she escaped her forced marriage, and her family’s domination. The basic right to life, liberty and security of person were denied to Rafeeqa as a child and young adult, as were the rights to education and to marry. In many ways Rafeeqa was subjected to torture and mistreatment, the absolute right not to be tortured or treated in an inhuman or degrading way has been repeatedly and consistently contravened.</p>
<p>c. how different these impacts are for differently located women, and particularly for women who face the intersection of multiple discrimination?</p>	<p>See final group analysis</p>
<p>d. what kind of divergences exist on the ground, which are a product of active negotiations?</p>	<p>See final group analysis</p>
<p>Are there particular insights from Rafeeqa’s lived reality that we think should inform our new readings of the concepts of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>?</p>	<p>There is stark contrariety between the law of the land and the non-codified laws of Rafeeqa’s family and community. The law of the land serves to protect all citizens, and there are specific Child Protection laws to protect children from harm. There are laws to protect those who are vulnerable as adults, and legal recourse is coupled with services to support those who have been hurt or abused. Protection and anonymity is provided to those who disclose, whether it is the victim, a professional service provider, a friend or a family member. Despite this protection, neither Rafeeqa, nor anyone from her family thought to use the legal recourse at their disposal, no doubt, due to the allegiance to family honour, and the patriarchal conditioning and environment they existed in.</p> <p>Although Rafeeqa’s experience of sexual abuse is not related to <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>, what is directly relevant to <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> is the power of the <i>wali</i> whether that be the father or other male relatives such as the grandfather or uncle, to marry off young daughters. The phenomena of early marriage are further exacerbated by economic factors that motivate families to resort to these damaging marriages to legally bring a relative from the home country into the UK. There is a combination of factors at play in these early marriages, including economic, legal identity, politics, flawed religious interpretations, and the cultural aspect, which is by far the strongest.</p> <p>Rafeeqa was rebelling and questioning these values and conditions from an early age, and this should be taken into consideration in our readings of the concepts</p>

	<p>of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>. The image of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> should not be threatening or disempowering. It should be inviting and accepting, a robust reference for Muslim women, particularly Muslim women in the West, which they can use with confidence.</p>
<p>Are there certain changes in the law, in policies and/or in institutions, which are crucial entry points at this point in time to create a workable pathway towards equality and justice in the family?</p>	<p>Family law, Child Protection law, and Safeguarding legislation in England means that there is legal recourse for all children, young people, men and women who are denied equality and justice, however this is in accordance with the codified law of the land, and does not extend to the non-codified traditions and practices that have governed Rafeeqa's life. The law of the land takes the onus away from the vulnerable child or adult, and places it on parents, family members, and professionals, so that maximum support and protection can be afforded to the abused. However, the atmosphere of secrecy and fear in Rafeeqa's family prevented everyone from accessing this support.</p> <p>Rafeeqa approached a <i>Sharia</i> council in the hope of accessing support, however this was not forthcoming. <i>Sharia</i> councils are non-governmental organisations, without legal standing, which have been set up to assist Muslims, particularly Muslim women, with Islamic <i>fiqh</i>-related issues such as inheritance and divorce, however Rafeeqa's experience was extremely negative and insulting, and no such support was available to her. <i>Sharia</i> councils are not monitored by any government body, or by policies and guidelines, and this is a significant factor in the type of service women receive. A good way of moving forward would be to set up a regulatory authority for the <i>Sharia</i> councils, which would ensure some uniformity of service, and penalties for non-compliance. Advisors with specific knowledge and experience of domestic abuse, sexual abuse, forced marriage and honour related violence should also be available, together with religious scholars with in-depth <i>Fiqh</i> knowledge, in order to provide a holistic and reliable service to those in need.</p> <p>I feel that in order to bring about positive change for Muslim women within their families, communities and societies, initiatives and awareness raising programmes such as the National Society for the Protection of Children's (NSPCC) abuse in <i>madrassahs</i>, and sexual abuse in families, need to be drawn up from the mainstream laws and disseminated through appropriate channels. Extra-curricular events at religious institutions such as mosques should address issues such as sexual abuse and incest. Mosque leaders and <i>Imams</i> are failing in their duties, and should be reminded of their responsibilities to all Muslims, not just the men. Organisations such as Muslim Women's groups at both local and national level, generic women's groups and other community programmes should be included in this approach, and avenues of recourse and support should be identified and shared. The self-imposed restrictions need to be lifted from Muslim families, and services and measures need to be in place to support those who are willing to come forward and report these abuses.</p> <p>National organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain (http://www.mcb.org.uk/), and the Islamic Society of Britain (https://www.isb.org.uk/) should step forward and take a lead in supporting the exposure of sexual abuse within Muslim families, so that it is no longer a taboo to acknowledge and address this issue. The Muslims of the UK need to begin to remedy the internal ills of their community themselves in the first instance, only then will external support from mainstream services become accessible to those at risk.</p>

<p>Are there important lessons from Rafeeqa’s life, which challenge the way we carry out our own work and movement building? Are there changes we should make in our own empowerment strategies?</p>	<p>The most important lesson from Rafeeqa’s story is that we need to have an all-encompassing strategy to equip those working with Muslim women to recognise child sexual abuse, incest and marital rape, and to equip them with not only the skills needed to deal with such incidents, but also the knowledge and understanding of patriarchy and its crippling effects. The Muslim communities of the UK are not one homogenous mass; rather they are diverse, in language, nationality, dress, race and culture. These differences need to be recognised by professionals, in order to provide the best support possible.</p> <p>Empowerment strategies should include capacity building workshops in the Muslim context for both genders. Concerted efforts need to be made to remove any form of stigma from anyone attending the workshops by garnering the support of established and credible Muslim organisations and individuals. This may be an alien concept for many of us, however it is important to include local and national bodies in our empowerment work, not only to gain access to the women (and men) we need to work with, but also to gain their trust and establish our credibility.</p>
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Reflections

Assumptions: attitudes, values, beliefs

My initial impression of Rafeeqa was correct, I found her values, attitudes and beliefs to be in line with the constructed way of knowing. Rafeeqa uses her own experiences together with external knowledge to arrive at the truth. I was surprised by the fact that despite all that had happened with Rafeeqa, she is neither bitter nor a persistent victim, and feel that she has used the adverse experiences as a foundation for something positive. She is empathetic towards victims of abuse and violence, and is fully committed to not just making things better for the individual woman, but also to educate and train front line professionals.

Rafeeqa’s faith is strong, and she is extremely spiritual. I believe this was the case from a very young age, when she began to question the behaviour of the adults around her and relate it to Islam and its teachings. She states that as a Muslim she can turn to Allah and Islamic teachings for answers, rather than humans. Throughout her life she has found that there was no-one that she could rely on for support, no-one was there for her except for *Allah*. The behaviour of her family was in contrast to her interpretations of her faith, and even at a very young age, she questioned their Islam, particularly at the point of her early marriage in Pakistan. Not at any time did I get the feeling that her attitudes were false in any way, nor were they contrived for any personal gain. I felt safe and connected with her on a feminist and spiritual level, which is a connection I have only previously felt with fellow feminists.

Despite the family’s attempts to control Rafeeqa and her life in the same way as they have with other female family members, she refused to accept this denial of her identity and self. She faced many challenges and managed not only to get herself through with little support, but also managed to protect and care for her daughter throughout. The stranglehold the *walis* had on her family, was loosened by Rafeeqa, and she was able to demonstrate the flaws in the traditional and cultural practices being perpetrated by male (and some female) family members.

Justifications

Solve problems: deeper meaning, changes: Although Rafeeqa is typical of many women of her generation and background, born to immigrant parents from South Asia, who lived and operated in a patriarchal extended and joint family system, she refused to be a part of that structure. In spite of the abuses she suffered, or maybe because of them, she refused to accept her fate and managed to extract herself and her daughter from her family.

Rafeeqa's strength becomes even more apparent once she is away from her family. She has used the law of the land and legal recourse to ensure protection for others from her abuser, and in doing so she has flouted all the cultural norms and expectations that were instilled in her.

Rafeeqa hasn't allowed her experiences to impede her; rather she has used them positively to help others. I believe she has fully arrived at the constructed stage of knowledge: - she is self-aware, without being pretentious, and is secure in her identity. Her role as a support worker for abused women includes listening and empathising, as well as speaking with and for others. She is very receptive of divergent views and perspectives, and gains pleasure and fulfillment from helping others. I will always remember her immediate response when I asked her if she would be willing to be a resource person was *"only if it will help someone."* I think this completely sums up Rafeeqa, a woman I am proud to know.

Life Story #2: Nijat

Nijat is the eldest of four children, and the only girl. Her parents are of Pakistani heritage, her mother migrated to UK at a very young age and then returned to Pakistan to enter into an arranged marriage with her cousin. She became pregnant with Nijat quite quickly and returned to the UK, her husband joined her on obtaining his visa, by which time Nijat had arrived in the world. Her story is as follows: -

From a very very young age, there was only one person in charge, and that was my Dad. I must have been about 10 years old, and I remember on the way to school, I used to steal sweets from my own shop, which was pretty awesome! I didn't steal the sweets to eat them, but I stored them in a bag, under my bed, where my Mum cleaned once a week, and obviously she found them! When the bag became full, I would have to remove something to make room.

I remember one day my dad came to pick me up from school, and he didn't say a word, not a single word, everything was perfectly normal until I came into the house and I saw a bag, a drawstring bag, the kind you would use for the gym, sitting on top of the sound system, and that was it, I was in trouble. I got smacked, all the way up the stairs, and asked for an explanation, but I honestly could not explain why I had done it. I didn't even like any of the stuff I had stolen; I still don't really like chocolates or sweets! That was the first time I realised my Mum didn't have a say in anything. She couldn't stop my Dad from yelling at me, shouting at me or beating me. That was the first time I actually remember being hit. It was after that I started seeing how my Mum had always looked at my Dad as well, not as an equal in their relationship, but as "he's the man in charge, and she will do whatever he says." Therefore, it followed that I had to, and have to do whatever he says as well. I think that's when the understanding that nobody else is ever going to be in charge, first kicked in.

Shortly after this we moved houses, and everything seemed to be alright, we chugged along like that, whatever my Dad said, we listened to, if he said, "go to bed," we went to bed, if he was in a bad mood nobody said anything. We moved again to the house we are in now, and things carried on in much the same way for a while. Then I started high school, and things changed a little bit, the first thing that was noticeably different was that I wasn't allowed to walk home from school. My Dad didn't approve of me walking home, so he had to pick me up and drop me off. Even if I wanted to walk home, I didn't dare ask my Dad, because he would just ask why, if I wanted to go on a school trip, he would ask why. I would always go to Mum first, thinking she'll ask Dad, but then sometimes even she didn't ask Dad, and she would say "well we know your Dad is going to say no, so we'll just not go to him to even ask." I didn't think this was right, I didn't agree with it. My friends were allowed to go wherever they wanted, they were allowed to walk home from school, they were allowed to do things I couldn't do, so obviously there was a lot of resentment that built up against my Dad through my high school years. I didn't really speak to my Dad much.... He was the same with one of my brothers, Salim.

Salim followed me, I think he was as scared of my Dad as I was, because he had seen the same things as I had, there's only two years difference between us. I remember towards the end of high school, something as small and insignificant as Salim wanting to shave but not doing so because my Dad said no, and that was it, he had to keep his facial hair. He went through a lot too with my Dad; I think both him and me paved an easier path for Amir and Emad, our two younger brothers, definitely, without a doubt.

I think I must have got to around the age of fifteen when I started rebelling, at that stage I thought to myself, hang on, I've seen enough, and I have had enough. I had seen him hit my Mum, I had seen him literally scare the living daylights out of every one of us, I didn't like it, and thought somebody has to stand up to him, and it has to be me. However, it didn't quite work because I realised that my Mum was also getting the backlash of my behaviour, along with me. My Dad would say, "If Nijat's not behaving then it's your fault, because she's your daughter." He would say things like "she can walk home but if anything happens I'm going to kill you and kill her as well," and other similar comments, which made things so much more difficult and awkward for my Mum and for me. At this point, there was little or no

communication between my Dad and me at this time, the most I ever said to him was to ask how many *rotis (chappatis)* he wanted to eat...

At the time I didn't know what to make of him, all I thought is what is this man doing? He's just so strict, he's just awful, he's such a Paki, and they were the thoughts I had. As I got older I realised that it was his fear, his fear of me effectively taking away his *izzat*, (honour) which he had spent so long building up. That's what it was. In fact, until this day, and I still tell people this now, he said to me just as I started sixth form, "just remember that every time you leave this house you're carrying the respect of the whole family in your hands – if anything happens, the onus is on you". I also remember him telling me little stories and secrets as he called them regarding *izzat*, honour and respect and relating them to me. We still weren't really talking, he never asked me about college, or life or what I was doing, he was never happy with me, there was always something he didn't like. He would tell me the "lipstick story" where he would point someone out and say, "see that girl Nijat, you might think she looks pretty with lipstick on, but it's not good, you don't wear it." I remember sitting in the back of the car thinking why is this man telling me this, I don't even like lipstick, but it was his roundabout way of telling me that this is what men find attractive, therefore you are not going to do that. He became obsessive, he had to know where I was at every given moment, he wanted to know my timetable, when I had free periods why was I going to the town centre without gaining permission. However, he was happy for me to attend St Wilfred's sixth form, as there weren't many south Asian people there, from whom he had to protect his reputation and his honour.

Although he was so paranoid about protecting his honour, he didn't feel the same about taking care of me! I didn't feel protected, at the time I felt restricted! Until this day I don't feel that I was protected! It was about him, not ever about me. It was always about protecting his own reputation. Whilst all this was going on with my Dad, my relationship with my Mum was getting a lot better. I think if it weren't for my relationship with my Mum, I would probably have gone, I wouldn't have stuck around. Then his greatest fear would have been realised! What he didn't understand is that he was going about it in completely the wrong way, if he'd explained everything to me and taken into account how I was feeling, I wouldn't have done anything at all, because there would have been a level of respect there for each other, based on the fact that he trusted me. It was a very trying time for the relationship between my Dad and me, however I noticed some small changes. He still picked me up and dropped me off, but if I said I was going into town with my friends, he seemed to be fine with it, which seemed very strange. However, I realised that it was because he held something over me. He told me "I know people who know who you are, but you don't know who they are, so if you do something you shouldn't be doing, it will get back to me, so if you do go into town, I know you will behave yourself".

It was instilling fear into me - in my Dad's eyes, in his opinion, respect is fear, but it isn't at all. I wasn't really scared of him after that, I thought, well, what are you going to do? And neither did I respect him. Not at all. I hated him, I couldn't stop hating him. I remember he went for his annual holiday to Pakistan, the relief! And seeing the change in my Mum as well, she was relieved too, she was different. We would get up early, there would be music playing, there were no instructions telling me to be home by a certain time, to make sure that my Dad's breakfast or dinner was ready, or having to make sure that my Dad knew where I was at all times. When he returned from his trip I realised just how different things were from when he was away. I remember thinking "we haven't done anything wrong whilst you've been away," so that's when I started saying things to him.

Whenever he returned from Pakistan, he was even worse, if that is possible. He believed more so than usual that everyone was a slave to his needs. He's a man, big man, he walks into the house, and everyone should drop everything to tend to him, only his needs and wants matter.

My Mum and Dad's relationship had changed by this stage as well. It was my seventeenth birthday, and my Dad was insisting that I go to Pakistan to get married, this created many rows and arguments in the house. My Mum was insistent that this was not going to happen. She was adamant that my life wasn't

going to be a replica of hers, she was insistent that I got an education. I wasn't party to these conversations, but was told bits of them. I felt much more supported at this time, as I felt that I had someone on my side, somebody who understands me. The only other thing I kept thinking and hoping was for my Mum to remain strong, I felt she was the only one who could say anything, and the only one who could stand up for me, otherwise my fate would be sealed.

When I saw how difficult things became for my Mum I thought maybe I should just let him take me, maybe I should just let him marry me off, it would make everything alright. We did arrange to go to Pakistan, and I did think the marriage might possibly happen. By this time, I didn't actually feel anything for my Dad. I didn't like him, but I didn't hate him either, I was numb, I definitely didn't respect him. He was just there, somebody we had to make tea and dinner for, somebody we had to err on the side of caution at all times, just in case he developed a bad mood. He became a thorn inside me, annoying and irritating. The phase of him insisting I get married didn't seem to last long, but this may have been due to the fact that I went off to college, I was busy and occupied and didn't really witness all the conversations, discussions and arguments that were taking place. Also, selfishly, I was at the age where I was only thinking of myself, and didn't really think about what my Mum was going through at home, I think it continued for quite some time, but I was unaware of it. I think she shielded me from most of it, and it was only when I finished sixth form that I realised that she had been doing this. All this time, three years, whilst I had been busy with my college work and exams she had been protecting me from the worst of the situation at home.

By now I had decided I wanted to go to Manchester University, and do a degree in Social Work, and put this to my Mum. She was absolutely fine with this and agreed straight away, however when we put it to my Dad, he said "no, I'm not having any of this, she's not going to Manchester, even if she commutes and doesn't stay away from home, I'm not allowing it. You got what you wanted, she's been to college, now it's time for her to get married." This is when I realised the whole marriage thing had been continuing in the background, and that he had agreed to postponing any marriage plans until I finished college. My Mum said a lot of things, many of which I can't remember now, because, I have suppressed them, I don't need them, I don't need them to stress me out, so I have chosen to forget them. However, as things started coming out about relatives wanting my hand in marriage and what was said and wasn't said to them, I remember thinking "that's a lot of things that have been said and done!" I was shocked at the extent of matters relating to my marriage and remember thinking, "gosh, my Mum has had it very hard, she really has."

To keep the peace, I gave up my dream of social work, and instead went to Blackburn College, which in my opinion, at that time, was the worst place a South Asian girl could go. It just was not nice at the time. I went, but was out of my comfort zone, I didn't like attending a college where girls were getting changed in secret, arriving at college in clothes that their families approved of, but then changing into outfits they wanted to wear but weren't allowed to. I wasn't accepted because I was different, I had been pulled out of a predominantly white Christian school and thrust into Blackburn College, with majority Asian Muslims with many diverse complexities regarding culture and identity - I didn't do the things they were doing, therefore I was on the outside. I lasted three months, and I opted to leave, and this point was the start of a new relationship between my Dad and me. I told him what went on, and asked him to think about why I would want to go there with all that was taking place. I think my Dad then thought, "This girl does know what is right and what's wrong, and does understand." Up until then I think he thought others would just influence me and I would indulge in all the behaviour and activity that he feared would harm his *izzat*. This goes to show how little he actually knew me! This is the time I thought this is my Dad, and he doesn't know me, but I don't care. He is agreeing to let me go to Preston University, which is twelve miles away, he is also happy for me and my Mum to go to a mixed gym and he has accepted my new friend, and I am allowed to go to her house, and chill out with her!

I always wondered how and why my Dad was all right with this girl who was my new friend, and then realised it was because they were his kind of people, a traditional Pakistani family, they were people

who didn't work, they didn't expect their girls to go to college or employment. My friend was very different to me, she wore lipstick, and she used make-up, and I was surprised my Dad didn't say anything. Later, I understood it was because he knew her father, and her father was somebody who had arrived in the UK around the same time as my Dad, and had faced the same struggles. Maybe all the people who arrived at the same time shared the same thought and ideas about their new society, and felt they needed to control their children and prevent their exposure to these ills in society. Later on, I realised it wasn't about controlling all their children; it was about controlling the girls, certainly for my Dad. He doesn't have any sisters, he doesn't have nieces, and I don't think he knows how to treat females, until this day I don't think he knows, because I don't think his mother instilled this into him. He doesn't respect anyone, he's selfish. If he wants something, he goes and gets it. He doesn't want to know if things need doing at home, for instance if he wants a new car, and the sofa needs replacing at home, he'll go and get a new car; the sofa isn't his problem or issue. As far as he is concerned, people outside won't be able to see his sofa, but they will see his car. I don't think he valued his home life at all, or what his wife had done. To this day I don't think he does. Yes, he worked and earned money, but a large percentage of that money went to his parents, a large chunk of it went there.

As I got older I realised he was sending large amounts of money to his parents and brother, and I remember feeling angry and let down when I discovered that whilst I had been attending a state sixth form college and school, he had been paying for a private education for his nephews in Pakistan. This really got to me, here we were struggling financially, and he was supporting other people in a foreign country! It was shit!

I remember thinking that he was supposed to be my guardian and protector but I don't know who he was protecting, I didn't feel protected. I don't think my brothers were or my mother; I don't think any of us were protected by him. I wouldn't have gone to him for anything, but what was protected was his mother's interests, which were his brother and his brother's family. He was protecting their future and ensuring they had one, when we were struggling to try and make a future for ourselves. It isn't as though he didn't work, or claimed benefits, he worked hard, but he was driven by the thoughts of what he would get in terms of honour, to make himself look bigger and better. He wasn't driven by a good future for his children; he didn't have aspirations for us. Even now, I think if his sons turned out to be criminals or drug dealers, or if they had illegitimate children, he wouldn't be bothered by it.

The first time I actually felt slightly protected by him was when I left university and he gave me a mobile phone. It was an old handset, horrible, but it was the fact that he gave it to me that mattered. I already had one, and had had it for a year and a half, my Mum gave it to me, but I had to keep it hidden from him. When he handed me this phone, for the first time ever, I thought my Dad actually cares. He's given me this phone, so that when I'm at university, I can call when I need something or if I'm stuck, but still underneath I was questioning his motives, asking myself does he trust me enough to have a mobile phone, have I finally gained his trust? Up until that day whenever I stepped out of the house he would say to the others, "the girl better not be doing anything wrong, she better not be overstepping the mark." I can say that if I ever felt physically protected by him, it was now, but emotionally, he never protected me. My emotions and feelings were never protected; he didn't give a shit what he said to me.

The time between leaving college and university was so hard; I think I blocked a lot of it out. I just didn't want to think about it. It was a time when I had a lot going on emotionally, I was thinking of the people I was with, and wondering if I would fit in? I had just finished at a predominantly white school and thrust into a college with a high ratio of South Asian Muslims, where I didn't fit in and neither did I want to. I had the inner turmoil going on within me of "if I go to university will I fit in or not?" I think I was being very selfish, I didn't see what was going on around me, I really didn't, but the arguments were still going on between my Mum and Dad. I knew because I would hear them. There would be long periods of time when they didn't speak to each other; I am talking months and months, not days. It transpired that these arguments were less to do with me and what I was doing, and more to do with the fact that my Mum was trying to protect me and get me an education. Many times I felt like saying, "let's go, let's just

go and do the deed, (get me married), leave the education”, but my Mum was persistent, and I don't know why. Her life was so difficult, and it is only when I got older that I understood why she did what she did. She didn't want the same difficulties and barriers for me; neither did she want to see me in a situation similar to the one she was in.

In the six months between leaving college and going to university, there was one constant thought in the back of my mind, “if I do go to university, is my Mum going to have to take a lot of abuse and stress for it?” However, she had started working by this stage, which meant she was out of the house quite a lot as well. My Dad started to be alright with that but each small or minor issue led to my Dad saying to my Mum “it's because you're working”, which in turn led me to question whether he had a problem with women working, and wondering if that was why he didn't want me to go to university? I could never work out what “things” he had an issue with - until this day I haven't been able to work it out! I realise these could be his own insecurities and nothing more.

My Dad was very concerned with his external image, and my Mum going out to work went against this image. However, he was happy for her to earn money, he just didn't want her to be visibly working. Nobody else should know that my Mum was working, because then it could appear that he was inadequate as a husband, or a father or as a male, in other people's eyes. However, the flip side is that he could be quite supportive of my Mum too, and the fact that she was stronger financially, even if that money wasn't supporting him directly. As time went on I realised that his reasons for letting my Mum work were selfish, because her income freed up his money. His money then effectively made his Mum happy, because he could send it all abroad and do everything he wanted to do for anyone overseas in Pakistan. I didn't see any of that money, until this day I haven't seen any of my Dad's money; he's never supported me.

My Mum could have used the Islamic concept and said it is money that I have earned, and that I am keeping and using in a way that I want, but she didn't, and I think the reason she didn't say this to my Dad is to make her life a little bit more bearable, and to give her children what she thought they deserved, because our Dad didn't give a shit, he didn't care that our TV was only twelve inches, as long as he had his big TV in his room that was fine. As for the sofas, as long as you could still sit on them then it didn't matter that they were old and worn in places, and broken in others, they didn't need changing. That was his way of looking at things, whereas my Mum's way of looking at things was if you can't have a decent home here, why have a castle in another country? He didn't quite see that, so I think my Mum thought that at least this way I can give my children a childhood they can enjoy, we weren't spoiled but we didn't want for anything. I think that my Dad always wanted to go back to Pakistan and take us all with him, until very recently he would say “well we're not going to stay here, so why bother making things nice? I remember the days when my Dad was insistent on all of us obtaining our dual nationality; because when they kick us out we will be able to go back to Pakistan without difficulty. He fully believed that he would be ejected and us with him. I found this a thoroughly ludicrous thought and didn't understand it at all! I'm a British citizen, why am I ever going to be kicked out?! Things are a bit different now! He's not going anywhere anymore, neither is he going to be kicked out as he put it, but back in those days he was adamant it would happen. He would always say, “you must have £500.00 in your bank account at all times, that is just enough to get you a ticket to Pakistan when you need it!”

I found all of this very difficult, because my Dad came to England at a very young age, and his mentality was the same as those of the generation above and before him. His college education took place in England, he isn't illiterate, so why was he still having these backward thoughts? He is only two years older than my Mum, yet she is different to him. They came from the same roots and same background but such a big difference in outlook and attitude! I always struggled with this as a child. The general consensus amongst my Pakistani friends at the time was that this was pretty much how Dads were, and how they were supposed to be. However, as I got older I realised that they're not all like that at all. I don't think my Dad had anyone to fear, that is why he was the way he was.

I never ever felt that my Dad carried out his role and responsibilities, not at all! He didn't have responsibility for anything! He didn't even have the responsibility of paying the bills! He had the title, and he had the ability to instill fear in us, and in his mind he had respect from us, but I remember my Mum doing all the shopping and cooking, calling and phoning people when things needed fixing, I don't remember my Dad doing anything, apart from maintaining his own car or going to work, or engaging in his own social activities. His role as head of the household should have included making main decisions in relation to the house and its general running, but he didn't. He didn't discuss anything with us, he told us how it was going to be. If he had said it, that was it, we had to abide by it. By having the role of head of the household, he had the privilege and the ability to control us. Culture and society together condoned his behaviour, he's a man, he's allowed to say what he wants, he's allowed to do what he wants and nobody is going to say anything. So, if he wanted to lock his wife and children in the house, and did so, then he could go out and tell people of what he had done, but nobody would bat an eyelid! It was okay for him to do that, he was allowed, because he was the husband and the dad, nobody could question him.

I think by shifting all the responsibility he should have had onto my Mum, freed him up to be "someone". He wasn't a dad or a husband; he didn't perform any of his responsibilities or duties in my opinion, yet he had status! The only privilege he had was to instill fear in us, and the more he did this, the more "respect" he gained from us, and this made him feel bigger and better about himself. Eventually this backfired on him, as we got older and began to understand things more we stopped being afraid. Some people continue to instill the fear well into their children's' adult lives, but fortunately we had a bit of a U turn and it didn't happen. However, had we not had the courage, or the understanding or the education together with a supportive mother I think today things would have been very very different.

There was a huge discrepancy between the theory of guardianship and protection and the actuality, but to the outside world it would definitely not have appeared this way. For example, we weren't allowed to tell anybody that Mum was at work! If someone came or called, we had to say she was out doing the shopping or some other chores. Externally it was a case of everything we had got was due to my Dad. All the money that my mother had freed up due to working was spent on building a huge mansion in Pakistan, and then people admired it and him, saying look at what he's done, how well he manages his home and family, how good he is with money and how hard he works, he's done it all! But no he hadn't, he only got what he got because of my Mum, but nobody out there knew that. His children got an education, he bragged to people of his daughter doing a degree, and his son being at university and saying how proud he was but we wouldn't have been there if it wasn't for my Mum. If it were up to him, we would have been married off! Even to this day he goes out with his head held high, talking of how well his children have done at university but he hasn't done a single thing to help us get to where we are. He didn't actively do anything to encourage or help us, if anything he tried to slow down and even stop our progress. Again, he's taking credit for something he had no part in. To this day my Dad still feels inferior next to my Mum, he didn't earn as much as she did, and she was holding her own and supporting us, I think he felt as though he was losing power. Going out and making people believe that all the achievements were up to him, helped him to believe that he was responsible, and in turn made him the recipient of others admiration which made him feel powerful. I honestly think he believes he did play that role, and can't see that he had nothing to do with any of our success or achievements. He believes that everything we have is due to the way he is and what he has done. I don't think that even for a second does he think that he's actually been a hindrance, and he's just been on a power trip all this time.

I remember we had to break the news that my Mum was going to begin working slowly, but I think he was more accepting than he would have been due to the financial circumstances at the time. However, he would often say, "don't forget, you only work because I allow you to work". He gave her permission to go to work, but he made her feel that she owed him for allowing this, but if problems occurred within the general running of the house they were due to her, because she had chosen to work rather

than take care of the home. But, when things were going smoothly and the money was coming in, he pointed out it was due to him, and the fact that he had allowed her to work! Further to this, he approved of her working in a school, as there weren't many Asian men there, it was just around the corner from home and it fit in with school times and holidays.

Many times, he blamed extended family rifts on my Mum and her working too. Extended family members would discuss the fact that she was out, she was getting ideas, and she was becoming disobedient and standing up to her husband. She was challenging him and asking for her rights, and this was all down to the fact that she had a job, that he has allowed her to have. Therefore, it was his mistake and he needed to rectify and sort it out, usually through beatings.

In your observation of your own family were/are there specific obligations that family members must meet in relation to your Dad?

My Dad had some strange expectations of us, I had more obligations towards him, because I'm a girl, but a lot of it had to do with the boys as well. They were expected to take a keen interest in his stories about Pakistan and they were expected to be just as interested as he was in matters and situations in Pakistan as he was. With me he wanted me to do all the things a good and obedient wife would do, so as a daughter I should cook, I should stay at home, I had no need to leave the home without good reason. I see now that it was all about controlling our movements, and us but we weren't aware at the time. He didn't want or expect us to challenge him in any way and I think if he could he would have locked us away.

He had so many expectations, and we were just supposed to know what they were, without him telling us. For instance, he would go in the shower and come out expecting his clothes to be ironed and laid out, ready for him to wear. He wouldn't ask anyone to iron his clothes, he just expected everyone to know his wishes and desires. He shouldn't have to lift a finger, and as a daughter I should know this, and ensure that his clothes, food and all his needs were anticipated and met by myself. This meant I had to be at his beck and call all the time, I couldn't go out anywhere because he may want some tea, or he might want dinner. Even when we used to go to the gym on Sundays, I remember, we had to be back home by 11.30, as this is the time he got up on a Sunday, and he would expect his tea and breakfast to be made. He also used his job as a taxi-driver as a means of control too. He would often say, "I know all these roads, I know so many people, you could be anywhere and I could be there!" That was how he would make sure that we all behaved, because if we didn't, he would know.

As a child, I don't remember my Dad being very religious, the local mosque leaders had no effect on my Dad! He was of the opinion that he knew what he needed to do and no *Maulana* or *Imam* could teach him anything he wasn't already aware of. Occasionally I did see him pray, but not as much as I do now. He was more interested in his cars and music rather than religion. It was also all about his social life and his social standing, being able to bring people home without warning and expect them to be made welcome. I didn't see him make a conscious effort to go to the Mosque to pray; however, he did go on a Friday.

Extended family however had a massive influence on him! What they thought of him was more important than anything else. What they thought of my Mum or us didn't matter, it was all to do with what they thought of him. I think a lot of it had to do with his Mum, my Grandmother, when she thought he was losing control of his wife, his children and his household, she needed to sort it out and she would do this by playing extended family members off against each other. This all became more apparent when I got older. For instance, we would go to visit a family and two weeks later we would be told by my Dad that we were to have nothing to do with them, as they had offended his Mum. If we still insisted on going my Dad would fall in his mother's eyes, she would see that he had little or no control over his wife, and God forbid, he must have control over his wife!

He had control over all of us, but he didn't protect us, he didn't care about us as people, especially me. I don't think he ever told my brothers to "look after your sister", or 'don't let her go anywhere on her own". This may have been due to me being the eldest, and the only girl, but I felt quite alone. As much as I had my Mum for support for so many years I had seen her struggle, and I didn't want to burden her with anything more, so I kept my thoughts and my struggles to myself. She was the only one I could have spoken to, I didn't have sisters or cousins and didn't have a close girlfriend, but I chose not to change this. I figured the best way of dealing with things was to shut them off, not think about them, and not talk about them with anyone, which then meant that you didn't need anyone. It was a way of protecting myself, my Dad had never protected me and I didn't want to burden my Mum any more. I remember at school that it was me looking out for my brother, the one who is next one down from me. We were quite close, and I had a cousin, Saj, who looked out for me at school, I didn't ever tell my parents about how much he did do, but he really did look after me. This was the first time that I came across a male figure that was protective of me and it was a nice experience. If anyone pulled my hair or bullied me, I knew Saj would be there. There was no way that my Dad would do that, or my younger brother, I was older than him, I was looking after him, it couldn't be the other way around as far as I was concerned, so as far as I was concerned, there was nobody to look after me, or protect me.

Moving forward a few years' things had changed a little bit by this stage. I think my dad understood by now that I was aware of society and how people thought and because of this I think I got something from him. By something I mean an understanding, but for the first time I got something! He realised I understood what he meant about honour and *izzat*, and what he wanted, and that made him feel better or reassured about me and what I was doing. He gave me the mobile phone, which to me meant that he was happy with me, and he was fine with me going to university so off I went. At this time, I didn't hear very much about marriage, but, did I not hear it or was I not listening? I'm at university, I've got a whole bunch of new friends there, I've got this amazing thing going on with my life where I'm not being pressured to get married, so maybe I just didn't hear it. In reality I've never been pressured, my mum has been pressured, but not me. I'm not sure if I ignored the pressure, I look back and I think I did. I shut it out.

I remember I wanted a job whilst I was at university, and I recall we had to break it to my dad very very slowly, do it in such a manner that it would be acceptable to him. I already had a job; in fact, I had been working for three or four weeks before I told him. I approached him and told him I had an opportunity for a job and he was agreeable to it, which was a first. He was so chilled out and relaxed about it, we had no idea he would be this way. This was my dad, why had he changed? Then I realised it's because he trusted me. After everything he'd said he realised this girl is not going to do anything wrong, and that's what did it.

After this my dad and I started talking, I would come home from university and tell him how my day had been, and slowly the relationship between my dad and I began to build from there. He still wasn't protecting me or taking care of me; for example, I was commuting to uni but he wouldn't pick me up or drop me off. I was using public transport, coming and going on the bus, in fact some days I was coming home later than I had ever come home before because I had late lectures, which finished at nine in the evening, but he never questioned me about why I was coming home so late. I found this very strange, but then I thought, is my mum being questioned about it? In the background, he was still going on about marriage, it turns out he wanted me to marry one of his cousins, and this cousin was prepared to wait! What had actually happened at the time was that my dad had said to this cousin's mother that "my daughter is in education let's wait until she's got her degree and then we will sort it out," so effectively, it bought him time. My mum was not aware of this either, she heard afterwards. For my dad, it was a case of waiting until I finished university. In his head, he had it all planned, I was going to university, I would get my degree, and then I would marry this cousin. This is why he was so relaxed about the job and me working, it all started to make sense afterwards. By this time, he couldn't say to me that I couldn't work anymore, I had already been working for two years now, I was never asked to explain why my salary went, it was taken for granted that the money I earned was to aid my studies.

At some point during this time my dad, brother and I, took a short trip to Pakistan, and I realised none of the extended family were talking to us because of the issue of my marriage. Being the only daughter and the only granddaughter, I was just an object. For my mum, it became a point more than anything else to just not get me married to anyone in Pakistan. Despite all the arguments that were still going on in the background between my parents, my relationship with my dad carried on developing, it was quite good actually! However, I felt the relationship was false, I still didn't trust him, I still thought he could turn on me at any stage, I felt he was lulling me into a false sense of security. He was being good to me because he wanted something at the end of it. The relationship was strange, very strange, I'm sure relationships don't work like that. I remember thinking, you can say what you want to me, but you are still just dad. I was never fully able to attach emotionally to my dad in the way I should have been able to. I always had to err on the side of caution, I'd seen it before, and he could flip just like that. This is why I mentioned the incident of when I stole from the shop and he came to pick me up, and stayed very calm and friendly. He never let on that I was about to get in serious trouble when I got home. In the back of my mind there was always the thought that this was exactly what he was doing now, he's pretending everything is okay, but it's not. He thinks I'm stupid, I'm sure he honestly thought I was stupid.

At this point in my life I was very much a yes-man for my dad, when him and my mum argued, I would say to him "yes, I agree with you, I know mum upsets you," and so on. In reality, I didn't care what his problems were, the only time I cared was when my mum was involved. That's the only time I cared, and I would step in, but I feel that's where I went wrong because it then became the normal thing for me to do. So, all of a sudden after university, I'm involved in all these arguments that are taking place. I had to keep stepping in; I had to know about them all. Neither my mum nor my dad thought about my marriage, or me, at any stage of these arguments. Neither of them stopped to think how must Nijat feel? Luckily for them, I dealt with it myself by focusing on my work. It was at this point that I felt I had to do everything by myself because mum didn't care about how I feel, although she's tried to get me an education, I felt this wasn't about me, it was about getting something she never had. I didn't know if she was trying to get something that she didn't ever have, or if she felt that me getting an education was the right thing to do, or was she getting back at my dad and my grandma? I really didn't understand.

Looking back, I realise I never had a positive male role model. Yes, my uncle was there, my mum's brother, but as a girl there is only so much you can talk to your uncle about. Until this day I think my uncle understands me, better than most. He was able to see things that the people I lived with were not able to see. I remember thinking why can't my mum and dad see it? As for my brothers, they didn't need to see it, they were now getting on with their lives without having to listen to the arguments. It was just me, I had to listen to them; even when I was in bed, upstairs, I could hear them arguing. I used to go to bed at 8 o'clock to avoid having to listen to them argue but there was no getting away from it. By the time I left university and got a job in Manchester I was glad to get away. I used to spend so many hours working just to keep away from home.

Although things were better in some respects, I still had not learnt to drive because I was not allowed to learn how to drive. My mum had been allowed to learn to drive, but this was for my dad's selfish reasons. My mum had been allowed to learn how to drive so that she could pick us up and drop us off and therefore relieve my dad of this responsibility. I remember my mum doing this from a very young age so I don't know what or how this came about. It was also another way that he could keep an eye on us without having to do anything, because he knew that we would be going straight to school or college and straight back. I wasn't allowed to learn how to drive but my younger brother was. He had to drive; he was a boy it was expected. When he started to drive my mum placed a condition that my daughter too will learn how to drive, so for some reason, albeit reluctantly, my dad allowed it. As it happens I didn't have any interest in learning how to drive and failed my first test, but I wasn't bothered, I didn't want to drive. Eventually I passed and my dad bought a car for my brother and me to share. By this time my younger brother Amir had passed as well, so he and I shared a car, and Salim had bought his own.

Although my dad had bought the car for me and Amir to share, I still wasn't allowed to drive around on my own. I remember he went to Pakistan and whilst he was away I was driving around quite a lot by myself. When he returned, my mum warned me, and said "just be careful because your dad might say something." This really got to me, he had bought the car for my brother and me to share but really, I wasn't supposed to be driving, especially not on my own. I remember saying to my mum "dad bought the car for me and Amir, why would he have a problem with me driving it?" My mum replied, "your dad says things but he doesn't mean them. He's not happy about you driving at all, but he can't say that, which is why he's imposing restrictions." I went out in the car anyway, on my own, and when I came home I told my dad that I'd been driving by myself, but he didn't say anything. I started thinking this was mum's fear - what is her fear, why is she feeling like that? Now my dad's saying he's okay with me driving, but she's not, I don't get it. I never understood it but after that my dad never mentioned me not driving by myself so it was all right. In a perverse way, my dad preferred me driving because I wasn't walking, so I wasn't as obvious when I was out and about. I went straight to where I was going and straight home. Again, his own selfish reasons, not any sense of protection or caring for his daughter, not because it would open job opportunities for me, but because I would then not be getting on a bus with people he may know.

I remember thinking what the heck, if they are his reasons then so be it. I don't care, I still get to drive. At the time, I didn't understand that this was what my mum was trying to explain to me, that nothing he did was selfless, there was always something behind it. Strangely, I was now driving to Manchester every day whereas three years earlier my dad had been adamant that I could not go to university in Manchester. This actually made me resentful and bitter because he had denied me the degree I wanted and made me settle for something I was not happy with. What I had wanted to do was social care, which wasn't available at the university I attended, what I actually did, was the combined Honours in health studies and education studies.

My graduation was a killer! I didn't want to go because I was graduating late due to various reasons. My dad didn't understand why I didn't want to go, I told him I've done the hard work I don't need a photograph to prove I did it, but my dad was insistent, to the point where he was throwing his money about. He wanted the DVD, the photographs, paying for my gown, extra photographs, in fact everything you could think of, and more. On the day, he was the proudest man there. There were not very many South Asian people, mainly white and black, and he was so proud because I was only one of two South Asians. I remember looking at him and saying to myself "why are you proud, what have you done? Nothing. You've paid for my hat, you've paid for my gown, and you've run round for the DVD? Wow, big deal!" My mum told me that when he was sat in the audience he nearly cried. "Why? You've sat in the audience, you're nearly crying, what have you done to get me here?" I didn't want that piece of paper, I didn't want the photographs, or the hat or gown; I didn't want any of it. When we came out there were a lot of people coming out of the IT graduation, they were mainly South Asian, from Pakistan and India, and mainly Muslims. My dad said to me, "so you picked a topic that not many South Asians are interested in?" He was very pleased with this. He then went home and rang Pakistan, telling his family there that his daughter had got her degree! "Why? You didn't even want me going to college, why are you so proud of my degree?" By the way I am the first person in my dad's family to have got a degree, all the extended family, all those who are older than me, none of them has a degree, I was the first. I remember all the days and nights I sat doing my assignments and my essays, and my dad walking in and out. Not once did he ask me what I was doing or what my essay, or assignment was about - he just wasn't interested.

I remember that during this time I started hearing a lot about my dad's family from my mum. What they wanted, what they were thinking, and so on. It came to light that the person my dad had originally wanted me to get married to had just died in an accident. For my mum there was a sense of relief because the threat had gone, they couldn't marry me to him. Far from it, this started a whole other thing with the dead boy's mother who was not taking no for an answer. She spoke to my dad and

reminded him that she had another son who was suitable, and that she'd like him to marry me. It was at this point that my mum realised what had been going on without her knowledge, or consultation. She wasn't aware that my dad had promised me to this woman's son, but I'm not sure if he actually promised, or if he was too cowardly to say no to her when she first came with the proposal. As I said, by this time my relationship with my dad was much better, we were talking much more, I felt my dad was comfortable talking with me, as I was with him, to the point where I could tell him where he was wrong. By this stage when he said something to me about my mum, I was able to tell him he was wrong.

What was also good at this stage was that he was no longer physically aggressive towards my mum. I think the reason for this is that my dad took a step back and realised that my brothers, his sons were now older and bigger, and that his sons were not going to accept this, it was just something that was not going to happen in this house any more. I think that realisation made him understand that he would have to do things differently. He couldn't behave in the same way he had been behaving in the past. Although I didn't see it, my understanding is that my brother stood up to him at one stage and said, "no you will not raise a hand to my mum anymore." I think the moment that happened my dad found some respect for Salim. This had an impact for my mum too, and I think she felt here's my protection. Because my dad had never fulfilled this role, he had never been her protector; she now made Salim her protector. I realise that my mum had been quite alone as well, she hadn't had anybody to turn to either, but now this had changed.

The job in Manchester was at a call centre and I remember telling my dad that it was only for eight weeks. That's how I got away with it because he thought it was only temporary. Within six weeks of starting the job I got promoted, it was the first time in my life that I had received such positive feedback, it was strange. Up until now nobody had believed in me, nobody recognised how well I had done. Obviously, my mum was in her own turmoil, whether she accepted that or not, but I didn't get any positive reinforcements from her, no matter how much she denies it, I didn't. All of a sudden, I had people telling me I was amazing, in fact amazing enough to run a department! It didn't matter whether or not I had the experience, what mattered is that they had faith in my abilities and me. That was a massive year; before I knew it, I had made so much money, which was sitting in the bank doing nothing, so I told my parents I wanted to buy a property in Manchester.

Once again, my dad was proud of me! I remember feeling angry and wanting to say, "hang on, none of that is because of you, it's because of me." However; despite all of this I feel that during the years I was at university, my dad actually got to know me as a person rather than just 'the girl', and therefore was not able to say to just anybody "yes you can have my daughter for your son." He couldn't physically do it because by now I meant something to him; whereas before I never had. Although things had changed between my dad and me, I know he would still have preferred it if I was his son. He still said things like "you would have this whole house in top-notch order if you were a boy," whereas my mum was completely the opposite and she would say "Nijat you would probably be imprisoned by now if you were a boy!" This is because my mum saw a different side of me; she saw my frustration and she saw the periods of intense anger. She thinks she knows why I was frustrated and angry, but she doesn't. Not at all.

In 2007/08, whilst I was at university, I met somebody I wanted to get married to. For my mum, this was quite a shock, and she kept saying to me "no no Nijat not yet." I think it was fear that made her react in this way, not fear of what community would say or that I had tarnished their name, but fear of my dad. She was scared; scared of what my dad would say and do to us both. It's a shame really, it's very, very sad. I don't know what my dad would have done if we had told him, my mum knows him better than I do, she's the one that has taken the physical hits, she knows what he's capable of. I think she was scared that he would say I told you this is what would happen. I remember my dad saying to my mum just after I had finished my GCSE's "if she does anything", meaning me; he hardly ever said my name at that stage, he always referred to me as *kuri* (girl). He said, "If she does anything out of turn I will kill the both of you." At that stage, when I was so wrapped up in wanting to marry this guy, I had completely

forgotten this, and it didn't occur to me that this is what my mom would have been scared of. Would he be capable of doing that? I don't know. Now I don't think he is, but back then he was a different person and I think he was capable.

Going back to this guy that I wanted to marry; my mum did agree to put it to my dad, but it was a case of having to strategically plan how we were going to tell him. There were some extended family connections with this person I wanted to marry, and I remember having discussions with my mum on the best way for his family to approach our family with a marriage proposal. In the end it never happened, maybe wasn't meant to be, but this experience made mine and my mum's relationship a little bit different as well. I actually felt that she no longer saw me as the daughter who was causing her grief and problems, but that she cared about my happiness and wanted to help me. I don't know why, but so many relationships changed within this small period of time. Until today, my mum still has that deep fear; the fear of what my dad will say if some guy was to come with a proposal for me, and he didn't fit my dad's criteria, it wouldn't happen, but I'm not scared any more I'm just not scared. I'm different now.

In terms of my marriage I don't think either of them have been fair. It's like everything else, for so long I felt I have to do everything myself, so this is another thing I'll probably have to do for myself. My dad doesn't know about the previous relationship and me wanting to get married whilst I was at university, but my mum says I made things worse for myself! So now I'm to blame for the situation that I am in! She says this because when I wanted to get married to this person, there were also a couple of times where I wasn't completely sure, and I felt it was better to get out of that relationship. He was very persistent and adamant that we could sort things out as long as we were able to be in touch with each other, to which my mum said, "okay I'm going to allow you to pursue this relationship even though I feel it's wrong, because it could ultimately end in marriage", which it didn't. So now she says I've brought this on myself getting to such an age and not being married.

I feel I can't say anything back to her because I don't want to hurt her, and I know she thinks that when I do say something I am having a dig at her, but that's not true. Equally I don't want to hurt my dad either, because now I have got a soft spot for him. Even though I don't completely trust him, he is still my dad after all. It's such a complicated situation because if I take my dad's side in an argument, my mum thinks it's a betrayal, and if I take my mum's side, my dad gets hurt. Often, I just do what is necessary to keep the peace, so if that means just saying yes or no to either or both to get what I want, which is a bit of peace and quiet, then that's what I'll do. I don't like being in that environment, they don't understand why I love being alone, but it's just so nice to be away from all of that. It's very difficult to say no, or to disagree with my mum, because as soon as I open my mouth she immediately says, "oh you think I haven't done anything for you," which is wrong. I acknowledge and recognise what she did for me. She just dwells on all her problems, which means that I can't possibly tell her how I feel.

I think my mum is trying to sort something out for my marriage but my dad, no definitely not. I think my dad could quite happily have me sat at home, although he has said to me "if you find somebody, if there is somebody that you like then just let us know, as long as he treats you right it will be okay." But I feel this is one of those things that my mum tells me about where he says one thing but doesn't actually mean it. He still has prerequisites for this person, such as caste, he must be of a high caste which is equal to my dad's caste, it has to be someone who doesn't live too far away, and he has to be Pakistani. These conditions have become worse after my brother has got married, due to the way my sister-in-law actually behaves and the way he thinks she should behave. So in many ways, I am quite angry with my sister-in-law for undoing what I have spent years building up, but I'm not worried, I'll deal with it when the time comes.

If anyone is protecting me it is Allah – I have moments where my faith dips, I'm not going to lie about it, but I always come back to it. It's the one thing that's always there for me. I know my mum and dad are not there for me and this makes me feel nothing, absolutely nothing. I don't feel anything anymore just

nothing. I think this is worse than feeling angry and resentful because indifference means there is nothing there at all, but this is how I cope.

I need time out from them and they don't understand that. I have a friend, who I go to see regularly, and we have the silliest of conversations, but I feel good! I can't remember when I had a conversation with a family member and feeling good about it.

Every time I think things are getting better, that they are easing off a little bit, something else happens. Everyone seems to have a problem with the way I am as a person. I take the approach "if you don't like it then tough, I am who I am." I'm not a bad person, and people who don't know me very well recognise this, yet the ones I live with don't see it. I think this is my way of protecting myself, it's self-preservation. I have to take this approach in order to take care of myself and my feelings, nobody have ever protected me, so I have to protect myself. I don't trust anyone; I don't think anyone will protect me even in the future. I honestly believe that I have to look out for myself because nobody else ever will. I know that my mum will probably be there, but it would have to be an absolute last resort. I think my biggest fear is needing someone; being dependent on someone for emotional support. My role is to support other people, not to be supported.

My doctor has made counselling available to me, but I haven't taken it up because I think I'm coping very well, although I do have moments of anger when it gets too much, and the other times that I need to be away from home. When people are stopping me from going away by saying silly things like "you have to be at home Nijat, you're a Pakistani girl Nijat, Pakistani girls don't just go away from home for time out," that's when I get frustrated. I'm not out there doing something I shouldn't be; I'm just trying to cope with what is going on my house and with my family. Nobody ever asks me how I'm doing, no one.

It's ridiculous how they impose limitations, it's okay for me to support my mum and my dad and my brothers, it's okay for me to work, yet they still want to try and control my movements. I think this is because when I am out and about, people will see me and this will have an impact on my dad's, and the family's reputation and honour. I'm at the stage now where I'm just confused about everything, I don't know where I stand, I don't know whether I am coming or going, I don't know what's going on with that family of mine either. My dad has allowed me to go away: the same man who wouldn't allow me to go to Manchester has allowed me to live away from home, but now my mum's turned the other way, now she says things that my dad used to say! For example, she says things like "don't tell people you got a promotion and you're living away from home, what will people say?" She is worried about the very people who spent years spreading rumours about her daughter, so how does that make me feel?

Now my mum is protecting the name and the honour and the reputation instead of my dad. The roles seem to have switched, and I find that strange. I can't cope with it, the relationship that I had with my mom has suffered because of her behaviour and attitude. I get so angry and frustrated by what she says, especially when she treats me as a child of 16 when it suits her purposes. I don't understand why she's become like this, she fought so hard when my dad was saying things like this, I'm sure she doesn't realise how she's behaving. Maybe all those years of my dad's drumming it into her have made her believe it, or maybe it's always been there and I haven't seen it before. She used to argue with my dad and have so much conviction in her arguments, so much passion and belief, so it leads me to ask, does she not believe any more? I think it was more a case of challenging my dad rather than actually fighting for the principle. She says things like "if you meet a man for the purpose of marriage, don't tell him you're living away from home, because then he will think you're not a good Pakistan girl." These are the sorts of things my dad used to say and she used to challenge, and now she's saying them. But I really don't care anymore, and that's become very apparent to them. I am hoping to God that somebody can make my mum see sense, because I can't. She doesn't like the way I think or what I say, but what she doesn't realise is that I am her.

So, if what I'm saying is wrong, it's only what she used to say, I've heard 20 years of it! I was there when she was fighting for her right to go to work, the right to go to the gym, and the right to be trusted, that's what I'm doing now. Somebody has to tell her that how she is behaving is not acceptable, but nobody in my house has the courage to do that, nobody is man enough apart from me, and to be quite honest I'm tired of the responsibility. She has devalued everything that she argued for, and again I question did she really believe in what she was fighting for, or was it just to gain over my dad? She's happy now because my dad is very much doing what she wants and what she says; she can come and go as she pleases, everything she wanted she's got. She's happy now, so it doesn't matter what everybody else is thinking or what their needs are. My brother's wife now has to fight for those very things that my mum fought with her husband about, because of my mum's attitude. What she says to her is exactly what my dad used to say; I don't think she believed in her arguments at all because if she did, why would she still not believe in them? Why would those arguments and those beliefs not extend to all women? Especially the women in her own family? In reality, the things that were fought for 20 years ago, should be established within our family but they're not, although we have got some small things in place, which is why I'm able to work and drive. I think this is due to the progression of culture and community rather than how things have worked out in my family. I don't think there is anyone who can tell my mum that what she is doing and how she is behaving is wrong.

However, I am a firm believer that no matter how much you know, your parents generally know better; not always, but most of the time. I've told my mum to find me someone to marry, if she thinks he's appropriate then we will take it from there, if however I find someone; I will let her know so she can grill them to death, and if she agrees with my choice, we will take it forward. This is my plan for marriage and it does not involve my dad, because as far as I'm concerned, my dad will be told, not asked. I will tell him. He doesn't realise that everything he has done through the years, the way he's been towards me, are things that I haven't forgotten that. I still do believe that deep down he is still part of this master plan to just marry me off to make somebody else happy, probably his mum. Does my happiness truly mean anything to him? I don't think so. If he had a choice between his daughter's happiness and his respect in the community, his respect in the community would come first. I don't think about it, I'm sick and tired of thinking about marriage!

I know my mum is consumed with my marriage, but if and when it happens I'll deal with it then. I know that when my brother got married a few months ago there was some concern about my feelings, my mum and her friends were thinking about how I was feeling about my younger brother getting married before me. I honestly say all I felt was pure happiness for him and, and I wished him the very best in life. My younger brother was happy and that was all that mattered to me. At this stage I was busy in my own life, I had an aim, I had a goal, I had somewhere to go in my work. I didn't give as much time to the preparation and planning of the marriage as my mum thought I should have, and I think this is why she thought that I was upset about my brother getting married before me, but I was genuinely busy. Everybody else, and everything else, including this marriage was just in the way of my aim. However; my dream was shattered at this wedding because I was unable to go to a work event, which would have earned me promotion.

Nobody asked me if the dates for the marriage were suitable, it was just assumed that I would be available. Although my dad said, "Nijat you can go away," the amount of grief and I had to take every day over the phone from my mum, was unbelievable. Whilst the preparations were going well it was okay, but the minute something went wrong it was my fault. "Nijat, you should have been at home, it's because you're not here that this didn't work, it's your brother's wedding and you don't care", and so on and so on. She was pecking at my head every single day but still I muddled on. I was so close to getting what I wanted; my own office and my own field sales department, along with £15,000, but it's gone. I lost it all because my mum said it wasn't right for me to be away from home, even when my dad had given permission. She was more bothered about me being at home when her brother came, because he wouldn't have approved of me being away, but when did it switch from things having to be all right with my dad, to having to be all right with her brother? At which point did I become answerable

to my uncle rather than my dad? We fell out strongly about this because my mum holds my uncle in much higher regard than my dad, and now my uncle is very much like my dad was in terms of attitude and opinion.

For example, when my mum suggested to her sister-in-law that we go out to watch a movie, she said "no, I'd rather not, because your brother wouldn't like it if we went out in the evening." This is the same uncle who has seen everything my mum went through; he was born and brought up in this country, he's heard of the beatings, he knows everything! I think he's even worse than my dad was, he's certainly more oppressive, and he's the man that we warn women about. He is a very, very good man, but he has changed in many ways. Maybe his wife chooses to be submissive, which is fine; this is how she was brought up, but I don't agree when she says to my mum it's better that we don't go out, or we don't do something just because my uncle wouldn't like it, because then my mum turns around and says: I think it's better that we don't go because your uncle and auntie wouldn't approve of it! But you used to argue with dad for the right to go and watch a movie, why aren't you arguing with your brother? Why are you just accepting it? I feel pretty annoyed about this, particularly about the fact that it's extended to me. If my mum wants to abide by what she thinks her brother will approve of, then that's fine, she needs to understand that I am my own person, and as much as I respect my uncle, she cannot expect to just take an order without questioning it from a man who is not even my dad.

But my mum expects me to accept without question and to hold him in as high esteem as she does. My uncle is one of the best men I know, this stipulation is not so much him as it is my mum. His opinion is extending to the boys as well, particularly Salim now that he's married, but as I said before it's not him, it's my mum imposing that. She also expects my sister-in-law to abide by my uncle's opinion and when my sister-in-law has challenged it, my mum has been deeply offended, telling her that this is a man we do not disagree with, we do not raise our voice to, and you've disagreed with him, you've insulted him. My mum has taken it a step further, being overly upset, saying things like he's my brother how dare she offend him? Her brother is a grown man, he can defend himself, if he dislikes something that somebody has done, especially somebody that is so new to the family then I am sure he will be able to do something about it, he doesn't need my mum to defend him. But she felt it was her role to defend him and she carried on saying terrible things to my sister-in-law for three weeks.

If I was to be totally honest I could say that at this moment, the family and me, don't really get on very well. They don't agree with my views, and I still feel like they don't value my opinion in a lot of things. However, some things have changed, for instance, Salim, who was very quiet and really didn't say very much to me in the last few years, now says that I am the only one he can confide in. Amir always comes to me before he makes a decision to get my approval or opinion, not because I'm older but because he's seen me struggle through so much. He knows that I still try to protect my mum from all the little things, which is why he comes to me rather than trouble her with all the small mundane things they get into— things that are not really worrying and are easily dealt with, but for my mum they would become huge issues.

My usual approach to their dilemmas is, "let's look at the problem, let's think about it logically and find a solution. My mum however would think about it for four days, and completely stress about it, and stress everybody else as well, so in order to protect her and ourselves, I've taken on the role that my dad or my brothers should have taken on, that is the role of my mother's protector, but I haven't taken it out of choice, I feel that I've been put there. I feel I have no alternative but to take on this position and this role because if I don't do it, it will be detrimental to my mum's health. In actual fact, I think I protected my dad quite a lot as well from my mum too. It's strange how their roles shifted - where before my mum had spent so long being scared of my dad, it's now come to my dad saying, "well if your mum is okay with it then we can go ahead, or if your mum is happy with such a thing then I'm happy with it too." My mum is now the person in the family that we go to when major decisions have to be made. My dad no longer matters, his opinion no longer matters, the only time it would matter a little bit is my marriage, apart from that, his opinion doesn't matter at all.

Looking at me, nobody would see that I have saved three children's lives, or that I had stopped a woman from dying, or that I spend a lot of my time helping and advising women whose marriages have broken down, and whose partners have been violent. Do you need to be married to be able to give good advice, can a single person not do it, and does marriage give you a license to be able to offer advice and support? I don't think so! But I know how the community thinks and feels, why they think I'm not qualified to support other women; it's because of the absence of a man in my life. I don't have a man, I'm not married, so therefore I don't know anything - I'm not qualified to advise, or help.

I often justify the fact that I'm not married to myself more than others and the main reason I think that I'm still single, is because maybe my family needs me to be at home, and that's what keeps me going and that's why I continue doing what I'm doing for my family. I get the *duas* and blessings as my reward, however it can't carry on indefinitely, and within the next few years I'm going to have to do what I can to secure myself a husband who will treat me with respect, and not be somebody I fear. Someone who will treat me as an equal, not the way my dad did with my mum. A husband whose priorities are his wife and his children and not his mum and his brothers and sisters all the time. I would like to think that I would treat his parents with dignity and respect, but that depends on him. If I have waited this long to get married, I'm not about to make a rash decision and just marry for the sake of marrying. It has been, and still is, immensely difficult to defy the cultural norms and expectations, but I have been strong; in fact, one of my biggest fears is losing that inner strength. It is this inner strength that has allowed me to challenge what is wrong and speak up for what is right, and this has affected my relationships with my family, with my dad, my mum, my brothers, and even some of my friends, but I can't help who I am.

My principles and my beliefs mean a great deal to me. I know many people from our community and extended family and friends think I'm westernized, which is seen as a bad thing, but I think it is ridiculous. There are many girls that I know from my own community and religion who go around half dressed, they're doing all the things that they shouldn't do, but they are not seen as deficient in any way because they're married. They have followed the cultural expectations whereas I'm breaking away from the norms. I know I am different but not in a bad way. I pray, I respect my parents, but I don't embrace the whole community and society's expectations. I have never thought to ask them why they think I'm westernised in fact I don't care enough to ask, and I think it's this very attitude that sets me apart, that makes me westernised. What they are frightened of is acknowledging and accepting that I don't care about their norms and traditions. In my country, the white people don't care about cultural expectations, and I fit in with them, which is what defines me as westernised in my community's eyes.

In my opinion, an ideal family would be the exact opposite to what all of us are here. I know we all like to think we are equal but we are not. I would like to take my family exactly how it is and give them the ability to just sit down and be able to discuss things openly, where everyone's opinions are valued and everyone's opinions matter and everyone is valued equally. We are living in a time where we know the price of everything but we don't know the value or worth, and I think that's what makes us so unjust really. I don't think we will ever be equal as women, how many years have women fought for rights and have still not got them? I don't think we ever will, because whilst we still have people here like my mum who have turned around and changed after so many years, we will always have inequality. We could have had a physical demonstration of equality if mum had stayed where she was in terms of fighting for equality, and dad had met her partway, then we would have been bang on perfect! Instead we've always had one who has power, my dad has come down a step being a nasty controller, and instead my mum has stepped up to take over the control and power, for example she has made us all get the Live 360 Application on our phones so she knows exactly where we are!

Analysis of Nijat's story

What have I learned from Nijat's life story?	<p>Nijat's life story has had a profound effect on me, and I have found it to be very different from all the other life stories I have collected. The only way I can think of to describe her narration is as a volcanic explosion. The most prominent thing to strike me was the constant gravitation from one parent to the other which has been in evidence throughout most of Nijat's life. I found her narration to be candid and forthright, and at times it seemed that she was grateful for the opportunity to unload.</p> <p>I have learned that although there was constant friction between her parents, Nijat was shielded from much of it by her mother, who has then used this to impose difficult choices on Nijat, such as forcing her to choose between her parents. Emotional and psychological blackmail appears to have been inflicted by both parents, from her father to control her movements and to warn her of the consequences of stepping out of line, and from her mother when she has wanted Nijat to believe the worst of her father.</p> <p>I have also ascertained that although Nijat's mother had very strong ideas and beliefs with regards to the rights of women, these have not translated to other women, apart from her daughter. Nijat questions this belief on several occasions during her narration, asking whether it is a genuine belief and conviction, or just about her mother's efforts to best her father. I further sense that there is an unspoken sense of obligation that Nijat feels towards her mother, which prevents her from making a decision for herself.</p> <p>Despite Nijat being the only girl of four children, it is ironic that she is now the protector of her mother from her father and vice versa, and also her mother from her brothers and their issues. Nijat has mentioned that this leaves her feeling unprotected again, and I feel she has put up very strong psychological barriers against ever needing anyone, which I suspect comes across in her attitude, and deters people from approaching her, including potential marriage partners.</p> <p>Although I have found Nijat to be brutally honest at times, I cannot help but feel saddened by her disillusion of her mother, and to a lesser degree of her father. Despite having attended college and university, and carrying out a very responsible job role, where she is assisting women who have suffered abuse, she is unsure of herself and lacks confidence. This is not immediately apparent; however, I feel the attitude of self-preservation, and "I couldn't care less", are carefully contrived, and mask this insecurity very well.</p>
Is there anything specific to say about the following topics:	

<p>a. how the dominant (articulated in codified and non-codified law) interpretations of qiwamah and wilayah impact the choices Nijat has made in her public and private life?</p>	<p>The impact of non-codified laws, rules and regulations as set out by Nijat’s father is evident throughout her life-story, and has greatly influenced the choices she has made. I would go so far as to say that she really hasn’t made choices for herself; rather she has followed directions whether spoken or unspoken, and has managed to negotiate an acceptable way for herself.</p> <p>The indisputable example of the impact of non-codified laws is the issue of Nijat’s marriage. Due to her father’s authority Nijat has not felt able to introduce anyone as a potential husband, as it is understood that he would disprove. Further to this, after one attempt, he hasn’t been active in identifying and introducing Nijat to a suitable potential husband, which has left Nijat in an untenable position with regards to her marriage. Her mother is also subjected to these laws, and despite having made huge gains she is unable to support Nijat in her quest to marry someone who is acceptable to both her and her father.</p> <p>Nijat’s choice of career was denied her due to the conditions imposed by her father, and this has had a long-lasting effect on her. She still hasn’t got over this to this day, and although her relationship with her father has improved, she has not forgiven him. Subsequent choices of career have also been in accordance with the conditions imposed by her father, although there does appear to be some relaxing of the rules, particularly in regard to her employment, friends and driving. I feel this is due to the fact that her father no longer sees her as a threat to his honour, possibly due to her age.</p> <p>Nijat mentions that her father was not particularly religious, nor did he care for the opinion of scholars. The only time he went to the <i>Masjid</i> was on Fridays, for <i>Jumm’ah</i> or for the funeral prayers of someone who passed away in the community. Although her mother is more spiritual, and sets more store by religion, it was cultural norms and traditions and community reputation that were drawn upon, rather than interpretations according to faith.</p>
<p>b. how such interpretations have contributed in shaping Nijat’s sense of self and affected her capacity to enjoy her human rights (civil and political; economic, social and cultural rights)?</p>	<p>Nijat’s father’s non-codified interpretations of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> have massively contributed in shaping her sense of self and identity. For a long time, her father referred to her as “the girl”, not even using her name, which is an erosion of her existence. Furthermore, she has been unable to exercise her rights to education, whilst some may argue that she did have an education, this was not an informed and free choice, rather it was conforming to the expectations set out by her father. Her social rights have also been inhibited by her father, as he was always concerned that she may do something to compromise his honour. It is evident in his reaction at her graduation, that he was pleased that she had been on a course with very few South Asian people, as these were the people he wanted to impress with his standing and reputation. If Nijat had been on a course with a significant number of South Asian students, any unacceptable behaviour would have become the topic of unwanted discussion which would have had a detrimental effect on her father’s honour, but this threat had been greatly reduced due to the degree programme she had enrolled on.</p>

	<p>Overall, the effects have been quite damaging to Nijat's confidence and sense of self, and in many ways, she has now taken on the role of a son rather than a daughter. Interestingly, Nijat mentioned a comment made by her father where he had said that if she were a boy she would have the whole household in top-notch order; this almost seems to have become a self-fulfilling prophecy.</p>
<p>c. how different these impacts are for differently located women, and particularly for women who face the intersection of multiple discrimination?</p>	<p>See final group analysis</p>
<p>d. what kind of divergences exist on the ground, which are a product of active negotiations?</p>	<p>Nijat's story gives examples of negotiations that have occurred throughout her life in order to acquire some of what she wants whilst remaining compliant to the rules and regulations set out by her father. For example, rather than not going ahead with her university education when she was denied the programme of her choice, she compromised and attended a university close to home. Other negotiations regarding driving, a mobile phone and employment have also been made, to the point where it became acceptable for her to remain away from home.</p> <p>Nijat has also become the protector of her mother, father and brothers, and this is a divergence from the typical norms and traditions. I believe this has been brought about by Nijat's continual proving of herself, and almost negating herself as a female in order to take on what has been traditionally a male role. I feel this divergence is in preparation for Nijat to be the protector and guardian of her parents as they get older, a role typically taken on by the sons, but which now appears to have fallen to Nijat due to the fact that she isn't married with a family of her own.</p> <p>Another divergence that is apparent from Nijat's life story is that both she and her mother are employed in well-paid jobs and contribute to the household income. They play key economic roles within their family unit, with her mother now in the position of the principal wage earner. A sub-feature of this divergence is that although many South Asian families prefer male children so that they can be protectors and providers for their parents as they grow older, Nijat's mother is in fact still supplementing and providing financial support and maintenance for her sons.</p>
<p>Are there particular insights from Nijat's lived reality that we think should inform our new readings of the concepts of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>?</p>	<p>Nijat's lived reality is atypical of females of her age and background, however there is a slowly growing number of South Asian Muslim young women in similar situations. The role of the <i>wali</i> is far removed from the facilitation of a marriage to the prohibition and prevention of marriage, and it is evident that Nijat's father has had a stranglehold on his family, particularly his daughter that has impeded the course of her life. There is no doubt that economic factors would have been at play in her father's only attempt to arrange her marriage to one of his relatives, however when that did not come to pass, he absolved himself of all responsibility.</p> <p>This leads me to understand that he felt an obligation towards his extended family, however did not feel the same obligation towards his</p>

	<p>daughter, due to his distorted understanding of his duties.</p> <p>I believe Nijat’s story is an example of a slowly emerging trend within the South Asian Muslim community of the UK, where girls are not forced into an early marriage to a relative, but are allowed to pursue an education and career, after which half-hearted attempts are made by parents to find a suitable partner, which sadly are in short supply. The absence of such partners is leaving young women in limbo, they are still unable to find their own husband due to the non-codified laws or traditions of their families, who in turn are either unwilling or unsure of how to arrange a marriage for a daughter who is no longer in her early twenties, but rather in her early thirties.</p>
<p>Are there certain changes in the law, in policies and/or in institutions, which are crucial entry points at this point in time to create a workable pathway towards equality and justice in the family?</p>	<p>The law of the land is applicable to all citizens, and does not state that the father, or other male relative, has a duty of care or guardianship towards his daughter or other female family members. However, the non-codified cultural laws have made it almost impossible for young women such as Nijat to take autonomy on significant life issues such as marriage, education and career. Although these steps have been sanctioned by religion, they are still unacceptable in the environment in which Nijat and others like her live, thereby sidelining the religious aspect and giving precedence to culture and tradition.</p> <p>In order to combat this, I feel there is a need to re-educate the South Asian Pakistani Muslim community on basic Islamic principles and begin to make the distinction between religion and culture. The best avenues for promoting this are Islamic institutes such as the Greenville Trust, who are able to reach a large number of Muslims, young and old, and promote key Islamic messages, whilst challenging the negatives that are in existence in the Muslim community of the UK. Musawah’s toolkit and Capacity Building training is also an ideal place to begin the shift in mindset which is required to bring about equality and justice in British Muslim families.</p>
<p>Are there important lessons from Nijat’s life, which challenge the way we carry out our own work and movement building? Are there changes we should make in our own empowerment strategies?</p>	<p>The primary lesson to be learned from Nijat’s story is not to assume that third generation Muslims are exempt from the non-codified laws and traditions that governed their parents and grandparents - as we have ascertained, these cultural norms are very much alive today. Our empowerment strategies should have a multi-pronged approach, to educate service providers in health and education, to first and second-generation immigrant Muslims and finally to young Muslims, by holding Islamic education programmes which will equip them with the knowledge required to challenge and combat prohibitive cultural practices.</p>

Reflections

Assumptions: attitudes, values, beliefs

My initial impressions of Nijat during her narration were of a young woman who was deliberately combative and abrasive, often appearing to be rude and uncaring, however I soon realised that this was a front, and a form of self-preservation that Nijat had cultivated. It became clear that Nijat used the “attack before you’re attacked” strategy, in order to deal with the various issues in her life. I felt very compassionate towards Nijat, and at times I felt despair, wondering if she would ever be able to move forward and make life choices for herself. During her narration, it became evident that she wanted a husband and family of her own, and although she vehemently denied it, I couldn't help but feel that she was protesting too much, and wanted me to think that it didn't matter to her, when clearly it did. Many times during Nijat’s recounting of her life story, I felt she was displaying separated knowing, she has been moulded by a traditionally male culture, and has learned to know by appealing to impersonal reason. Nijat has consciously cut off her own feelings and emotions and severed herself to some degree from the experiences of her friends and peers, whilst adopting an adversarial approach to life, which I feel is a coping mechanism.

Justifications

Solve problems: deeper meaning, changes: Despite all attempts to the contrary, Nijat has displayed elements of connected knowing, she is able to work with women who have suffered violence and abuse, which involves listening, believing and empathising with the women she works with. I believe she is able to enter the world of the women she works with, and understand them and their experiences, offering support and advice to assist them in rebuilding their lives.

Whilst Nijat wholeheartedly accepts that her mother has sacrificed a great deal to enable Nijat to gain an education and avoid an unacceptable marriage proposal, she has repeatedly questioned her mother’s motives in doing this. Furthermore, she has identified the role reversal of her parents and concluded that her mother is in fact a hindrance to an equal and just family, rather than a facilitator.

Although Nijat did not appear to be very spiritual or religious, she has mentioned that she relies on no one, only Allah. I believe she does have faith, however displaying this or admitting to it may be seen as a weakness, which is why she doesn't allude to it more often.

Life story #3: Sumera

My name is Sumera and am aged 51.5. I have four children and have been married for 33 years. I consider myself first as a Muslim, then a British Pakistani, but very often I feel I don't belong here in England or in Pakistan so I am a gypsy really! Although I have settled here for many years I still don't have a sense of belonging because my ideas and beliefs don't fit within the English culture and don't fit in with the Pakistani culture, maybe I'm a misfit? However, I do feel that my ideas and beliefs are accepted as a Muslim and that's what matters the most to me.

As a person, I feel that I am a fair, honest and decent human being with the right intentions, and I focus my daily life on pleasing Allah SWT in my own way. If I try and help people that come into my life and deal with their issues to the best of my ability then I will have pleased Allah SWT.

I've come through the most horrendous times in my life, losing my mum in awful circumstances, and serious health issues but I have children I can be proud of in this life and the next, a close-knit family that would do anything for me, and of course surrounded by beautiful and loving friends.

As a young girl, I don't recall any particular time that I was told who held the authority in our house. I always assumed it was my dad, and this made sense to me, it seemed a natural order of things, dad was the person in charge and mum kept things in order. As an adult, there wasn't an opportunity for me to question authority, as my dad died whilst I was a teenager. I do remember that at the time my parents were arranging my marriage it didn't seem like one particular parent had authority, although at times it seemed my mum had the control, but it was still dependent on my dad's approval. I was not asked or consulted about my prospective marriage, and nor did I question it; it wasn't the right thing to do at that time. Good Muslim girls didn't talk about marriage; they certainly didn't challenge their parents' regarding the choice of marriage partner, as far as I understood it, we were not supposed to have any feelings or opinions either way, our parents knew best, and we should leave it to them.

My integrity and worth as a human being was taken away when I was 14 years old when my parents arranged a marriage for me. They pressurised me into accepting by using emotional blackmail, as my dad was ill. They had sorted my eldest sibling out and wanted me 'over and done' with and it didn't matter if I was happy or not, or if I had goals like the education I wanted to pursue. My mum took me to the goldsmiths and tried to get me to choose my wedding jewelry and this is where I displayed disagreement and avoidance tactics by going against the norm. I stated I disliked gold as I naively thought if I don't get gold, they won't marry me off. But the process still carried on and when I said I didn't want to marry this person my mum told me that I had 'cut her nose off,' basically ruined their honour and respect in society. My parents weren't listening to me, and had enlisted the help of my elder sister and her husband to dissuade me from saying no. I told a teacher in school, a Mr. Holmes who didn't know what to do and just said he was sorry to hear I was having a hard time at home!!

I then decided to approach the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>), for some help and advice, but they then put me into a girl's home where I stayed for 2 nights and then begged to be allowed home as I was missing my baby brother. It was also at the time I was doing my 'O' levels so very difficult time. All I remember was that my parents were told I had to be allowed to sit my exams. On my return home, I remember being isolated and all my things had been ransacked but I can imagine what my parents will have gone through not knowing where I was. My parents stopped talking to me at the age of 15 and it took me a year to find a way of addressing this issue and making my feelings known to them. But they did get the message that I would not marry the person they had arranged my marriage to.

Life was very difficult but my parents kept showing me photographs of different individuals. My mum wanted me to marry her nephew, my dad had other proposals but didn't pressurise me, so, as I always

cared for my dad's side of the family, I decided to take my chances on my dad's brother's son. The man I am still married to 35 years later. The man I married at the age of 16.

When I got married there was no negotiation about who would be head of household. I feel it was different because we were both young and looking back not ready for marriage or a family, but were thrown in at the deep end due to the marriage being arranged by families for their own benefits. My parents' intention was to get rid of the burden of a daughter and my husband's family's intentions were to get him to England in order to gain opportunities for a better life for his family. I feel no thought was given by my husband to the requirements of a husband, a father and head of household. On the day of the marriage my role as bride was just to sit there and the *Imam* asked me if I was in agreement to marry my husband. No one represented me; I spoke directly to the *Imam*. There was no marriage contract, no agreements, and no negotiations, other than that my husband would come to the UK. It was a marriage arranged to benefit our parents, for my in laws, in that they would have a prosperous future, and for my parents in that they had got rid of their burden, a daughter. That's how I was made to feel, a burden.

My parents had no interest in my aspirations and what I wanted in the future. I think that was the norm for people of my parents' generation, and I feel this was due to following cultural practices rather than following religion and an obvious lack of in depth Islamic knowledge. They were aware of their responsibilities as Muslims in terms of the 5 pillars as they knew them, but not all other nitty gritty things such as the importance of a marriage contract. No discussion was instigated regarding responsibility, just an unwritten rule that the man was head of household, and that's how it stayed. In theory, he wanted to be head of house but without the responsibility and duties. To date he has not fulfilled any of the religious requirements in his duty towards my children and me. Although I was running the home and household, I constantly had to figure out what would please him or displease him. This meant that we were functioning without a head and at every major decision there would be arguments.

My understanding on this matter is that my husband wasn't ready for marriage and his reasons for entering marriage were a means to an end to get to the UK and provide for his parent and sibling family, who he prioritised over his wife and children family. He even gave his brother's children priority over our own children; I felt my children were just something he had to tolerate and were also a means to an end, to prove his manhood and give him heirs.

We have functioned or malfunctioned through our lives, with me sorting out all aspects of our family life, including the children's education, both Islamic and otherwise, all their issues, even to the extent of buying homes and making a future for the children. The biggest issue has been, and still is their marriages, especially of our daughter. Despite taking the lead and managing all aspects of our family life, I could never be seen or recognised as being the head of the household because I am a woman. The head of household has to be the man; this was decided/expected by the family, society, and cultural and religious norms which all expect him to fulfill this role and carry out all his responsibilities. But my question to this would be how is this taught? It's just an assumption that men will know their role as husbands, fathers, and the prospective head of household. This is especially true in Pakistan where the main priority seems to be getting boys married to someone from the UK, in order for the family to make their fortune. I felt my husband wasn't taught the role of a husband whereas I seemed to naturally know my role as a wife and a mother.

There was and still is a lack of knowledge and full understanding of the role of the head of household, never mind who decides, and who should be the head of household, and the corresponding reasons for this choice. From a nature and nurture point of view is the role taught or learned through observation of the men's' own family life, specifically how their dad was as head of family? The head has 'privileges' such as having the final say in how things are done regarding finances, children's education and their future such as marriage. And 'privilege' over the wife and whether she chooses to study, work, and how

she interacts with her family.

Privileges are automatically bestowed, however there is a very fine line between being a productive and fair head of household who is aware of the best interests of the whole family, and a head of household who is abusing his privileges to exert power and abusive types of behaviour. The impact for me personally has been immense and has had detrimental results on my life; every aspect has been a struggle, I always had to think ahead of what the head of household's reaction is going to be.

I have had to adapt and become the mother, father, and all relatives to my children. The head's thoughtless attitude has come from the need to please his parents over his responsibility to his wife and children. He has been unable to distinguish between his different responsibilities to each, which has caused poor relationships within the family, especially between his mother and I. My children have nothing to do with their paternal relatives, who show no interest in them whatsoever. This makes me very angry and frustrated, their father sends money regularly to his parents in Pakistan, and visits them frequently, however they can't even be bothered to call us. Sadly, both my parents have died, my father passed away soon after my marriage, and my mother passed away nearly 5 years ago. When my father died his verbal wishes were not fulfilled, and the eldest sibling took what rightfully belonged to my brother and me. As no one witnessed this verbal agreement but the immediate family, this could not be rectified and addressed. This then has caused the family, to break apart, my brother and I are together, however we haven't spoken to our elder sibling, I refuse to call her sister, for over 20 years, not even when our mum passed away.

Due the above happening after my dad's death, my mum although illiterate, did make a will leaving everything to my brother, but this was done according to English law and unfortunately the eldest sibling managed to manipulate my mum and change this will after over 21 years, taking advantage of mum's mental ill health. So overall the only one who has inherited anything belonging to my parents is the eldest sibling, and this has been due to her own greed not what my parents would have wanted. I tried to access help and support, as I wanted my brother to get what he was rightly entitled to, but no one helped! I had to go through the English justice system; the law of the land differs from the Islamic law. In the English law, the eldest child is often cited as the next of kin even if that person is female.

My husband's attitude and behaviour towards his children has also been at odds. He has been different towards our eldest born son, and has a poor relationship with him. He feels the expectation of eldest son according to his interpretations, hasn't been met. This is due to the fact that my son stepped in front of me to stop his father from beating me. From that day on his father lost interest in him and refers to him as a mother's boy or "your son." He is punishing my son for defending me, yet he cannot see beyond his own mother, disregarding all her faults and mistakes. He is almost indifferent towards my daughter; every aspect of her life has been difficult, from what she wore to whether she was allowed to study further, work or even going to the gym! Marriage has been another massive challenge as he has not fulfilled his duty and put conditions down in order for us to fail at finding a rishta (suitable marriage partner). I know that deep down he has wanted to fulfill his mother's wishes of marrying my daughter to his nephew, again use my daughter as a commodity and a means of bringing him to the UK.

I have always disagreed with this, and as a result of standing my ground, I have suffered many physical beatings. My husband has shown little regard or care for what's best for my daughter or what she wants out of life. This has resulted in my daughter reaching her 30's and remaining unmarried. This is in contrast to the responsibility of a father or male guardian within religion, where he is supposed to be the *wali*, and help his children, especially a daughter, to get married, not become an obstruction, there is a clear discrepancy between the theory and practice. The responsibility of providing for, and protecting the family is something that has to be taught from an early age by the parents or during religious education. As I have mentioned previously, my husband, the assumed head of household was obviously taught that his main responsibility was his family back home and not the family he had 'created' after marriage.

As a child, it appeared to me that my parents had a different relationship to mine and my husbands. It seemed that they discussed things, my dad still cared for his family and relatives, and funded his widowed cousin, nephews and sisters, but he did provide and protect my mum, my siblings, and myself. I recall my dad giving my mum his wages and my mum managed the house with the money including savings. She also managed to save for our marriages, but I also recall many arguments and fights over money and remember moving from a home with the luxury of an internal bathroom in the late 1960's, to a house without a bathroom. This must have been to save money. My dad, although illiterate, was very astute and created quite a property portfolio, but people around him had other ideas and took advantage of his generosity and good nature, which caused many arguments within our extended family, which he managed.

My husband however, is totally different, and is unable to manage both 'parties' to whom he has a responsibility; his parents, and his family here. This is why our family life has been very difficult and has ended up with me taking the responsibilities of a provider and a protector as well as fulfilling my role as mother and wife and homemaker. I have to make the major decisions in our family on my own, including the children's education, Islamic and otherwise, teaching them morals and manners in order to ensure they become good responsible members of society, whilst staying on the correct religious path. In addition to this, I have had to battle with my husband to pursue further education and employment, in order to give my children the above opportunities. I have come up against barriers from extended family, which cause arguments between my husband and I, resulting in him holding envious vendettas against my children and me because the extended family are unable to cope with the little success we have had in our lives. All of this has caused immense problems within my marriage as it has dented my husband's male ego. Although he is supposed to be the provider and protector, he has failed to that, but in front of society he takes the credit for all the work I have done.

I addressed the challenges by being focused and becoming a 'superwoman' - I had no alternative but to carry on and make adjustments in order to ensure my children had a better life than me. But it has been a hard balancing-act, as I have had to make sure that the children respect their father and have a good opinion of him, nevertheless as they have grown up they have seen the failings of their father in his role and responsibility towards them. I hope and pray this has not affected my three sons, and their future ability to fulfill their own roles as providers and protectors of their wives and children. During all this time, I have not accessed any form of support from society or any government officials, although now there are various people in government agencies who do provide this support to individuals going through similar issues including poor parenting and domestic abuse. But this then opens another can of worms; if the professionals don't understand the ethos of an Islamic household the outcomes can be skewed, leading to our families and children being misguided and losing their cultural and religious identity.

During my marriage, I have had very difficult times where my human integrity and liberties have been taken away. And I have had angry moments when I have blamed my mum for not giving me the opportunity to grow up, enjoy my youth, and pursue the education I wanted to pursue. And at other times I can happily say if I had my life again I would make the same choices again. And at the end of the day I planned but Allah SWT had different plans for me. And He has given me the strength to endure all the difficulties I have had to face. I sometimes look back and think how did I come through that?

Although it has been and is still proving to be very difficult to arrange a marriage for my only daughter, I was able to at least make some progress with my eldest son's marriage. A couple of years ago he told me that a girl he knew as a friend had "proposed" to him, and suggested they get married.

My son is a gentle, honest straightforward person, he is very patient and tolerant. On the surface, it may appear that it is easy to take advantage of his good nature, but he has high moral standards, and an inner strength, and will not be messed around. Knowing this, I didn't have any worries about him

making a wrong choice, however, hindsight is fantastic!

I have always taught all my children to be honest with me, and I do feel that I have taught them right from wrong but living in the UK, I feel we have to make some allowances. Although I know it is wrong for both sexes to mix, it is very difficult in this country to enforce, or maintain segregation. The best way I have been able to deal with this, is by encouraging my children to be open and honest about their friendships, but to be aware that I would neither condone or approve of a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship. I have always instructed them, that if they met someone who they could see a future with, then to tell me and I would do what was required Islamically and take it forward in a legitimate way.

Accordingly, my son told me about Faiza, but then it took a year for him to decide he wanted to take it forward. With my brother's support and encouragement introductions were arranged between both families.

My first meeting with Faiza's family left me with niggling feelings, but I put these down to not knowing the family and also the fact that their family culture was different to ours. Ultimately, I trusted my son's judgement, even though I had misgivings.

Due to the issues I have with my husband, who has never taken his role as head of household and family seriously, I didn't have anyone to discuss my concerns with. I did *istikhara* and also asked someone else to do it for me. These resulted in good signs, which allowed me to put my fears to the back of my mind. The niggling feelings were directly related to the following:

- Faiza's mum didn't speak, or ask any questions about my son or the family
- She stayed in the kitchen on both visits for most of the time
- I had difficulty understanding her
- No communication at all via phone etc.
- Faiza's mother had no involvement in marriage arrangements - I had to deal with Faiza, or her younger sister
- They were very vague about their family
- Only visited us twice before marriage
- The younger sister posed rude, indirect questions about living arrangements
- Faiza went to Pakistan to purchase her wedding outfit, but there was no consultation with us about the colour or style etc.
- *On her return, she wouldn't show me the wedding outfit!
- Faiza was rude, arrogant and aloof right from the start of arrangements
- She had painted a picture of herself to my son that she was a homemaker, when in fact she was the opposite.
- *My son had told her of his decision to reside with the family, as he was eldest son

We made mistakes during the arranging of this marriage, and our mistakes are as follows:

- We didn't carry out checks on Faiza's family through friends and neighbours
- I should have taken note of my feelings
- My son confirmed he had doubts, and if I had mentioned my feelings he would not have gone ahead.
- *From the very first day onwards Faiza showed her dislike of me through facial expressions

During *Ramadan*, after just 10 days of marriage she was constantly arguing with my son, even though they had their own space. The first setback was her refusing the *Eid* gift from my husband, together with the unwillingness to become part of the family, and forever prioritising her own family. Following a minor disagreement on the day of *Eid ul Fitr*, Faiza telephoned her family and asked her male family

members to intimidate my son. They arrived at our house on the day of *Eid*, under the influence of alcohol and wanting a fight. Rather than clearing up any misunderstandings, Faiza left the marital home with her relatives. I wanted to end the marriage right there, if a wife can call her cousins on *Eid* day to teach her husband a lesson, then that woman couldn't possibly care for my son and she certainly did not respect him in his role as her husband.

I regarded this as a huge misdemeanor, however I came to know that she had hidden this from her mother. When she went home following this event, her mother was under the impression that she had come home for *Eid*, she didn't tell her mother that she had walked out. I was under the impression that her mother didn't care either, and so I contacted her aunt. A reconciliation meeting was arranged 3 weeks later. Her cousin attended with the family, and apologised for his behaviour on *Eid* day, but her brother neither came to the house, nor did he apologise. This completely ruined any future relationships my son could have with her family.

Following this meeting, Faiza returned to our house, where despite all my reservations I tried to give her another chance. Although I was very wary of her, my husband and I treated her like a daughter, in fact she had a very strong ally in my husband.

During the following 8 months, her behaviour and routine was as follows:

- She went to work from 8am–8pm
- She did not contribute any of her time, or emotions to the family unit
- She behaved like she was a visitor
- She behaved like she did not want to be here and tolerated us
- Her behaviour changed on the days she went back to see her family
- She totally pushed her boundaries, and never returned home even when asked by her husband
- She did not do any housework, here or at the house they slept in
- She showed no interest in the family's goals and aspirations
- She was very reluctant to talk about her family, or any family history
- Her behaviour when I was ill was atrocious
- She still continued to pay the mortgage for her mother's home.
- She did not make any effort to integrate with my family
- She showed no respect for my husband, or me
- She had a hidden agenda, the main goal being to separate my son from his family

By now I was of the thinking that if I left her enough rope she would hang herself. And that she did, on the 4th of June 2013, after 11 months of marriage, when she walked out of the home, because my husband, her father in law, dared to ask her why she was late coming home from work. He advised her that it was best for her to come straight home after work, and invite her friends home, and only then go out if the need arose. She did not like this and told my husband that she didn't have to tell him anything regarding why she was late home, as she had already informed her husband. Following this exchange, she walked out of the house, and didn't return even after my request. She claims she stayed with friends, but how do we know where she was? My son spoke with her and brought her home after 2 days to the house they slept in. She said she would apologise to my husband and me for her rudeness, however, the following day she went to work and didn't return home. Her brothers picked her up from work and refused to let her come back to her husband until we went to get her and then only under conditions they imposed.

My son gave her enough opportunity to come back of her own accord from June 4th to beginning of *Ramadan* in July 2013., but she did not return. I gave my son the opportunity to move into his own home away from us but my son didn't want to separate from the family and did not see this as a viable option. He could see what Faiza wanted was what her sister had. Her sister and her husband live with

Faiza's mother; he hardly sees his own family, and his daughters are being brought up by the maternal grandmother, rarely seeing their paternal grandparents. This is not the natural order of things. Children are the future lineage of their fathers. This girl had lied to my son about what she was like, she thought she could marry him, apparently believing that his parents were only required up till wedding day, and then wanted no further interaction. This was a girl, who despite praying her *salat* and observing *Ramadan* was totally unaware of her role as a wife and a daughter in law. My belief is that "STUPID MOTHERS BREED STUPID CHILDREN!"

I have had to become head of the family but in a hidden way, where behind the scenes I am the head and make sure the family functions as it should, but on the surface, that is seen by the world and society, it is my husband who is the head of the family although he does not fulfill this role. He is happy to take a back seat and take the credit for all the good work that is carried out including decisions about education of the children, boundaries, religious teachings, property, and dealing with all issues on a daily basis. However, the minute anything goes wrong, then the blame is put on me. I feel my role has been, and is a balancing act and after doing this for 33 years, it has taken its toll on me and my health.

There was no strategy plan to be accepted by society. I have not adhered to any plan, as my aim was to be a successful family in all aspects, and ensure the children were brought up to be well balanced honest good Muslims who could function in this society, only accountable to Allah *SWT*, not the society itself. And I have tackled this on a daily basis not following a plan. To this day I don't think I have been accepted as head of house externally, but at home it is known to who matter. Particular issues, such as marriage of the children has been a difficult area to address as an 'interim head' because the head hasn't fulfilled his role and responsibilities, but will not relinquish his role either. So, he has a hold or basically an unwritten rule that these major decisions have to be approved by him. For example, my daughter is now in her 30's and still abides by the rules of the home, although she is an adult and should be able to live her life and move onto her next natural step as a woman, to get married and have a family of her own. But this has not been allowed to happen due to my husband failing his responsibilities and having a hidden agenda. This goes back to the marriage contract and marriage arrangements that I disagreed with, as the reasons his family wanted the marriage were unsound.

Marriage should be about companionship, love and respect, to have a family and to complete your *Imaan*, but for my husband and his family it has always been about the benefit to them, and this has carried on even to the extent of affecting my daughter. She was seen as a commodity and the hidden plans were to prevent her getting married to anyone of our choosing, and to be left no choice and backed into a corner and agree to marrying a person from my husband's family in order to better their future, without any thought to the compatibility or consequences of such a marriage, or my daughter's future and happiness. So, it doesn't matter if I am the head of the household, at the end of the day the power and control is with a person who fails his religious duties as a man, a husband and a father. So, what do we live with? An abuser? It is only his pride that prohibits him from allowing me to make and carry out all the decisions, as he feels he will have lost all power and control over us.

In this 21st century, an equal and just family would be easy if everyone had clearly defined roles that were openly discussed, and taught early in schools and homes. I am aware that the roles are there in the Qur'an and the hadith, but how many of us follow our beautiful religion as it should be followed. If we lost the EGO and gave each other the respect and care that is required in a loving family then we would help create an equal and just family and society.

Analysis of Sumera's story

What have I learned from Sumera's life story?	<p>The overwhelming impression I got from Sumera's life story was one of bitterness and anger towards her husband and his family, and also towards her own parents. There are repeated references to being a burden on her parents, a burden they wish to rid themselves of as quickly as possible, with marriage being the appropriate system through which they can do this. Her marriage, and in particular her husband, are a strong cause of resentment, which is apparent throughout her narrative. It is interesting to note that at the point of the first mention of marriage, Sumera had the strength of character to approach her teacher for help, and when there was nothing forthcoming from this, she then went to the NSPCC, (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children).</p> <p>This leads me to believe that Sumera was at the subjective stage of women's ways of knowing at the young age of 14, she possessed enough awareness to approach individuals and organisations for help, despite the fact that at that time the establishments of the UK were very ignorant of diverse cultures and religions. Despite this ignorance the authorities took some action, this had some effect in that her parents were told that she must sit her exams, which delayed the marriage. I found it curious that Sumera has scarcely mentioned her sister, it would have been interesting to know the age that she was married, and her comparative experiences, however Sumera would not be drawn on this topic. I consider Sumera's relationship with her husband, and her marriage, to be typical of many Muslim women of her generation. She is managing her home and family, and is contributing financially, however she is not seen as the head of household, or even as an equal.</p> <p>This is due to the non-codified laws and traditions of her extended family and their patriarchal culture. This is obviously causing Sumera to feel resentful and angry, and this anger spills out against her husband. Sumera feels galled that her husband is negligent of his duties as the head of household, yet he takes all the glory and recognition that the position carries. In reality, it is Sumera who is fulfilling the duties and responsibilities, in spite of this, she is not and will not ever be acknowledged as the head.</p> <p>Sumera has had to fight and battle with her husband for permission to continue with her education and to work, it is apparent that although he has made some concessions, he still holds ultimate power and control, not only over her, but also over their children. This power and control is most marked in relation to their daughter, and in particular, to her marriage. I get the impression that Sumera doesn't feel her husband has a right to the children, (who are in fact now adults), because he hasn't contributed to raising them in the manner that she thinks he should have, in accordance with his position as head of household. This is clear in the possessive terminology she uses when talking about them, ie, my sons, my daughter, and my children.</p> <p>Sumera frequently refers to religion apropos her husband and his responsibilities towards her and her children. She believes that a lack of</p>
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Islamic knowledge has led to her parents, her in-laws and her husband behaving in the manner they have. She states that they have little religious knowledge beyond the most basic 5 pillars, and have allowed cultural norms and traditions to inform their practices. She questions whose responsibility it is to instill religious knowledge into men, and believes that they should be taught the roles and responsibilities of a husband and father, rather than just emulating what they have observed of their own fathers.

Sumera is extremely critical of her daughter in law, and has stated that Faiza was unaware of her roles as a wife and daughter in law. I find her expectations of her daughter in law to be unrealistic and regressive. She has a strong relationship with her son, and whilst this is to be commended, at times it appears that this very relationship is a serious impediment to the success of his marriage. It appears that Sumera has a tight reign on her son, and an emotional hold, which may be due to the fact that he has witnessed the violence towards his mother from his father. He seems unable to stand up to her in any way, almost as if he is in fear of her, and rather than acknowledge the truth, he gives the impression that he is happy with what his mother is saying and doing. In my observation, I find Sumera and her son to be all of what she alleges her mother in law and husband to be, in fact all that she has battled and challenged in her own life.

Sumera has shown that she was at the subjective stage of women's ways of knowing at a very early age. At age fourteen, she resisted the patriarchal structure by trying to get external help to escape a planned forced marriage. Later on, her reflections on her own life also show that she did not stop at the level of only experiencing that this normative authority was wrong, but she had developed enough knowledge and consciousness to realise the disconnect between the oppressive cultural norms, and what her religion actually instructed parents and guardians to do with regard to their wards. I feel Sumera has progressed from one knowledge position to another, regarding her own experiences. The problem with her position regarding her daughter in law is she has no empathy and applies an abstract idea of what she thinks the role of daughter in law should be.

She displays how a woman's trajectory of self-knowledge and engagement with patriarchy can be complex. She has recognised and realised all that is wrong with the patriarchal structure, having suffered from it herself, however she has also learnt to negotiate with this system, and has reached a stage in her life where she has some power gained, not only from her work and economic autonomy, but also from her position in this patriarchal system; now an older woman, a mother with an adult son who can now exercise power over the son and his wife.

From the above I deduce that it is possible to be at more than one stage of the women's way of knowing, and that it isn't necessarily a straightforward transition from one stage to the next. In Sumera's case I feel that she is at the subjective and procedural stages of knowing, and is displaying the separated knowing of the procedural knowledge stage. She has assumed the position of criticism and doubt, and distanced herself from Faiza and

	<p>her experiences. All the elements of separated knowing are present; doubt, argument, impersonal debate, and so-called objectivity.</p>
<p>Is there anything specific to say about the following topics:</p>	
<p>a. how the dominant (articulated in codified and non-codified law) interpretations of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> impact the choices Sumera has made in her public and private life?</p>	<p>One of the most interesting considerations in Sumera’s story is that she was conscious from an early age that she couldn’t approach anyone from her own racial or religious community for help and assistance. This is demonstrated by the incident in which she approached her schoolteacher, and a male at that, for help rather than an <i>Imam</i> or elder from her own community. Following this, she approached a national charity for assistance, rather than the mosque. I am of the opinion this speaks volumes with respect to the pervading patriarchal culture that Sumera was living in, where it was unheard of for females to question or challenge any aspect of it.</p> <p>The patriarchal interpretation of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> also took precedence in relation to marriage, specifically pertaining to <i>wilayah</i>. Rather than truly fulfilling the duty of a guardian, her parents forced her to marry against her will, to someone they had chosen for her. She was able to reject the initial marriage partner; however, this didn’t lead to her being able to identify a husband of her own choice. She states that she was closer to her paternal relatives and as she didn’t feel pressured by her father in the same manner as her mother, she decided to go ahead with the arranged marriage on his side of the family. I believe that this was a cleverly constructed ruse on the part of her parents to get her to agree to marry someone of their choosing, and to their advantage, whilst leaving Sumera with the false assumption that she had been actively involved in the choice of husband.</p>
<p>b. how such interpretations have contributed in shaping Sumera’s sense of self and affected her capacity to enjoy her human rights (civil and political; economic, social and cultural rights)?</p>	<p>The strong patriarchal interpretations of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> have eroded Sumera’s sense of self, self-worth and identity. She states that her integrity and worth as a human being was taken away at an early age. In essence, this could mean one of two things: firstly that she, and females in general were considered inhuman or sub-human by their community and culture, which would explain the lack of regard for her feelings and aspirations. Secondly, that although she may not have recognised this initially, as a direct result of the traditional practices she has been left feeling inhuman or sub-human. Either way, the consequences are one, and the same.</p> <p>Sumera has had to fight and negotiate for basic human rights such as education, for both herself and her daughter, which demonstrates a shift to procedural knowledge. Despite all of Sumera’s achievements, she is still not fully able to enjoy the rights granted to all citizens of her country, due to her husband’s attitude and control. Cultural rights do not extend to women being recognised for their contributions to family and society, which is again in contrast to the country’s policy.</p> <p>Sumera questions the disconnect between what Islam says regarding the responsibilities of the man as a husband and father, and the reality. In</p>

	<p>actual fact, she is carrying out this role, and yet there is no recognition of this by her husband. Further to this, the cultural norms do not allow recognition or even acknowledgement of her contributions to the home and family. She feels her husband is not able to provide for her and her children in an appropriate manner, therefore she has taken on this responsibility but the lack of recognition has made her very bitter. Although she has financial autonomy, I question if this is actually true autonomy, as she is compelled to use her income to maintain and run the family and home. She is earning as much, if not more than her husband, but doesn't have the right to state this openly.</p> <p>The bitterness Sumera feels against her husband is obvious, and I get the impression that she doesn't hold back in terms of letting him know how deficient she thinks he is as a husband, father and provider, yet she still goes to some lengths to ensure that her children at least respect their father.</p> <p>Sumera is angry and outspoken about her husband prioritising his parent and sibling family over his wife and children family, and is particularly resentful of her mother in law, however she is behaving in the exact same manner that she is accusing her mother in law of. She is angry that even after marriage Faiza was still making mortgage payments for her mother's house, and not making contributions to her new family, and that she was giving preference to her own family over her husband's family.</p>
<p>c. how different these impacts are for differently located women, and particularly for women who face the intersection of multiple discrimination?</p>	<p>See final group analysis</p>
<p>d. what kind of divergences exist on the ground, which are a product of active negotiations?</p>	<p>Sumera makes a significant economic contribution to the household and in all likelihood the higher earner, however this is in direct contradiction to the <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> model of gender roles, where the man is the provider and maintainer, and the woman is fully taken care of and supported. Sumera recognises the disconnect between religion and her actuality, and repeatedly questions this on a general level. She doesn't appear to have asked this question of her husband, and I feel this is because she fears he may withdraw the permission he has given for her to work, therefore at present she is accepting of the status quo even though it angers her.</p> <p>Sumera's battle for the right to work was won only because her husband realised that her income would actually serve his purpose, in that it would free up his money and relieve him of the need to fully provide for his wife and children. Sumera quickly became the major earner, due to her positions and promotions within local government, and this growth in earning potential brought many other divergences with it such as economic autonomy, and the opportunity to have a stronger voice, particularly in regards to her children and their futures. I believe that although Sumera's income is necessary and vital to the economic balance of their home, her husband could and would withdraw permission for her</p>

	<p>to work at any time. I feel he would suffer the loss of income rather than the perceived loss of face if it were to become known that he no longer had complete power and control over his wife.</p> <p>There is further divergence from the <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> gender roles, in that the father holds the position of <i>wali</i>, however, Sumera's husband doesn't appear to fulfill this role, which leaves it to her to negotiate and arrange marriages for her children. It is clear that her children expect her to carry out this role, as her son approached her rather than his father, with the suggestion of his marriage. This is also unusual in from a cultural perspective, where it is usually the fathers who take a leading role in arranging or approving their children's marriages.</p>
<p>Are there particular insights from Sumera's lived reality that we think should inform our new readings of the concepts of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>?</p>	<p>Although we are aware that patriarchy is an ideology practised by both men and women, it is sad to observe this in reality. It appears that Sumera feels justified in her behaviour and expectations of her daughter in law, without recognising this conduct is exactly what she has been challenging and battling against with her husband, in laws, and society. Our readings of the concept of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> should take into account what female patriarchy looks like, as it differs from the male practice, and consider if these distinct practices warrant individual approaches.</p> <p>It is interesting to note, that although her husband has been her adversary throughout her marriage, she describes him as an ally for her daughter in law. Sumera seems a little affronted on behalf of her husband, when she is describing an event between her husband and daughter in law, where he questions why she arrived home late. She has never displayed any true regard for her husband yet expects her daughter in law to defer to him.</p>
<p>Are there certain changes in the law, in policies and/or in institutions, which are crucial entry points at this point in time to create a workable pathway towards equality and justice in the family?</p>	<p>Although recent years have seen a change in the approach to forced marriage on the part of organisations and services, further changes such as mandatory training for front line professionals, and criminalising forced marriage, are required in the codified laws of the country in order to equip all frontline professionals with the knowledge required to help someone in such a situation. If such legislation existed then the response would be very different to the one Sumera received from her schoolteacher. There are many initiatives currently in existence, such as Asian women's specialist domestic abuse services, and charities such as Practical Solutions, (specialists in forced marriage and honour based violence), and Muslim Women's Network UK http://mwnuk.co.uk/contactus.php, which can be utilised to bring about such changes in an appropriate manner. Bringing about such changes in the law of the land is far easier than bringing about changes in the attitude towards forced marriage in the non-codified practices of some Muslim communities in the UK. Faith establishments should be the first port of call to condemn such harmful traditions, and use Islamic examples to reinforce these messages. Mosques should be supported by organisations, such as the police and education authorities in reshaping their communities in a non-threatening manner.</p> <p>The UK has many anti-discriminatory laws and policies that are all encompassing, however, these are meaningless in the face of non-codified traditions. In order to empower Muslim women, it is essential to create space for them to learn about their own faith, and all its intricacies, not</p>

	<p>just the old-fashioned transmittance of knowledge from teacher to pupil, but discussion forums and workshops. Existing networks such as Muslim Women’s Network, and other non-governmental Muslim institutions can be approached in the first instance, however there is no reason why in the first instance, a suitably knowledgeable individual could not arrange such capacity building workshops.</p> <p>Sumera’s marriage is full of contention and bitterness, which cannot be healthy for either of them or their children. There are repercussions from there relationship, such as the emotional obligation to please his mother on the part of the eldest son, and of course the impact on their daughter’s life, due to the inflexible stances taken by both her parents. In the UK, there are strong established organisations that deliver marriage counselling, such as Relate, however these are not always appropriate for Muslim couples. This is an area that needs to be explored; the gaps need to be plugged, as there is a dire need for such a service within the Muslim community. Currently there is no specific marriage counselling service for Muslims in the UK, however such a service can be established without too much difficulty. <i>Sharia</i> Councils are a natural option to carry out such services; however, there must be a system of governance and reporting which is uniform and transparent. This governance should not come from the mainstream organisations, or government, rather from within the Muslim communities of the UK.</p>
<p>Are there important lessons from Sumera’s life, which challenge the way we carry out our own work and movement building? Are there changes we should make in our own empowerment strategies?</p>	<p>The most important lesson from Sumera’s life story is to recognise that a woman can be at multiple stages of women’s ways of knowing at any one time. This is not something to be frowned upon; rather it is a reflection of the complexities of Muslim women, and their lived realities, which allows them to proceed in tangents, rather than in one upward direction. When carrying out our work, we should be aware of diversity of mobility within the various stages of women’s ways of knowing and carry out our movement building work accordingly. We cannot expect the empowerment of Muslim women to be a straightforward step-by-step process; rather it is a multi-faceted approach that is required.</p>

Reflections

Sumera's parents arrived in the UK in the late 1950's and she was one of the first children of South Asian immigrants to settle in the mill towns of England. Her work as a civil servant employed by local government to safeguard children also played a part in the selection, as did her belief in the empowerment of Muslim women.

Assumptions: attitudes, values, beliefs

Sumera's faith is strong, and she practices in a manner that she is comfortable with, for example, she doesn't cover her head but she does observe her daily prayers. She has strong principles and values, and overall her attitude towards people is fair and just. In her working life, I believe she is a constructed knower, using her own knowledge together with other's knowledge to arrive at the truth, although I find it a contradiction in her personal situation with her daughter in law, where there has been a distinct lack of constructed knowledge. I feel the constituent parts of listening, sharing, and openness of mind and heart have been absent in her relationships with her husband and daughter in law, and I feel that in her personal relationships, both her attitude and behaviour is that of a separated knower.

Justifications

Solve problems: deeper meaning, changes: Sumera is untypical of the women of her generation, in that she has challenged and questioned the position of her husband as the head of household, where many wouldn't. She hasn't let his inefficiency hold her back, rather she has used it to further herself, and together with determination and courage, she has made a success of life for herself and her children. This doesn't diminish the bitterness or pain that she feels, which come to the fore at critical times, such as her children's marriages.

Sumera is opposing traditional patriarchal norms, especially for her daughter, but still submits to the outward requirement of having a male head of household, no matter how deficient he may be. I feel this notion is further perpetuated in that it appears to be what she wants for her sons.

I returned to Sumera to ask a final question – **'How do you feel after telling me your life story?'** and she replied: *'The first bit brought everything to the surface, it was intense and a reminder of what I have been through. Not good really, but it was a cathartic experience. Even the bit about Faiza was difficult, but it has reinforced what I sometimes forget, that Allah SWT has given me a great deal of determination and ambition, and I am a fighter, and of course a survivor through the will of my Rabb, Alhamdu'lillah.'*

Life story #4: Shadiya

My Father and Mother came to the UK in the early 1960s and my father settled in the North West of England, close to other family and friends from his home in Pakistan. I am the eldest of four children, I have two sisters, and one brother, who is the youngest of all of us, and very much the apple of my Mother's eye! For as long as I can remember the holder of authority in my family was my Father. My Father was always the provider of everything. I remember my Mother saying unless we had permission from my Father we were not allowed to go ahead and do anything. Not only was he the head of our household, but he was also the head of the extended family. Everyone came to him to settle disputes, arrange marriages, borrow money, or to make decisions for them regarding purchase of land, or goods. It was his decision to allow us to go into further education or to work, and I was allowed neither, as it was more appropriate in our family to get the girls married early.

I was quite young when I got married, not even twenty, but because my father had decided it was the right time, I didn't think to say no. My family is *Shi'a* Muslims, however my marriage was arranged to my cousin, my mother's sister's son, who is *Sunni* Muslim, and at the beginning there was some difficulty in adjusting. The initial consent to the proposal was given by me, which really wasn't consent, just going along with what I was expected to say, but after that I had nothing to do with anything. My family and his family made all decisions. They decided *Maher*, and they decided the way the *Nikah* would take place. I was expected as a bride to sit there looking pretty, sign a document, and nod my head. It was never told that I had a right to write my *Nikah* contract and include things that were important to me, in fact it was hammered into my head that I had to be a good wife, and take care of the *izzat* of my father, and also now my husband. This was such a huge responsibility, and I felt that the only way to take care of this *izzat* or honour is just to go along with everything my husband and his family said, which is what I did in the first few years of marriage.

Once I was married it was just done and the norm that my husband was the head of the family. This had been the case in my family and his and that's the way it was going to be with us. Earlier on in the marriage I continuously felt inhuman, as if I didn't matter, my feelings had no importance or recognition. Whatever I did was not good enough. I couldn't ever say anything, even when my four-year-old daughter was taken away from me, I don't know how I got through those years all I know is that although my parents were supposedly there for me through everything, it wasn't really the case, and as long as I returned to my husband after I cried to them, then it was all ok.

Although we both earn, the final decision is always my husband's, the children are aware that their father is the head of the house and they need his permission for everything, from what they wear to who their friends are, and they know that his decision is final. I wasn't and still am not always happy about this, and there are many occasions when we fight or argue over this, especially when his decision is not in my best interests, or the interests of my children.

My husband's mother is a weak person, and due to her personality and nature, my father in law took a second wife and moved in with her. My mother in law was left with her children, my husband and his brother and two sisters. This gave her a hold over her sons, as she is always complaining about their father, and how she has been wronged, and it is their duty to now take care of her, even before their own families. My husband wasn't able to say no, and this was especially hard for me when she decided that I was not a fit mother to my first child, a little girl. She kept going on and on at my husband that he should send the child to Pakistan so that she could take care of her, and protect her from me, and the society in the UK. I expected my father to stand up for me and say that this was not right, for a child to be separated from her mother, but he said he couldn't go against my husband's wishes, and so my little girl was taken from me and sent to Pakistan for 5 years. It was such a hard time, I had the other children, another girl and two boys, but all I could think about was her. After constant begging, pleading, crying and arguing, my daughter finally came home to me.

I always felt resentful that I had not been allowed to carry on with education, and by this time I was established in my marriage and had a good relationship with my husband. When I told him I wished to go back and study, he was a little bit apprehensive but I managed to persuade him by saying that I would be able to get a good job, and earn some money, and this would help with the household finances. This grabbed his attention, as he was constantly sending money back to Pakistan to his mother and sisters, and our income was very strained, he saw this as a solution and therefore gave me permission to go to college. I went and studied and did my degree and am just completing a Master's, and have also qualified as an adult teacher, teaching in the community. Of course, now I earn more than my husband, and this has given me a greater degree of authority in my home, although I still don't make the final decision, what I do say is listened to, or at least some of the time.

My husband still makes some decisions without even consulting me, and I have no option but to go along with them.

All the ranting and wailing in the world doesn't make a difference, for example, he decided that his younger brother was going to come and live with us. We had to sponsor him to join us in the UK and find him a job. His wife and daughter are in Pakistan and he lives with us, rent-free. Not only him, but recently, my husband decided that his mother should come and live with us in the UK, as she is now getting old, and needs someone to care for her. Up until now she has lived in her home, with her daughters and their husbands, but for some reason this was no longer suitable or appropriate. I was not consulted on this issue, and she came to live with us over a year ago. This has not been easy for me at all, as I have had to accept it without question, and not only do I work full time, have four children to take care of, but am now waiting on my mother in law too. She is not old or infirm, but believes that daughters in law have certain duties towards their mothers in law. My house is only small, we have three bedrooms, and now it is overcrowded, my children are suffering as a result, there is no privacy for me or my girls, however my husband doesn't see this as an issue.

I feel when my father was the head of the family I did not have any issues with this; I guess I felt because I was a daughter I had to accept this. As a wife, I always felt we are equals we need to run the house together but my husband felt it was his role to take care of us all. In the eyes of the world he has taken on the role, but I know he feels undermined sometimes because I don't just accept his position without question. I also challenge things, and his mother dislikes this. I feel I have to always challenge or question, not because I am being difficult, but because I feel the need to assert my position and place, otherwise I might become invisible.

Very recently, my mother in law decided that my brother in law should take a second wife, as his first wife was not successful in obtaining a visa to come to the UK. She had already mentioned this to my husband and his brother, and neither of them had challenged her. She then mentioned it to me in a roundabout way, by asking me what I thought of a girl cousin, as a prospective bride, and when I asked whom for, she told me, your brother in law. I was horrified, and very angry, and immediately said it was impossible. I also said that they should all be ashamed of themselves, what were they playing at?!!! I told her I was surprised at her behaviour and intentions, as she had experienced this personally and why would she give this pain to another woman? I even told my parents, and yet again, my father said he couldn't interfere, although he didn't agree with it. I was shocked by their attitude, and then decided to tackle my brother in law. He told me he was happy with his wife, he didn't want to take a second wife, but felt he couldn't say no to his mother! A grown man, going along with something that is wrong, just because his mother was emotionally blackmailing him! He asked me to tell his mother that he did not wish to take another wife, which I did, but this had a negative effect as she thought I had put him up to disobeying her, which led to her being angry with me. As a result, she didn't speak to me for many weeks, and tried her best to provoke my husband and brother in law against me too.

I think it is quite obvious that although my husband is the head of the household, which to me means looking after his wife and children, there has always been a discrepancy because for him his own family

came first. Even though he says all the right things and appears to support me in my work, in reality it is because it is easier for him and frees up money, which he can use as he wishes, rather than use it for his wife and children. My husband's family are from a working-class background and now they need to become wealthy, this means we do not take priority, his own family does, but my question to my husband is always this, "is it not your fathers' responsibility as head of his family to take care of them, how come it has become your responsibility?" I have never got an answer to this question, and as time goes on, my resentment towards my husband's family grows and grows. I have insisted that he no longer sends money to his sisters and have threatened to stop working if he carries on. I no longer speak to his sisters, due to their constant demands, and my husband has acknowledged this.

It upsets me that as a female I am expected to seek permission in whatever I do regardless of my status, whereas males are not questioned on anything they do. Although I am now the primary earner, I am still expected to explain where certain money is spent, and my husband often asks me to account for my spending. This is in contrast to what it says in religion, where women are not only allowed their own income, but have the right to use, or spend it where and how they choose. This is a clear disregard for religion in favour of culture, and shows the disconnection between the two. I am even angrier that he allows my mother in law to question me regarding finances, and allows her to ask me to account for spending, surely this is not acceptable, or right? Why doesn't she ask her son to explain his income and spending? Why do men feel they don't need to explain themselves? Sometimes I feel it would be easier to give up work, but I know that our standard of living would drop and both the children and myself would have to go without things we want, and I can't bring myself to do it.

It is so unfair, that before marriage I was my father's responsibility and he had the right to give me permission to carry on with education or to work, and after marriage it was now my husband's responsibility to protect me and give me permission to seek employment or carry on with further education, however the difference is that I needed to prove to him that I was, and am capable of doing this, and that the end result will be beneficial for him and his family. Why can't I just be a person in my own right? I live in a free country, yet I am trapped by all these stupid laws and cultural expectations, that don't allow me to move outside of what they say. I feel so frustrated and angry with my parents, my husband, mother in law, but most of all these people who dictate what culture is for women, and how they must move and behave within the cultural framework.

I have daughters of my own and although I accept that culture is constricting, I feel I am taking the best from culture and combining it with what I know of religion to make their lives better than mine was. I am strongly in favour of education for my girls, and on this topic my husband is in agreement. However, I still agree with some cultural aspects, such as dress. My girls are not allowed to wear western clothes, that is trousers, jeans and tops. Their father wants them to wear Pakistani clothes, such as *shalwar kameez*, with a *dupatta* or scarf. They don't have to cover their head, but they should have it with them. I haven't challenged this, as I feel he is right, he has to have some say in their upbringing and he does have the final say. Even with education, he has specified which school the girls go to, somewhere close to home, where the pupils are of a similar background. They are not allowed to walk to or from school, he drops them off and picks them up. I want my girls to have an education and to get in in the conventional manner, however it may be that they need to do what I did, and go back to college after marriage.

I am concerned about their marriages, and I have already identified a marriage partner in Pakistan, for my eldest daughter who is now 14. I haven't told her this, because I don't want to affect her schooling in any way, but I do expect her to do as she is told. This is the sign of good upbringing, and I know I have brought all my children up properly.

Many times, I have felt that this "man as head of household" identity is a farce, but other times I know it to be true. Although I am the main earner, I am better educated and qualified than my husband, I am still a woman, and I don't have final say in anything. In some things I have a say, but I feel that this is

more to humour me and keep me on side, I feel I am given permission to work or to see my friends, rather than this being my choice, so in reality I don't have a say at all. This position of authority that my husband holds is due solely to the cultural norms that exist in his family, and are based purely on his gender rather than capability. It is a position that is given or bestowed, not earned, and as such it is false and unfair. Ideally, my relationship with my husband should be equal, and we should recognise that we have different qualities, strengths and skills that we bring together to make things good for our children, however I don't think that will happen for me.

Analysis of Shadiya's story

What have I learned from Shadiya's life story?

I have found the following to be of interest from Shadiya's life story. Firstly, on the surface it appears that Shadiya is a free moving, independent Muslim woman, living in the West, whose family has embraced the values of the country they are living in, and are in tune with the rights of women, however, this is not true at all, she still has to appeal to the male superiority which is ever present in her culture, in order to try and get basic rights such as education. Whether or not these are granted fully and freely is also debatable, as she has to present the advantages to her husband of her working, rather than the advantages to herself, this is also conforming to the patriarchal demands of her culture.

An aspect of Shadiya's life which I found surprising, and a little disturbing is that when it comes to her daughters she is part of the patriarchal system, furthering and perpetuating some of the behaviours and expectations, such as marriage and dress. She doesn't appear to challenge these in any way, nor does she take into account her daughters' future wishes or desires. She has taken the lead in arranging her elder daughter's marriage to someone from another country without any apparent thought to the potential difficulties or challenges she would face. Indeed, she seems to have forgotten her own unhappiness and difficulties at the beginning of her marriage, and doesn't seem to acknowledge that similar challenges would exist for her daughter. In fact, she seems to be quite comfortable with the idea that her daughter could quite easily follow the same path as herself in terms of marriage first, then education, rather than the more conventional route. Shadiya states that she would be failing in her role and responsibility as a mother if she didn't make this arrangement for her daughter's weddings. Furthermore, it is an outward sign of good parenting, and it is important for wider community to see and recognise that Shadiya has brought her children up properly, to obey their parents and do their bidding.

Shadiya explained it was important for her to arrange her daughter's marriage in this way because it would demonstrate a number of things: - firstly that she has control of her children, and this would increase Shadiya's standing in the extended family unit, she would be recognised as a matriarch, and have a more active role in the making of major decisions. Secondly, it is the right thing to do for her daughter, to secure her future. It is essential to protect her girls from external influences, which may lead them to declining an arranged marriage, or making a marriage of choice, which is not acceptable in their family. Thirdly, how are the girls supposed to know what is good for them in relation to marriage? That is what parents, especially mothers are for. I wouldn't be fulfilling my role and responsibility as a mother if I didn't make this crucial decision for her.

Evidence of Shadiya's negotiation of the patriarchal system within her family is present throughout her life story. Although she questions many aspects of this patriarchal system such as the notions of a male head of the household, and how she is expected to account for money she has earned despite her economic contribution to the household. Shadiya's relationship with the patriarchal system is a complex one, she questions

	<p>many aspects such as the notion of the head of household, and being held to account financially, even though she is the main contributor to household finances whilst embracing other aspects, which is evident in her views on how her daughters should dress. She is happy to allow her husband to dictate a dress code, and expects them to follow it. It is interesting to note that she does not mention her sons at any point with regards to education, marriage or other expected behaviours.</p>
<p>Is there anything specific to say about the following topics:</p>	
<p><i>a. how the dominant (articulated in codified and non-codified law) interpretations of qiwamah and wilayah impact the choices Shadiya has made in her public and private life?</i></p>	<p>I feel there are conscious and subconscious impacts of the non-codified laws and these have influenced the choices that Shadiya has made in her life. One of the most severe and deep reaching impacts of the patriarchal interpretation of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> is felt in Shadiya’s statement where she is talking about her early days of marriage, when she felt inhuman, her feelings were of no importance, and that she didn’t matter. I believe this is due to the long practised non-codified laws regarding the position of men and women in Shadiya’s family. It is certainly clear that at this point in her life, Shadiya is at the silence/silenced stage of Women’s ways of knowing. I further believe that although Shadiya is certain in her belief that she is a confident, forward thinking Muslim woman, living in the West, the reality is much more complex, as is illustrated by her arranging the marriages of her young daughters.</p> <p>This quite clearly relates to the <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>-related law on <i>wilayah</i>, however there was no mention of this as a religious principle during Shadiya’s telling of her story, nor were there any other religious references. Rather it was the cultural expectation that was being fulfilled by being ‘<i>zimadaar</i>’ or responsible. The decision regarding her daughters’ futures is based on what the patriarchal system expects of Shadiya as a mother, and what it expects from daughters.</p> <p>Despite Shadiya feeling or believing she has made a choice regarding her education, I do not see this as being true, as she has had to justify or sell the idea of her education to her husband and demonstrate what the advantages would be to him and his family. Once she has obtained his approval to return to education, she again has partially conformed in terms of the employment she has “chosen”, which is that of a teacher. In the Pakistani Muslim community that Shadiya and her family originate from, teaching is considered a safe and honourable profession for women to enter into, and it is highly likely that she would not have faced any opposition or challenges in this choice of career.</p>
<p><i>b. how such interpretations have contributed in shaping Shadiya’s sense of self and affected her capacity to enjoy her human rights (civil and political; economic, social and cultural rights)?</i></p>	<p>Shadiya’s family has been living in the UK since the early 1960’s, and has settled and lived amongst a tight knit society, all of whom share the same culture and values. There appears to be a normative system that governs gender roles and relations that has shaped the life path of Shadiya (eg her marriage was arranged when she was young by her father to her cousin). I believe that her childhood and adolescence will have been greatly impacted by this system, and feel that although she has been exposed and conditioned by the non-codified laws of patriarchy shared by her family, extended family and community, Shadiya has negotiated new pathways in terms of her education, employment and becoming economically</p>

	<p>empowered. Shadiya’s mother and other women of her generation from this community have rarely worked outside the home, their sole focus being their family, in particular the men. They served their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons, and brought up their daughters to do the same, instilling the same values and traditions into them, and expecting the girls to adhere to them.</p> <p>Shadiya’s life choices both in her personal and professional life reflect this, she was not able to defend her right to bring up her own daughter, nor was she able to exercise her right to education in a full and free manner. Her social rights are dictated by the community she originates from, and there is little evidence of any amalgamation of cultures; many families have taken the best of the original culture and the best of the indigenous culture, resulting in a way of life, which is acceptable to many if not all members of that family. However, Shadiya appears to be brokering a fusion of cultures, which is clear to see in her seeking education, and employment, leading her to becoming economically empowered.</p> <p>Shadiya questions the disconnect between religion and culture with regards to economic autonomy.</p> <p>Her understanding of the religious perspective is that she has a right to make decisions regarding money, property or jewelry that she owns. Furthermore, she is not expected to use this for the general upkeep and running of the home, this is the husband’s responsibility. He should provide for her, and her children, and make sure that their home and all it entails is maintained in the appropriate manner. However, Shadiya’s financial contribution to the running of her home, is not just expected, it is necessary, which is in contradiction to what she believes is the religious truth. Her emerging sense of self, and her more powerful position with her family unit, allow this disconnect to continue, as it does not interfere too much in her personal advancement and progression.</p> <p>I am of the opinion that Shadiya is being quite strategic in this instance, where she is turning a blind eye to the secondary notion of religious rights in favour of the primary notion of personal development and the evolution of her family unit. I feel there are multiple pathways being trodden by Shadiya, the negotiation of the patriarchal system, the movement towards economic autonomy, becoming more informed about her faith and her position according to religious principles and embarking on the amalgamation of cultures.</p>
<p><i>c. how different these impacts are for differently located women, and particularly for women who face the intersection of multiple discrimination?</i></p>	<p>See final group analysis</p>
<p><i>d. what kind of divergences exist on the ground, which are a</i></p>	<p>A divergence from the gender roles is clear in that Shadiya plays an important financial role in her family and in fact the main earner, and is not protected or provided for by her husband. This is in direct contrast to the</p>

<p>product of active negotiations?</p>	<p><i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> model of gender roles, where the man is the provider and the woman is fully taken care of and supported by him. In further contradiction, Shadiya's husband and mother-in-law expect Shadiya to make a significant regular and permanent contribution to the maintaining of the home and family. To add further insult to injury, Shadiya is held to account over her earnings, and has to justify where and how her money has been spent.</p> <p>Shadiya recognises this disconnect between religion and culture, and at present I feel she is not challenging it because it suits her purpose not to. It could actually become problematic for her if she articulates her views on this issue, as it is quite possible that the ground she has gained regarding education and employment may well be lost, if permission is rescinded.</p>
<p>Are there particular insights from Shadiya's lived reality that we think should inform our new readings of the concepts of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>?</p>	<p>Shadiya's lived realities clearly demonstrate the dichotomy of the law of the land, which is all encompassing, and the traditions and non-codified laws of society that are specifically directed at women. It is also evident that although Shadiya believes she is breaking free of patriarchy and its effects, the reality is that in some ways she is part of the system, and yet in others she is not only making changes, she is breaking free. Our readings of the concepts of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> should take both of these factors into consideration, and focus on how we can help emerging Muslim feminists to recognise patriarchy as a system and ideology rather than a male behaviour, and recognise their own role of perpetrating and continuing the ideology.</p> <p>Shadiya's engaging with the normative system may not actually be what it first appears to be. Initially, it may seem that Shadiya is meekly following the patriarchal norms and expectations of her family, however upon closer examination it could be argued that she is actually playing the system for her own gain; that is to say that to all intents and purposes, Shadiya is doing exactly what she is expected to do, however she is making significant changes from within, as is evidenced in her negotiations for education, and financial empowerment.</p> <p>Ideally, possible remedies that are non-threatening could be presented to women such as Shadiya, in order to equip them with the necessary tools and skills to begin to challenge the patriarchal system from within, in a safe and invulnerable manner.</p>
<p>Are there certain changes in the law, in policies and/or in institutions, which are crucial entry points at this point in time to create a workable pathway towards equality and justice in the family?</p>	<p>Family law and anti-discrimination legislation in England means that there is legal recourse for all women who are denied equality and justice, however this is in accordance with the codified law of the land, and does not extend to the non-codified traditions and practices that have governed Shadiya's life. I feel that in order to bring about positive change for Muslim women within their families, communities and societies, initiatives need to be drawn up from the mainstream country laws and disseminated through appropriate channels, such as Muslim Women's groups at local and national levels, generic women's groups and other community programmes which have an anti-discriminatory ethos.</p> <p>The emergence of <i>Sharia</i> councils as an alternative to the law of the land, appeals to many Muslims, however there is evidence that the rulings are often unfair towards women. An initiative to monitor, and align the</p>

	<p>existing <i>Sharia</i> councils would be a good initial entry point, followed by uniformity in practice and advice. An amalgamation of <i>Sharia</i>-compliant legal recourses and interpretations of <i>Sharia</i> law would be extremely advantageous for Muslim women, and would ensure a realistic route towards equality and justice in the Muslim family.</p>
<p>Are there important lessons from Shadiya’s life, which challenge the way we carry out our own work and movement building? Are there changes we should make in our own empowerment strategies?</p>	<p>I feel the most crucial lesson I have learned from Shadiya’s life story is that it is important to recognise the different stages that women may be at in the women’s ways of knowing. Further to this it is also important not to expect women to behave in the way we expect them to, but to recognise their behaviour as part of their development. Empowerment strategies must be simple but effective; for instance, in the UK country context it would be extremely beneficial for Muslim women to have a basic understanding of their rights within religion. They are often taught to recite the Qur’an by rote, or parrot fashion, and little attention is paid to impart the meaning or context, which leads to misplaced religious beliefs, or the perpetuation of patriarchal norms by women themselves.</p>

Reflections

Assumptions: attitudes, values, beliefs

Some of Shadiya's values were challenged through exposure to new ideas and opinions, and a desire to know more was born. I feel however, that although the desire to know more is genuine, Shadiya is still unable to move to the stage where she listens to and begins to trust her inner voice, due either to the shackles of patriarchy, or an underlying belief in the patriarchal system that she is familiar with.

Justifications

Solve problems: deeper meaning, changes: Shadiya is a representative of many Muslim women of her generation, born to migrant parents who are still part of an extended family framework, which includes not only immediate and extended family, but also close friends, and people from the same village, town or city. As such, I felt her experiences would reflect the experiences of many Muslim women born to Pakistani Muslim families who had settled in the UK from the 1950's onwards.

Shadiya seems to recognise some issues that are problematic, such as her mother-in-law trying to arrange a second marriage for her brother-in-law, against his wishes, despite the fact that the mother-in-law herself was subjected to the trauma of a polygamous marriage. However, she does not question the impact of this potential marriage on her brother-in-law's current wife, nor does she examine these issues in the current country context, which rule a polygamous marriage as being illegal. Shadiya is vocal on this issue, and asks significant questions of her mother in law, firstly, how would this marriage affect the first wife of her brother-in-law, secondly why is her mother-in-law insisting on this second marriage, when it is against her brother-in-law's wishes, and thirdly, why would her mother-in-law wish to inflict the pain of a second wife on another woman when she herself has suffered this heartache. I believe this questioning shows that Shadiya has shifted in her knowledge positions, ranging from early silence, to received knowledge, then onto the stage of subjective knowledge to the current position of a procedural knower.

Final Analysis

How do the dominant (articulated in codified and non-codified law) interpretations of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* impact differently located women, and particularly women at the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination?

Muslim communities and community organisations in the UK have always been led by men. In the past, this could be explained as a result of the patterns of Muslim migration to the UK or of imported South Asian cultural norm, but as Muslims in the UK have become more settled and as a British-born generation of ambitious, civically engaged Muslims have emerged, community structures led by men only have seemed increasingly outdated. While there have been some promising steps, established Muslim communities and organisations have a long way to go to reflect their constituencies.

My four resource persons have been subjected to the non-codified laws, cultures and traditions of their families and communities rather than the codified interpretations of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. They are vulnerable to many layers of discrimination due to being Black, female, or Muslim. They face discrimination in the labour market, at every level of the recruitment process, with some Muslim women removing hijabs or changing their Muslim names for an interview. Although my resource persons are all contributing significantly to the household income, there are still cultural rules and regulations, which dictate whether or not they can work, or how they can use their income. This is in direct contrast to the Islamic perspective, as the resource persons themselves have pointed out.

Further to this, there is the insidious Islamophobia, which is now a standard feature in the lives of many British Muslims. Women are especially susceptible to Islamophobic attacks if they wear the hijab, or other clothes associated with their religion. Although my resource persons have not mentioned dress as such, I noted that they have all come to an amalgamation of eastern and western dress, such as long shirts and trousers, long skirts and blouses, all full sleeved, and non-revealing. None of my resource persons wear the hijab, except to pray.

Studies and research show that Muslim women are also discriminated in the areas of mental health, where they are more likely to get a diagnosis of psychosis than their white counterparts, and in political and public roles, where they are grossly under-represented.

Add to this already deleterious mix, the traditional norms and practices that many Muslim women face, such as the right to education or a career of choice. Marriage is a huge issue for South Asian Muslim women in the UK, where the phenomenon of forced marriage is becoming more and more visible. Three of my resource persons have been manipulated, manoeuvred or forced into a marriage, where the right to choose their partner has been denied them. Marriage also features strongly in the life story of the fourth resource person, where the traditions and norms of her family have prohibited her from marrying.

Domestic abuse was also a feature of the life stories, ranging from horrific physical abuse, to the more hidden emotional and psychological abuse faced by one resource person. There are also elements of financial abuse, where resource persons have to account for money they themselves have

earned, or where the husband has absolved himself of the responsibility of maintaining his wife and family, leaving the woman with no alternative other than to earn a living for herself and her children, and for the upkeep of the home. The issue of employment and earning a salary is complex: - whilst the law of the land does not discriminate on who should be the principle earner and maintainer of the home and family, Islam states that the woman has a right to decide how to use her own money, which shouldn't be used for the general upkeep of the home, unless the woman chooses to use it in such a manner. Additional complexity is added when the traditional rules and norms of family and community also come into play, where husbands and families grant the woman permission to work, but do not allow her to use her own earnings as she chooses.

According to the Fawcett Society <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/>, we are a long way off from equality between women and men in the UK., and believe one key reason is that the national laws and policies of the UK, and those who make them, are still falling way short of delivering the change that they could for women. In some cases, they even seem to be moving women backwards.

There is still a political culture and system that too often views women's equality as a fringe issue to be dealt with by someone else - or worse, an unimportant or irrelevant concern in modern Britain. But the hard facts – the 15% gender pay gap, the 4.1 ratio of men to women MPs, women making up almost 2/3rds of those earning £7 per hour or less – show otherwise.

Chapter 3: Findings from Legal Mapping

The legal mapping in the UK was conducted in a slightly different way from other countries participating in the Global Life Stories Project <http://www.musawah-lifestories.org/>. This is mainly due to the fact that in the UK, secular state law is applicable to all, men and women, of different race and faith. However, non-codified religious-based laws make a mockery of the state law, differentiating between Muslim men and women, boys and girls, on many issues, such as marriage and divorce, inheritance and control over the wife's autonomy, and the daughter's body.

In order to gain a real insight into the lived realities of Muslim women in the UK, and also to gather rich meaningful data for the legal mapping, I decided to hold three conceptual workshops, where women would attend, get some information regarding the project, and participate in answering questions aimed at mapping *qiwamah* and *wilayah* in the non-codified laws governing gender relations in their communities, as they understand and experience these laws. The three workshops were held in Glasgow in Scotland, Birmingham in the Midlands, and Accrington in the North West of England.

I sent invitations and information about the workshops through existing women's networks and groups, as I felt they were best placed in each locality to publicise the event, and to promote it where it was most appropriate. Also, they were able to assist in terms of recommending venues where to hold the conceptual workshops, and most importantly, caterers!

The workshops were extremely well attended, with between 12 and 20 women at each event. I began with an icebreaker, and then continued by showing one of the videos from the Indonesian project, before splitting the attendees into smaller working groups. They were then allocated a number of questions (from the Musawah legal mapping guide) to answer in their small working groups, before they all came back together and discussed the answers. All participants were able to answer all questions.

The findings of the three conceptual workshops are as follows:

Qiwamah and wilayah issue	National law & policy/non-codified law, tradition & culture
<p>1. Man as head of household</p>	<p>The national law (England, Scotland and Wales), does not state that the husband is the head of household, and neither is there an equivalent term. The law does not require the wife and child's name to follow the name of the husband or father, nor is national identity based or linked to the husband or father. Women are not required to vote in the same area as her husband, and tax relief or benefits are available to her on the basis of her income. Any income earned by the woman is paid directly to her, and women are free to access state services such as education, housing and health, and do not require their husbands' or fathers' permission in order to do so. Women are able to buy land and/or property in their own right and this does not require a male signature at any point. Muslim women are free to marry non-Muslims without either spouse having to change their religion.</p> <p>However, non-codified laws and practices in the selected communities contradict the state law as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Traditionally man is the head of the household ❖ No set process to determine head of household, this is predetermined ❖ Islamic perception and belief in many communities and families is that man is the head of household, for example God has created men and women and fixed all the rules and responsibilities according to their capabilities ❖ But in reality, women are in charge ❖ Both men and women are expected to work to provide for their family (this includes both within the home and external employment, or work) ❖ Responsibilities should be shared ❖ Many women stated that from birth they had been brought up with misconceptions and dictations from families and communities, that male children are better and superior to female children ❖ This has had a profound psychological effect on female children ❖ The fact that they are female has affected the opportunities they have been allowed to pursue ❖ Treated differently to brothers ❖ Father has always been in control, he makes all the decisions, he has the power, the will, and the money ❖ Father made decisions regarding what the daughter wore, what she ate, where she went, who her friends were, what time she slept, if she worked and got education ❖ Did not have the chance to challenge father's control in any way – mother did not challenge so daughter just accepted. Questioning would be considered un-Islamic and daughter would be known as a bad daughter ❖ Experience of one group member – her husband does not allow her to do the housework as he says she is an angel not a cleaner! (this was the exception rather than the norm)
<p>2. Gendered responsibility</p>	<p>The state law does not list different responsibilities for husband or wife, nor are there any specific responsibilities that are only for men. The law does not state that only men are responsible for maintaining their wife and/or children within the marriage, or in the event that the marriage breaks down. Marriage creates legal rights and obligations between two people, amongst</p>

those rights and obligations is the right to receive support from, and the obligation to provide support to the other spouse. Under certain circumstances this particular right/obligation may extend well beyond the termination of a marriage by divorce, resulting in one party paying periodic or lump sums of money to the other to assist in his or her support. This support or alimony is not necessarily linked to the passage of time and can continue indefinitely or until the remarriage or death of a party. Child support differs in that it usually ends when a child reaches the age of 18, unless they are still principally dependent on parents, ie they are in education or are disabled, and in which case it can be extended to 23 years of age, or in the case of disabled children, indefinitely.

Non-codified laws within families and communities are very different from state laws on the issue of gendered responsibility.

- ❖ According to cultural norms in some Muslim communities and families, the man goes out to work and is the sole earner, whilst the woman remains as the homemaker. However, times are changing and more and more women are working in paid employment to help meet the financial needs within the home. This is often seen as a double-edged sword, as the women are often told how fortunate they are in that they are “allowed” to work, but the economic climate and family needs make this a necessity, which is greatly unappreciated.
- ❖ Cultural norms allow discrimination and promote inequality within the family
- ❖ No room for discussion, debate or consultation, just have to accept decisions and get on with things
- ❖ Personal experiences shared by women in the conceptual workshops include:
 - ❖ Moving out of the main family home where the couple lived in a joint extended family setting, with the husband’s parent and siblings’ family, was very emotional and difficult, but we managed this well. I felt my husband was torn between his “parents and siblings’ family” and “wife and children” family, and he prioritised “parents and siblings’ family.”
 - ❖ On marriage, my husband moved to the UK from overseas, and carried responsibility for “our family” and “his family” but always gave first priority to his family back “home”. This made me feel he never considered us, or this country as his home.
 - ❖ Things were usually handled by the husband, with the wife taking a back seat
 - ❖ I sometimes felt I was a single parent
 - ❖ As time has gone on, (30 years of marriage for one woman and 15 years for another), there is more equality in discussions and debates, and in internal decisions. There are times of struggle with external decisions
 - ❖ There is more opportunity for my children to discuss their perspectives and points of view with me, however, despite my efforts and intentions to raise them in a different manner to the way I was raised, they still show more deference to their father – Dad has the final say! Many discussions regarding the *Sha’riah* perspective on this issue take place in our house

3. Inheritance

The state law does not define a greater share of inheritance for sons as compared to daughters, and there are no restrictions regarding inheritance where a person only has daughters. This does not apply to the royal family,

	<p>although this is currently in the process of changing, where the first born of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge will become the heir to the throne regardless of whether it is male or female. Peerages and titles also carry special conditions. There is no other gendered provision in law that gives females a lesser share than males. There is provision within the law for individuals, male or female, to contest wills where there are disputes regarding inheritance. The state law does not recognise the application of any customary and/or religious laws in matters of inheritance.</p> <p>Once again there is disparity between the state law and non-codified customs and traditions. The following are the lived experiences of Muslim women in the UK:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Daughters are expected to waive their rights and are frowned upon by immediate and extended family if they don't ❖ The Qu'ranic teachings are not followed at all ❖ Some men in some families are more forward thinking than most, and make specific provision for daughters which is fair, and write his into their will ❖ Daughters and sisters resigned to the fact that they probably won't inherit anything, regardless of the fact that they are often the main support and carers of parents
<p>4. Control over wife's autonomy</p>	<p>According to state law:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no requirement for the husband's endorsement of the wife's business or property transactions. • There is no requirement which makes the wife's right to work conditional on the husband's permission or the "interests of the family". • There is no requirement of the husband's permission for a wife to travel – locally and/or abroad. • There is no requirement to make the wife's right to visit relatives, conditional on the husband's permission or "interests of the family" • There is no requirement for a woman to obtain her husband or father's permission to stand as a political candidate. • The wife can apply for divorce through the courts; there is no requirement for the husband to pronounce <i>talaq</i>. Both husband and wife can use delaying tactics to obstruct the divorce. • There is no legal requirement that obligates courts to reduce final compensation for a divorced wife if she has exercised autonomy from her husband during marriage (eg left or moved out of matrimonial home). • There is no requirement for any post-divorce settlement or maintenance during <i>iddah</i> to be conditional on the wife's behaviour – this is not applicable. <p>Non-codified family and community traditions place many restrictions on Muslim females living in the UK. Below are a few examples of how they are affected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Men can go whenever and wherever they choose without having to explain their movements to anyone; whereas women need to give reasons for going out and inform their families about their exact location and whereabouts. The participants felt this was directly related to <i>qiwamah</i>, i.e. the man taking on the role of protector, when in fact it may be more to do with control. Some women felt guilty for going out and have developed strategies to deal with this, for instance coming

	<p>home early or bringing something back for the husband and children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ A woman is required to obtain her father or husband’s permission to go to work, they need to approve of the job she will be doing. Increasingly, women are not left with any alternative but to go out to work as the husband is not earning enough, although she still has to obtain the permission of her father or husband prior to working, and the participants believed that this is an Islamic requirement. ❖ Discrepancy exists between theory and reality as many women are now co-providers and sometimes they are the sole providers for their family ❖ In female single parent homes, women are the providers and protectors ❖ Change has taken place due to a desire for women to have careers – this is a result of academic education and social contexts, social norms and financial pressures, i.e. the desire for more. Practices vary among different couples and communities. There are men who do not want to permit their wives to work, but there are also other men who push their wives to work, even when the latter do not want to. In both instances, the choice does not remain with the woman ❖ In many families, the woman/wife is required to obtain the husband or father’s permission before travelling anywhere, even for visiting family members who may live locally. If the husband or in-laws are not happy with this, she is not allowed to visit her relatives. Some participants felt that local and regional travel did not require permission, however in the interests of safety it is important for the husband/family to know where she is ❖ In many cases the wife is expected to obtain her husband’s permission before acquiring any land or property, and also for any business transactions, although in Islamic law she has a right to exert full control over her property and assets and is free to spend or use these in any way she sees fit ❖ There is an obligation for the woman to obtain the permission of her father, brothers and husband before she stands as a political candidate, a few participants felt this was also an Islamic requirement ❖ The wife can initiate <i>khul’</i>, by submitting a petition in writing to the <i>Sharia</i> Councils, which are established by Muslim communities, but the husband will be contacted and informed that an application has been received ❖ Wives commonly are compelled to initiate fault-based divorce because husbands would refuse to pronounce <i>talaq</i> ❖ Husband can delay a wife’s application for divorce by not having papers served on time. This is applicable in the instance of <i>khul’</i>, where he can delay proceedings by not responding on time, or failing to provide the necessary documents. These strategies that some men resort to derail women’s efforts to get divorce also take place in English courts where state laws apply. ❖ It is important to note that there are no corresponding requirements or limitations placed on the male in non-codified culture, tradition and expectations
<p>5. Control over wife’s body</p>	<p>State law and/or policy do not</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require the husband’s permission for sexual and reproductive health services such as family planning, abortion, sterilisation, or emergency obstetric care, neither is the wife’s permission required for the husband’s vasectomy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permit the husband to discipline or beat the wife in any way. Sentences for domestic violence depend on the seriousness of the offence, and whether the abuser has any previous convictions, and range from a conditional discharge to a custodial sentence. Some areas of mainland UK have specialist domestic violence courts in which the staff are specially trained to deal with the issue, and will try to fast track criminal domestic violence cases. There is a widely held belief that sentencing in domestic violence cases is often lenient in comparison to stranger violence cases. This does not reflect the reverse opinion, which is that harsher sentences tend to be handed to the wife if she commits violence or murder • Honour killings have only recently been recognised as a specific form of cultural domestic violence, and are now referred to as “so called honour based violence” by the police and other agencies. There are many misconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices which surround this particular abuse on the part of the state, which often leaves the victim even more vulnerable. However, there is some progress through training and education for both service providers and service users, and judges are not considering honour as a mitigating factor when cases are brought to court • State that the wife must obey the husband, although the words of the marriage vows include to <i>love, honour and obey</i>, but many couples are choosing to write their own vows. • The law recognises marital rape • Allow the punishment of a wife who is <i>nushuz</i>, or disobedient • Make the wife’s maintenance conditional upon her remaining in the marital home • Provide for the restitution of conjugal rights • Make post-divorce financial arrangements or maintenance conditional upon the wife’s sexual behaviour <p>Community laws and traditions are in contrast to the state law, as are the experiences of the participants in the methodology workshops, as reported below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Some scholars say it is a right of the husband to have control over the wife’s body, some say it is not, all I know is that my husband has final say, I can’t even have my ears pierced or apply nail polish without his consent ❖ My mother and other female relatives told me there is no such thing as marital rape. I must submit to my husband whenever he wants sex, if I don’t he will stray, men are weak. It will be my fault if he commits <i>zina</i> ❖ My husband sleeps with other women, he makes me wax his body hair, and help him get ready when he is going out to meet these women. If I disagree or refuse he beats me, he perforated my ear drum and broke my ribs, I asked him how he would feel if I was to mess around with other men, he told me that wouldn’t happen as my body and soul belong to him. If he ever thinks or believes I could be thinking of another man, or that I want to leave him, he will kill me. ❖ My husband got into a great deal of debt, and passed me around for sex to pay of his debt. He told me I belong to him, he can do whatever he wants with me.
<p>6. Control over daughter’s autonomy</p>	<p>The state law does not</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require a <i>wali</i> or guardian’s consent for a valid marriage, unless one

	<p>or both of the intended spouses are 16 years of age in which case parental/legal guardian consent is required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The law does not give a guardian any over-ruling power or <i>Ijbar</i> • Prohibit either parent or legal guardian or responsible adult from signing forms relating to health, or education services • Require permission from the father of an unmarried woman to access reproductive health services • Provide for lesser sentences for fathers who kill or harm their daughter/s <p>The non-codified laws and traditions of many families and communities in the UK are in stark contrast to the state law. Many families believe they have the right and the moral duty to control their daughters and that they should not be given autonomy as this will lead them to transgress the norms and expectations the family and community have of them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I wasn't allowed to wear jeans whilst I was growing up, as only bad girls, i.e. whores and prostitutes wore jeans. Neither could I leave my hair loose, as this was another sign of a girl with loose morals. ❖ My sisters and I were not allowed to have friends, my father used to say, "why do you need friends when you have each other?" My brothers' friends were also not allowed to come home because of his sisters being in the house ❖ I had to learn how to cook, because this was the mark of a girl ❖ I was not allowed to attend any after school functions or parties because my family believed bad things happened there ❖ I was beaten for staying longer than allowed when I went to the library. I bumped into one of my school friends there and we stayed in the town centre, I went home over an hour late, and my mother beat me, and called me names. It wasn't just my father ❖ I am over 30 years of age, and have to get permission or "inform" my husband, parents and parents-in-law of my movements, especially if I am travelling out of the local area, and if I am going overseas then I have to have a family consultation! ❖ I am very careful of my daughter's movements, I haven't allowed her to learn how to drive, don't misunderstand me, she is a good girl, decent, hard-working, studying for her MA, but it's the world, its bad, it corrupts girls, then they suffer, and the family are let down ❖ My sisters-in-law and I are still required to get our mother-in-law's approval before buying coats, and shoes. We cannot wear clothes she thinks are unsuitable, even if our husbands are happy with us wearing them. Western clothes?!!! No chance! ❖ I am not allowed to go and see my doctor on my own, or attend any appointments, even with my university. Somebody is always with me, just in case I make the wrong decision ❖ When I was pregnant I couldn't go to ante-natal appointments on my own, and my mother was not allowed to attend with me, it was always my husband's mother and sister, and they asked all the questions, and made the decisions
<p>7. Guardianship of children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The law does not state that fathers are the "natural guardians" of their children • Child support payments are made from one parent to the other n after a divorce or separation. Child support payments are usually made from the parent who does not have custody of the children to

	<p>the parent who does. When a married couple has children, the husband is automatically deemed the father and may be required to pay child support after divorce. In cases involving children out of wedlock, paternity must be established before child support can be imposed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is nothing in the law to state that parental responsibility can be lost by father or mother. In cases of paedophilia, criminal activity, alcohol or drug abuse, children can be placed in care and on the “at risk” register, and parents will have supervised contact • Both parents have the right to sign any documents relating to health, education and other requirements such as permission for school outings etc. • If the father changes his religion, the law does not require the children to follow his new religion <p>The non-codified laws, traditions, customs and beliefs tell another story entirely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Not sure what you mean by guardian or guardianship ❖ There is no question regarding guardianship, it’s the father, the paternal grandfather and uncles. Then grandmother can have a say too, but not my mother or my aunts, not at all. I remember the first time my brother asked my mother’s permission for something rather than my uncle, and the whole family went mad and blamed my mother for corrupting her sons, saying she was getting ideas above her station, did she think her children belonged to her, did she bring them with her from her parents’ house?! This attitude has only diminished once we have become adults ❖ My father decided everything to do with us children, my mother was never allowed to make decisions, not even choosing our shoes ❖ We were never allowed to know my maternal relatives because of a family rift. We were always told that they didn’t matter, we would be recognised by our father and his side of the family, mother’s families don’t mean anything ❖ Even if the father is a bad guy, a crook, a criminal, he is still the guardian and in charge ❖ I know of one man who was in prison for supplying drugs and he used to tell his children what to do from jail! He told them to study and be good, and told his son to make sure he looked after his sister and don’t let her go anywhere on her own
<p>Laws & legal developments that in practice or potentially counter the discriminatory understandings of <i>qiwamah</i> & <i>wilayah</i></p>	
<p>a) Negotiating rights & responsibilities in the marriage contract</p>	<p>The law does recognise the possibility of negotiating rights and responsibilities in the marriage contract, usually in the form of pre-nuptial agreements, however in reality many Muslim women are not aware that the <i>nikah</i> is a contract and can be negotiated with terms and conditions written into it. As far as they are concerned the woman’s role is to say yes three times and to “get on with it.” There is no discussion or negotiation, and definitely no mention of contract or contractual obligations.</p>

<p>b) Alternative inheritance practices</p>	<p>The law allows all citizens to make wills and gifts, and no share of estate is specified for individuals in state codes. The law of the land is often used by Muslims when the wishes of the deceased parents are not known, however this is often contested. More often than not, the estate is divided between beneficiaries according to interpretations of <i>Shari'ah</i>, and pressure is exerted on the female to give up her share. The eldest sibling is often the executor of the will or estate and decides who gets what which often leads to unfair division, and long and costly legal battles. The legal costs are covered by the estate and often there is very little if anything left for the beneficiaries once all payments to solicitors and courts have been made.</p> <p>One participant shared that the Pakistani government has a law in place to try and ensure that the correct percentage of inheritance is paid according to the <i>Shari'ah</i> law of Pakistan. However, in reality, this is often flouted and there is very little legal recourse or recompense for women.</p> <p>In order to address these issues, many individuals are making wills in accordance to state law and specifying who gets what. This will is final and binding, and the executor of the will is often named within the will itself to try and avoid conflict. Further to this, many parents are gifting parts of their estate to daughters in their lifetime so that they are in accordance with <i>Shari'ah</i> or bringing together families and extended families to announce their wishes so that there is little or no discrepancy on death.</p>
<p>c) Constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination</p>	<p>Currently, the law of the land does not discriminate on the basis of gender. There have been a small number of cases where males have tried to use the Muslim laws in a court of law but this has not been acknowledged by the judge and decisions and rulings have been made according to state law.</p>
<p>d) Domestication of CEDAW and/or other treaties</p>	<p>Although the UK signed CEDAW in July 1981, it was not ratified until April 1986. Since the UK has a dualist system of international law, treaties are not binding unless incorporated by legislation. In 1999 and again in 2008, the Committee recommended that the UK fully incorporates CEDAW. In its 1999 Concluding Observations, the Committee emphasised that that the incorporation of the ECHR in the Human Rights Act 1998 was not sufficient, since it did not provide for the full range of women's human rights in CEDAW, nor for temporary special measures. In its most recent report, in 2008, the CEDAW Committee once again urged the Government to utilise the opportunity presented by the proposed introduction of a new Equality Bill to ensure the incorporation of the Convention.</p> <p>On 10 June 2011, the Government Equalities Office (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-equalities-office) submitted the UK Government's seventh periodic report on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women to the UN. The report covers developments over the last four years in areas such as health, employment, education, representation, social and economic benefits, sex role stereotyping, trafficking, marriage and family law. It also provides an update on the situation of women in the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories to which CEDAW has been extended. The Commission will be engaging independently in the UN review process, including advising the CEDAW Committee on key gender equality challenges in the UK, engaging with NGOs</p>

	<p>and commenting on the Government report. The UK examination by the UN CEDAW Committee is scheduled for July 2013.</p> <p>To our knowledge and during workshop discussions we were unable to identify any instances where lawyers or courts had referred to CEDAW or other international treaties in relation to <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>.</p>
e) Courts reinterpreting discriminatory laws and policies	<p>The state family law does not recognise the <i>fiqh</i> principles of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>. Cultural norms and traditions are considered, but when they are in contravention of the law of the land they are not regarded as mitigating circumstances or as a defense.</p> <p>A positive aspect with regards to this is that judges are not prepared to accept the notion of “honour” as a reason for violence, or death as in honour killings.</p>
f) Laws against domestic violence and violence against women	<p>The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act applies to all citizens. This law has been used to address issues of violence, harassment, stalking and blackmail without specific reference, recognition or acknowledgement of <i>qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i>. Muslim families or Muslims, are not exempt from any of the protective elements of this act.</p>
g) Citizenship and Muslim families	<p>Muslims can choose to marry outside of the law of the land, however this marriage will not be recognised by the state and the two individuals will be considered to be co-habitees, rather than spouses. Many participants in the workshops consider the state law to be fair and non-discriminatory, however on occasion, it does not meet their specific needs, for example when initiating or applying for <i>khul</i>. Yet state laws allow either partner to petition for divorce in state courts. But many Muslim women feel that divorce obtained from state courts is not religiously valid if it does not meet the requirement for divorce in Islamic law. Therefore, they more often than not apply for both a judicial divorce through state law, and <i>khul</i> according to Islamic <i>Fiqh</i>, one is for legal standing, and the other for reassurance. In addition, <i>nikah</i> between two British Muslims is not recognised as a valid marriage by the state. So, British Muslim couples often have a state-recognised marriage ceremony in a registry office, and a <i>nikah</i> which satisfies and reassures them that all is correct in the eyes of their faith.</p>

Chapter 4: Research Instruments

My research began with three conceptual workshops to explore the level of knowledge and understanding of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. The workshops were held in Glasgow in Scotland, Birmingham in the Midlands, and in Accrington in the North West of England. The participants were involved in individual and small group work to discuss *qiwamah* and *wilayah* (See appendix 1).

Once resource persons had been identified, I had a series of meetings with them in order to gather and document their life stories. Prior to any documentation I asked the resource persons for their consent, which was given in writing on a consent form. (See appendix 2). I also carried out a risk assessment in order to ensure my own safety and the safety of the resource person. (See appendix 3).

All appendices are at the end of this chapter.

Appendix 1: Legal Mapping

Man as the “head of household”

- In your family/community, is it stated or accepted that the man is the head of the household or an equivalent term? Is this reflected in any other way, for example in national law, religious understanding or family/community expectations and traditions?

Gendered responsibilities

- Does your family/community list different responsibilities for a husband and a wife?
- Are there specific responsibilities for men? What are they?
- What is the stance on maintenance of the family, is this responsibility of the man, or is it gender neutral?
- Is there an expectation of men having to protect the family? Is this a written or unwritten rule?
- Does it equally emphasise rights and responsibilities?
- Compare the responsibilities of husbands and wives, do they discriminate or promote inequality in the family?

Inheritance

- Does your family/community define a greater share of inheritance for sons compared to daughters?
- What is the position where a person has only daughters?
- Is there any other gendered provision, which gives females a lesser share than males?
- Is there discrepancy between the family/community law and the national law?
- Does the national law recognize the application of any customary/religious laws in matters of inheritance?
- Do court judgements mention the brother’s financial and moral responsibilities as “head of family”? Can this be used to uphold their responsibility to give their sisters their due inheritance, or explain why the sister may not have a greater share?

Control over wife’s autonomy

This economic, social and political control can be manifested in many different ways:

- Property – does your family/community require the wife to obtain the husband’s endorsement of the wife’s business or property transactions?
- Employment – does your family/community make the wife’s right to work conditional on the husband’s permission, or “in the interests of the family”? Is there a corresponding limitation on the husband’s employment?
- Mobility – does your family/community require the wife to obtain the husband’s permission to travel, locally and/or abroad? Does this make the wife’s right to visit relatives, conditional on the husband’s permission, or “in the interests of the family”? Is there a corresponding limitation on the husband’s mobility?
- Political participation – does your family/community state that a woman requires her husband’s permission to stand as a political candidate?
- Divorce – Does your family/community require the husband’s permission or consent for *khul* (separation)? If a wife initiates a grounds-based divorce, (e.g. *fasakh* (annulment), *tafriq* (third method of divorce in which court intervenes), *shiqaq* (differences between a husband and wife) through the courts, does the law require the husband to pronounce *talaq*? Does the law (both written and non-written community law) enable the husband to obstruct or delay a divorce initiated by the wife? Does the law (both written and non-written community law) allow the courts to reduce any financial compensation for a divorced wife if she has exercised non-sexual autonomy, (eg she has visited a friend/got a job that he disapproves of or she does not accept his decision-making authority)?
- Post-divorce financial arrangements – Is any post-divorce maintenance or *nafaqah* during *iddah* conditional upon the wife’s behavior?

Control over wife's body

- In many places in the world, the law can endorse the husband's control over the wife's physical integrity in many different aspects of life
- Does your family/community require the husband's permission/consent for sexual and reproductive health services such as family planning, abortion, sterilisation, and emergency obstetric care? Is the wife's permission required for the husband's vasectomy?
- Domestic violence and marital rape - does your family/community permit the husband to "discipline" or beat the wife? Does the national law provide for lesser sentences in cases of domestic violence in contrast to violence by strangers? Does the law (both written and non-written community law) recognise marital rape? Does the law (both written and non-written community law) provide for a lesser sentence if a husband murders a wife? How are these provisions different if the wife commits the violence?
- Sexual "obedience" and maintenance - Does your family/community state that the wife must obey the husband? Does the law (both written and non-written community law) allow punishment of a wife who is *nushuz* (disobedient)? Does the law (both written and non-written community law) make the wife's right to maintenance conditional upon her remaining the marital home?
- Post-divorce financial arrangements - is any post-divorce maintenance or *nafaqah* during *iddah* conditional upon the wife's sexual behaviour (e.g. allegations of relationships or her subsequent re-marriage will end the payments)?

- Control over daughter's autonomy
Wali - does your family/community require the *wali's* (guardian) consent for a valid marriage? Can only father or grandfather be a *wali*, or can any male or female act as wali? Does the law (both written and non-written community law) allow a marriage to take place in the event that a *wali* refuses to consent unreasonably?
- Ijbar – does your family/community give a *wali* the power of *ijbar* (over-ruling authority)? Is there permission to challenge *ijbar* by the bride?
- Health and education – In your family/community does the father have to sign forms relating to health (emergency and ordinary) and education services? Can the mother or any adult sign? Does the law (both written and un-written community law) require permission from the father for an unmarried woman to access reproductive/sexual health services?
- Honour crimes/domestic violence – What is the position of your family/community regarding fathers who kill or harm their daughter?

Guardianship of children

- Does your family/community state that fathers are the "natural guardians" of their children?
- Does the law (both written and non-written community law) require fathers (but not mothers) to maintain their children even if they do not have custody of them?
- Does the law (both written and non-written community law) state any circumstances in which a father's rights to guardianship may be lost? How does this compare to the circumstances in which a mother may lose her right to custody?
- Can a mother be a joint, or alternative guardian?
- If the father loses his right to guardianship, who is given priority as an alternative guardian – the mother or the father's male relatives?
- How is the father's right to guardianship manifested in daily life? What activities (eg health, education services, travel) require his permission by law, (both written and non-written community law) and how is this reflected, (eg forms requiring signatures etc)
- If the father was to change his religion, to or from Islam will your family/community require the children, both minors and adults, to follow his new religion?
- If a form requires a person to state "son/daughter of", can they insert their mother's name instead of the father's name?

Appendix 2: Consent Form

Consent to participation in research

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Mussurut Zia on behalf of Musawah. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

Purpose of the study

To document the life stories of Muslim women in 11 countries to determine their lived realities in light of *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

Meet with the researcher to tell your life story

Review your consent at each meeting

Review the final documentation of your life story and make any changes

Give permission for your life story to be included in the research report.

Participation and withdrawal

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Subject

_____ Signature of Subject
_____ Date

Signature of Subject

Date

Appendix 3: Risk Assessment

What are the hazards?	Who may be harmed, and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Date completed
Withdrawal of resource person	Project may be harmed, due to loss of resource person Further harm in that there may be a shortage of time in identifying another resource person	Consent forms Recognition and mitigation of risk, ie timing, location, duration of meeting	Review at each meeting, recognise possible risks as they occur, identify and implement measures to reduce/eliminate risk	M. Zia (Musawah Advocate)		-
Danger to resource person	Physical harm, ostracisation					
Typical dangers	Family interference, danger from state					
Danger to Musawah Advocate	Physical harm, damage to property, i.e. recording devices, notebooks					
Potential barriers and/or threats	Lack of willingness to participate, withdrawal of consent,					

Final Word

I have found the role of researcher in the UK for the Musawah Global Life Stories Project to be a journey of many emotions. I have felt honoured that women have considered me trustworthy enough to share their life stories. I have felt awed in face of the challenges that my resource persons have overcome, and humbled by the strength displayed by all of the women.

The research project has also been a journey of self-discovery, challenging some of my sub-conscious prejudices and beliefs. At all times, the project has been immensely rewarding.

The Global Life Stories Project has reinforced my passion and dedication in working towards justice and equality in the Muslim family.

Acknowledgements

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Information Sources:

Fawcett Society

Office of National Statistics – UK