YOUNG PAKISTANI MUSLIM WOMEN'S REFLECTIONS ON DIFFERENCE, FUTURE, AND FAMILY

By

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Abstract

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Adviser: Professor Stacey J. Lee

This dissertation employs data collected from multiple sites in Southern California over a period of nine months. Several in-depth ethnographic interviews and participant observations were conducted with Pakistani Muslim women (age 17-22) and their parents in an effort to better understand the influence that parents and ethno-religious communities had on their lives, academic choices, and aspirations. This dissertation explores the ways that seemingly paradoxical stereotypes, as members of a model minority and the victims of their parents, Pakistani culture and Islam, have informed the ways young Pakistani Muslim women identify themselves and are identified by others. As the children of immigrants and members of an ethno-religious community consistently marked by difference, I examine the varied and often conflicting ways participants define themselves and the ways they are defined by others through the processes of differentialism. Using a critical reconceptualization of agency, one that delinks the concept of agency from secular progressive politics, this work explores the varied modes of agency embodied by young Pakistani Muslim women. Findings confirm the idea that the lives, experiences and perspectives of immigrant youth are complex and multifaceted and that their identities are always in flux and ever changing. Importantly, this research contradicts the cultural clash theory, which suggests that Pakistani parents

are inherently obstructive to their daughter's educational and career goals. This work challenges hegemonic discourses about young Pakistani women that position them as passive recipients of oppressive cultural and religious practices. Findings also complicate our view of agency and choice in relation to young Pakistani Muslim women, deepening our understanding of the roles of parents and ethno-religious communities in the lives of immigrant youth.

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courageously exposed their wounds and triumphs to me. They opened their hearts to me, and trusted me to tell their stories and I can only hope that this work exposes them as the intelligent, indomitable, resilient, authentic and kindhearted young women that they are. Their stories will undoubtedly inspire me for years to come. This dissertation would not have been possible without each of them.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION: 1

The Study: 1
A Brief History of Pakistanis in the US: 6
On Culture and Agency: 8
Overview of Chapters: 15

CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY: 18

Methods: 18
Interviews: 18
Participant Observation: 26
Setting: 27
Participants: 30
Recruitment: 32
Data Analysis: 37
Ethical Considerations: 38
Limitations: 39

CHAPTER 3 DISCOURSES OF DIFFERENCE: 44

Racialization, Religification & Differentialism: 45
I Am What I Am and What I Am Not: The Complexities of Self-Definition: 51
Difference on Display: "It's just not what you do": 73
The Risks of Difference in the Community: 81
The Benefits of Being Different: 87
Conclusion: 91

CHAPTER 4 ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS: 94

Education Status of Pakistani Women in Pakistan and the US: 94
Gender Norms Within the Pakistani Community: 99
Educational Attainment and Aspirations: 104
Dual Frame of Reference: 110
Parent Expectations and Involvement in Education and Schooling: 117
School Equals College Equals Independence: 130
College as a Requirement and a Choice: 133
The Community and Untraditional Pathways into Higher Education: 138

CHAPTER 5 AGENCY: 149
Conceptualizations of Agency: 151
Mehar: 167

Batool: 183
Discussion: 197

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION: 206

APPENDICES: 216

WORKS CITED: 223

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Study

On a recent trip to California, my mother, father and a family friend sat around our dining room table, sipping chai and chatting about their children, community events and our families in Pakistan. What began as a casual conversation over chai soon turned into a discussion about politics, the current state of Pakistan and their decisions to migrate to the United States. After we listened to my parents weigh the pros and cons of living in the U.S., my mother's friend explained what they left behind in Pakistan and why her family made the decision to do so. "Your uncle was a judge," explaining her husband's profession before moving to the US. "You shouldn't say it, but I had ten maids and everything I ever needed!" she admitted without trying to sound boastful. "But he has never complained about not achieving that level of success here." "Then why did you leave, Auntie?" I questioned. "We left for our children. We wanted our daughters to have a better education than they would have been able to have there, *beta* (child)," she answered. More than thirty years later, her eldest daughter is a physician and the other a journalist. On the other hand, Zainab Auntie is the only member of her family without a college degree; she never learned to drive and speaks very little English. Her husband, now retired, sold insurance after moving to the U.S. "We sacrificed our desires for our children's education." My parents shook their heads in agreement, and the conversation quickly turned to a discussion about how I should start thinking about marriage now that I was almost done with my PhD.

I have been witness to countless conversations in which my parents, family members, and family friends shared similar stories about their migration to the U.S. and every time, the response is the same. "We came here for our children's futures…their education." In fact, research shows that there is substantial support for women's education in the American Muslim community (Haddad, Smith & More, 2006, p. 13). Furthermore, young Pakistani women in the US are surpassing the educational levels of their mothers and their foreign-born counterparts (Kibria, In P. G. Min, 2006), and have exceeded the educational attainment of their foreign born and white counterparts in percentage of high school graduates, college graduates and postgraduate and professional degree holders (Reeves & Bennett, 2004). However, the media and (to a lesser but equally problematic extent) the academy emphasize the cases of Pakistani parents who have prevented and/or discourage their daughters from pursuing education, and young women who have been and are being oppressed by their families and religious and ethnic communities.

As Carola Suarez-Orozco (2008) contends, "more than ever before, there are substantial misrepresentations, misunderstandings, and misperceptions about Muslims" (in Sirin & Fine, p. xiiv). In part, these misunderstandings persist because of a general lack of knowledge about the social, cultural, historical, economic and ideological diversity that exists within the Muslim community. Although Pakistanis make up less than one-tenth of a percent of the total population of the US, they are the second largest Muslim group in the United States following African Americans. Despite the fact that the population of Pakistanis has increased exponentially since the 1960's, our knowledge about the community, particularly the young women, remains sparse and

undiscriminating. Scholarly articles and news reports habitually highlight the pathological and static nature of Islam and Pakistani culture and the subjugation of Pakistani/Muslim women. Furthermore, research on Pakistani women in the West continues to rely on assimilationist, western-feminist, orientalist and secularist explanations for their educational struggles that implicate both family and community (both ethnic and religious).

What is more, the educational attainment of young Pakistani and Muslim women depicts them as docile, lacking agency and as the victims of their parents. In a political environment of increasing hostility toward Islam, "the manipulation of gender to reinforce the so-called 'clash of civilizations'—portraying Islam as oppressive of women and the west as liberated—has placed Muslim women in Western societies in an extremely difficult situation" (Haddad, Smith & Moore, 2006, p. 23). As Saba Mahmood (2005) argues, ongoing scholarship on women's agency is essential considering Western popular media's continual portrayal of Muslim women as "incomparably bound by the unbreakable chains of religious and patriarchal oppression" (p. 7).

Interestingly, a subsequent, and seemingly contradictory stereotype Pakistani youth and their families face, paints them as placing a high value on education. The model minority label that is often associated with East Asian groups in the US also includes South Asians and is based on generalized notions about the value Asians place on education, a perceived hard work ethic, high levels of educational attainment and disproportionate economic success in the US (Lee, 2005). Pakistani's, particularly those who come from middle class homes and cannot be immediately identified as Muslim, benefit from the same model minority rhetoric that typifies Asian Americans as 'good

minorities' in the US. Nevertheless, Pakistani's association with Islam, a demonized religious community in the US, often counteracts their model minority status.

As a Pakistani woman born in Pakistan and raised in the US, I have become increasingly concerned about the paucity and quality of literature available on the lives and educational experiences of Pakistani youth. While there have been several empirical studies about the identity development of South Asian and Muslim youth, intergenerational conflict and the practice of arranged marriages (Abbas, 2002; Abougundia & Noels, 2001; Badruddoja, R., 2007; Bhattacharya, 2000; Chaudhry, 1998; Das Dasgupta & Das Gupta, 1996 &1998; Dion & Dion, 2004; Dwyer, 2000; Gibson, 1988; Ghuman, 2001; Hasnat, 1998; Ibrahim et. al., 1997; Kakaiya, 2000; Khandelwal, 2002; Leonard, 1997; Maira, 2002; Morning , 2001; Ngo, 2006), there is a limited body of academic literature on the educational experiences of Pakistani youth, particularly young Pakistani women in the US. The purpose of this study is to critically understand the varied and often conflicting roles families, ethno-religious communities and religion play in shaping the educational futures of young Pakistani women.

This dissertation is a critical qualitative study that examines the roles that religion, family and community play in the expectations and aspirations that young Pakistani Muslim women have for their lives and academic futures. Most of the scholarly work on Pakistanis focuses on those living in the UK and Northeastern US. The literature on the educational experiences of Pakistani women living in the US is even more limited. Nevertheless, this dissertation does not directly address the issue of educational experience but rather, sheds light on the educational aspirations of young Pakistani Muslim women by focusing on the ways the young women think about education in their

lives. The primary goal of this research is to contribute to the small but growing body of research on the educational aspirations of young Pakistani Muslim women in Southern California.

My personal experiences as a Pakistani woman who was raised in the US, my conversations with the young women in my ethnic and religious community and their parents, as well as the dearth of literature on the education of Pakistani women in the US have each influenced my decision to concentrate on the educational attainment and aspirations of Young Pakistani women.

The three main empirical questions that guide my research include:

1. *What messages are young Pakistani women receiving from their families, communities and schools about the role of education in their lives?*
2. *How are they interpreting and making sense of these messages?*

I am also interested in understanding:

3. *How my findings can help us better make sense of Saba Mahmood's conceptualization of agency?*

This dissertation employs data that was collected at multiple sites in Southern California over a period of nine months. From December 2010 to August 2011, I conducted several in-depth ethnographic interviews and participant observations with Pakistani Muslim women between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two and their parents in an effort to better understand the influence that parents and ethno-religious communities had on their lives, academic choices, and aspirations. Specifically, I sought to understand how young Pakistani Muslim women interpret the messages they receive

from their parents about education/schooling and how these messages influence the ways they imagine their futures and ideas about family, Islam, community, and self. In this dissertation, I use their interpretations to open up spaces needed to rethink the concepts of culture, community and agency. Furthermore, as the children of immigrants and members of an ethno-religious community that are consistently marked by their difference, I examine the varied and often conflicting ways they define themselves and are defined by others by looking at the way they are religified (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012) and racialized by their peers, communities and families. Nevertheless, this work does not seek to perpetuate the dominant framework for understanding the experiences of young Pakistani Muslim women by highlighting cultural differences and ignoring the variability within their ethnic and religious communities. Instead, in this dissertation, I intentionally work against essentialist interpretations of Pakistani culture and Islam that limit a critical understanding of the community, family, religion and gender. Finally, Using Saba Mahmood's (2003) critical reconceptualization of agency, one that delinks the concept of agency from secular progressive politics, this work explores the varied modes of agency embodied by young Pakistani Muslim women. More often than not, agency is defined in relation to resistance of norms. What this definition ignores, as Saba Mahmood (2003) argues is the fact that agency and resistance to norms should not be conflated and thought of as one and the same.

Brief History of Pakistanis in the US

Pakistanis have a much longer history in the US than one would imagine. Although Pakistan is a fairly new country, having separated from India in the 1940's,

South Asian Muslims have been in the US since the late 19th century on the West coast of the United States (Takaki, 1989). Nevertheless, the population of Pakistanis I focused on arrived in the United States during the third wave of immigration in the 1980's and 1990's. Unlike Pakistanis who left Pakistan following the passing of the US Immigration Act in the 1960's, 1990's immigrants came as a result of family reunification as skilled laborers as well as trained professionals (Najam, 2006). They are more diverse in terms of socioeconomic status than their predecessors and came to the United States with their ethnic communities already developed by post 1960's immigrants. While the population of Pakistanis in the US was less than 50,000 in the 1970's, the current population of Pakistanis is estimated at between 200,000 and 500,000 people today (Najam, 2006). The cities with the largest population of Pakistanis include New York City, Los Angeles, Houston and Chicago (Najam, 2006). Most of the social science research on Pakistanis in the US has been conducted on those on the East coast, but there is very little research that has been done on those communities on the West coast. Along with my personal ties to the community, this lack of literature on West coast Pakistanis has led me to pursue my research in Southern California. Like most Pakistani communities in the US, the founding members of all of the mosques that I recruited my participants from migrated to the US as students and professionals. However, in southern California, the community has rapidly expanded in the last 10-20 years as a result of family reunification policies. As such, there are more young people now than there ever have been. The current population of Pakistanis in Los Angeles exceeds 100,000 and is steadily growing according to the 1990 and 2000 census report on Asian Americans. Pakistanis are also the largest population of Muslims in the US next to Black Muslims.

Not only are Pakistanis a growing population in the US, but Pakistan is also the focus of much of US foreign policy in the Middle East. An 'ally' of the US, Pakistan has become one of the capitals of the 'war on terrorism.' This has had a significant impact on the community in the US and abroad. While men have been the targets of countless hate crimes against Muslims, it is the young women who have been most affected by local national policies in the US and Europe. The recent banning of the hijab in France just one of the debates that has centered on the status of Muslim women and has been the justification for countless local and federal policies directed against Muslims. Aside from this, the level of discrimination against Muslim and Pakistani youth following the 9/11, attacks have risen dramatically (Center for American Islamic Relations). Sirin & Fine (2008) report that most Muslim youth have dealt with discrimination on individual and institutional levels from fellow students as well as teachers, administrators, strangers and law enforcement officials. Although there is much discussion about these young people in the media, there is less empirical research that has been done that may provide us with a more critical outlook on their lives, choices and educational experiences and aspirations.

On Culture and Agency

In this section, I discuss the major theoretical concepts, of culture and agency that informed the conception of this project as well as the collection and analysis of the data. I begin with a discussion of the concept of culture and move into the various conceptions of culture that have come out of the literature in anthropology. I also discuss how I have chosen to use and think about the concept of culture in my own work. Although brief, I

also include a discussion of the concept of agency. However, in chapter five of this dissertation I provide a detailed analysis of the notion of agency as envisioned by Holland et al (2003) and Mahmood (2003).

Culture

The concept of culture has become one of the most controversial issues in the modern social sciences in part because it has essentialized groups (Abu Lughod, 1993). As Abu Lughod argued in the preface of her second edition of Writing Women's Worlds (2008), "even more today than fifteen years ago, the idea of 'culture,' with it's inevitable generalizations and typifications, has become a central component of the distancing and othering" (p. xii). Furthermore, there is no consensus among social scientists on the definition of culture, but rather as Borofsky (2001) notes, "culture is what various people conceive it to be, and…different people perceive it in different ways for different ends" (p. 433). However, Borofsky offers three examples of popular and disciplinary usages of culture. The first usage, according to Borofsky, implies "cumulative development". He goes on to explain that the "beliefs, behaviors, and/or artifacts are portrayed as developing through time, often toward some progressive, positive end." In other words, this conceptualization of culture conflates culture with evolution. The second perspective, which as Borofsky argues, remains common among anthropologists, represents culture as the "beliefs and behaviors people retain despite interaction with the 'West.'" Culture, in this sense, refers to the ways of life and learning that are meant to counteract the negative effects of modernization. This definition entails resistance to foreign or alienating ways of life. The final conceptualization of culture accents national differences and the

particular identity of groups. As Borofsky notes, many modern nation-states use this sense of culture to promote a collective sense of unity. Anthropologists however, use this understanding of culture to "emphasize a peoples shared beliefs and behaviors that distinguish them from others and, at the same time, offer them a sense of shared meaning" (p. 433).

In the education literature on immigrant youth in the US, culture is often discussed in the discourses of incorporation. For example, in their discussion of the experiences of immigrant youth, Kasinitz (2008), Alba & Nee (2003), both assimilation theorists, mention that the beliefs and behaviors of immigrants and especially their children cumulatively develop in ways that generally will benefit them in US society and that immigrant cultures little value in the dominant US society. Conversely, the work of Portes & Rumbaut (2006) and Zhou & Bankston (1998), segmented assimilation theorists, pay specific attention to the beliefs and behaviors people retain and use to counteract their negative experiences within mainstream American society. Finally, much of the work on Pakistanis emphasizes the shared beliefs and behaviors of Pakistanis that are used to distinguish them from other ethnic groups in the US. While each of the above mentioned scholars has contributed to our understanding of the various means through which immigrants have been incorporated and marginalized into the US, it may be argued that they have also contributed to the homogenization of culture, regardless of their good intentions. Still lacking, in my opinion, in the literature on immigrants and education, are conversations about the fact that culture has been misrepresented.

Despite our good intentions, when we separate groups on the basis of culture, we are contributing to the generalization of groups of people, and essentially, recreating or

perpetuating stereotypes about those groups. As Appadurai (2005) submits, culture is often defined by those who have the power to do so, therefore, our picture of it is often misleading because as he explains, the agency of marginalized groups gets lost in the defining of culture.

Furthermore, the dominant social science framework for understanding the experiences of young Pakistani Muslim women in the West focuses on cultural difference and assimilation (Das Gupta, 2006) and western feminist interpretations of agency. Dasgupta (2006) goes on to explain that much of the research on South Asians, including the literature on Pakistanis, reflects the assumptions of the ethnicity paradigm, which is consumed with the process of becoming American. She argues that the research on assimilation focuses on differentiating Pakistani culture/Islam from western culture and tends to pay more attention to individuals and groups as opposed to larger structures of power. When we attach certain values to a particular culture, it takes us away from seeing the overlapping systems that pervade boundaries. For example, instead of focusing on the systemic nature of patriarchy, research has focused instead, on the Pakistani/Muslim community's efforts to maintain traditional gender roles. In this dissertation, I attempt to complicate key assumptions about the gender/ethnic/religious identities and (the lack of) agency at the center of western scholarship and liberal thought, through which young Pakistani Muslim women are often judged. Although understanding difference is necessary, our misrepresentation of culture has led to the perpetuation of stereotypes about young Pakistani women and the strengthening of hegemonic discourses about their ethnic and religious communities. Rethinking culture,

will allow us to reevaluate the ways we think and write about notions of resistance, agency, and empowerment among immigrant youth.

Because religion and culture continue to be misunderstood and essentialized, they become the 'jumping off' point from which the critique begins. As researchers, we are encouraged to first diagnose or state a problem, find reasons for why the problem exists and finally offer solutions to the problem. As Lois Weis (2004) mentions, "where people locate critique—that is, where they place the blame and responsibility for tough times—bears serious consequence for how they conceptualize remedy, if they can imagine alternative possibilities for themselves and their children, and whether they can see themselves as potential activists engaged for social change" (In Weis & Fine, pp. 27-28). In my review of the literature, I found that Pakistani culture and Islam were implicated as the source of the problem as opposed to the larger systems of power that pervade culture. I approach this research with the understanding that social forces, policies and environmental factors affect the achievement of students in U.S. schools.

In this dissertation, I attempt to move away from positivistic explanations of culture, achievement, agency, by recognizing my role as a storyteller. In Writing Women's Worlds, Abu-Lughod (2008) acknowledges the limitations of research and the fallibility of an argument. The one thing I have perhaps spent the most time considering is how to avoid telling what Abu-Lughod calls "tall tales" and "fairy tales." It is the unintended tales, that most concern me when reflecting on my role as a Pakistani Muslim storyteller attempting to do research about young Pakistani Muslim women. It may, in fact, be vanity or the need to have my existence acknowledged, but by focusing on Pakistani Muslim youth I am contributing to an image of them, creating an image of

them. In this work, I approach culture as socially constructed, identify the diversity that exists within (Pakistani) culture without perpetuating stereotypes and at the same time recognize the importance my participants place on culture as their own.

On a recent trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, at the 'Treasures of Afghanistan' exhibit, I was struck by a quote hanging above the entry way that read; "when you lose your culture, you lose your history." As I pondered it meaning, I realized that there is something very real and tangible about culture that people, including myself, rely on and root ourselves in. Anzaldua's (1987) famous quote, "if you really want to hurt me, talk bad about my language," reminds us of the intimate connection we have with language, a central component of culture and the communities we associate ourselves with. There is a corporeal pain that is associated with the experience of hearing about your culture in a negative manner. When ones culture is misrepresented, they are, in essence, being misrepresented. When researchers fail to consider the weight of their words, we run the risk of putting the existence of our participants down. Perhaps we need to remember that one's attachment to their culture, despite the fact that it is a social construction, is tied to a deeper need to feel affirmed as a human being.

There is a huge part of me, especially after reading account after account about the problems with Islam and Pakistani culture that feels extremely protective of my 'culture,' my religion and my community. The task of researching a community one is intimately tied to becomes even more difficult because of the extra weight, no doubt self-imposed, of reproducing stereotypes about that community. "The imperative we experience to be critical of how our culture and traditions oppress women conflicts with our desire as members of once colonized cultures to affirm the value of the same culture

and traditions" (Narayan, 2003, p. 311). Like Narayan (2003), I find myself torn between a *need* to validate the lives and experiences of young Pakistani Muslim women while at the same time maintaining a critical perspective about the social, cultural, and religious mores used to justify their lived experiences. This point of tension forces me to consider my openness to interpreting the findings fairly without prejudice as well as my investment in a particular image of Pakistani Muslim women. The dominant framework for understanding the experiences of young Pakistani Muslim women focuses on cultural differences and largely ignores the variability within their ethnic and religious communities. As such, in this dissertation, I intentionally work against essentialist interpretations of Pakistani culture and Islam that limits our understanding and their possibilities. Nonetheless, I also address the ways ethno-religious and cultural practices confirm and disconfirm monolithic images.

Agency

As Saba Mahmood (2005) argues, ongoing scholarship on women's agency is essential considering Western popular media's continual portrayal of Muslim women as "incomparably bound by the unbreakable chains of religious and patriarchal oppression" (p. 7). Mahmood's (2003) profound understanding of agency not only informed the conception this project, but also the processes of data collection and analysis. This revised notion of agency, has forced me to question and consider how structures of power, like patriarchy, are negotiated by different groups in different ways. Mahmood argues that we live in a patriarchal world, but maintains that patriarchy is practiced in different ways and affects the lives of women in different communities/societies in

different ways. Young Muslim Pakistani women are measured and measure themselves based on a liberal-progressive version of feminism that portrays/perceives them as unagentive if they do not resist the patriarchal nature of their religious and ethnic communities. Therefore, the patriarchal structure they learn to problematize is the one that is based on the messages these youth internalize about their ethno-religious communities. According to the dominant discourse, youth are empowered when they resist the cultural and religious norms of their families, but how then do we make sense of the inhabiting of norms in order be a part of one's community? Mahmood explains that the western feminist framework conceptualizes freedom as the consequence of her own will rather than of custom tradition or social coercion. Challenging the liberal feminist notion of free will and how it is related to agency has been central to my analysis of how these young women conceptualize choice and embody agency.

Overview of Chapters

In chapter two of this dissertation, I outline the methodology that was used for the basis of collecting, organizing and reporting the data. Qualitative researchers aim to gather a comprehensive understanding of human behavior and the motivations that inform that behavior. As such, the research presented here seeks to understand and answer questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning and emphasize the value laden nature of inquiry. This research relied on several qualitative methods for gathering information including participant observation, field notes, and structured and unstructured interviews. In this study, I investigate why and how young Pakistani women made sense of their selves, culture, family, communities and religion in the ways they did as opposed to the what, when and where of their lives.

Chapter three of this dissertation focuses on the complexities of self-definition and the benefits and risks of putting their 'difference on display.' I start this chapter by reviewing the literature on racialization and religification. Racialization and religification refer to the socially constructed processes where race or religion, become the predominant way of defining oneself. This chapter explores how family, community, religion and peers informed the ways the participants identified themselves and their conceptualization of culture and difference.

Chapter four starts with a review of the literature on the educational achievement and attainment of young Pakistani Muslim women in the US and Pakistan and the gendered norms that exist within the Pakistani community. In this chapter, I look at the messages parents and ethno-religious communities send to young Pakistani Muslim women about the role that education plays in their lives. I go on to explore their interpretations of these messages and the factors that influence their academic performance and goals. I also discuss their parent's involvement in their education and schooling and their motivations for pursuing higher education. This chapter challenges the dominant discourses that propose that Pakistani Muslim parents are unsupportive of their daughter's educational goals and choices.

In the Chapter five of this dissertation I take a different approach to analysis by presenting two case studies. In the case studies, I explored how two participants, Batool and Mehar, interpreted and embodied the dominant messages they received (about sexuality and the gender) from their parents and ethno-religious communities and Islam. In this section, I investigate how their interpretations of these messages and lived experiences help us make sense of the concept of agency. I start the chapter with detailed

discussion of the concept of agency as discussed by Holland et al (2003) and Mahmood (2003). Using this critical reconceptualization of agency, one that delinks the concept of agency from secular progressive politics, this chapter explores the varied modes of agency embodied by these young women. Finally, in Chapter six, I review the findings of this study, examine the implications of the results, and offer suggestions for future study.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Methods

A critical qualitative approach to research was taken to determine what messages young Pakistani women are receiving from their families about the role of education in their lives and how they interpret and make sense of these messages. I refer to this research as 'critical' because the goal was to understand how the lives, perspectives and experiences of the participants were impacted by factors including cultural/ethnic background, religion, race and gender. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2008), qualitative researchers "seek to answer questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning and emphasize" the "value-laden nature of inquiry" (p. 14). Unlike quantitative researchers, the qualitative researcher is the primary data collection instrument. Qualitative research is holistic, empirical, interpretive, and empathetic. In addition to the above, 'good' qualitative study, as maintained by Stake (1995), resists the "exploitations of the specialist's platform," sensitive to the risks of research involving human subjects, involves researchers that are not just methodologically competent and "versed in some substantive discipline but versed in the relevant disciplines, and requires the triangulation of data and assists readers in the recognition of subjectivity (p. 48).

Specifically, this study employed an ethnographic/case study model. The purpose of ethnographic research is to "obtain a holistic picture of the subject of study with emphasis on portraying the everyday experiences of individuals by observing and interviewing them and relevant others" (Creswell, 2003, p. 200). Instead of focusing on

generalization, qualitative researchers utilizing the case study/ethnographic approach focus on particularization, or understanding the case itself. Stake (1995) explains that a distinctive characteristic of qualitative inquiry is its emphasis on interpretation. Furthermore, in case study research, the researcher does not "confine interpretation to the identification of variables and the development of instruments before data gathering and to analysis and interpretation for the report" (Stake, 1995, p. 8). Instead, an interpreter is placed in the field to observe the "workings of the case, one who records objectively what is happening but simultaneously examines its meaning and redirects observation to refine or substantiate those meanings" (Stake, 1995, pp. 8-9). From December 2010 to August of 2011 conducted multiple in depth interviews and participant observations with young Pakistani women and their families. Observations and semi-structured interviews were conducted with both young Pakistani women between the ages of (17-22) and their families.

Interviews

As Carspecken (1996) explains, interviews promote the production of dialogic data which is "generated through dialogues between the researcher and the researched" (p. 155). Although the primary focus of my research was the young women, I was also interested in parents' perspectives about education and their beliefs about the role it should play in their daughters' lives. Therefore, I conducted multiple semi-structured interviews (between 3-5) with eight young Pakistani women and a single interview with their parents. Interviewing the participants on multiple occasions gave me the

opportunity to pose follow up questions as well address any questions I may have had about the previous interview.

Originally, I wanted to conduct individual interviews with twenty participants however, this approach would not have allowed me to develop the relationships necessary to truly understand the dynamic nature of their perspectives and lived experiences. Because I went into this research with the assumption that there is variation among Pakistani families and individuals in regards to the way education and schooling are understood, I felt it necessary to specifically focus on the individual level and specifics that I would not have been able to get at by surveying larger groups of people. Furthermore, because the Pakistani community in Southern California is so small, I felt like the best and most efficient way to address my research questions was through individual case studies.

One-on-one interviews focused on the messages the young women received from their parents about the role of education in their lives and my interviews with parents focused on their views about the education/schooling of their children. Again, the focus of my research was young women and the messages they received from their families about education. However, a secondary motivation of this work was also to understand what parents thought about the role of education in their daughters' lives and how they communicated their ideas to their children.

Participants were compensated (20 US dollars) for their participation in the research as an acknowledgement of the time they took out of their lives to be a part of the project. The participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and forgoing questions and/or stopping the interview would not affect their compensation.

This served as an incentive for the young women who did not work outside of the home. Parents were also compensated (20 US Dollars) for their participation in the interviews.

The interviews with the young women focused on their backgrounds, educational experiences/aspirations, and family lives. The goal here was to explore how these messages affected the academic and non-academic choices they made. In other words, my goal was to better understand how these messages influenced the ways they imagined their futures, the purpose of education, and their ideas about family, community, and themselves. In understanding how the young women interpreted these messages, I was able to open up spaces to more-critically think about the concept of agency.

In the interviews, I asked the young women how the messages they receive from parents about the role of education in their lives compared and contrasted with the messages they received from their parents and community members. "Lead off questions" were designed to open up a topic domain (Carspecken, 1996, p. 156). Follow up question were formulated before the interview and after my initial reading of the data. Lead off questions involved asking participants to describe a typical day in school and at home, about their relationships with their parents, and their overall goals/aspirations in regards to education.

South Asians living in the US have the largest percent of two-parent homes. With the exception of two young women whose fathers had passed away, the young women who participated in this study came from two-parent homes. Of the eight participants, I was able to interview at total of five parents/sets of parents. I found it much more difficult to get parents, particularly the fathers of the young women, to agree to be interviewed than I did with their daughters. I made multiple phone calls to each of the

parents requesting that both parents be available for the interviews, but of the five parent interviews, only two of the interviews were with both the mother and the father. Of the three one-parent interviews, one of the mothers was widowed and the other two explained that their husbands were either busy or unavailable for the interview.

Interviews with their parents focused on their ideas about the role of school/education in their lives and the lives of their children. I also asked parents about their relationships with schools and how the messages they received from teachers, administrators and staff varied from their own ideas about the purpose, value and goals of education. Many of the parents I interviewed had more than one child, so I asked general questions about their goals and aspirations for their children as a whole as well as specific goals or expectations they have for each of their individual children. The purpose of this was to gain insight into how gender and age might affect the expectations parents have for their children.

Interviews were conducted with the young women in their homes, at school, in parks, restaurants, and local coffee shops. Because some of the participants did not drive, I usually picked them up at home and asked them to suggest a place where we could talk. Quite often, parents, mostly mothers, came out to say hello before we left for the interviews. In these brief interactions, I tried to ease some of the concern that I sensed from parents by telling them when we would be back or where we would be going. By the second or third interviews, I noticed that many of the parents became a little more comfortable and didn't come out or conversely, offered me something to eat or drink before we left for the interview.

When assuming the role of researcher, I noticed that I often felt conscious about how I was perceived by the participants. I think the bulk of my anxiety came from my fear that I would be perceived in a way in which I did not want to be perceived by them and their families, as irreligious, too Americanized, or as someone who was overstepping her boundaries and digging too deep into their personal lives. One thing I realize now is that my participants and their parents were not the only people that were concerned about the way they were perceived. One thing I wasn't prepared for, as a researcher, was the intense sense of vulnerability I felt around my participants and their parents. I too had an image to uphold, largely because my family was a part of the community I was researching. I found myself dressing a bit more conservatively than usual and thinking a lot about what my participants and their family thought of me. Most of my interactions with the participant's families were limited to saying *salaam* at community events. Furthermore, the age difference between my participants and I was large enough that I didn't know or hadn't had conversations with seven of the eight participants before starting my research. I had no previous relationship with any of them or their parents other than seeing each other at community events.

One of my primary concerns when I started conducting interviews was how to create a space in which the participants felt comfortable enough to share their experiences and parents felt comfortable enough to trust me to speak with their daughters. I experienced many a drive home in which I found myself feeling excited about the memory I had excavated from my participants minds and at the same time concerned about the fact that they had shared something so deeply personal about themselves or their families with me, a woman they did not really know. When assuming the role of a

researcher, I often felt like a stranger offering them candy. I now understood the "knowing and distrustful" smiles their mothers shot in my direction at the *majlis*' [religious gatherings]. I didn't anticipate the deeply personal nature of the conversations I had with the young women and their parents. Nevertheless, these young women and their parents showed me their wounds, some healed and others fresh. As a result, I shared my experiences with them and couldn't help feel a kinship and connection with each of the young women.

There were moments in the process that I found myself overwhelmed with excitement for their futures and moments when I would come home feeling drained and burdened by my knowledge of their experiences. Would they regret sharing these details? How could I write about such experiences and at the same time protect their rights as participants? How would they benefit from this process? Would I represent them accurately? I was shocked by their candidness and at times worried if, for example, ten years from now, they would regret having opened their worlds to me.

I would usually ask my participants to pick a place they felt comfortable at for the interviews. All of the young women (with the exception of Mehar) lived at home with their parents, so a few interviews were conducted in their homes, usually when their parents were at work. I was invited to and visited all but one of the young women's homes but the bulk of our interactions happened in outdoor spaces like parks, on a school campus, or local coffee shops. Though our interviews were semi structured, the experience of interviewing the young women felt more like conversations than formal interviews. By our third or fourth interviews, the young women and I had developed a level of rapport making the interview questions simply starting points of conversations. I

was shocked by the candidness of the young women because I remember being much more cautious in my interactions with people from the community when I was their age. Perhaps, however, honesty is a symptom of youth. These young women have never been the subjects of research. Therefore, this experience was new to them just as the process of wring about and constructing their lives is new to me.

In a discussion of Eros and the pedagogical process, bell hooks (1994) writes "well-learned distinctions between public and private make us believe that love has no place in the classroom" (In Giroux & McClaren, p. 117). Analogously, in the field, researchers are encouraged, as a means of maintaining the validity of our claims, to uphold a sort of disembodied relationship with the 'participants'. Admitting to the ties we create with our participants and the love that results from those connections is to admit to ones biases as a researcher. However, hooks goes on to say that "this very notion is based on the false assumption that education is neutral that there is some 'even' emotional ground that allows us to treat everyone dispassionately…to allow one's feelings of care and one's will to nurture particular individuals in the classroom to expand and embrace everyone goes against the notion of privatized passion" (p. 117). Using the same logic, the field of research is not neutral ground, but rather a place where relationships are forged. I shared aspects of my life with the young women and came away from the research with a deep sense of care and empathy, fear and joy for each of them. Treating "the field" as a public space, where there is no place for passion, care, nurture and love, prevents a researcher from entering the field as a "whole" person. By maintaining this public private binary within the fields of research that lacks love, as hooks (1994) argues, we, as researchers become "disembodied spirits."

Bordieu (1986) echoed a similar sentiment in The Weight of the World when he suggested that, “the interview can be considered a sort of spiritual exercise that, through forgetfulness of self, aims at a true conversion of the way we look at other people in the ordinary circumstances of life. The welcoming disposition, which leads one to make the respondent's problems one's own, the capacity to take that person and understand them just as they are in their distinctive necessity, is a sort of intellectual love..." (p. 614).

Participant Observation

Along with interviews, observed the young women on multiple occasions and in varied settings. Participant observations took place in their homes (mostly around the dinner table or in the kitchen), at community events, in the mosque, and at school. When explaining the observation process to my participants, I told them that I was approaching the observation with the intention of spending time ‘in their shoes.’ All observation involves participation in the world being studied. Therefore, my role was more of a participant observer. Observations happened randomly, without much notice and lasted from less than an hour to half of the day. My role as a researcher was fairly interactive with the participants while conducting the observations.

Through observation of the young women, I wanted to gain a more nuanced understanding of their lives, opinions and experiences. While interviews allow the researcher to have a certain amount of control over the line of questioning, they also provide “indirect information filtered through the views of the persons being interviewed” (Creswell, 2003, p. 186). According to Stake (1995), the advantages of observations in research are many. First and foremost observations allow researchers a

firsthand experience with the participants. Moreover, the researcher can also record information as it is revealed. Also, behavior, beliefs, and information that are inconsistent with or conversely support the interview data can be noticed during observation.

During the observations, I kept a record of events to provide a fairly "incontestable" detailed description of the setting and individuals for further analysis and interpretation of the data. I tried to focus on the way culture, religion, education, and gender were embodied and discussed as well as key events and environmental conditions that may influence my analysis. Along with taking "descriptive notes" on the traits of the participants, physical setting, a reconstruction of dialogue, and accounts of activities or events, I kept reflective notes about my personal thoughts such as "speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices" (Creswell, 2003, p. 189).

Setting

This research took place in Southern California. While much of the research about Pakistanis in the US focuses on Pakistanis in New York, there is a shortage of research on Pakistanis living on the West coast of the US (Sirin & Fine, 2008, p. 204). California is home to the largest population of immigrants in the US as well as the second largest population of Pakistanis (22.3% of the total Pakistani American population) following NY with 48% of the total Pakistani American population. The Pakistani community in Southern California is more dispersed than it is in NY. Therefore, I chose not to focus on a specific area in Southern California but rather the Pakistani community

in general. There were three masjids/mosques that the young women were recruited from all located less than thirty miles away from each other.

Education research shows that socioeconomic status influences parent involvement in schools, their expectations, levels of religiosity (Zhou & Bankston, 1998), student achievement and aspirations (Gibson, 1988; Lee, 2005; Lew, 2006; Lopez, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Valdez, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999). Research on the education of Pakistani youth has focused on lower income Pakistanis in the UK and on the East coast, but very little research about Pakistanis has been done on the West coast about middle class Pakistani youth. The young women and their families were representative of a range of middle class backgrounds. Although I did not ask parents the specifics of their incomes, all of the parents lived in lower-middle to middle-middle class communities in southern California. All of the participants parents, with the exception of one whose father was born in the US and mother's family migrated to the US when she was a young child, migrated to the US on the basis of family reunification and had family who was financially sound enough to sponsor them and support when they arrived. Nevertheless, college education is one of the main indicators of middle class status, and all of the participants had at least one parent who held a college degree from either Pakistan or the US or both and all of the participants parents had at least some college. Most of the participant's fathers worked professional jobs, one owned his own business, one was a university professor, and two had managerial positions at large retail companies. One of the participant's fathers worked as an engineer in Pakistan but explained that he was unable to use his degree in the US and worked as the manager of

retail company in the US. Furthermore, with the exception of one participant whose mother was widowed, all of the participants' parents owned their homes and cars.

Most of the research about Pakistanis in the US has focused on Pakistanis in NYC, but very little research has been conducted about Pakistanis in California. Although New York has the largest population of Pakistanis in the US, Southern California is home to the second largest population of Pakistani Americans. With the largest population of immigrants in the United States, California is frequently at the center of conversations about immigration and the rights of both documented and undocumented immigrants. Although the debate usually centers on issues relating to undocumented immigrants from Mexico, Central and South America, it no doubt has important implications for immigrants from all parts of the world who are living in California. California has a long history of policies regarding immigration and the rights of immigrants. With the landmark case of Lau vs. Nichols in the 1970's to more recent concerns about national security and access to education (Proposition 187), the approval of Senate Bill 1070, and the banning of ethnic studies in Arizona, California has been at (or in arms reach of) the nexus of immigration policy and debate.

Pakistani's have an extensive history of immigration to California and are representative of various waves of immigration. According to the Asian American Studies Center at UCLA, people from present-day Pakistan were among the first South Asians to immigrate to the United States in the early 1900's (Lai & Arguelles, 2003). Following the Immigration Act of 1964, most Pakistanis entered the US as skilled workers, trained professionals, and students. However, the majority of Pakistanis immigrated to the US as a result of family reunification in the 1980's and 90's. Most of

the young women and families I worked with immigrated to the US through family preference categories. However, the Pakistani communities they are now a part of, were established by the first wave of Pakistanis in the 1960's, 70's and 80's.

Participants

Pakistani women represent multiple marginalities as members of Islam, as non-whites, youth and finally as women and immigrants/the children of immigrants. They are the margin of the margin, yet in many cases still belong to a model minority group that purportedly stress conservative family values and place a great deal of importance on education. Unfortunately, alternative viewpoints about these young women and their families are not as available as examples of women who are denied of formal schooling and are victims of sexual persecution and religious fundamentalism. The more a group of people are put in the spotlight, the more perspectives there are about them and the more essential it becomes to hear their voices.

I specifically focused on young Pakistani women between the ages of 17-22 because we can see interesting patterns in terms of educational attainment on a national scale. Pakistani women are graduating from high schools and colleges in higher numbers than ever before and are surpassing the level of education of their white and male counterparts (Pakistani men), as well as older generations of Pakistani women (Reeves & Bennett, 2004). Additionally, I concentrated on young women between the age of 17 and 22 because this is a time when young people are making their first transitions into adulthood. As people get closer to adulthood, their lives begin to change dramatically. Some young people move out of their parents' homes, some get married, and others

simply begin to make decisions about the paths they will choose once they finish high school or college. As young people cross the threshold of adulthood, they also enter a period when they begin to think about themself, their identity, their family, and their culture/s in different ways. While they are each making transitions into adulthood, life at 17 years old is qualitatively different than life at 22 years old. Therefore, I recruited young women from three age groups: 17-18; 19-20; 21-22. The goal of this was to learn about their varied experience at different stages of their lives. I recruited 3 young women who were entering their junior and senior years of high school (between the ages of 17-18), a time when students start the process of applying for college and/or making decisions about the steps they will take after high school. I also recruited three young women between the ages of 19-20 who were in their first couple of years of college. At this time, young people are making decisions about their focus of study (major) as they complete their general requirements in college. The final group was comprised of two young women between the ages of 21-22 who were getting ready to graduate from college. Twenty-two is the standard age of graduation from college and I assumed that the young women would be thinking about the steps to take after college.

While the focus of this research was the young women, I also wanted to interview their parents. While I interviewed the young women three-five times each, parents were interviewed one time. Much of the research on Pakistanis in the US and the UK tends to focus on young women but does not focus on parents' perspectives about their role of education in their daughter's life. In interviewing both the young women and their parents, I hoped to provide the reader with a more detailed and thorough picture about the role education plays in their lives and the lives of their daughters. While more attention

is paid to the role of parents in preventing Pakistani women from pursuing formal schooling, I consider the function education (both formal and informal) has or is expected to have by the parents. My conversations with the parents of the young women opened up spaces to rethink what it means for parents to be involved in the education and schooling of their children as well as what types of education (religious, formal-schooling) are valued by parents and why. In short, there is much conversation, but a lot less research about parents' ideas about education.

Young Pakistani women and their parents are the subjects of my study, but they are also the population of people *for whom* I did this research. Ladson-Billings (In Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) reminds researchers that the question 'for whom?' is not merely about research as a form of advocacy, but also "who is capable of acting and demonstrating agency" (p. 258). More and more, young Pakistani Muslim women are understood and represented as the un-agentive, hapless victims of their families and religious and cultural communities. As young people living in a society that portrays and perceives them as such, these representations undoubtedly weigh heavily on their opinions of their ethnic and religious communities and relationship with their parents and taint their perception of themselves. Therefore, to answer the question of *for whom* I did this research; I did it for these young women and the members of *my* religious and ethnic community. I am hoping that my research will bring to the fore, a nuanced perspective on the lived realities of young Pakistani women and their parents; one that acknowledges the multitude of factors that shape their life experiences.

Recruitment of Participants

As a member of the community I was conducting my research in, I had an advantage in that I knew what community events the young women were showing up for. I began my research in the month of Muharram, when Shi'a Muslims gather at their local mosques every day for up to forty days to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Karbala and the martyrdom of the Imam Hussain ibn Ali, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad, and his family. The event is marked by arranging majalis, an Arabic term meaning "place for sitting," to review Islamic teachings and to commemorate the Imam Hussain's sacrifice. During the *majlis*, a lecture is given by a religious scholar and the recitation of salaam and *noha*, or poetry that is recited before and after the lecture. Nowadays, it is more common for lectures to be given in English or to have both English and Urdu lectures, but salaams and *nohae* are most often only recited in Urdu. After the majlis, people usually socialize while food and tea are served. Along with its religious significance, it is also a time when 'the community' gathers and reconnects after months of not seeing each other. On the weekdays, *majlis*' take place in the evenings, after most people have come home from work and school. On the weekends, there are *majlis*' during the day and at night. Although it signifies a time of mourning for Shi'as, it began as a form of protest by Zainab, the sister of the Imam Hussain, who vowed that as long as the people do not recognize the actual cause of Karbala, the followers of Hussain will continue to protest on the streets and in dwellings as to what happened in Karbala. It was Zainab, who was responsible for the foundation of mourning.

During the Islamic months of Muharram and Safar, religious scholars from across the US, Middle East, South Asia, and Europe travel to various locals to share their religious knowledge and honor the memory of the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad

and his family. A secondary objective of Muharram is to strengthen the collective and individual bonds of the Shi'a community. As a historically marginalized Muslim group, it is often the only time of the year Shi'a Muslims see each other on a daily basis for an extended period of time.

I arrived in California a week before Muharram began in December of 2010. My parents are active members of the Shi'a community in X-town, California, so most of the people my parents know, know that I live in New York and that I would be home for six months to conduct my research. Much of how I was initially perceived by my participants and especially their parents, I assume had much to do with their interactions with my parents. I am my parents daughter first and a researcher second. I believe this affected the way people not only perceived me, but our conversations as well. For example, in my first interview with Noor's parents, her parents mentioned their friendship with my parents before the interview began. Although I had never had conversations with many of the young women or their parents, I know that most of the parents are friends with my parents. Despite the fact that I may define myself as separate from my parents, their relationships with members of the community both helped and impaired my efforts as a researcher. It is for these reasons as well as the fact that I was staying with my parents in California, and often went to the mosque with them, that I felt the need to ask my parents to not to talk about my work as a researcher, or try to recruit/suggest young women and/or their parents for/to me. As a researcher in a community that knows me and my parents I felt the need to emphasize the fact that any involvement in my study would be strictly confidential to any potential participants. As I came to find out later, many of the parents of the young women participating in my research, approached my mother to tell

her that I would be interviewing their daughters or had already conducted interviews with their daughters. My mother told me that she reminded many of the mothers of my participants that she did not know who was participating in my study that I did not discuss my research with my family. Nevertheless, six of the eight participants' mothers told my mother that their daughters were involved in my research project.

The question that I have pondered the most throughout this process has been how to best maintain confidentiality when doing research in a religious/ethnic community that my family and I are members of? While it was impossible for me to control the actions of the participants and their parents, I emphasized the fact that I would not be sharing the information I gathered with anyone but my committee members. Having never participated in a research study, I assume that many of the parents and participants (including my own parents) were unaware of the fact that I was required to maintain their confidentiality. I did, however, find it interesting that many of the participants' mothers approached my mother about the research. Parents may have assumed that I shared the conversations I had with their daughters with my parents or members of the community. The primary participants were the young women, but a couple of the mothers seemed skeptical about the purpose of my research. While I felt like they gave me the benefit of the doubt and never overtly questioned my intentions, largely due in my opinion to the fact that my parents were well respected within the community, in their initial interactions with me, I sensed a skepticism on their part about the purpose of the research that didn't come in the form of questions, but rather as taciturn stares directed at me, kind but wary. In fact, a few young women that I interviewed told me that their mothers had requested that they not reveal anything personal to me. In many of the interviews,

parents and participants expressed concerns about maintaining a good standing within the community. As a researcher, I would be asking parents and/or their children personal questions they may not discuss with members of the community (let alone, close friends and/or extended family members) that they knew could potentially compromise their standing/respect/positionality if I were to expose them.

Having not seen most of the community for months and in some cases, years, many women asked about my studies and the research I was conducting. Each of the mosques I visited was segregated according to gender. Therefore, I did not have much interaction with men. On a couple occasions, women approached me to tell me that I may want to ask their children or other young people they knew to participate in the study. On one particular instance, a young female community leader, from one of the mosques I used for recruitment, introduced me to a group of young women that I had never met. These young women knew my family, but were much younger than me when I moved away from California, so I did not know many of them. After introducing us and telling them that I was looking for people to interview for my project, she walked away and let me speak to the group as a whole. Of the four young women that were in the group, two did not fit the age range I was looking for so I spoke to the other two individually. Of the eight women who participated in my study, seven were young women I either did not know, or had never said more than hello to. Although I grew up in X-town, I am significantly older than all of my participants, therefore it was the first time I had interacted with several of the young women.

Initially, I planned on recruiting participants by placing flyers in three of the Shi'a mosques with large Pakistani populations. However, by the first week of Muharram,

enough young women had expressed interest in participating, so I did not need to rely on flyers for recruitment. Furthermore, I did not notice a space in any of the mosques where flyers could be posted and none of the young women were members/volunteers at the South Asian organization I wanted to use for recruitment and the young women were too old to attend the Sunday school's I was planning on using for recruitment. I wanted to work with young women at various stages in their education (high school juniors and seniors to seniors in college) so I asked the young women their age before asking them if they wanted to be a part of the research. Luckily, I was able to find three young women in high school, three community college students and two college seniors.

Most of the young women who participated in the study seemed eager to have an opportunity to talk about their lives. On a few occasions, the young women suggested other young women they thought might be interested in participating. However, each of the eight young women I initially spoke to contacted me to confirm their participation.

Data Analysis

Using Creswell's (1993) model for the analysis and interpretation of ethnographic data, I organized and prepared the data for analysis. Approximately forty interviews were transcribed and field-notes were typed up. Data was sorted and arranged according to the sources of information. I obtained a general sense of the information and then reflected on its general meaning. Creswell suggests that the researcher consider the general ideas participants are saying, the tone of the ideas, and the general impression of the overall depth, credibility and use of the information (p. 191). Next I began a detailed analysis of the data with a coding process. Coding involves "classifying observations

into files or categories" that are usually predetermined (Stake, 1995, p. 169). I used codes to generate descriptions of the various settings and participants as well as categories or themes for analysis. Themes were analyzed for each individual case and across different cases. Finally, the data was interpreted by making meaning of the data. According to Stake (1995), there are two strategic ways that researchers reach new meanings about cases, through "direct interpretation of individual instance" and categorical "aggregation of instances until something can be said about them as a class" (p. 74). Case study relies on both of these methods.

To check the accuracy of my findings, I triangulated different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and use it to build a coherent justification for themes. I also used "member-checking" to determine the accuracy of my findings through giving the participants a specific descriptions or themes in order to determine if the participants thought the information was accurate. I used what Creswell calls "rich, thick description" to convey the findings and clarify the biases I brought to the study as a member of the Pakistani community and potential acquaintance of the participants and their parents.

Ethical Considerations

Although this study involved minimal risk to the participants, qualitative research is always obtrusive, particularly participant observation. Participant observation necessitates a sort of invasion of the privacy of the participants. Furthermore, sensitive information is often revealed, leading to a potentially vulnerable situation for the participant. Because my participants talked about their parents and families, there was a

risk that it could lead to discussions between them and their parents, and these discussions could have led to arguments if the two parties disagreed with each other. Additionally, recalling unpleasant experiences either at home or in schools could have had potential psychological effects on the participants. Nevertheless, my interview questions were fairly benign, and I do not believe that the interviews caused harm to the participants. Still, the following precautions were taken to ensure the participants rights: 1) the participants were told the research objectives and provided with a written description of the objectives and intended use of the research, 2) written consent forms and parental permission forms were distributed and collected prior to the research, 3) verbatim transcriptions and written descriptions were available to the participants, 4) the participants wishes and interests were considered throughout the process, including when choices were made regarding reporting the data, 5) final decisions regarding anonymity/confidentiality were left to the participants.

Limitations

Many studies of researcher positionality have investigated the insider/outsider researcher-participant relationship, however, there continues to be a need for research in education that examines the multifaceted nature of the researcher/participant relationship. It has been suggested that researchers that share the same ethnic/cultural background with their participants experience both advantages and disadvantages as a result of their role as insiders. Some have warned that "over-rapport" in which the insider researchers come to identify with the groups they are studying may lead to research that is flawed by "partial perspectives" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996). Still, others have highlighted the

fundamental epistemological problems with the insider/outsider debate (Abu Lughod, 1993; Kusow, 2003). Accordingly, I assert that researcher positionality can be discussed outside of the limitations of the insider/outsider binary in education research.

Through a critical examination of my research, I claim that the ways in which a researcher may be positioned within the research is far more complex than insider/outsider perspectives suggest. I argue that by perpetuating the insider/outsider dynamic in research, researchers run the risk overlooking the diverse and often conflicting realities of the researcher and participants. I maintain that employing this logic results in the same essentialization of culture that many researchers attempt to avoid when working within familiar communities.

Perhaps the clearest limitation to my research was the fact that I am a supposed "insider" researching a community I am intimately tied to and a member of. Because I am invested in the portrayal of the community that runs counter to the more hegemonic depictions of my community, I may have been clouded, or feel that I had more right to be critical of my community. What I understand to be a part of what I envisioned my role as researcher to be was heavily dependent on my willingness to practice reflexivity, to be conscious, as Maxine Greene would put it, "wide awake" in my work. As Olesen (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) submits, "researcher reflexivity needs to be tempered with acute awareness as to the contributions of hidden or unrecognized elements in the research…thus there is the recognition that both researcher and participant produce interpretations that are 'the data'" (p. 331). For this reason, how I choose to label/position myself (and how my participants label/position me) in my work involved a great deal of reflexivity on my part, and required that I incorporated these reflections into

my interpretation of the data and lastly, I acknowledge that the research I conducted and ideas I transmit in this dissertation are based on my interpretations.

My most pressing concern is perhaps how this research will be read and interpreted. I decided to focus on this community because of the concerns I had with literature that ignored the agentive nature of Muslim women and made gross generalizations about Pakistani culture, Islam and women's roles, therefore it is not my intention to further perpetuate stereotypes around the community. As a member of this group, and an individual who is deeply troubled by the increased/accepted level of bigotry against Muslims, I think it is even more of a concern that I not reproduce the same stereotypes I strive to write against. However, as Abu Lughod (1993) reminds us, all research leads to generalizations, *which is why this work should not be seen as reflective of the entire community.* The case study approach emphasizes individuality and therefore creates more space for the reader to comprehend the more nuanced and diverse reality of a community or group of people. I do however recognize that regardless of my intentions to not contribute to a static notion of what it means to be a young Pakistani Muslim woman or parent and regardless of my efforts to not construct their lives in a way that they might disagree with, that I will end up doing exactly that. As Joel Spring (2004) argues that there is no true or accurate interpretation of history, therefore, there can be no true or accurate interpretation of peoples' lives and experiences in research. I am the teller of their stories and the interpreter of their experiences. In other words, I constructed the narratives of their experiences, perspectives and lives. What I have attempted to present with this research is just one of many interpretations of their lives.

What I choose to focus on and emphasize as well as deemphasize is reflective of how I have experienced their lives.

'Insider' research, or research in which the researcher is a member of the community that is being researched, assumes that researchers can both benefit and be at a disadvantage as a result of their membership in the group being studied. However what insider research does not consider is that membership in a community is not just about being of the same ethnic or religious background as the participants, but instead involves a shared history and experience. Having lived on the East coast for many years now and only having traveled back home 3-4 times a year, I feel like both an insider and outsider and dislike an insider and outsider. As Edward Said cautioned over thirty years ago, "we must take labels seriously" (Bayoumi & Rubin, 2000). Said goes on to say that instead of going around labels, we must acknowledge that they exist as historically loaded identifiers and are used "to produce complex meaning" (p. 175). I often wonder how this experience would have been different if I wasn't an "insider?" All researchers occupy the role of both insider and outsider at various times in the research process. At the same time, these labels are dangerous in that they perpetuate the same stereotypical assumption about culture as static and fixed. There are times when we, as researchers can relate to our participants, and other times when we cannot. Furthermore, the labels of insider and outsider only further perpetuate a fixed and static notion of a community, culture, and/or religious group ignoring the diversity of experiences that exist within the community. Therefore, I choose not to refer to myself as an insider researcher despite the fact that I have been exposed to the dominant religious and cultural ideologies and historical experiences of this particular group. In short, just because I am a Pakistani Muslim, does

not mean that I share the same values, history and experiences as other Pakistani American Muslim women.

As a researcher, I was required to have an interview protocol that I used to guide the interview process. But, what I found was that most of our interviews turned into hours long conversations about our lives as Pakistani Muslim women because we were women who shared not only experiences as the children of immigrants in the US, but also as members of a relatively small ethnic and religious community in Southern California. What I came to find is that these young women were actually eager to talk to me and share their lives with me. For some, I was witness to this release. "I can tell you anything, right?" Aneesa asked me. Others were excited about the fact that I was interested in learning about their lives. Mehar, on the other hand, was convinced that what she shared with me was her part in exposing a need for dialogue in our community, especially among parents and young people. For her, it was an opportunity to make a political statement.

CHAPTER 3

DISCOURSES OF DIFFERENCE

My family and I moved to California from Texas in 1990 and within that year, we moved twice because my parents were concerned that the schools my brother and I were attending were not as good as the schools in the more suburban part of the city. It was the middle of my 8th grade year and I had just come back to California after a month-long trip to Pakistan with my family. Before I left for Pakistan, I had long hair down to my waist. When we were in Pakistan, my mother felt my long hair made me look too old so she requested that I have it cut. Showing up on the first day of school with my newly shorn hair, a girl in my class started telling people that I had to cut my hair to get out of Pakistan or else 'they' wouldn't let me come back to the US. It seemed like a harmless joke at the time, but there was something about what she said that stayed with me. It was one of the events in my youth that highlighted my difference. Even though the rumor was false, it was the first time I had been called out for being different.

When I started to think about the discourses of difference that the young women who participated in this study engaged in, it reminded me of my discomfort with the term 'different.' When difference is thoughtfully considered, it is beautiful. But when it becomes the spotlight that follows you around when you want nothing more to blend into a group of your peers without sticking out, it is a problem. More than that, I have become increasingly uncomfortable with how the media and researchers in education talk about difference, primarily when they are addressing cultural difference. The media and scholars discuss Islam and Pakistani culture in a way that takes me back to that moment in junior high school. Whether it is a picket sign at the sight of a mosque being built by

ground zero that seeks to tarnish the name of the Prophet or documentaries and reality shows that talk about Muslim women as though they are inherently oppressed, I am sick of being different. The trouble is, I would never change who I am.

The following chapter explores a range of discourses of difference that were revealed in my conversations with eight young Pakistani Muslim women. However, I do not limit the analysis to simply pointing out how the young women comprehend difference, but how they have formulated very unique understanding of what it means to be young Pakistani Muslim women living in the US. I look into their conversations not only to understand each of them on a deeper level but also to understand how discourses of difference and eventually static notions of culture are internalized and prescribed. I also want to emphasize the fact that their responses were varied, so there are discourses of difference within discourses of difference. What is more, the point of this discussion is not to highlight the idea that Pakistani culture and American culture are inherently different or to attempt to define culture by focusing on difference but rather to critically examine the ways that the young women are defining themselves as 'different' and to understand the reasons why there is such a focus on difference.

Racialization, Religification and Differentialism

The processes of racialization and religification, directly inform the ways the young Pakistani women identify themselves and are identified by others. Racialization is "the socially constructed process where race becomes the predominant way of defining oneself or being defined by others" (Bigelow, 2008, p. 28). Racialization is a powerful mechanism for rejecting, grouping, or classifying based on race for the purpose of

negating equality (Bigelow, 2008; Lee, 2005). According to Lee (2005), "through their encounters with the dominant society" (p. 3), immigrants and their children experience the processes of racialization and become racialized minorities. The racialization of immigrants reifies the stratification of society on the basis of race through the emphasis of an 'us versus them' dichotomy.

Race was the predominant way that the immigrant youth in both Lee's research on Hmong American youth and Bigelow's research on Somali American youth identified themselves and were identified by others. Conversely, Purkayastha's (2005) research on South Asian American youth indicates a somewhat distinctive process whereby ethnicity overrides race as the principal marker of difference. South Asian Americans officially fall into the larger pan ethnic category of Asian American. However, Nafeesa, one of the participants of my study, challenged the categorization of Pakistanis as Asian:

> Like I'm not Asian, well I mean Orientalish. I'm not Asian, I'm not White, I'm not Mexican, and I don't look Mexican or Asian or White at all. I'm distinctly different.

In fact, none of the participants I interviewed identified themselves on the basis of a racial category (i.e., Asian; Black; White). According to Purkayastha, as the dominant society assigns social meaning to broad sets of physical appearance, and South Asian Americans, as compared to other Asian Americans, are frequently identified as being racially ambiguous. She goes on to explain that South Asian American's are racialized through meanings assigned to their "traditional cultures"—stereotypically implied in terms of arranged marriages, distinct religious practices, and a range of non-American values.

Conversely, the dialectical process of "religification" insists that religion, not ethnicity or race, is assigned and chosen as the primary indicator of difference through which Pakistani American youth are identified and identify themselves. In her research on working- and lower-middle class Pakistani American youth, Ghaffar Kucher (2012) found that the "ascription and co-option of a religious identity trumps other forms of categorization, such as race and ethnicity" although race, class and gender are implicated in the process. This dialectical process of whereby religion is used to mark Pakistani youth as non-citizens has a significant impact on their "identities, socialization, notions of citizenship, and feelings of belonging" (p. 2).

Implied within the theories of racialization and religification is the notion of differentailism, as discussed by Etienne Balibar, who focuses on the way culture is used to categorize groups of people and substantiate their domination. During the 20th century, biology and genetics were used to justify beliefs about the inherent superiority and inferiority of people from different racial groups. However, as Etienne Balibar (1991) astutely argues that we have come to a point in history where biology is no longer used as a justification for the differences that exist between races of people because it is widely accepted among scholars (and perhaps even the general public) that the categorization of people into races is more socially and culturally determined than based on biology. Balibar submits, "it is granted from the outset that races do not constitute isolable biological units and that in reality, there are no 'human races.' It may also be admitted that the behavior of individuals and their 'aptitudes' cannot be explained in terms of their blood or their genes, but are the result of their belonging to historical cultures" (p. 21). In other words, Balibar suggest that the categorization of people and groups has shifted from

the biological difference of races to an equally problematic hierarchical system in which cultural and religious differences are naturalized. Just as the discourses of inherent racial differences were perpetuated throughout the 20th century, we are currently in a period where culture has replaced race as the natural explanation for difference between human beings. Balibar argues that culture can also function like nature, "and it can in particular function as a way of locking individuals and groups a priori into a geneology, into a determination that is immutable and intangible in origin" (p. 22). He goes on to say that, despite their good intentions regarding the recognition of the diversity and equality of cultures, anthropologists, social scientists, and anti-racists continue to orient their work in a way that imagines cultures as separate and thus fuel the idea that culture, like race, is natural. According to Balibar, if you want to avoid racism, you have to avoid abstract anti-racism, as conceptualized by anthropologists and other social scientists. Anti-racism "fails to grasp the psychological and sociological laws of human population movements" and postulates that individuals are the exclusive heirs and bearers of a single culture, segregate collectivities" (pp. 22-23).

Like Balibar, who problematizes the notion of cultural 'difference' Appadurai (2005) and Abu-Lughod (1993) problematize the notion of culture by reminding us of the limitations of the language of culture. They argue that the problem with culture is the essentialist nature by which it is perceived. Moreover, dominant conceptions of culture and religion are often defined by those who have the power to do so. Therefore our understanding of this is often misleading because as Appadurai (2005) explains, the agency of marginalized groups gets lost in the definition of culture. Balibar, Appadurai and Abu-Lughod are equally critical of the idea that essential differences exist between

people based on their racial or cultural groups. Nevertheless, they do not deny the fact that people organize themselves and are organized according to their cultural groups, but instead argue that culture, like race, (because it is thought about uncritically) is used as a justification of superiority and thus domination by nation-states, people and scholars alike.

According to Balibar, after the disqualification of the biological discourse of race, culture has become an "equivalent and substitute" for race (2005, parallax). As such, racism, in its current formation, is no longer about the superiority of races, but rather now covertly functions on the idea that there are inherently superior and inferior cultural groups. Neo-racists (most of whom do not consider themselves to be racist), as Balibar explains, promote the dignity of all cultures and denounce the idea of hierarchy as absurd, but also perpetuate the naturalness of culture. This new racism, is a racism "whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences" (p. 21). Balibar goes on to explain that at first sight, this new racism "does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but only the incompatibility of life-styles and tradition" (p. 21). He argues that this 'racism without races', or "differentialist racism," which does not have the pseudo-biological concept of race as its main driving force, has always existed (i.e.: anti-Semitism). Balibar argues that like anti-Semitism, contemporary Arabophobia "carries with it an image of Islam as a 'conception of the world' which is incompatible with Europeanness and an enterprise of universal ideological domination" (p. 24). What is more, Balibar contends that no theoretical discourse on the dignity of all cultures can compensate for the fact that the assimilation demanded of people (by the state) from non-dominant/different cultures

"before they can become integrated into the society in which they already live, is presented as progress, as an emancipation and a conceding of rights" (p. 25). He defines different cultures as those which constitute obstacles to the dominant culture, or which are established as obstacles to the acquisition of dominant culture. The "cultural handicaps" of the oppressed classes are presented as "practical equivalents of alien status, or as ways of life particularly exposed to the destructive effects of mixing" (p. 25). In sum, Balibar argues that the primary way people learn to categorize themselves (and the communities they belong to) and are categorized by others is on the basis of culture, as opposed to race. Moreover, culture, like race, is understood not only as fixed, but also as natural.

Indeed, the processes of religification, racialization, and cultural "differentialism" inform the way immigrant youth and youth of color are categorized and learn to navigate their identities as 'other.' Nonetheless, I found that neither race nor religion was the primary marker of difference but rather, multiple systems of categorization (including gendering) were co-opted by and ascribed to the middle class, Pakistani, Muslim women in my study. Unlike Purkayastha (2005) or Ghaffar Kucher's (2012) studies, I found that neither ethnic nor religious identity "trumped" the other as the primary form of categorization. Instead, ethnicity, religion, gender *and* culture were all implicated when they differentiated themselves from others. In some cases, religion stood out more than ethnicity as an indicator of difference and in others ethnic background and culture was highlighted as a marker of difference. Furthermore, as young Pakistani Muslim women, gender was always implicated in the processes of categorization.

In the sections that follow, I look at how the participants think about what it means to be Muslim and Pakistani and how these conceptualizations inform the way they distinguish themselves from their peers, parents and family members, other Muslims, and their ethno religious communities. More specifically, I focus on the ways the participants defined themselves and their cultures in relation to their Pakistani Muslim and non-Pakistani/Muslim peers, family members in the US and in Pakistan and members of their ethno-religious communities.

I Am What I Am and What I Am Not: The Complexities of Self-Definition

In the first of my multiple conversations with the young women, I asked them to describe themselves to me. I went into the interviews wanting to know about their lives as Pakistani Muslim women living in the US but the participants did not limit their descriptions of themselves to the labels that I had assigned to them. Some participants described themselves as being "typical teenagers" and "normal." Others emphasized their involvement in school or volunteer organizations while others described themselves as "outgoing" or "introverted." All of the young women I interviewed mentioned their roles as friends, daughters, sisters or students. Consistent with any teenager or young adult, the young women highlighted the importance of their relationships with family, friends at school and within their ethno-religious communities in each of our conversations.

Their initial descriptions of themselves were usually vague and didn't address their ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds or gender. Perhaps it was because I too, am a Pakistani Muslim woman, and they didn't feel the need to describe themselves in

such terms. I decided to ask each of the participants a question that I am asked on a regular basis; “what are you?” On multiple occasions the participants prefaced their answers by stating that it was a hard question or that they didn’t know how to respond because it was the first time they were asked to talk about it in detail. Their responses varied from “Pakistanian” and “southeast Asian” (Pakistan is in South Asia) to “Pakistani and Muslim,” “Pakistani and American,” or simply “Shi’a.” Unlike the labels that I used to describe them, their descriptions of themselves were never simple or predictable but rather always complex and multilayered.

Originally, the goal of my study was to focus on how the young women ethnically and religiously define themselves in terms of what they are. However, the participants defined and identified themselves not only highlighting what they were, but also what they were not. When researchers discuss identity, the primary focus tends to be on the labels people use to define themselves. However, it is equally important to consider the ways people don’t define themselves. Lee (2005) found that “traditional” and “Americanized” Hmong youth defined themselves against each other. She explained, “what it meant to belong to one group was largely based on not being like the other group” (p. 53). Similarly, the Muslim Pakistani women in my study not only defined themselves “against” their American peers, but antithetically to their Pakistani peers, non-Desi/Muslim friends, parents, family in Pakistan, and members of their ethno-religious communities. Unlike Lee, whose participants defined themselves against their traditional or Americanized peers, the young women in my study defined themselves in opposition to other religious or non-religious, practicing or not so-practicing Muslim and Pakistani counterparts. Nevertheless, the participants who defined themselves as “non-

religious" or "not very practicing" did imply that they were more "modern" than their religious/practicing peers.

As we dove deeper into our conversations I noticed a pattern in the ways that they were talking about themselves, their family, friends and communities. Being Pakistani and being Muslim made them feel different than the majority of people they went to school with yet each of the participants also expressed a feeling of normalcy in each context of their lives and were able to relate to their peers at school and within their ethno-religious communities, their parents and their relatives in Pakistan. In other words, they saw themselves as different from each of these groups, but they also saw themselves as being a part of them.

Their descriptions of themselves and others were thoughtful and complicated and at the same time informed by hegemonic conceptions of culture or what it meant to be a young Pakistani Muslim woman living in the US. All of the participants made clear distinctions between what they understood to be Pakistani culture and American culture. Some focused on ethnic background when defining themselves while others focused on religion however their lives and identities were synchronously influenced by the fact that they *were* Pakistani Muslim youth raised in the US. In the section that follows, I discuss their interpretations of Pakistani culture and Islam, and how these interpretations shaped their notions of self and community, regardless of the primary identifiers they chose. I start this chapter by looking at the ways they defined themselves against their religious/non-religious Pakistani counterparts, their American friends, their parents and extended family members in Pakistan. I go on to examine the messages they receive

around and about difference from their peers at schools and within their ethno religious communities.

Religious vs. Non-Religious

Each of the participants' parents were active members of their religious communities and their daughters regularly attended and participated in religious events at the mosque, however the religious identification of the participants varied. All of the participants mentioned their levels of religiosity early on in our conversations, before I was able to ask them any questions about the role that religion played in their lives. Based on my informal observations as a member of the Pakistani Shi'a community and my observations of the young women at the mosque and community functions, I noticed that the cliques and groups they chose to be a part of were often organized on levels of religiosity. In other words, the 'religious girls' or girls who wore hijab often sat with the other religious girls and the girls who were not-so practicing and/or non-religious often had Pakistani Muslim friends who were equally non-practicing and/or not-so-religious. Likewise, the participants almost always defined themselves as either religious or non/ not-so religious or practicing non-practicing Muslims.

Of the eight women I interviewed, Batool and Jamila chose not to identify solely as Pakistani, but instead specifically mentioned their relationships with Islam and identified themselves as "practicing" Muslims, particularly as Shi'a. At first, Jamila, a junior in college, found the question difficult to answer but exposed the intricacy involved in thinking about one's own identity:

> Wow. That's a really hard question. I wouldn't even know how to respond to that. There's a lot of ways to describe me. Yes, I'm religious, I'm focused in school, I

> guess I could say that. I mean if someone were to ask me how do I identify myself, I actually had this conversation with my friend before, I wouldn't say "I'm a Pakistani woman" I don't really want to define myself as that. I would say "I'm a Shia" coz I'm really attached to my religion. I would say that's what I identify myself. Yes, I'm American but you know, it's not too big of a deal to me. I'm not gonna obsess over it. As a Pakistani, I used to say "yes, I'm Pakistani" when people would ask me how do you identify yourself. If you identify yourself more of an American or a Pakistani, I would say Pakistani. But, I don't know.

Jamila, who used to identify as Pakistani, defined herself as Shi'a but also told me that although her mother was from Pakistan and her father was from India, she felt more Indian than Pakistani. When I asked her to explain, she pointed to the richness of Indian literature and culture that she believed was less apparent in Pakistan, because of what she perceived as Pakistani's obsession with things like makeup and clothes. She explained that she didn't relate to other Pakistanis because she often felt that the Pakistanis she met had either completely assimilated or were not integrated enough:

> When you see Pakistani-Americans here, either they come straight from Pakistan they have no idea what's going on or they're completely Americanized. They were American more than they are Pakistani then they have no idea what's going on. Either their attitude to their culture or they make fun of it. Like they think it's a joke, that their parents do this and that. Either they can't speak the language or they make fun of the dress. It's basically like as if they don't know what's going on.

Jamila's definition of herself was based on her rather generalized notions of Pakistani culture and what it meant to be Pakistani; either Americanized or clueless about life in the US. She concurrently affirmed and disaffirmed her ethnic identity as a Pakistani and her national identity as an American, however as she formulated her ideas about what it meant to be a Pakistani and an American, her religious identity became her primary identifier. I found it interesting that Jamila's identification of herself transformed as her relationship to her faith became stronger. As Sirin and Fine (2008) suggest, cultural identities are "a changing aspect of young selves, flowing in interaction with

other complex dimensions of selfhood including gender, skin color, religiosity, community, passions, fears, material wealth, fantasies and dreams" (p. 12). Just as Jamila's ethno-cultural identification shifted from Pakistani to Indian, her religious identity was not fixed, but rather, malleable and reformed as her interpretation of the world and her purpose in the world changed. Nevertheless, her ideas about Pakistani culture remained static.

Jamila also mentioned that the bond she shared with her group of friends, from a variety of Middle Eastern and South Asian countries, in high school and college was based on a shared religious identity as Muslims as opposed to a shared ethnic identity or culture. She went on to talk to me about what it meant to be a young Shi'a girl living in the US:

> I would say it's whatever you already are. If you're a student, if you're working, if you're doing whatever but at the same time you do know about your religion, you do practice it as well and you keep up with it.

Like Jamila, Batool emphasized the fact that she was a practicing Shi'a and lived her life according to Islamic guidelines. "Practicing Islam," to both young women, meant praying regularly, fasting during the month of Ramadan, participating in religious ceremonies and events and avoiding things like alcohol and premarital sex. Batool defined herself as "just a young Muslim girl kind of figuring it out and making it up as I go along in life".

> Someone who practices, I guess I would say, a young Muslim girl who will make Islam their lifestyle. You know, not their culture not just like kind of picky-choosy. Like someone who actually makes it their lifestyle.

Unlike Islam, which requires its followers to adhere to explicit parameters, culture, according to Batool, was employed according to choice. Both Jamila and Batool defined

themselves against their non-practicing counterparts and emphasized the importance of "making Islam their lifestyle" by actively engaging in their religious communities and adhering to the rules of Islam. When I asked Batool to give me an example of what she meant by someone who makes Islam their lifestyle, she explained:

> So basically, somebody who works towards like bettering himself or herself everyday. I would say, basically, following Islamic guidelines and principles and stuff. I mean, nothing very specific but in this day and age it's like, even when I'm with my friends, I kind of seem like, *'why are we going right to college?'* It's like, you know, *'Hey, why don't you come to the MSA meetings?'* Where they'll be like, *'Uh, no. It's okay. I got things I'd rather think.'* You know, and it's just like certain beliefs are necessary not… that they would have maybe not necessarily followed those Islamic guidelines and stuff. So I mean, I think just in general like someone who lives their life that way, following the Prophet and the Ahlebait's [family of the Prophet Mohammad].

Jamila and Batool's primary identifier was not their ethnic background, but rather they emphasized the fact that their "lifestyle" was built around their religious convictions and therefore influenced the way they identified themselves. Additionally, they defined themselves in opposition to their "non-practicing" counterparts because they prayed, did not engage in premarital sex, drink or do drugs.

Like the participants who defined themselves based on their roles as Muslims, the participants who initially described themselves based on their ethnic backgrounds defined themselves against the "religious" Pakistani people they knew. Furthermore, I found that most of the young women often discussed Islam and being Muslim as part-and-parcel of what it meant to be Pakistani. Of all of the participants, Ismat, a student attending continuation school, was the one girl I rarely saw at the mosque or at religious gatherings at peoples houses, with the exception of an Eid bazaar at which I asked her to be a part of my research project. In high school, Ismat was diagnosed as "learning disabled" and told me that she often struggled to stay afloat in her studies. At the age of 13 her father

unexpectedly died of a heart attack and at the age of 16 her younger cousin informed her that she was adopted as a child from Pakistan; a secret, her mother later told me that she had not intended to share with Ismat until she was much older.

Ismat initially defined herself as a "typical teenage Pakistani girl" but as she explained what she meant by the term "typical" her description of herself changed:

> A Pakistani girl who's into you know. A Pakistani girl who goes with her parents to events and stuff and wears Pakistani clothes and watches Indian movies and you know, does family stuff and celebrates all the events and stuff. Every girl is different though. So the way I am, I'm not totally that typical because I'm not that kind of religious and stuff. And I like to do things my own way. Like if anyone told me to do this or that I'll do opposite of what you've told me to do. So when it comes to religion, it's not something I'm into. But like the whole like other stuff, like going to weddings and you know events and all that. I'll go here and there you know. And I'm like into the whole Indian movies and stuff. But I am not fully typical that much kind of, you know?

While she acknowledged the fact that "every girl is different," to Ismat, a "typical Pakistani girl" was someone who not only someone who participated in the cultural traditions like weddings, or watching Indian movies, wearing shalwar kameez and eating Pakistani food, but also, and perhaps more importantly, a girl who identified as religious. On a number of instances, the participants defined themselves in relation to what they referred to as "typical Pakistani" people. Understandably, Ismat associated Pakistani culture with Islam as the majority of Pakistanis in the US are Muslim, and the mosque, a religious institution, is one of the central places where Pakistanis have the opportunity to interact with other Pakistani people. For Ismat, Pakistani culture was definable and static, but because she was not religious, adopted or as she later mentioned, successful in school, she was not representative of the "typical Pakistani" person.

Nafeesa, a freshman at a community college, also identified as Pakistani but told me that she had recently started to add that she was of "Persian descent." Nafeesa, like

Ismat, had lost her father in her early teens and found out that she was adopted from Pakistan shortly after her father passed. She explained that she didn't know if in fact her family was of Persian decent and I asked her to explain why she chose to identify herself as such and she explained:

> I feel like if I say I'm straight up Pakistani, people will be like, 'Oh, you're Pakistani, blah, blah, blah. Is that the same as Afghanistani? Why aren't you wearing a scarf?' I just don't want to go through all of that.

Nafeesa went on to explain the assumptions people made about her because she was Pakistani:

> Well I guess they assume that I must obviously be a Muslim. Which I don't have a problem with saying that I'm Muslim, but I just don't want to go through all of the, 'well why aren't you wearing a scarf?' and 'oh, how come you're allowed to talk to boys then? How come I see you wearing this and that?' I don't want to get judged by the outside-community because I'm already being judged by the inner-community.

I asked Nafeesa what she meant by the "outside community" and she told me that she was referring to the "non-Pakistani community." She seemed frustrated by the fact that people often asked her why, as a Muslim woman, she did not wear a hijab (scarf):

> I guess after a couple of times you just get tired of answering so you'd rather just not say anything. Like at school they'll be like, 'Oh, you're Muslim? Then, how come you're wearing something like that? Shouldn't you not be allowed to wear that? Shouldn't you be like completely covered? Why can I see your face?'

For Nafeesa, saying that she was Pakistani equaled saying that she was Muslim and saying that she was Muslim came along with the expectations people had about what Muslim women should be like. While Muslim women who wear hijab are easily identifiable, young Muslim women like Nafeesa who do not wear hijab often pass as members of other ethnic groups or are expected to explain and justify their Muslim-ness to people with a very limited and biased conception of Islam. For Nafeesa, identifying

herself as being of Persian descent allowed her to avoid the expectations people had for her as a Muslim woman.

Emphasis on the pathological and static nature of Islam and Pakistani culture and the subjugation of Pakistani/Muslim women by Muslim/Pakistani men is common throughout academic literature and the mainstream media. As Mir (2009) explains, "dominant majority discourses" are Orientalist stereotypes that are constructed, internalized and deployed—in the media, in educational and other public spaces—not only by whites but also by most Americans of a variety of backgrounds" (p. 238). Moreover, the dominant majority discourse around young Pakistani women and their families not only rely on Orientalist tropes, but also Western feminist explanations of oppression and empowerment. Muslims in America tend to be represented in two ways, as violent fundamentalists or as exceptional assimilated immigrants (Bayoumi, 2008, p. 4). Monolithic representations of Muslim women in particular, like those mentioned Nafeesa mentioned of being "completely covered" or sexually repressed and unagentive, seem to center around their perceived subordinate status within their religious and ethnic communities. Nonetheless, as Rana (2007) reminds us, "the myth that Muslim women are veiled, demure and suppressed" can be traced back to the literature and art of Colonial times that "helped perpetuate the image of the 'otherness' of the Muslim woman" (p. 172). She goes on to remind us "there is no archetypal Muslim woman." Such limited depictions of Pakistani culture and Islam prevent people from understanding the complexity of culture and religion.

Nevertheless, the participants who defined themselves as religious or not-so/non-religious seemed to embody the idea that there was a right and a wrong way to be a

Muslim woman and were equally invested in the naturalization of culture. Furthermore, none of the participants challenged their own limited notions about the static nature of Pakistani culture, but were critical of non-Muslim and non-Pakistani people who perpetuated stereotypical representations of Pakistani culture and Islam.

Jamila and Batool were active participants at their mosques, ‘practiced’ Islam at home, and had significant relationships with Muslims from a range of ethnic backgrounds at school and at home. Ismat, Nafeesa and Mehar (whose relationship to Islam I discuss at length in Chapter five), on the other hand, defined themselves as not-so/non-religious, had fewer Muslim friends and rarely participated in community events. Nevertheless, the identities of all four of the young women was shaped by their experiences within the their ethno-religious communities and the fact that they were raised as Muslims. Being raised among other Muslims, regardless of how religious or non-religious they claimed to be, informed the way they perceived and classified themselves.

Friends

Each of the participants told me that their most significant relationships were with other Pakistani/Desi/Muslim friends because they understood them in ways that their American friends didn’t. While Aneesa told me she had many different types of friends, her closest friends were also members of the Shi’a Muslim community in Southern California. She explained the difference between her different groups of friends:

> I have these two friends, they’re both Desi. One’s Indian and one’s Pakistani of course we share everything like similar experiences and we’re all close in age. They also go to my mosque, well one of them she also goes to the other mosque and the other one, she’s not that religious, but every now and then, she’ll come. I feel like they really understand me. We’ve gone through similar experiences. With them, it’s about everything. We talk about life, family, other friends,

> relationship problems, jobs and school, anything you can think about. And I have my other friends that are non-Desi but I'm closer with my Desi friends. With my non-Desi friends we can talk about boys, school of course, but I feel like I can't really talk about my cultural situation, I guess, because they don't really understand that.

I asked Aneesa to explain what she meant by her 'cultural situation' and she told me that she didn't talk to her non-Desi friends about religion because she didn't feel comfortable "explaining all that stuff to them." Interestingly, Aneesa conflated culture and religion when telling me why she felt uncomfortable talking about religion with her non-Desi friends. She told me:

> Like Muharram and stuff, what's going on with my religion right now, they might get it but I have other friends who talk about that so why tell everybody? My relationship with them is really good so I'm fine with that. But they're also separate. I keep two separate groups. Like I'll tell them one thing and then I wont tell them the other because they're the group that I grew up with, they're like closer.

She went on to explain, "I don't need all my friends to get who I am…I've got those two and for me it's like quantity over quality." Aneesa preferred to maintain relationships with her non-Desi (Desi is a Hindi term that is used to refer to people who are South Asian) friends that did not involve having to explain the complexities of her religious practice, like Muharram, a period of over two months where Shi'a's commemorate and mourn the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad, and his family. While both of the groups Aneesa mentioned were important to her, the people who 'got' who she was were her Shi'a friends whom as she explained, understood and were able to relate to her experiences as a young Pakistani Muslim woman raised in the US.

Nafeesa echoed Aneesa's frustration with having to rationalize her life to her non-Desi friends:

> My American friends just don't understand the fact that I can't hang out all the time. They get mad at me if I can't go somewhere. They don't understand like, 'No my mom won't let me. You don't understand.' Then they'll get really angry and like… I mean I've lost a lot of friends that way. I guess, not lost, but we just drifted because they'll ask me to go do stuff and I'm like, 'My mom isn't going to let me go.' And then I don't go and they make their own memories and they have their own inside jokes and that just keeps growing and growing until I'm way out of the loop. So then, it's time for me to move on to a new group of friends. They just don't get the fact that I just can't go everywhere. Like, 'Oh we're all going to hang out at so and so's house.' Like there's no way in hell my mom's going to let me go there. She doesn't know the parents and that's a dude.

Unlike Aneesa and Nafeesa who maintained two groups of friends, non-Desi and Muslim, Batool told me that the majority of her friendships were with other Muslims because they shared similar values:

> Yeah, the majority of my friends are there [the mosque she attends, Yasin]. But I think since I left high school, I have to say that I kind of don't have as many like non-Muslim, like I wouldn't… close friends. In high school, I had like known some close friends but I would say since I left sort of college that I kind of just, most of my friends that I've hung out with regularly are Muslim.

I asked Batool why she thought that was the case:

> Well, it's kind of like, *'What do you wanna do for fun?'* type of thing. It's like your interests really, really change. And it's really hard to like, to have friends that share like different values as you. People who can't relate to you. Coz it's like, you realize there's nothing fun to do together anymore because your interests have completely changed.

Like most young adults, the participants wanted people in their lives who were able to relate to what they were going through. Batool, Jamila, Nafeesa and Aneesa developed close relationships with their Desi, Pakistani, and/or Muslim friends because they did not feel like they had to justify their cultural and religious differences to them like they did with their American friends. However, all of the participants told me that the Pakistani/Desi Muslim friends that they chose their friends according to the perceived values they all shared or did not share. For example, six of the eight participants were in

relationships at the time that I interviewed them or had been in physical intimate relationships with other people and all of their Pakistani/Desi Muslim friends were accepting of this fact. However they did not share this with all of the Pakistani Muslim people they knew because the participants assumed that the more religious girls, like their American counterparts, were equally judgmental of their difference. As such, the participants preferred to surround themselves with people that were able to relate to the issues they faced as members of a culturally and religiously marginalized groups.

Parents

As the young women elaborated on their relationships with their friends at school and within their ethno-religious communities, clear differences in the ways they thought and spoke about what it meant to be Pakistani and what it meant to be American began to emerge. The participants regularly used words like “backwards,” “conservative,” “traditional,” “hard working,” and “family oriented” to describe their parents and/or other Pakistani people they knew in the US and in Pakistan while their American peers and culture was labeled as “modern” and “liberal.” The participants’ conceptions of Islam or Muslim people, Pakistan or Pakistani people, and Americans was often based on generalizations about Islam, Pakistani and American culture that they both perpetuated and challenged throughout our conversations.

I found that it was much easier for the participants to articulate what they saw as the differences between American culture and Pakistani culture than the similarities of the two. These conversations often came up when the participants were talking to me about their relationships with their parents. For example, Laila explained:

> I just feel like Americans are more liberal…you could see it in the movies. You know what I mean? Just the culture wise like, for high school kids it's all about dating. I feel that's just the American culture. For Pakistanis its not really like that, it's different. But I still feel like I'm living the best of both worlds. I can be an American kid, a Pakistani-American girl, you know. Like my parents aren't super strict, I still go to school, I have every right every other American kid does too. There's some…based on experience or talking to other people, they don't trust their kids at all. They're like 'You know we're Pakistani kids, we're not allowed to go out and mingle with American kids and stuff.' Sometimes my dad has that mentality as well. He doesn't like me going to my American friends houses. He says 'Laila, they're different.' He's like, 'I trust you, I'm more afraid of everyone else. At this age, kids do bad things.' I'm like, 'Dad, you have to trust me.' But they're not as strict as saying, 'You can't go.' They still want me to be involved in anything, in ASB. I'm the vice president of my class…it's really time consuming. I'm always after school, I'm going away and stuff and you know most parents…I talk to my other Pakistani girlfriends and their like, 'Yeah, my parents will never let me do that because they don't like me out of the house. There's boys there and if I go out to go camp with them, my parents would never let me.' *Shukar alhumdu lil Allah*, I thank God my parents are actually okay with that. They're like, 'you can go out because I understand what you're doing, what the purpose is' and stuff.

Laila's American friends' parents were permissive, unlike the parents of her Pakistani friends who often expressed hesitation about their children's non-Pakistani/Muslim friendships. However, as I will discuss later, the participants told me that their parents encouraged them to participate in social activities that happened at school. Nevertheless the young women repeatedly likened leniency and progressive attitudes about socialization with American culture and conservativeness and restrictive ideologies with Pakistani culture. My conversations with the participants suggest that parents also possessed essentialized images of American culture and idealized notions of Pakistani culture, and these images/beliefs influenced their responses to life and childrearing in the US as well as the messages they sent to their daughters about culture and difference.

Laila went on to tell me that unlike many of the kids at her school, she hadn't lost her culture but instead felt "tightly bounded with being Pakistani" which brought her

closer to her parents. She told me that she felt like she had the best of both worlds because she had the advantages of being an American kid and at the same time her parents were not as strict "religion or culture wise." Nevertheless, she did mention what she saw as a difference in the way her American friends were "brought up" and she was raised.

> My parents are not as open…I can't talk to my parents as easily, I feel like. They don't understand as much, but my friends parents, "Oh yeah, I talked to my mom about my boyfriend and stuff" and I feel like it's difficult for me to be like "oh mom, there's this guy." Like there's a social barrier you could say. Similarities? They're both really different cultures you know. But I feel like my life has been a mixture of the two…it's never been like I had to separate my two, you know, being American and being Pakistani. I feel like it's just kind of like a conjoint thing that I never really took time to think about.

Like most young adults, six of the eight participants reflected on the fact that they didn't feel like their parents "understood" them. The participants attributed their parents' inability to understand to their parents' culture as opposed to the generational differences that exist between the young people and their parents. In other words, not being able to talk to their parents about certain topics, a reality that many young adults and adults struggle with, was often associated with their parents' cultural and religious beliefs.

What is more, all of the participants understood the value systems of Pakistani parents and Pakistani culture in binary terms. "Traditional" beliefs were commonly represented as being synonymous with Pakistani culture, their parents values (informed by their culture), and the ideas espoused in their respective ethno-religious communities. Intergenerational conflict and the cultural clash theory are two dominant narratives about South Asian and Muslim youth that are widely circulated throughout the literature and the media. The literature on South Asians and/or Muslims in the US, highlights the discord between parents and their offspring that develops as a result of the fusion of two

distinct cultures (Leonard, 2000). Zaidi & Shuraydi (2002) suggest that a “generational gap” exists between South Asian Muslim parents and their daughters based on competing value systems and conflict arises when immigrant families and their children must negotiate between the parent’s “ethnic” world and Western culture. According to Thornley and Sian (1991), the cultural clash theory promotes the image of the South Asian female as someone who is passive and subject to the repressive practices of her family. Pakistani youth are frequently depicted as moving away from the traditions of their parents, while at the same time moving ‘Westward’ toward progress or a less traditional, more modern value system. Moreover, Ngo (2008) argues that this oppositional framework is problematic not only because it “reifies the notion of culture…as something that is fixed or a given…rather than a social process that finds meaning within social relationships and practices” (p. 5). Furthermore, as Ngo explains, “binary oppositions inscribe judgment and a pecking order (i.e., good/bad, ours/theirs) into cultural practices and values” (p. 5).

The concept of Orientalism has been useful in thinking about the traditional/modern binary that saturates the literature on Pakistanis in the United States. Edward Said defines Orientalism as “the absolute and systematic difference between the West (which is rational, developed, humane and superior) and the Orient (which is aberrant, undeveloped and inferior) (In Marvasti & McKinney, 2004, p. 52). The labeling of communities as either traditional or modern not only reifies stereotypes about the superiority of one over the other, it limits our understanding of the similarities that exist between the West and the Orient, or Pakistani culture along with denying the fluid nature of culture. The traditions of the dominant culture, or culture of power, were rarely

understood as ‘traditional’ by the participants. Rather, the participants described American culture as ‘modern’ and changing whereas Pakistan culture was often understood as antiquated and stagnant.

The young women understood their parents’ traditional value-system as an example of them holding on to the non-American customs and beliefs of the past. For example, Batool told me that the reason why she likes going to her mosque is because the programs are “catered to the youth” and conducted in English, “not just catering to the sixty year olds who only want to hear their language.” Because the values and culture of their parents were understood through the lens of the modern/traditional binary, it was difficult for the participants to imagine a ‘traditional’ value system as relevant to the current realities of their lives. Interestingly enough, parents’ stances on things like dating (sexual relationships before marriage are forbidden in Islam) was often attributed to the ‘backwardness’ of Pakistani culture rather than attributed to the rules of Islam.

Still, despite their frustrations about the community or their parents “backwardness,” the participants maintained that their relationships with the members of their communities and their parents were important to them and the young women made efforts to bridge what they imagined as their separate worlds. The participants were not, as the research on South Asian and Muslim youth suggests, fundamentally resistant to and plagued by the ‘traditional’ beliefs of their parents and ethno-religious communities. While “freedom” and “equality” was discussed as characteristic of the American value system and most of the participants regularly complained about not being able to have as active a social life as they would have preferred, they all told me about the importance of their relationship to their parents and regularly commented on the significance of

maintaining some of these values such as not drinking or taking drugs or having sex before marriage which were values associated to Pakistani culture, Islam and their parents.

Pakistani Pakistanis

Nonetheless, each of the participant's descriptions of themselves were much more complex and multilayered than their understanding of Pakistani and American culture. For example, Nafeesa pointed out the complexity of her identity as a Pakistani Muslim woman living in the US:

> I don't think there's any difference between being a Pakistani woman and just being a woman. It just comes all the same things. Yeah I'm Pakistani but I wouldn't differentiate myself from an American person. Just because I grew up here I guess. So I would just… I guess I would identify myself as American raised even though I'm Pakistani by birth and descent. I don't really identify with the typical I guess stereotype of how a Pakistani girl is supposed to be.

Nafeesa elaborated on what she meant by the "typical stereotype" of a Pakistani girl:

> I don't know, from what I've heard, they're like really quiet and like they're not… I guess the whole thing is like American girls are really independent and Pakistani girls are not so much. Which is why with the whole thing, they always bring the Pakistani girls here to get married to their American sons because they think that they'll be more submissive, I guess.

I asked Nafeesa if she thought that there was truth to the stereotype and she explained:

> From what I've experienced, not at all. Like I've been to Pakistan and the things I experienced when I was in Pakistan, I never went through here. I mean I saw a lot more drinking in Pakistan. Like around, well I guess it also depends on the people I hang out with.

Although they saw themselves as different from their American and/or non-Muslim peers, they also saw themselves as different from their female counterparts in Pakistan. When we were discussing their feelings about the advantages of growing up as

members of their ethnic and racial group in the US that the participants often compared their lives to the lives of women that they knew or knew of in Pakistan. I was surprised that many of them had never been to Pakistan but had strong opinions about what it would be like to grow up there. The two young women who had visited Pakistan recently, Nafeesa and Jamila, had a more complicated understanding of their Pakistani counterparts in Pakistan.

Aneesa, Jamila, Nafeesa, Noor and Laila each differentiated themselves from their female relatives in Pakistan. For example, when telling me about what she imagined her life would be like if she grew up in Pakistan, Aneesa told me that she wouldn't want to live in Pakistan because "everything, life sucks there." When I asked her for an example, she said:

> I mean, I'm sure it's nice for people but it's hard getting a job, anything, like achieving anything you want to do. Anything you want to be successful at…And also in education, like how over here you could get scholarships. Can people get scholarships there? I'm sure it's not as easy as here, just make an essay and send it in and hey, you might win a scholarship. Also the social life, you cant do what you want to do or hang out with whoever whenever. I think it's a lot easier here.

Aneesa explained that if she lived in Pakistan, she would probably be narrow-minded, judgmental and would lack the freedom to go out if she didn't live in the US.

> First of all, I wouldn't know what life would be like here and how great it is here. So if I was just there and didn't know what life is like here, I'd probably be okay….my cousin has a big house and they're doing okay. I'd be in school. I don't know what I'd be studying. Probably like biology or becoming a doctor because that's all my parents would want. They still want that here too. I'd probably have friends here but I'd only meet them at social gatherings. I wont be able to go out. I probably wouldn't be as smart.

When I asked her why she didn't feel like she would be as smart if she lived in Pakistan, she explained:

> It depends. There's like two kinds of smart; the street smart and the book smart. And here you kinda get both but there it's just like, oh whatever [she puts her hands up, shrugs and laughs]

Aneesa elaborated on what she meant by 'street smarts' and mentioned her cousins in Pakistan as an example:

> What they think about America is like what they see on TV. Like black people are bad or whatever. I don't know. I guess life would be fine if I didn't know what life was like over here. So I'd be married, have kids and then die [laughs]. Maybe have a job and work in a hospital or something but not really having the freedom to do much. I'd probably have different friends and they would be narrow minded like me if I lived there.

I asked Aneesa what she meant by "narrow minded" she gave the example of her cousin, who grew up in Pakistan but came to the US to study, and then moved back to Pakistan and to get married as soon as she was done with her studies.

> She doesn't understand life. She's like "why do people do that?" I feel like she's judgmental. I told her about my personal relationships with people and she didn't understand that. She doesn't seem to understand any of that. I don't know why. Like my parents, she has the same thing, her mom doesn't want her to go anywhere far either. It was just one person, and I can't say that all Pakistani people are narrow minded. I know I can't say that. That was just like my experience.

Aneesa's response underscores the fact that in the US, non-Pakistanis and Pakistani Americans alike have very little knowledge about the differences that exist between Pakistanis in the US and abroad. The dominant conception is based on essentialized images of Pakistani women who are characterized as the victims of their families' religious and cultural practices. It has been suggested that the elaboration of difference between Muslims in the West and non-Muslims (Pakistani's being the largest Muslim group in the US following African Americans) has often centered on the status of women in the Muslim world (Haddad, Smith, & Moore, 2006). The participants often noted that dominant conceptions of Pakistani and Muslim women were unrepresentative

of their lived realities in the US, but they perpetuated similar essentialized ideas when talking about their Pakistani counterparts in Pakistan.

While Aneesa's perceptions were informed by what she saw as the "narrow mindedness" of Pakistani people, Jamila mentioned that on her trip to Pakistan, she was surprised by how "stereotypical the girls were there" and was concerned and a little disturbed by what she explained as Pakistani girls obsession with clothes, make-up and guys. Unlike Aneesa, Jamila acknowledged the misconceptions Pakistani Americans have about what Pakistani women are like in Pakistan. She mentioned that parents in the US are always so concerned with the ills of American society and often idealize life in Pakistan with little knowledge of the fact that the same things that happen in the US are also happening among young people in Pakistan. "We're actually less *thaiz* than the girls over there" Jamila told me. When I asked her what she meant by the word *thaiz*, a term often used to describe Pakistani American girls who are sly or fast. Based on her observations, the Pakistani girls in the US were less likely to be involved in relationships, going out or dating, than the girls in Pakistan. Ironically, Jamila went on to say that her Pakistani friends' parents were more trusting of other Pakistan girls than they were of the American friends that the girls had despite the fact that they both were engaged in the same "bad" activities such as pre-marital sex and drinking.

As I reflected on my conversations with the participants I realized that they had a limited understanding of the complexity of culture and identity and often relied on stereotypes and generalizations to identify themselves and define the seemingly disparate cultures they are a part of. In fact, there were only a few occasions in which the participants were able to critically articulate their ideas about culture in a way that did not

assign certain characteristics or values to entire communities/cultures. Nevertheless, I realize that it is difficult to understand the nuances of culture when you are not encouraged to think about culture in a critical manner.

Difference on Display: "It's just not what you do"

As adolescents and young adults, how they saw themselves was based on their experiences and their ideas about what it means to be members of their religious/ethnic groups but also the behavior and experiences, both negative and positive, of other Pakistani's and/or Muslims they knew. While none of the young women admitted to hiding their ethnic or religious background from their peers at school, many of the young women didn't "try to get into detail" (Laila, int. 1) when talking about themselves. Noor, a senior in high school, told me about a young woman she knew at a neighborhood school who wore traditional Pakistani clothing (*shalwar kameez*) and a head covering (*dupatta/chador*).

> I don't feel that people judge me as much as other people. I have seen some girls that are Pakistani and people judged them way more than me which was like so weird. But maybe it was because I feel like I am so modernized, but maybe I am not, I don't know.

I asked Noor to explain what she meant by the term modernized and she said:

> Not modernized but…okay, there is this girl that goes to a different school from mine, and she always tells me how people judge her so much, and I was like 'why?' She told me that she wears a *dupatta* on her head. I think she even wore *shalwar kameez* in school once or something. I don't do that. I can't do that. I can't wear it. I'd feel so weird if I wear a chador on my head or if I go out in like *shalwar kameez* and stuff like that. And I guess the whole boy thing; she would refuse to talk to boys. I don't know…I can't do that.

Nafeesa shared a similar story about an Arab Muslim boy at her school who "put himself out there" and got a "lot of slack" for being proud of being Arab when they were in the fifth grade.

> I was kind of embarrassed to associate myself with him, because his dad was my Sunday school teacher that fifth grade year too. But that wasn't because he was a Muslim. That was just because he was weird, you know? But I didn't want people to think that all Muslim people were like that, because he was kind of an extreme case. Like, I don't do stuff like that. Like I don't know, he'd bring things like lamb testicles to school to eat. I'm like, "why would you bring that to school to eat?" And then he was like, purposefully like during lunch ask the teacher if he could pray in the classroom in front of the, like I'm not saying that's a bad thing, it's not. It's really like that's good for him. But you could wait till you go home. Like why, and he didn't used to do that before. Why all of a sudden now do you have to push it in everybody's face…he would just do things to highlight himself.

Nafeesa told me that people laughed at him and made fun of him at school.

> They'd be a little weirded out. I'm not going to show up to school in *shalwar kameez*. It's just not what you do.

I asked her why wearing *shalwar kameez* to school was something she wouldn't consider wearing to school:

> Because it's out of the norm. It's like, why? I mean there's nothing wrong with bringing positive attention to yourself but why put yourself in a position where you know you're gonna get made fun of if you don't have to? If you own American clothes, why not wear them? Why go out of your way?

She told me that she knew that her peers would make fun of her if she wore *shalwar kameez* to school:

> But I would make fun of myself. Like if I saw a girl wearing *shalwar kameez* to school, I would look too like, why are you doing that? It's just out of the norm.

"Going out of your way", "putting it out there", differing from the norm, or "highlighting oneself" by openly displaying their culture puts young people in a compromised position in spaces where conformity is encouraged. Of the eight young

women I interviewed, a number of them used the example of wearing *shalwar kameez* to school as something 'you just don't do.' Still, when at the mosque or at community functions *shalwar kameez* was the norm. In both contexts, 'sticking out' I learned was something that most of the participants (with the exception of Batool who wears the hijab) avoided. More interesting perhaps is the idea that covering your head or wearing something other than American garb at school was seen as un-modern or non-American. As Nafeesa mentioned earlier, she would make fun of herself for wearing *shalwar kameez* to school. In her ethnography on Hmong youth, Lee (2005) found 'Americanized' Hmong youth mocked traditional students for being "too traditional, conservative, and old-fashioned" (p. 54) and social borders between the groups were rarely crossed at school. She goes on to explain, "by disparaging traditional youth, the Americanized youth were casting out the aspects of the Hmong community they viewed as problematic for life in the United States" (p. 54). Like the Americanized youth in Lee's study, Nafeesa and Noor defined themselves against "unmodern" Pakistani and Muslim youth who wore traditional Pakistani clothing, covered their hair (wore chador or dupatta), chose not to mingle with the opposite sex, and/or prayed at school. The bulk of the participants, including Aneesa, Nafeesa, Noor, Ismat, Batool, Jamila, disassociated themselves from Pakistani and Muslim youth whom they saw as "un-modern" or "backwards" because their experiences in schools and the in larger society "taught them that an immigrant status was a stigmatized status" (Lee, 2005, p. 54).

Like teachers and administrators, non-Muslim non-Pakistani young people also lack understanding about the Pakistani community and Islam. When Lori Cohen and Leyna Peery (2006) asked their sophomore literature students to examine their

perceptions about women in Islam, many responded with the following terms: submissive to men; not well educated; covered faces and bodies with hijab or burka; no rights; loyal and dedicated to families; fragile; and separated from men (p. 20). Not surprisingly, Cohen and Peery's literature students' responses are reflective of widely held beliefs in the US about Islam and Muslim women. All of the participants of this study mentioned that the non-Pakistani/Muslim people they knew had expressed similar sentiments about them or other Pakistani and/or Muslim women. Zine (2006) refers to this type of discrimination as "gendered Islamophobia." This can be understood as "specific forms of ethno-religious and racialized discrimination leveled at Muslim women that proceed from historically contextualized negative stereotypes that inform individual and systemic forms of oppression" (p. 240). As of the year 2000, Abdo (2008) reports that over 37,000 Muslim women were kicked out of their schools and over 24,000 teachers were fired for wearing the hijab (p. 1). Regardless of whether a young Muslim woman wears the hijab, it is clear that they have historically been, and continue to be, discriminated against based on their affiliation with Islam. A poll conducted in March of 2009 by the Pew Research Center revealed that over eight years after 9/11, 48 % of Americans still have an unfavorable view of Islam. Moreover, an ABC News report states that a common belief among Americans is that "Muslim women are oppressed and forced to wear the hijab" (2008). However, a recent poll of over 8,000 Muslim women in Muslim countries shows that how Muslim women are perceived is strikingly different from how they perceive themselves (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007).

Interestingly, reticence to display difference was also informed by the cues they received from members of their families. Laila, a junior in high school, told me that she

tried not to go into too much detail when talking to people about her ethnic/religious background.

> When I was younger actually when the whole 9-11 thing happened, my dad was very like, 'Laila, don't tell people you're Muslim. Don't tell people you're Pakistani.' That was actually really hard because even though I was younger, kids would still, they sort of have that mentality of mimicking and causing trouble.

Laila told me that her father didn't want her to reveal her ethno-religious background because he was fearful that people would discriminate against her at school and or physically harm her if they found out that she was Pakistani or Muslim. According to Prashad, "the home becomes the place for the enactment of culture (or in other words, the preservation of heritage)" (p. 121). He goes on to explain that South Asians "take refuge in the home as a result of the mistreatment by white society" (p. 105). In other words, the home serves a dual purpose for South Asians. On the one hand, it is a space where immigrants can defend and maintain their traditions, and on the other, the home is a safe space, a space where immigrants are able to guard themselves and their children against discrimination from the host society. Laila went on to tell me that because she did not wear hijab and was able to pass for something other than Pakistani, it was not hard for her to hide the fact that she was a Pakistani Muslim. Nevertheless, she explained that as a child, it was painful to feel like she needed to conceal her identity as a Pakistani Muslim. However, this experience led Laila to restart a club called Socially Together and Nationally Diverse (STAND) that had previously died down at her school.

> So we do activities. Getting to know other religions like, why it is important to be tolerant of one another. And people ask me all the time like, 'why did you do this club?' Always my response is, 'I've suffered through people making racial remarks towards me. I just felt really closely towards it. That's what I work for every day, all the time.

Conversations about difference happen regularly in schools and administrators and teachers either avoid facilitating such dialogue or are unaware of how to do so. Therefore, Muslim women, like Laila, are left with the responsibility of addressing misconceptions about their cultures and religion to their peers, teachers, counselors and administrators in schools. Sirin & Fine (2008) found that the Muslim American women (most of which were Pakistani) in their study were "relentlessly committed to educating others—even taking this on as a cultural and gendered responsibility, perhaps a burden—these young women launch personal campaigns to correct social stereotypes…they educate and correct the misperceptions" (pp. 162-163).

I didn't specifically ask questions about their experiences post 9-11 but the topic came up at least once in my conversations with each of the young women. In 2001, all of the young women were in elementary or middle school. Discrimination, as they explained to me, often came in the form of jokes or taunting. Four of the eight women mentioned the same joke that had been directed towards them in reference to Muslims as terrorists. When talking about the disadvantages that come along with being a Muslim living in the US, Nafeesa explained:

> After 9-11 stuff like just, the racial talk. It would be like 'Oh are you hiding Osama in your house?' They didn't know any better. Like, they didn't know what they were talking about. They just knew what their parents say and what they've heard on the news. So they'd be like 'oh, you're Muslim? You must be related to him somehow, you must be protecting him.' And I'd be like, 'yeah, I am. You should come and check it out.' I always just laughed it off. It was never really a big deal to me. I guess because I'm a girl too. I know the guys get a lot more slack for being Middle-Eastern or Pakistani.

I asked Nafeesa why she though Muslim boys were discriminated against more in school. She explained, "even like racial profiling…you never see a girl get pulled over. We kind of get away with it because we're pretty and exotic looking." Using Derald Wing Sue's

notion of "racial micro-aggressions" to describe the experiences of Pakistani youth in NYC schools, Ghaffar-Kucher found that teachers constructed Pakistani Muslim boys as a problem, whereas "girls were typically viewed as oppressed victims of Islam who were to be pitied" (pp. 13-14). What is more, the work of Lopez (2003), Lee (2005), and Valenzuela (1999) suggests that unlike young men, young women are not perceived as dangerous but rather as passive and compliant with the school's rules and hence, as better students. Analogously, Muslim women are perceived as the docile and subservient victims of their ethno-religious communities therefore they are not constructed as threats to the security of the institutions they are a part of, but rather as helpless and hapless girls in need of liberation.

Nevertheless, Like Nafeesa, the other participants didn't see interpret these 'jokes' to be forms of discrimination, racism or Islamophobia, but instead often brushed them off as harmless comments that their friends or peers had made to them. Although there was a consensus among the young women that the media acted as the purveyor of misinformation about Muslims, the participants spoke little of and seemed largely unaware of institutional forms of discrimination against people of color and Muslims. When the participants did discuss the discrimination that they and/or other Pakistani and Muslim people experienced, it was almost always understood as random act of physical and/or verbal abuse by an ignorant individual. What is more, my conversations with Noor and Nafeesa suggest that discrimination that was based on a display of difference was actually seen as justifiable. As Leonardo (2004) contends, oppressed people, as individual subjects of domination, do not inherently possess "a correct or true understanding of racial oppression." He explains that many of them "are just as confused

as whites when it comes to an organic understanding of racism. Many people of color have shown their inability to perform critical analyses of the causes of their own oppression" (p. 141). One must understand what constitutes discrimination in order to recognize when they or someone like them are being discriminated against. From what I was able to gather, most of these young women, including Laila who started a club that promotes tolerance among students, had a very limited critical understanding of the nature of power and privilege. This comes as no surprise as our schools work hard to silence such dialogues among students.

Furthermore, Nafeesa, Noor, Laila and Aneesa seemed to have internalized a definition of racism that equates talking about racism or discrimination with perpetuating the cycle of oppression. Bonilla Silva (2011) suggests that a reluctance to talk about racism is indicative of the pervasiveness of "color-blind racism" in the US. The participants appeared to embody a racial ideology, or "collective understanding and representation produced by social groups" to make sense of their world, that mirrored the dominant racial ideology which suggests that "race is no longer a central factor determining the life chances of Americans" (Bonilla-Silva, 2011, p. 190). This dominant racial ideology, according to Bonilla Silva, is based on four frames "that function to create apparently non-racial explanations of race events" (p. 192). The four frames of color-blind racism are abstract liberalism, cultural racism, minimization of racism, and naturalization. Nafeesa, Noor, Laila and Aneesa seemed to profess a color-blind view that was indicative of three of the frames outlined by Bonilla-Silva including, the cultural racism, minimization of racism and discrimination, and naturalization of matters that reflect the effects of white supremacy. Not only were the participants invested in the idea

that the US was the land of opportunity, but their parents seemed equally convinced in the idea that if they tried hard enough, regardless anti-Muslim discrimination, that their children would be able to succeed (i.e., meritocracy). Furthermore, participants perpetuated what Bonilla-Silva calls the "biologization of culture" also referred to as the "naturalization of culture" by Balibar in that they understood culture to be based on a fixed set of values that were inherent to the members of that culture. Finally, as mentioned previously, the participants tended to minimize acts of discrimination and racism as either random or harmless.

The Risks of Difference in the Community

While the participants expressed concerns about what Nafeesa previously referred to as being judged by the "outside community" they also voiced a great deal of concern about how they were perceived by their peers within their ethno-religious communities and put tremendous effort into maintaining an image of themselves at the mosque and at home that differed from their lives at school or with their friends. I realized that school was not the only place they were discouraged from putting their differences on display and encouraged to conform. Coming off as different in their ethno-religious communities also had similar repercussions.

The participants were aware that the Muslim community was being watched from the "outside community" but they were also highly cognizant of the fact that they were being closely observed within their "inner" ethno-religious community and at home. Sirin and Fine (2008) contend that Muslim men and women are at the "nexus of these multiple forces of surveillance and exclusion" (p. 100). Sirin and Fine found that young

Muslim women in their study had to contend with a "more intimate scrutiny" within their families and religious communities than the young Muslim men they interviewed. In her research on the educational experiences of Yemini Muslim youth, Sarroub (2005) also found that the spaces in which Yemini Muslim girls lived their lives, were also closely scrutinized by the Yemini community. Nevertheless, as Sirin and Fine explain, these social, political and psychological dynamics extend well beyond the Muslim American community. Cohen (1999; in Sirin and Fine, 2008) argues that historically marginalized communities not only produce "policing mechanisms" that center on physical characteristics, but also use "moralistic and character evaluations to appraise membership" (p. 100). Sirin and Fine explain that the Muslim youth in their study felt like they had to 'hide' some of their identities at home because "they travel through different worlds," but also because they worried about "the price their parents might have to pay for the choices they, particularly the daughters, make" (p.100).

Like Sirin and Fine's participants, the participants in this study also felt the need to hide certain aspects of their lives, particularly their sexuality, because of the perceived threat it posed to their reputations as well as their parents honor. According to Kibria (Kibria in Min p. 222), migration has led to the enforcement of traditional feminine behaviors of South Asian youth, including arranged marriage, and restrictions on women's sexuality.

Of the eight young women I interviewed, six confided in me that they had been or were in some kind of intimate relationship. They often chose not to share this information with the majority of people they knew at the mosque with the exception of close friends they knew and trusted. Convinced that their families and ethno-religious

communities were likely to support to the general Islamic view of sexuality that problematizes premarital sex and/or dating, the participants (with the exception of Batool) stressed the importance of conducting themselves in a way that avoided revealing private information about their intimate relationships to their parents and ethno-religious communities. Batool was the only participant who was engaged to be married while I was conducting my research and openly discussed her relationship with her friends and family. I made a conscious decision not to ask the participants about topics like dating in the interviews because it was not the focus of my research and I didn't want to put them in a position in which they felt like they had to share such information. However, I was taken aback by the girls' willingness to share the details of their private lives with me. I later realized that they had few opportunities in which they felt like they could talk to an adult Pakistani woman about the issues they were dealing with without the fear of being judged.

During one of my interviews with Nafeesa, she told me that a friend had started a rumor about her at the mosque claiming that she had started dating a boy she met on Facebook. Nafeesa initially told me that it was rumor, but later admitted to me that she was in a long-distance (non-sexual) relationship with a young man. I was the only member of the community, with the exception of a few friends at the mosque, who knew that Nafeesa had a boyfriend. Nafeesa was concerned that such a rumor could have serious consequences on the way she was perceived by people in her ethno-religious community.

> A friend told me that 'this person went out and they're saying all of this about you and now everybody thinks you're a bad kid and they think you're a bad influence and nobody wants you hanging out with their kids.' She said all of these people were talking about me and I was like, "Oh god, what happened? What did I do?"

> I didn't confront the other girl because I didn't want to start drama, but I just slowly withdrew from everyone. So I have to be really careful with what I say and what I do because you don't want to get like completely ostracized from the community.

It was important for Nafeesa and the other participants (who were or had been involved in relationships) to maintain the façade (within the community and at home) of good Muslim girls who didn't engage in premarital relationships, not only to secure membership in the community but also because if they didn't, it would lead to significant social pressure for both their families and themselves.

Muslim men and women are required to preserve their virginity until marriage. Nevertheless, Muslim parents are expected to safeguard the 'purity' of their daughters (Amin et al., 1998). If a girl is known to have engaged in a pre-marital relationship, regardless of whether she had sex or not, the status of her family within their ethno-religious community can be negatively affected. Furthermore, marriage within the community could become difficult for the girls whose reputations have been compromised. Getting married, according to Rashid and Michaud (2000), is "equated with achieving adulthood and brings with it recognition and security" (p. 55). Girls who conform, or appear to conform, to the norm of chastity and modesty, bring honor to themselves and their family, which in turn, serves to improve their status in their community and increases their chances for a good marriage (Blanchet, 1996; Rozario, 1992).

Nevertheless, Nafeesa went on to explain that despite the rumors, it was important for her to maintain her friendships in the community because these were the people that she grew up with and she felt she had to maintain ties with them. When I asked her to explain why it was important for her to be a part of the community, she explained

> Because you need the community. You want to still be part of the community because those are the people you have to eventually go to when you have big issues. They are the people who are supposed to be there for you.

I asked Nafeesa to give me an example of a ‘big issue’ and she explained:

> Like a death in the family, they’re the ones that have to be there. They’re the ones that would show up there. Like even a birth in the family or like anything. I don’t know, we have very active community and I need to be a part of that just, I guess even to keep like my spiritual faith up. Like I feel like I need the community to even like… Because I wouldn’t want to go if I didn’t have like a person that I could like sit with or like even though you’re not supposed to be going for those purposes, you don’t want to feel… You don’t want to feel awkward being there. Even though you are supposed to be going for the purpose for worship, you don’t want to be that one person that everybody’s like staring at while you’re there because that’s going to make you uncomfortable. And that’ll completely draw away from the whole reason you are there. Yeah we still have a lot in common. We still like clothes and we like shopping but I know I can’t talk to them about certain things and I guess I have like a bit of a resentment in there for all of them. But because you don’t want to cause problems you don’t bring it out and about.

1.5 and second generation immigrant youth are frequently portrayed as becoming increasingly distant from their ethno-religious communities or embattled by their conflicting realities but rarely are we provided examples within the literature on Muslim youth about the ways they negotiate seemingly divergent ideals and work to maintain ties with their ethno-religious communities. Despite the fact that she felt the need to censor herself around other members of the community whom she resented, Nafeesa also emphasized the importance of being a part of the community and not ‘sticking out.’ According to Nafeesa, it was her ethno-religious community that would eventually “be there” for her. I found it interesting that although the participants were critical of ‘the community’ there were also those who were equally tied to and dependent on the people and invested in the idea that it was a necessary part of their lives.

My conversations with Mehar complicated the idea of exposing difference within the ethno-religious community. She was the only young woman I worked with who was attending a university out-of-state. I recruited Mehar when she was home in California for her winter break. As with many of the young women, I witnessed Mehar's transition from a child to a young adult at the mosque from afar, and did not actually get to know her until I began my research. From the time she was in middle school Mehar wore hijab. When I approached her to ask her if she wanted to be a part of my research I noticed that she was no longer wearing hijab. Mehar decided to stop wearing the hijab in the summer of her sophomore year of college. Mehar told me that she noticed that a number of girls decided to stop wearing the hijab following 9/11/01. She explained that 9/11 "was the perfect out but that wasn't the reason why I was taking it off." She decided to stop wearing hijab because of the limitations people consigned to her as a "hijabi," a term that girls often use when they are referring to a woman who wears the hijab.

> I felt like so much of it was…I really hated how it just became my…that's the only thing that defined me, I guess so like I would go into a masjid and people would be like 'oh yeah, that's Mehar and she's a hijabi' and I would just be like 'actually, like I'm other things.' I just started like rebelling so much in my own way being like 'I'm a different hijabi' like I didn't hang out with any of the other Muslims and I refused to be a part of the Islamic organizations like once we went back to public school. I just hated how it defined me as like, the only thing I am is a Muslim.

Mehar went on to explain that she had the double disadvantage of having to field the presumptions non-Muslims constructed about her as a Muslim woman who wore the hijab, but also the assumptions that other Muslims made about her as a 'hijabi.' Although they dressed modestly, the vast majority of women at the mosque Mehar attended did not wear the hijab. As such, Mehar told me that members of the community often commended her and her parents for the fact that she decided to do so. I have participated

in and overheard many people within my community talk about the strength it takes for Muslim women in the United States to decide to wear the hijab and young women who wear the hijab are often commended for making the decision to do so. Mehar explained that people associated the fact that she wore the hijab with the values that her parents had instilled within her as well as an example of the resolve and determination she embodied as a young woman. However, as she transitioned from middle school to high school and into college, where she decided to stop wearing the hijab, her relationship with the Muslim and Pakistani community began to change as well as the ways she chose to identify herself. Although she was never chastised for deciding to take off the hijab, she did notice that people in the community treated her differently as a non-hijabi in that she was no longer commended for being an exemplary Muslim woman. In short, her decision to stop wearing hijab did not negatively affect her status in the community, but it also did not improve her status. My conversations with Mehar and Nafeesa suggest that their ethno-religious communities functioned in a way that ensured that the young women did not openly divert from the patriarchal and heteronormative objectives it sought to preserve. Behavior that was in-line with the abovementioned objectives, like wearing the hijab and chastity, was publically commended, whereas engaging in premarital relationships or behavior that threatened those objectives was condemned and had the potential of compromising the social status of them and their families.

The Benefits of Being Different

Ghaffar-Kucher's (2012) study on Pakistani American youth found that religion segregated the Pakistani-American youth in her study by marking their similarity to other

South Asian and Middle Eastern students and their significant difference from most peers. However, she also found that they increasingly "identified themselves as Muslim because doing so allowed them to transform the negative experience of being ostracized into a positive experience of solidarity and group membership with other Muslims" (pp.10-11). Lee (1997) also found that Hmong American women were critical of the Hmong community, but they also didn't want to be anything other than Hmong. Similarly, the participants of this study often mentioned the struggles that they were faced with as a result of being Muslim and/or Pakistani, but a number of the young women spoke about the benefits of being different. Nevertheless, described a range of benefits that were based on their hegemonic notions of culture and their ethno religious communities. What is more, the benefits were linked to and associated with their identification of themselves (i.e., Muslim, Shi'a, Pakistani, and Pakistani American).

For example, Aneesa, a junior in college, elaborated on what she saw as the advantages of growing up as a Pakistani in the US, "I think it's a good thing since we're minorities and there's not many of us. It makes us different, and since we stand out it should be easier for our voices to be heard. Because we're not Mexican, we're not White, I'm not trying to be racist here, but they're just like you know, everywhere, and there's not that many of us here, not in California." To Aneesa, being Pakistani made her different because she was not representative of the dominant racial groups in California. As such, it allowed her to feel like a part of an exclusive community that was unique.

Conversely, Batool, a sophomore in college and the only young woman out of the eight participants who currently wears hijab, emphasized the fact that being different protected her from the ills of the non-Muslim society she lived in. When I asked her if

there were any advantages to being, "a young Muslim girl," as she identified herself, she plainly stated, "there's so many…I felt like I didn't get all the ten billion heart-brakes in high school." Despite being the only Muslim girl at her high school, Batool explained that coming from what she describes as a culturally diverse and racially mixed family allows her to embrace her difference:

> I feel so comfortable when I go to high school or when I go to college. And if I want to speak up or say anything or if I'm in a classroom full of people or if I wanna go out for a certain sport, if I wanna go for drama, or you know, swing around like a monkey at the beach…I feel like I can because it's just like, just because I'm not around Muslims or I live in a Muslim country, that's when I can do something. No. I feel like you have to take advantage of the resources here and the people around you. And everyone is connected in a certain way regardless of religion. I felt like coming from a family that's so diverse, that taught me to be comfortable when I go out.

Batool implied that living in the US provided her with opportunities, regardless of her differences, a narrative that was repeatedly mentioned by the participants and their parents. Furthermore, the fact that she came from a diverse family (both of Batool's parents are bicultural/biethnic) and lived in a country that she saw as full of difference, made her difference feel like it was acceptable.

Although Noor didn't consider herself religious because she didn't pray regularly, she did state that having something that she "totally believed in like Islam" was nice because it allowed her to "be different from everyone else" she went to school with.

> My friends always want to hang out, which is great, and then I would be like 'no, I have to go to the mosque, and it's weird because they never say that. So I don't know if they don't really care that they're having church or they just don't want to go. Sometimes with friends, not necessarily my close friends, but other friends that I have seen, they don't even go to church. Sometimes they're bad. They do bad things and I'm just like 'wow,' so I always imagine, what if I don't go to church, what if I wasn't Muslim, would I be doing those things too?"

I thought it was interesting that Noor focused on the benefits of what she saw as Muslim values, considering the fact that she identified herself as Pakistani and "not very religious." However, I think Noor conflated the two because, as I mentioned before, the participants often associated being Pakistani with being Muslim and the Muslim community that Noor and the other participants were a part, of was primarily Pakistani. Nevertheless, to Noor, being different/Muslim, not only prevented her from doing bad things, but it also allowed her to be a part of an ethno-religious community.

Like Noor, Nafeesa also saw the benefits of difference and explained that her difference made her stand out:

> Well for me personally, I like it because I do standout sometimes. I look different and I like the attention I guess of looking different. So people will make it an effort to come up to me and try to find out who I am just because I look so different from everyone else. And like whenever I'm like talking to my mom, just like talking and the people would notice, 'Oh, what are you speaking?' Then they're like curious but in a good way.

Nafeesa went on to tell me that speaking a second language was a "definite advantage" because it gave her a "different tool I guess to utilize in my tool belt." Nafeesa explained that because Urdu was not as common as Spanish, that it was "more valuable" because "everyone kind of knows Spanish." Her Urdu skills also allowed her to communicate with people who didn't speak English. Nafeesa told me that because was the only person at her school who spoke Urdu, she was able to help an ESL student who had recently migrated to the US from Pakistan.

According to the participants of this study, 'being different' marginalized them from their non-Muslim/Desi peers, their parents, members of their ethno-religious communities, but it also allowed them to feel unique, gave them access to non-dominant communities, made them stand-out, made them feel protected from what they interpreted

to be the ills of American society, and gave them access to knowledge and skills that they wouldn't have had if they weren't different. Their conceptualization of difference is also indicative of their investment in the idea of the naturalization of culture. In short, the young Pakistani Muslim women in this study, imagined difference as an advantage and at other times a disadvantage, depending on the spaces they occupied.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrated the centrality of culture, race, religion and gender in the identification of young Pakistani Muslim women. Each of the participants referred to themselves as Muslims (at some point in our conversations), but the ways they identified themselves ranged from sect specific religious identifications (Shi'a) to those that denoted their ethno-national affiliations (Pakistani-American). The participants described themselves in thoughtful and complicated ways, however, they also possessed hegemonic conceptions of what it meant to be a Pakistani Muslim woman. Also, the processes of ethno-racialization, religification and differentialism influenced the ways they were identified by others and defined themselves.

What is more, their hegemonic notions of culture, race and religion coupled with their fears of exclusion and desire for acceptance influenced their tendency to define themselves against their American peers and American culture, family members living in Pakistan, parents, religious/non-religious Pakistani Muslim counterparts, and members of their ethno-religious communities. Their perceptions of culture, religion and ethnicity were often fixed and bounded, informed by the members of the various institutions they occupied. Nevertheless, identities shifted and transformed as they traversed the real and

imagined borders that they, their families, members of their ethno-religious communities, teachers, peers and media erected.

Additionally, they formulated relationships that allowed them to circumvent the essentialized notions people devised and used to discriminate against them and other Pakistani and/or Muslims, but they also participated in the naturalization of Pakistani culture, American culture, and Islam. Although the voices of the young women were emphasized in this chapter, it also seems that their parents and ethno-religious communities held essentialized images of American culture and idealized notions of Pakistani culture and community which influenced their responses to childrearing in the US and the gendered messages they sent to their daughters about culture and difference. Still, all of the participants made efforts to bridge what they imagined to be their separate worlds and maintained strong ties to their families and ethno-religious communities.

Furthermore, the institutions they were a part of (school, home, ethno-religious communities) and were exposed to (media) promoted conformity and surveiled their activity. As such, many of the participants downplayed their differences, depending on the context they were in. Still, this research also demonstrates how young Muslim women have resisted the assimilative pressures from the dominant society by exposing their difference. However, I found that the young women (and their parents) also naturalized matters that reflect the effects of discrimination/racism/religification, minimized acts of discrimination, and understood American culture and Pakistani culture as based on a fixed set of values that were inherent to the members of the respective communities. In advancing the differentialist narrative by "biologizing culture" or emphasizing the inherent differences between American culture and Pakistani culture, it

can be argued that participants and their parents actually contributed to their marginalization within the dominant society.

CHAPTER 4

ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

In this chapter, I focus on the messages parents sent to their daughters about the role of education in their lives and explore the ways the participants interpreted, inhabited and resisted these messages. Based on my empirical data, the messages parents sent to their daughters about education and schooling contradict the research that suggests that Pakistani parents are inherently obstructive to their daughters educational and career goals. My conversations with the participants and their parents show that the participants' parents supported their educational aspirations. Furthermore, parents and members of their ethno-religious communities expressed high expectations for their academic achievement. This research also shows that the participants were agentive in the choices they made about education, and forged new pathways, similar and different than those of their parents did. Interestingly, my findings also indicate that the cultural practices participants and their parents engaged in confirmed monolithic images of Pakistani culture, Islam and American culture in relation to educational achievement. In this chapter, I explore two seemingly paradoxical stereotypes that inform the ways young Pakistani Muslim women identify themselves and are identified by others. Often represented as the hapless victims of an ethno-religious community that devalues the educational aspirations and attainment of women, young Pakistani women also fit into the model minority category as members of a pan-ethnic community that places a high value on educational achievement.

Education Status of Pakistani Women in Pakistan and the US

Despite the improvement in Pakistan's literacy rate since its independence, the educational status of Pakistani women in Pakistan is among the lowest in the world (ESCAP, 1996). Approximately 60 percent of the total population of Pakistan is illiterate, and women make up 60 percent of the illiterate population (Asian Development Bank, 2000). In institutions of higher education in Pakistan, women have limited opportunities to acquire higher education and attain professional degrees due to the cultural prescription of gender roles and an inadequate number of training and professional institutions for women. Unfortunately, there is not much data on the changing definitions of traditional gender identities and women’s roles in education and the workforce in Pakistan. Nevertheless, women are attending college at much higher rates than their mothers and grandmothers. What is more, research shows that the educational achievements of female students are higher when compared with male students at different levels of education (Asian Development Bank, 2000).

Conversely, the vast majority of women in the US are literate (an estimated 99% of women in the US are literate according to the US Central Intelligence Agency World Fact Book), have access to primary, secondary and higher education due to federal policies that ensure access to free public education and coeducational colleges and universities. Statistics from the 2000 Census report on South Asians in the US shows that native-born Pakistani women are performing at high levels and are taking advantage of the educational opportunities available to them in the US (Kibria, In P. G. Min, 2006). Native born Pakistanis have exceeded the percentage of whites in percentage of college graduates and have surpassed the educational attainment of their foreign born and white counterparts in percentage of high school graduates, college graduates and postgraduate

and professional degree holders (Reeves & Bennett, 2004). Native-born Pakistani women were also more likely to have graduated from high school and were more than two times as likely to hold postgraduate and professional degrees as their male counterparts (Reeves & Bennett, 2004). However, native-born Pakistani males graduated college at higher rates than Pakistan females born in the US (Reeves & Bennett, 2004).

Nonetheless, in the US, hegemonic notions of Pakistani culture and Islam fail to consider the differences that exist between Pakistanis in the US and abroad, particularly in regards to education. It has been suggested that the elaboration of difference between Muslims in the West and non-Muslims (Pakistani's being the largest Muslim group in the US) has often centered on the status of women in the Muslim world (Haddad, Smith, & Moore, 2006). Much of this difference can be attributed to the educational attainment or lack thereof of women in places like Pakistan. To build on this point, I believe that the elaboration of difference between Pakistanis in the US and non-Muslims/Pakistanis in the US often concentrates on the status of the oppressed Muslim/Pakistani woman *living in the West*. The dominant conception is based on essentialized images of Pakistani women who are characterized as the victims of their families' religious and cultural practices that restrict or prevent them from attaining education. This, however, was not representative of the lived realities of the Pakistani Muslim women I worked with. The data (although limited) suggests that a difference in the cultural prescription of gender roles and more access to educational institutions in the US has led to the increase in educational attainment of native born Pakistani women. Young Pakistani women in the US are surpassing the educational levels of their mothers and their foreign-born counterparts, both of whom were educated (at least partially) in Pakistan. Regardless of their

achievements, much of the research on young Pakistani women focuses on the gender gap that exists in higher education between males and females. The purpose of this research is not to explore why this gap exists, because native-born Pakistani women are still achieving at comparably high rates. Rather, it is to investigate the dynamic nature of their educational experiences and aspirations.

In spite of a serious dearth of research on the educational attainment/achievement of Pakistani women, there have been a few studies that attempt to explain the reasons for their academic attainment/struggles in a critical manner. Although, it is generally agreed upon that Pakistanis highly value education, and that the young women have high levels of attainment and achievement, a considerable amount of research is dedicated to uncovering the conflicts that arise between parents and daughters in response to the education of Pakistani females. Dale, Shaheen, Kalra & Fieldhouse (2002) found that many Pakistani women demonstrated high aspirations and high levels of participation, particularly in relation to the educational and occupational level of their parents. Nevertheless, they also found that parents of Pakistani women were concerned that the educational attainment of their daughters had the potential of corrupting them and jeopardizing family honor. Girls who wished to continue their education faced a more complex situation than boys did. Similarly, much of the literature on the educational experiences of Pakistani women in the US, UK and Canada and attributes their educational struggles to the cultural prescription of gender roles and parents' religious beliefs. Abbas (2002), Ghuman (2001), and Zaidi & Shuraydi (2002) argue that it is parents' adherence the dominant values and norms of Pakistani culture, in particular, that disadvantages Pakistani women. Both Ghuman and Abbas refer to the "double-

disadvantage" Pakistani women face as a result of the patriarchal nature of Pakistani culture and Islam as well as the racial prejudice from the wider host-society. Ghuman (2001) and Abbas (2002), briefly mention the racism targeted at the Pakistani Muslim community in the West, still, the ideological diversity that exists among Pakistanis and within Pakistani and Muslim culture is generally left out of the literature. Such research suggests that parents, culture and religion are the principal factors limiting the educational expectations, aspirations and attainment of female Pakistani youth (Abbas, 2002; Ghuman, 2001; Zaidi & Shuraydi, 2002).

Thornley and Siann (1991) refer to this as the 'cultural clash explanation.' Embedded within this explanation is the cultural deficit theory, the culture of poverty argument and an assimilationalist rhetoric that implicates parents' religious and ethnic communities for the struggles their daughters encounter in schools and/or reaching their educational goals. The cultural clash explanation promotes the image of the Pakistani female as someone who is apathetic and subject to the repressive practices of her family. The problem with such an argument is that it ignores school-based factors that affect achievement such as assumptions made by teachers and career counselors about the culture, religious beliefs and educational aspirations of female Pakistani students. Moreover, discussions about the political, economic, and social issues affecting the personal lives and educational attainment of female Pakistani students are all but missing.

What is more, research suggests that more conservative families, most notably first-generation Pakistanis/Muslims from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, may prefer not to have daughters or wives continue with higher education fearing that it will discourage them from fulfilling responsibilities at home or expose them to currents or

trends contrary to traditional Muslim structures (Haddad, Smith and More, 2006; Sorroub, 2005). Unlike Hadad et al and Sorroub's participants, the participants in this study came from homes that were largely middle-class. Furthermore, all of the participants had parents that had some higher education in Pakistan and/or the US. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, the young women I worked with often mentioned their parent's fears about them losing their religious values, characterized their parents as religiously and culturally conservative, and had responsibilities in the home like picking up their siblings from school and helping their mothers cook and clean the house. However, all of the participants maintained that their parents expected them to pursue higher education and overwhelmingly supported their decisions to do so.

Gender Norms within the Pakistani Community

In Pakistan, women are traditionally given the responsibilities of the home. According to the UN report on women in Pakistan, less than 7% of women in Pakistan work outside the home. Furthermore, Islam requires that both women and men dress modestly, not date or have premarital sex. As Appadurai (2005) has noted, immigrants often uphold these rules much more rigorously based on the fear of corruption or loss of family honor. As the gatekeepers of tradition and culture, women are held to these rules stringently. Conversely, the male domain is outside the home.

Moreover, in Pakistan, extended family serves the social purposes that friends may serve in the US for many immigrants. Immigrants in the US have developed large networks of community (ethnic and religious) that sometimes double as family for people whose relatives are living in Pakistan. While it is impossible to generalize about all

people, either here or in Pakistan, I think it is fair to say that gender norms are often practiced in different ways by different ethno-religious and cultural communities. However, our understanding of norms must recognize the fact that similar norms can be shared by people living on opposite sides of the world (Pakistanis in the US and in Pakistan) and at the same time can vary within defined groups of people. Moreover, norms, like culture are constantly being redefined. Furthermore, because of the lack of family networks and the higher cost of living in the US, there is much more intermingling of unrelated sexes here than there is in Pakistan. In many cases, women have no choice but to work outside of the home in the US. In Pakistan female educational institutions are common, so boys and girls are often segregated and may go through their entire educational experience without being in the same class as their male peers. Nevertheless, community events and mosques in the US are often organized in a way that women and men interact separately in different spaces. Moreover, Pakistani women in the US have more opportunities for work than their mothers (who were not expected to work) did in Pakistan.

Accordingly, I found that the messages parents sent to their daughters took into account that their daughters would eventually work and would not have the opportunity to stay home without contributing financially to their families. With the exception of two of the mothers who had been widowed, the fathers were the primary source of household income. However, the all of the participants, with the exception of Batool who told me that she would work only if she needed to financially contribute to her family, told me that they expected to be equal contributors to their future households. Only two of the eight young women's mothers did not work outside of the home. Noor's

father told me that he and his wife made a joint decision that she (Noor's mother) would not work so she would be able to stay home and take care of the children while he worked despite the financial benefits they would enjoy if she was working. Despite the fact that she was a practicing doctor in Pakistan, Jamila's mother also chose not to work when she and her family moved to the US so that she would be able to take care of the children. Unlike their mothers, both Jamila and Noor expected to work after they finished their schooling.

Of the six mothers who did work, Mehar and Aneesa's mother's worked early childhood education. Aneesa's mother told me that she was professionally trained as a journalist in Pakistan, however after her family moved to the US, her husband suggested that she work in education because he thought it would be conducive to her responsibilities as a mother. Likewise, Nafeesa's mother chose a job where she could come home by the time Nafeesa was back from school. Laila's mother was professionally trained as a lawyer in Pakistan but was also unable to pursue law in the US and now works in an unrelated field. Like many of the participants' fathers, their mothers had jobs that were unrelated to their educational backgrounds. In fact, their parents often affirmed my decision to pursue education as it was, according to them, a "good profession for women." However, the participants did not limit their professional aspirations to only those that fit within the boundaries of traditional 'women's work.'

Research shows that support for women's education in the American Muslim community is high (Haddad, Smith & More, 2006). However, much of the research on Pakistani/Muslim's in the US has not focused on this but rather the struggles that Pakistani youth face in schools and at home as a result of their parents 'traditional'

religious and cultural beliefs. In the case of young Pakistani Muslim women, traditional values are frequently described as detrimental to their futures. However, the young women who participated in my study did not associate their parent's traditional values with barriers to their academic success, but rather saw their parent's values as complementary to academic achievement.

Accordingly, Zhou and Bankston's (1998) research on Vietnamese families, found that traditional social relations advanced the education of women. In fact, Zhou and Bankston found that the boundaries parents set up for their daughters actually prevented them from going astray like their male counterparts. On the other hand, Sorroub (2005) found that the academic and social expectations at each grade level as well as community and parental expectations for success did not complement each other. The Muslim women in Sorroub's study had little say in decisions about their futures.

Like the young women in Zhou and Bankston's study, the young women who participated in my study were often encouraged to observe traditional social relations like no dating and strict rules about socializing with friends (many of the participants that were in college were expected to get their parents' permission before leaving the home). Nevertheless, the participants did not always adhere to these traditional values. Six of the eight participants resisted the gendered expectations their parents had for them by dating in secret and lying to their parents about studying when they were actually hanging out with friends/boyfriends.

However, all of the young women I worked told me that their parents encouraged them to make decisions about their lives and academic futures. In fact, during a conversation with Noor's parents, her mother told me that she liked the fact that young

people in the US had the option of choosing their majors that they were interested in. She compared her experience of deciding upon a course of study when she was growing up in Pakistan to that of the experiences of her children:

> I was very good at maths but I didn't pursue it. But after I graduated with my BA in history, sociology and political science, I thought I should have taken maths, but at the time I couldn't decide anything because my parents, my father, decided for me. In Pakistan, parents decide. Over here, the teachers and counselors help the kids decide. But I like here that kids know what they're doing and counselors are helping them in schools.

Research on the educational attainment of immigrant youth in the US shows that the ways parents' come to understand the role of education in their lives has a significant impact on the way they envision the role of education in their children's lives and the messages they convey to their children about education and schooling (Valdez, p. 173). Although Noor's mother did not have the choice to make decisions about her own education and career path, she told me that she encouraged Noor to do so and appreciated the fact that her daughter had the option of choosing what she wanted to do in the future.

However, as Tyrer (2003) suggests, some existing discourses of South Asian and Muslim family structures "situate the family as inherently oppressive and as presenting barriers to women's participation in higher education and the labor market. These rely on discourses of 'degradation and despair' and tend to present racialized and pathological accounts of ethnic minority families" (p. 12). Despite such discourses within the academy and mainstream media that suggest that Muslim and Pakistani communities devalue, discourage and prevent women from pursuing and attaining education, the empirical data gathered here shows how the young women mentioned their families as crucial sources of support and motivation toward their higher education studies and in thinking about future careers. Each of the women I interviewed was expected to pursue

and complete their higher education studies by their parents and had high expectations and aspirations for themselves, but also went about the process of choosing a school, major and career in their own ways. What is more, all of the parents I spoke to told me that they felt like their children had more support from their counselors and teachers than they had in Pakistan. In this chapter, I look at the messages parents and community sent to the young women about the role of education in their lives and how the participants interpreted and enacted and resisted these expectations.

Educational Attainment and Aspirations

The young women Pakistani Muslim women I spoke to had relatively strong academic aspirations in that they saw themselves graduating from high school and college and expressed their desire to pursue graduate level schooling. All but one of the participants I interviewed expressed a genuine interest in school, were college-bound or graduate-school-bound (depending on whether they were in high school or in college) and were above average students (all seven of the young women had grade point averages above 3.5).

Nevertheless, the young women entered or would enter higher education through a variety of routes. Of the participants who were still in high school, Noor and Laila were both in the top 5% of their classes in terms of academic standing and intended on going to 4-year Universities after finishing high school (near the end of my time in California, Noor was accepted at one of California's best public Universities on a four year-fully paid scholarship). Nafeesa, Batool and Aneesa were in their 1st, second, and third years at community college but each of the participants expected to transfer to four-

year universities after completing their general education requirements (Aneesa was recently accepted to a reputable 4-year University). Jamila and Mehar both received full-ride scholarships to four-year universities (Jamila graduated high school as the valedictorian of her high school's class), both of which were highly regarded institutions, including an ivy-league university outside of California.

Despite the fact that the large majority of participants saw themselves graduating from college, Ismat told me that when she was at a "regular" high school, she didn't care about learning and school "wasn't really her thing." After her freshman year of high school, Ismat "fell behind" at her local public high school and transferred to an independent learning institution (she referred to her school as a "continuation" school) where she earned credits in order to gain her diploma. It was at this school that Ismat was diagnosed with an IEP that had gone undetected for over 17 years. Ismat, on the other hand, was 19 at the time of our interviews and working on completing her high school education. Ismat later earned her diploma and enrolled herself at a local community college. Unlike the other young women, however Ismat told me that she wanted to pursue a two-year degree after completing her secondary schooling but was undecided as to what subject she wanted to major in.

For the eight young women who participated in this study (including Ismat), completing high school and/or earning a college degree was understood a necessary part of eventually achieving success, earning independence from their parents and securing economic stability. All of the participants told me that their parents wanted them to focus on careers that would provide them with financial stability. Nevertheless, the participants made choices regarding their educations and future careers that were not just based on

their parent's desires. They all told me that they wanted to pursue majors/careers that they were interested in and passionate about that they believed would allow them to maintain and/or achieving financial stability, social status.

I asked the women about their educational aspirations and goals, and a few mentioned that they wanted to pursue what they referred to as "typical" Pakistani professions such as medicine and law because it would allow them to live their lives without the financial stress their parents experienced. For example, Nafeesa told me that her decision to pursue a degree in medicine was largely influenced by the financial struggles her family experienced here in the US. Nafeesa's father had a high paying, prestigious career in Pakistan at a large government financial institution however, when she was a young child, he became ill and was no longer able to work. In Pakistan, her family owned a home in an elite section of a large urban city and lived an upper-middle class life whereas now, she and her mother live in an apartment in a lower middle class neighborhood in Southern California. Nafeesa's family was able to migrate the US in the 1990's on the basis of family reunification laws but their lives in the US were markedly different than their lives in Pakistan. Nafeesa's father died when she was in her early teens. When her father was alive, he was too sick to work, and Nafeesa's mother has financially supported her family ever since. I asked Nafeesa, why she wanted to be a doctor and she explained:

> Well, the doctor thing, it is a lot about like helping people but I mean I'm not gonna lie, there's a lot about financial stability too. I know being a doctor I'm gonna make the money I need to be a able to support myself as well my family…financial stability is very important. Coming from where I came from like with the way our finances have been like I'm not gonna say it was like pay check to pay check, but it's been really hard.

While her decision was partially based on her desire to help people, For Nafeesa, securing a job that would provide her and her family with financial stability was key. Later in our conversations, Nafeesa mentioned that along with financial stability and her desire to help people, she wanted to pursue a career because it would allow her to be independent:

> I wanna be independent. I don't wanna be dependent on a man for like my life. Like, I mean if worse comes to worst like a family can have an abusive relationship. I want to have the ability to you know, escape and then be able to support for myself maybe my children and then I don't wanna have a job were like I'm force to like work like ridiculous hours for minimum wage.

Like her mother, Nafeesa didn't want to be dependent on her spouse due to unforeseen circumstances. However, unlike her mother, who worked in a profession that was physically taxing and low-paying, becoming a doctor would allow Nafeesa to have a career that would provide her with financial security and respect. Along with financial stability, Nafeesa wanted to pursue a career that would ensure that she was able to support herself, unlike many of participants' mothers who were financially dependent on their husbands. In fact, all of the participants, with the exception of Batool, mentioned that they wanted to be able to financially support themselves when they were married. Likewise, in her research with Hmong American college women, Lee (1997) found that her participants associated educational attainment with freedom from male domination. She explains, that her participants believed that education would allow them to achieve the "gender equality within their families that their mothers and grandmothers did not have" (p. 814).

Nevertheless economic stability and gender equality were not the only impetus for pursuing higher education. When I asked the participants about the types of careers they

wanted to have, they often mentioned that they wanted to pursue professions that would allow them to help other people. For example, one of the young women told me that her decision to pursue Psychology was influenced by her childhood experience of being molested by a distant family member. She lamented the fact that she didn't know any mental health professionals within the Pakistani community, but added that while she was still undecided, she was considering pursuing psychology as a profession as a result of her experience. I asked her how her parents felt about her interest in psychology and she explained:

> My family wants the best for me but sometimes I feel like they don't understand me. I want to do Psychology and my mom, she said 'No, you go after this, do biology.' They want me to have a really good career where I make a lot of money. And um, and they're not so concerned about doing what I like…doing what I want to do, like, it's more like, 'Oh yeah, make sure it's a good job, you get good money and you're stable there. And um, yeah, just like pretty much like, a job that's high in demand to whatever's in demand, so…My dad's like, 'Oh yeah, I still want you to do computer science,' like computers are like high in demand and then as far as biology goes, like doctors and chemists and pharmacy. Like, they're high in demand, you know, everybody wants them. They want me to do that stuff. I mean, I am going to the health science field sort of, so, yeah. I'm kind of heading over there.

In fact, seven of the eight young women mentioned that they wanted pursue fields of study that were not only care-based but also underrepresented in the Pakistani and Muslim communities in the US. For example, Jamila told me that her decision to pursue a degree in international relations was based on her desire to have a career that allowed her to travel and meet people from around the world and make "big decisions that affected a lot of people." Jamila went on to tell me that she imagined herself in a position where she was able to influence foreign policy or working for an NGO (non-governmental organization). Originally, Jamila wanted to pursue medicine because many of her family

members, including her mother (who chose not to practice in the US), were doctors and it would allow her to do something that helped people.

> At first, I wanted to become a doctor. My mom always instilled in me, from the time I was little, like 'oh, you should be a doctor. You should be a doctor.' Now I always say 'well I'll only be a doctor if I get to work on a refugee camp or like in a third world country' and she will always say 'then don't bother being a doctor.' (Laughs). So that kind so that's the only reason I would want to be a doctor. But then I realized you know that's it's a little difficult to do that. So I was like, 'okay how can I transfer that need to help other people.' So I mean international relations or political science is the way.

Jamila decided against a career in medicine, despite encouragement from her family members here and in Pakistan. Although Jamila resisted her mother's aspirations for her to become a doctor, she continued to pursue a career that would allow her to help people. I asked her why it was important for her to do something that would allow her to help people:

> I think I was always just a sensitive child. (Laugh). Honestly I would also say part of it is because I've been exposed to poverty too. In Pakistan, we live in a nice house, obviously, but when you go out to buy even barter whatever you see so much poverty. And I would see that when I was little and I didn't understand it. So I guess if you're exposed to it when you're younger, it's just kind of in you that we should be able to help these people because it's not fair. Also, I don't know I just have this restlessness in me I just feel like you know I wouldn't have as much fun or I wouldn't enjoy as much if I'm just sitting there doing something for myself it's not as exciting as like saving the world whatever. And plus there's so many opportunities to help. I want that feeling of satisfaction of knowing that I helped another person. It's just you feel like you can do so much for so many people and kind of make a name for yourself as well.

I found it interesting that although she wanted to pursue a profession that allowed her to help people, she also mentioned doing humanitarian work would allow her to "make a name" for herself. In fact, Jamila, Nafeesa and Laila each mentioned that the careers they hoped to practice, while based on a desire to help people, would provide them with a certain level of respect within their families, the dominant society and their

ethno-religious communities. According to Ahmad's (2001) research on the academic achievement of British South Asian Muslim women, "degree status confers certain social and personal advantages" (p. 148). Ahmad found that the parents of her participants were "keen to maximize their daughters' and their own social prestige by encouraging them to succeed academically" (p. 148). I don't think that maximizing her social prestige was the only reason Jamila's mother wanted her to pursue a medical career, because she dissuaded Jamila from pursuing medicine if it meant she would work "in a refugee camp," based my observations of the community and my conversations with the participants, I have found that a medical degree is often discussed as the most prestigious degree a person can attain.

Dual Frame of Reference

Ogbu's notion of a positive dual frame of reference suggests that immigrants "compare their opportunities and situations in the United States with those in their native countries and conclude that life is better in the United States" (Lee, 2005, p. 101). Lee (2005) found that "Hmong girls uniformly believed that there are greater opportunities for women in the United States than in Laos" and that traditional young women, in particular, were especially grateful for the existence of free public education. According to Lee (2005), academic success among traditional Hmong American young women was, in part, due to a positive dual frame of reference. The high achieving Hmong American young women in Lee's study saw education as a "way to gain personal independence and escape the lives like the ones led by their mothers" (p. 101). Accordingly, Lopez (2003) and Suarez-Orozco (1987) found that immigrant youth maintained a dual frame of

reference in which they differentiated and contrasted their existing positions in the US from that which their parents had in their native countries. Lopez (2003) found that women "consistently assessed their educational and employment aspirations against the backdrop of the hardships their mothers had endured because they had not had the opportunities to further their education" (p. 119).

Similarly, the goals and expectations the participants of this study had for their education and careers were not only influenced by the experiences they had while in Pakistan, as Jamila mentioned above, or their perceptions of life in Pakistan (as Aneesa mentioned in chapter 3), but also the struggles their parents experienced in the US (Nafeesa spoke about this earlier in this chapter). For example, Batool told me that because they had children at a young age, her mother and father were forced to delay their educational and career goals. Although her mother recently completed her bachelor's degree, her father was unable to complete his college education because he had to support his family. Batool told me that she felt the need to take advantage of the sacrifices her parents made for her and her sisters:

> Almost all the time, especially, since my mother went back to school that I saw him struggle that she wants really leaving, like coming back and leaving again and I just thought it was like back and forth thing and then they knew occasions of family in just to focus on their family and that is their number one priority. But, this is something she wanted to do herself and when I saw that, no matter what, she risked the family. I mean, she has three girls and at the same time, she completed them. She completed her goal that I look at that and say, 'Okay. You know, I do not have that right now. I do not have other responsibilities at the moment.' But my education – even I am not getting married to off to my education so, right now, it is like I have to do – like I have to think one thing at a time and education has always been like the first part of the plan before anything else and then comes marriage and comes kids and it comes the family and then so on.

When asked if they knew why their parents moved to the US, every single participant, with the exception of Batool, whose father was born in the US and mother was raised in the US, stated that their parents told them that they migrated to the US for their educations. I asked Noor why she and her family moved to the US and she explained:

> Yes, they always tell me that they moved because they want us to have a better education, I think that is pretty much the main reason...I don't know...because I think when you are in Pakistan, America seems like so much of a better life, so that's probably why.

This was referenced several times in many of my conversations with the young women and seemed to serve as motivation to academically succeed in the US. Like the girls in Lee's (2002) study, my participants also believed that they had more educational opportunities in the US than their parents had in Pakistan. For example, when I asked Noor about why it was important for her to do well in school, she mentioned her parents' education in Pakistan:

> I remember like when my parents used to tell me like in Pakistan when we went to school like they were like wow because I guess they had to pay for their education. So like, they were telling me, 'when we came here education was free and they were like that's something you take advantage of because it's such an amazing thing you can get to so many places with it, and like without it you going to be like lost.'

Noor, her brother and her parents migrated to the US from Pakistan in the mid 1990's when her family was sponsored by a relative. When I asked her parents why they decided to move to the US, her father explained "definitely the reasons were economics, things were getting very worst over there (in Pakistan) and so we got an opportunity to be sponsored and we thought it would be better to move out at that time." Noor's mother interrupted her husband to add that they moved to the US "for the kids education, we

thought it was the very best opportunity for the kids education because in Pakistan, the education is like very expensive. If you want to send kids in a very, very good school, it is very expensive." I asked them about the public schools in Pakistan and her father told me that they were "worst" in Pakistan but Noor's mother went on to explain that "it was good when we were there. Like when we were going to school, we went to public schools, like government schools, and they were good and we were very good students at that time too"

Noor's father was a chemical engineer in Pakistan and her mother graduated with a degree in history, political science and sociology. Her mother described herself as a housewife and told me that she and her husband made a joint decision that she would stay at home to tend to their home and children. Noor's father is now a manager at a retail store and told me that his decision to not pursue engineering in the US "was not a decision but a result of the circumstances" they faced when they arrived. He explained that jobs were hard to find when he arrived in the US and he needed to support his family and he couldn't wait to find a job so he took what he found.

Like Noor's parents, each of the parents I spoke to told me that they moved to the US because they thought that their children would benefit from the educational opportunities that were available to them in the US. Much of the research on South Asian parents, including Pakistanis, emphasizes the importance South Asian immigrants put on the education of their children (Bhattacharya, 2000; Gibson, 1988; Mogelonski, 1995; Kibria in P. G. Min, 2006; Ngo, 2006). According to Mohammad-Arif (2000), "South Asians have usually migrated hoping to offer a better life to their families…They want their children, including their daughters to pursue studies in the US and thus increase

their chances to find a job commensurate with their aspirations" (p. 71). While this is just one of the many reasons Pakistanis have chosen to migrate to the U.S. over the past fifty years, the educational attainment of future generations is central to the migration narrative within the Pakistani community.

As Noor's father explained above, economic hardships in Pakistan, and a rapidly deteriorating economy and difficulty finding employment also served as motivation for a move to the US. However in each of my conversations with parents, save Batool's parents, emphasized the educational opportunities children would have as a result of going to school in the US, and focused on this as the reason why they chose to move to the US. Most of the participants' parents came to the US in the late 80's and early 90's as a result of family reunification laws and were often sponsored by their siblings. With the exception of Batool, whose father was born in the US, all of the participants' parents were born in Pakistan or India and came here as young adults.

Fulfilling the Dreams of My Mother

In her research on the gendered educational experiences of second generation Caribbean youth, Lopez (2003) found that women's decisions about their futures "were etched against the backdrop of a self-sacrificing mother" (p. 119). For example, in my conversation with Batool's mother (whose family migrated to the US when she was a child), Shirin underscored the sacrifices she made for her family. Shirin had recently earned her BA in Early Childhood Education. She told me that she had put off her education by twenty years because she wanted to focus on raising her children.

> I wanted to focus my time, my energy, everything on them. And I said 'it's gonna be my time and I'm gonna do it when it's the right time. But I have to keep my

> priorities straight. These children are in this world and I get to provide for them. I have a purpose here. My purpose is to make them as good as I could possibly make them and help them in their lives to be good Muslims, educated.' And I want to focus my resources on them. They are my degree.

In fact, each of the mothers I spoke to told me that they either decided to or were required to sacrifice their educational and career aspirations after getting married, migrating to the US and/or having children. Lopez goes on to explain, "through assessing their mothers' situations, women were able to evaluate their options regarding marriage, education, family, and career plans" (p. 119). She contends that women's views about the role of education in their lives were intimately entwined with their status as women. Likewise, many of the participants I spoke to told me that their mothers did not have the opportunities that were available to them. Mehar, Nafeesa, Noor, Jamila, Laila, and Aneesa talked about the fact that their mothers did not have the chance to pursue schooling/careers because they got married and moved to the US and were expected to be the primary caretakers of their children. The participants frequently mentioned the strong bonds they shared with their mothers and told me that they and their mothers wanted them to take advantage of the educational/career opportunities in the US that their mothers did not have in Pakistan.

Laila often talked about her desire to academically achieve and the importance she placed on doing well in school. I asked Laila why it was important for her to do well in school and she explained:

> I think it kind of comes from my mom because when she was in Pakistan, she was gonna become a lawyer. She did her studies and she had a degree and everything. But when she came to America, she just dropped all that behind her and started working at the bank. And from there, she's like, 'You know what? I still regret it to this day. I wish I was that lawyer.' And then she says, 'I want you guys to succeed.' She was like, 'we came here when we were adults and you guys are born and raised here. We want you to be successful.'

Likewise, Aneesa shared a similar story about her mother's dream of becoming a doctor. Although Aneesa was considering choosing psychology as a major, her parents encouraged her to pursue biology. She told me that her parents wanted her to major in biology because it meant that she would have the opportunity to pursue a medical career in the future. Aneesa went on to tell me that she thought another reason why her mother wanted her to become a doctor was because her mother was unable to realize her goal of becoming a doctor.

> Because my mom, she's always wanted to be a doctor and she wasn't able to pursue that so she wants to…I guess she wants me to live her dream. She was like, 'I want one of my children to do, you know, biology and be a doctor.' She was doing medical at the time, and then she didn't make it, I guess. She didn't have enough points or her score was low and (inaudible) and then like, she came here, she tried like, she did, she tried doing here and then her husband was like oh, you have a kid, just do Child Development. And she was like 'yeah, I'll do Child Development' and she didn't want to do it but she was like 'okay, whatever, I have a kid anyway,' so she did it.

Like Batool and Noor's parents, Laila and Farah's parents shared stories about the struggles they encountered as immigrants in the US and the sacrifices they made for their families and the parents. Laila and Aneesa's mothers migrated to the US after getting married in Pakistan in their late teens. Unlike their mothers, who did not have the prospect of pursuing their educational and career goals, Laila and Aneesa had the opportunity to complete their education and work in a field of her choosing. Unlike the participants, their mothers had limited choices and opportunities when it came to their educational opportunities and careers and their parents' experiences and desires, especially the experiences and desires of their mothers, significantly influenced the decisions they made and the ways they imagined their futures.

Parent Expectations and Involvement in Education and Schooling

Parent Involvement in Education and Schooling

In order to better comprehend the messages parents and ethno-religious communities communicate to their children about the value of education, it is also important to explore the role parents and families assume in their daughters academic lives. My study did not focus on parental involvement in schools, however research on parental involvement directly speaks to the role parents play in their children's education, which in turn should speak to the messages they convey to their children about the role of education in their lives.

The general literature on parental involvement suggests that regardless of race and socioeconomic status the participation of parents in the educational process and experiences of their children has a significant impact on their educational outcomes (Jeynes, 2007) and has been shown to be a very positive force in a child's life (Patrikakou, 2005). Zhou & Bankston (1998) contend that immigrant communities influence school performance by providing social capital and "just as family structure can be tied to the achievement of students, community structure can also be connected to that achievement" (p. 233).

Nonetheless, Gerardo Lopez (2001) complicates the notion of parent involvement by exploring alternate conceptualizations of involvement activity that are not "socially sanctioned." According to Lopez, parent involvement is largely understood in terms of specific practices including volunteering in schools, attending school activities, participating on parent advisory councils and/or school governance boards, and reviewing

homework. Lopez contends that this characterization of parent involvement has "been historically quite transparent" and consigns parent involvement "to a scripted role to be performed, rather than unrehearsed activities that parents and other family members routinely practice" (p. 417). However, as Lopez argues, in order for parents to be involved in socially sanctioned ways, parents must have prior knowledge of particular "involvement scripts," a readiness to perform these activities, as well as the opportunities to be involved in the abovementioned ways. He maintains, that "parents from many different cultures demonstrate a deep interest in being involved in their children's lives" (p. 428). Lopez's work with marginalized groups from immigrant backgrounds who fall into the 'uninvolved' category, shows that that parents saw involvement as teaching their children to appreciate the value of their education "through the medium of hard work" (p. 422). As such, Lopez suggests that the transmission of sociocultural values, like hard work, should not be overlooked, but rather, recognized as an important form of parent involvement.

Research on immigrant parents suggests that they tend to be especially supportive of their children's education since they view education as the route to advancement in their new country (Lee, 2005; Ogbu, 1987; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Parents' expectations and the messages they send to their children about education and schooling has been shown to have the most significant impact on their educational trajectories and futures (Jeynes, 2007). Nevertheless, the type and amount of parental involvement in schools varies among groups. According to Dauber and Epstein (1993), middle class parents with fewer children and higher levels of education are more involved with their children at home and in their schools. Furthermore, the data from the National

Educational Longitudinal Study (2004) reveals that the further in school parents believed their adolescents would go, the clearer the adolescents' perceptions of such expectations and the higher their own academic expectations, the higher their academic achievement would be.

Research on Pakistani parents indicates that they do not employ traditional forms of parental involvement but *are* involved in their children's education. Crozier and Davies (2007) found that most Pakistani parents had a broad understanding of the education system and their children's general progress. Although they expect their children to do well academically and emphasize the importance of schoolwork, working class parents practice what Gibson refers to as "non-interventionist strategies vis-à-vis the schools" (1988, p. 129). These non-traditional forms of parental involvement often lead to negative teacher perception of parents as "hard to reach" and indifferent about their children's education (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Huss-Keeler, 1997). Huss-Keeler found that "the learning situation was made more difficult for those children whose parents were not considered interested because they were also denied access to school literacy experiences and resources that could have enhanced their literacy learning" (1997, p. 180). Crozier and Davies found that Pakistani parents' "passive" forms of involvement lead to lower teacher expectations for Pakistani students. The teachers in Crozier and Davies study believed that Muslim parents had different expectations for girls and boys, although researchers found that this was not the case. As a result, Pakistani children's achievement and learning was underestimated by teachers.

Pakistani Parents Involvement and Expectations

Unlike the families highlighted in Crozier and Davies (2007) and Huss Keeler's (1997) studies whose participants came from lower-income backgrounds and had parents who did not speak English, the participants of this study came from middle-class class backgrounds, had parents who spoke English and were formally educated (in the US and/or Pakistan) and/or working professionals. Furthermore, half of the participants had older siblings, and all of the participants had extended family in the US, all of who were able to help them and their parents navigate the terrain and expectations of their schools. What is more, all of the participants' parents were active members of ethno-religious communities, which gave them access to information about expectations for "socially sanctioned" (Lopez, 2001) forms of parent involvement.

Nevertheless, the participants and their parents told me that their teachers were supportive of their (children's) academic goals and had favorable views of them and their families. For example, I had the opportunity to briefly speak to Ismat's teacher and Laila's associated student body adviser and both teachers mentioned the "value" their families placed on education. Ismat was attending continuation school a program where she was only required to meet with her teacher when she finished assignments and need more assignments/packets to pick up. However, when I asked Ismat's teacher about her performance, he specifically mentioned her mother who regularly came with Ismat to the school while she dropped-off and picked up her assignments. He told me that Ismat's mother "cares about her daughter's education unlike most of the parents of the kids who come here." Likewise, Laila's ASB advisor told me that based on Laila's performance in school, she could tell that "her family really values education" although admitted to the fact that she had only met Laila's parents a few times.

Furthermore, each of the participants told me that their conversations with parents primarily focused on what was happening in school or how they were doing in school since they often couldn't/didn't want talk to their parents about others things like relationships. For example, when I asked Laila what types of things she talked to her parents about, she explained that most of the conversations she had with her parents involved school.

> See, that's the hard part. Like, spending time with them is kind of difficult because like there's not very much to talk about. And it's kind of like repetitive questions like, *'How's your day today?'* And it's the same thing. *'It was good.'* Nothing really happens, you know, but if... the topic of conversation is kind of like what's going on in school. Like I try and, *'Oh, this happened today.'* And my parents are like, *'Oh, that's good.'* So it's very short. If I have something coming up like, *'Oh, I have a meeting for this at our school. I have a test coming up. I need to go here.'* And just things that kinda involve the future, not really on a personal level. It comes in a lot about school coz I feel like for me, personally, I don't have anything else to really connect with.

As my conversation with Laila and the other participants suggest, talking about school was a way in which parents and their daughters were able to engage each other in conversation. Like the participants of Lopez's (2001) study, my conversations with the participants' parents reveal that they spent a great deal of time teaching their children to appreciate the value of education. For example, Laila's mother told me that she and her husband constantly talked to their children about the benefits of education:

> Education is a constant subject in the home. Constant. My husband also thinks that we have to be, that every minute kids should be learning, not to leave them alone. We have to tell them to do their studies. Any time we are out in the car, anytime we are…we have to tell them to study. He is always talking, talking, talking about education. Sometimes they get frustrated. But there's a communication, all the time, constant. And I do discuss with my daughters, the classes, when their assignments are due. I tell them 'don't get late.' And I mean I totally take interest in what they're doing. They talk to me about the teachers, they talk to me about the classes. I ask them every day, 'how was your classes, what did you do, how was your day?' Things like that so they know that what the parent's expectations are.

Aneesa's mother told me that when Aneesa was in elementary and junior high school, she would make sure she had done her homework and help her if necessary, prepare her lunches, "pick and drop" her from school:

> I went to her festivals, parent teacher conferences. And whenever she was sick, I would go to pick her up and take her to the doctor. That's why my work is only ten minutes away. I wanted to be with my kids, you know? Because I didn't want to be like, leave them alone *kae* [like] 'oh, mom cannot come because she is working so far.'

He mother went on to tell me that now that Aneesa was older, she was "able to help herself" with her schoolwork. Furthermore, because Aneesa drove, she was able to help her mother and 'pick and drop' her siblings. Nevertheless, like Laila's parents, Batool, Noor, Ismat and Aneesa's parents also told me that they constantly talk to their kids about the importance of education. In fact, based on my conversations with the participants and some of their parents, it was clear that parents talked about school more than any other subject to their daughters.

Like Lopez's participants, the parents of the young Pakistani women I worked with, saw the transmission of values as a valid and necessary form of parent involvement. Although they attended parent-teacher conferences, and school functions, were not completely traditionally involved in their daughters' schooling, in that none of the parents were members of a parent-teacher organization when their children were in elementary, junior-high or high school.

Like Aneesa's parents, the participants (and their parents) told me that their parents participated in more traditional ways when they were in elementary and middle school as opposed to when they were in high school. When I asked Noor's parents why they spent less time in their children's schools (they attended awards ceremonies and

some parent teacher conferences) once their kids reached high school, they told me that they didn't need to be involved because their children weren't doing anything wrong. Moreover, Laila's mother told me that when Laila was in high school, she didn't need to go to her school because Laila was doing well academically. Conversely, Ismat's (continuation school) teacher told me that he regularly met with Ismat's mother because she was extremely concerned about her daughter's progress and wanted to ensure that Ismat was making progress in school. Ismat's mother told me that she never missed a parent teacher conference. She explained, "in fact, I think they stopped doing it in high school and I was missing that because you could go talk to the teachers, but it wasn't something that you had to go to." She went on to tell me that when Ismat was in elementary school and junior high, she would email or call the teachers to check her progress and go to open houses at her school. She went on to say, "I kept myself involved with her education as much as I could do." With the exception of Batool's mother who regularly attended Batool's theater rehearsals, the extent to which the parents, particularly mothers, were traditionally involved in their daughter's high schools was limited to attending award ceremonies and graduations and going to parent-teacher conferences. Five out of the eight participants told me that their mothers took on the responsibility of going to meetings/parent teacher conferences when they were in elementary and secondary school. When I asked the participants mother's why they assumed the primary responsibilities at their daughters' schools, they told me that it was either because they were the only parent (two of the participants mothers were widowed), or that their husbands worked late night jobs and could not attend school-based events, or that their husbands simply chose not to go. In-line with traditional gender roles, mothers

were expected to assume the primary responsibilities when it came to childcare and going to their children's schools. Nevertheless, both mothers and fathers participated in non-traditional forms of involvement including, engaging their children in conversations about the importance of schooling and education and instilling the value of education in their lives.

However, when I asked the participants who they would go to if they needed help with their work, only one mentioned her mother, while the others said that they preferred to go to their friends or teachers for help. Noor and Laila told me that they mostly went to their friends or teachers for help with homework, but asked their older siblings for advice about high school teachers and the college application process. Aneesa had siblings in middle school and high school and was responsible for picking them up from school. Although her siblings did not come to her for help with school often, she did mention that they had the option of coming to her for help with school.

My conversations with the participants and some of their parents also suggest that their parents held a largely instrumental understanding of education in that they saw education as being linked to social mobility. According to the participants in my study, their parents were exceptionally encouraging of their educational goals and aspirations. In my conversations with the participants' parents, they often emphasized the fact that education was necessary in order to achieve social and economic mobility in the US. For example, when I asked Aneesa's parents what they thought the purpose of education was, her mother told me "to gain knowledge and experience and to know the world." When Aneesa was in the process of choosing a degree to major in, her father told me that he suggested that she pursue a degree in IT (Information Technology) because it would lead

to a high paying job and was in demand. Conversely, Aneesa's mother told me that she wanted Aneesa to pursue medicine because she was unable to do so after getting married. I laughed and told Aneesa's parents that when I was in college, my parents also wanted me to pursue medicine. Aneesa's mother went on to say:

> Because in this, [the field of medicine] it has more value and it has more money also, you know *beta* [child]? And the profession is good. Everybody sees that, *aur log achae nazron sae daik hain gae* [and people will see in a good light], you know, *achae nazron sae daik te hain* [people see it in a good light].

Aneesa's father interrupted his wife and told me:

> I mean *doctory* is a very, very old profession, that's why everybody say… even when you talk to an eighty years old woman or a ninety years old man [and ask], 'what would you like your kids to be?' they will say, 'Oh, I want my kids to be a doctor or an engineer!' *Yai jo nah, yai har aik kae mou pai aagaya hai* [This you know, this response is on every person's mouth].

As illustrated in the above quotes, Aneesa's mother wanted her to pursue a career that would prove to be lucrative, "valuable" or beneficial to people, and something that would improve the social status, not only of her daughter, but as Aneesa's father implied, her parents as well. Aneesa's mother went on to tell me that unlike her parents and other parents in Pakistan, she could not force her children to major in a particular subject and wanted them to pursue their interests. What is more, Aneesa's father agreed that medicine was a good field, but was critical of what he implied was a 'mob-mentality' among Pakistani parents who wanted their children to pursue medicine. He went on to say that regardless of the dominant narrative within the community, he encouraged Aneesa to pursue computer science because he worked in the field and felt like it was a sustainable profession. Like the participants, parents also resisted (what they assumed to be) the dominant discourses about education in their ethno-religious communities.

Although they did not always pursue the degrees and careers their parents desired, their educational goals and aspirations were mostly in-line with the hopes and dreams their parents had for them. Noor explained:

> In terms of school, they definitely do expect me to do my best and like have good grades. But I mean they don't they don't necessarily mean that I've got to be perfect. But I mean, they do want me to work hard and definitely college is something that they do expect me to complete. So, um, yes, definitely education is really a huge part of what they want for me.

Laila also mentioned that her parents had high expectations for her future:

> And ever since I was a kid, that's what it was. Like, *'you guys just have to be successful. You guys have to do your best.'* And I think it's not only with my parents. Everyone I talked to that's Pakistani, it's just, that's how it is. Like it's not really, *'Oh yeah you'll figure it out! Don't be afraid of the future! Take it easy!'* It's always, *'you have to aim high. You wanna be successful in life.'* and plus with the whole marriage thing. Like you wanna marry a doctor or you wanna marry somebody who's successful. So I think that's where it comes from. Maybe from my mom's parents or her… I don't know.

According to Laila, Pakistani parents had high expectations for their children when it came to academic achievement. Furthermore, like her parents, Laila also held an instrumental understanding of education. Laila believed that academic success would not only lead to a successful career, but also would allow her to find a comparable mate, which would lead to a successful family life. Moreover, if Laila married someone who was considered successful within her ethno-religious community, like a doctor, it would not only add to Laila's social standing in the community, but would reflect positively on her parent's social status within the community as well. Still, none of the young women, including Batool, who was engaged while I was conducting my research, told me about the 'pressure' parents put on them to get married. As Tyrer & Ahmad (2006) and Ahmad's (2003) research on Muslim and higher education women has shown, participants spoke instead about how the attainment of a degree could enhance their

marital prospects. Yet, all of the women, with the exception of Mehar who told me that she was not sure if she wanted to get married, and their parents, expected to be married in the future. However, unlike mainstream discourses that assert that Muslim and/or South Asian parents promote marriage over education, none of the young women experienced tension from their families in aspiring to or entering higher education. In fact, all of the young women emphasized the importance their parents placed on seeking knowledge.

Batool told me that her parents had specific expectations for her and her sisters when it came to schooling. She told me that the value of education had been instilled in her from the time that she was a young child. I asked her about the messages her parents sent to her about schooling:

> School is the number one priority. Before anything, before like friends, before anything, school is the number one priority and my parents, it is like growing up since I was two, that is what they have focused on. When I was 15 or 16 and everyone was getting a job at like Baskin-Robbins. They are like - school is your number one priority not scooping ice cream.

Like Batool's parents, the other parents I spoke to told me that the only thing they wanted their children to focus on was on schooling. For example, Laila's mother told me that the only job she required of her daughters was to study:

> That's the only job they have. I told them, I don't ask them to clean, I don't ask them to cook, I'm bad in that. I didn't train them well. I worry about what they are gonna do in their lives when they are married. But at home the only chore they have is, study. That's what my mom did to us, when we were coming back from school and tired and all that, we had our clothes ready to change. They were hanging there. She was a school teacher but she was a very hard working woman. She was a role model. A very hard working woman. [She would] wake up six o'clock, cleaning cooking, washing the clothes and no machines and not to many servants and stuff. Going to school, coming back, cooking and getting ready for us, making sure we don't have to do anything except study. And that's what I expected them to do and they know that. So it's not forcing but we keep an eye definitely on their grades and everything.

Laila's mother's ideas were informed by the gender roles her mother assumed in regards to her education. Although Laila's mother expected her daughters to retain the same gender roles, she prioritized their studies. She later told me that she spoiled her daughters because she wanted them to focus on doing well in their studies so that they would be able to attain careers that would allow them to be successful.

With the exception of Aneesa and Ismat, none of the young women worked while attending high school or college. When I asked the girls why they didn't work, they often told me that their parents wanted them to put all of their focus in their studies, as they believed working would distract them from what they needed to accomplish. Unlike many young people who are required to work in order to survive, none of the girls I spoke to needed to work but rather worked for "pocket money" or money to hang out with friends.

Along with the importance of formal education/schooling, Batool and Laila told me that their parents also emphasized the importance of religious education. For example, Noor's mother told me that along with academic success, she wanted her children to understand the importance of being good Muslims:

> It's important because, *agar tum achi naheen hogi* [if you are not good], you cannot have a good life. These two things [education and religion] are very important things in your life. You have to have all of those things. Without that, I don't think so that you can have a better life.

She told me that she did not force her children to pray five times a day, but she encouraged them to pray, go to the mosque, and follow the rules of Islam. She did not specify what rules she was talking about but I assume that she meant that she did not want her children to drink or take drugs, have premarital sex, lie, or disrespect their

elders. Furthermore, she saw being a good person [in this case following the rules of Islam] as a necessary pathway to being successful.

Verses from the Qur'an and *Hadith* (a report of the sayings or actions of Muhammad or his companions) emphasize the importance of seeking education. For example, the messenger of Islam, Prophet Mohammad placed great emphasis on learning: "seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim," which Hadith commentators have understood to be a command for young and old, men and women (Sultan & Ali, 2007, p. 140). He also spoke of knowledge as a lifelong journey: "seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave" and encouraged Muslims to travel far and wide to gain education (Sultan & Ali, 2007, p. 140). Education therefore is not conceptualized as separate from religion, but rather as an integral part of the process of becoming a better Muslim. Ramadan (2004) explains, "The outward expression of Muslim identity is the articulation and demonstration of faith through consistent behavior. Faith, understanding, religious as well as secular education, and transmission together guide the substrata of Islamic ethics and should therefore guide the actions of the believer" (p. 82). As such, all of the participants told me that their parents emphasized the importance of being a good student and a good Muslim. For example, Batool explained:

> Well, I think religion is always like, before everything else. Like they would rather see me grow up as a girl with religion in her life than even being like a doctor. Sometimes, that could be really like, you might meet somebody who's so intelligent or they are really successful but then at the same time, they do not have that spiritual aspect of their life. But they've always taught me that like whatever goals you have when it comes to education or career wise, the first thing is you have to always make sure that your faith is strong.

Laila's told me that her parents also emphasized the importance of being educated and a good Muslim:

> I think being a good Muslim is a form of education that is kind of leaning towards your success. And I feel like, your education, of course, that goes hand in hand with being a good person. And I felt when you've got your education, that all plays a big role in it. It's not like education equals study, study, study, study. That's why my parents aren't that strict upon just studying because they're also very about, 'You have to be a good Muslim. You have to be a good person to other people. You have to be well-rounded.'

Being 'well rounded' according to Laila meant not only succeeding in school, but also being a good Muslim. Unlike research that has shown that Muslim parents dissuade their daughters from attaining secular education, the data here shows that Laila and her parents valued both and did not see them as antithetical to the other. In fact, being a "good person" involved education that was both formal and religious.

School Equals College Equals Independence

Research shows that young immigrant women living in the US are subjected to strict social control by their parents, including limitations on socialization and increased domestic responsibilities (Lee, 1997; Lee, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Zhou and Bankston, 1998). Although strict social control is shown to have a positive impact on the academic achievement of young immigrant women, Lopez (2003) suggests that "young women growing up in such controlled environments may come to view schools as the only way to achieve some degree of independence" (p. 123).

Although the participants' parents possessed what Lee (1997) calls "folk theories of achievement that link education to success" (p. 813) and were extremely supportive of their daughters' academic endeavors, all of the young women (with the exception of Batool) believed that education gave them the freedom to be more independent. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the participants' parents had strict rules about their

socializing with friends, particularly those who were still in high school. Yet, even the girls who were in college were expected to ask permission before going out with friends and were rarely allowed to stay out late at night unless it was with people their parents knew. However, because school was considered a safe space by their parents, the young women often participated in extra-curricular activities and/or used school as an excuse to spend time with their friends. In other words, they subverted their parents' rules by using school as an excuse to engage in their social lives.

According to the participants who were still in high school, school provided them with excuses to spend time with their friends outside their homes, and allowed them to do things they weren't allowed to do like hang out with boys. Furthermore, membership in extracurricular activities like ASB (associated student body) and Key Club benefitted their academic standing and allowed them to explore their communities outside of school. The participants told me that they often used the excuse of going to library to do work or study groups as a chance to hang out with friends. Many parents were quite restrictive about them staying out late at night. However, the girls explained that their parents allowed them to because this type of socializing would contribute to their academic achievement. As compared to when they were in high school, Aneesa, Nafeesa, Jamila and Mehar told me that their parents were more lenient now that they were attending college. For example, Aneesa told me that she had more freedom to do as she pleased now that she was in college:

> It feels great being a student in college. I love being here. I really do I enjoy it. It's different than high school. Well, for me because I have more freedom. In high school I would not hang out with friends at all. My parents were really, really strict but now that I'm in college, I can kind of do–I'm not exactly free but I can do more and do my own thing. I guess they don't have to worry about me that much.

I asked Aneesa why she had more freedom in college than she did in high school and she explained:

> Well, first of all, I got my license so that definitely makes things easier and–I had my permit and my parents were like–my dad didn't let me drive on the freeway. My dad was like, 'No. I don't want her driving.' College is when I started driving out more and I just feel like being in college is easier. I guess because I'm older than ever so they said, 'Okay. We should kind of let go of her a little.'

Like other young people transitioning from high school to college, one of the benefits that the girls expressed was that they would be able move out of their home and onto campus.

> I kind of want to like - I kind of do not want to live at home, because my brother lives at home and so, I feel like, him living at home, he is so dependent on my parents even though he is almost 19. So, he is almost 19 and like my mom, sometimes, she would ask to wake him up in the morning, tell him to go to work or tell him to go to school, you know. And I'm like, 'I do not want to do it like that. I want to be able to be self-motivated. Get up in the morning, do what I have to do. And like, actually, to have more freedom but not like freedom in a way like going out or come back like at 5:00 in the morning but, just like in a way, do what I want, whenever I want to. Like be able to wake up, go to class, be able to, because like, I can. Like I feel my brother dependence on my parents is too much. I'm kind of like, 'I do not want to do that.' And then on top of that, like he still has to ask my parents like, 'I'm going here. Can I go?' You know and he is like – and like it kind of sucks because like sometimes, he got frustrated, too, because he is like, 'If I was living on campus, I would not have to ask you, guys. If I wasn't living at home, I would not have to ask. I would not have to deal,' and he got kind of frustrated because like – sometimes like he will come home like not even late and my parents will be like, 'Where are you?' and stuff. And he just gets frustrated, so, I see his frustration. And when I see he is dependent on them, I'm like, 'Oh, God.' And on top of that, I feel like it is a new experience, like living with somebody else.

While I don't believe that gender did not influence the way her parents raised their children, I thought it was interesting that Noor's parents expected her and her brother to adhere to same rules about going out. Unlike Mehar, Aneesa, Laila, Nafeesa, who emphasized the freedom that living on campus would give/gave them to go out and spend

time with their friends/partners, Noor wanted to live on campus as a way to become more independent, unlike her brother who as she explained, was less independent and self-sufficient because he still lived at home.

College as a Requirement and a Choice

All of the young women were highly invested in the idea that higher education would eventually lead them to success. For example, one of the questions on the interview protocol for the second interview asked the participants if they wanted to go to college. However, before I was able to ask the question, all three of the participants who were still in high school, including Ismat who told me that "school wasn't really her thing," told me that going to college and graduating with a degree was something they planned on doing. I asked Laila to explain why she wanted to go to college and she explained:

> Because I know what I wanna do in the future. Like, I know I wanna be successful. And I know by going to college and getting your further education, I will become successful hopefully whatever I wanna go. And I know I'm gonna have to go through college for that. And kinda, there's some kids who kinda have the option of going to college or not going to college. And I never thought of that as an option ever.

Like Laila, each of the participants told me that unlike their peers in high school, not going to college was never an option, but rather a requirement their parents had for their futures. Nevertheless, all of the young women, including Ismat, told me that despite their parents expectations, going to college was something that they wanted to do. For example, when I asked Aneesa why going to college was important to her, she explained that school allowed her "to be somebody":

> I want to do something with my life. I feel like if it wasn't for school, I won't really be doing much; I'd be bored. What would I do? I'm thinking about it and if

> it wasn't for college, what would I be doing right now? I wouldn't be somebody. I'll just be… I don't know.

While Ismat was hesitant about the prospect of not liking college and she did not expect to complete a four-year degree from a university, she too wanted to go to college to get an associate's degree. When I asked Ismat's mother if she expected Ismat to go to college she told me

The participants frequently mentioned the high expectations their parents had for them in terms of schooling. These expectations were interpreted as being fundamental to the value that Pakistanis and the Pakistani community in regard to education. According to the young women, education for both girls and boys was inherently valued in the Pakistani community. For example, when I asked Laila to explain why not going to college was never an option for her, she differentiated between the values that Pakistani's placed on education as opposed to her American friends:

> Just the family I was brought into. Just being Pakistani. And I think it's just with us because a lot of American kids, I was talking to my Pakistani girlfriends and they were like, 'American kids say they're gonna take a year off or they're just not gonna go to college.' And for me, it's like my parents are like, 'It's not a question. You're going to college.' Like, people are like, you know, 'it's an accomplishment, graduating from high school' but for my parents, it's not. It's not really an accomplishment. It's not about like, 'Oh, you just graduated.' You have to succeed and passing college or passing high school is just one step out of the way. So I think it was kind of engraved in my mind as a young child. Like, 'I wanna be a doctor. I wanna be this and that.' So I know that being the doctor, I knew I had to go to class.

All of the participants told me that their parents had emphasized the importance of going to school and graduating with a professional degree from the time they were very young children. Like Laila, Nafeesa also used the example of taking a year off before starting college as something Pakistani kids didn't do:

> It’s not even so much that we don’t want to go to college as we feel like we have to. I mean like, even if I didn’t wanna go to college, maybe wanna take a year off, maybe like you know, find myself. I don’t have that option because if I were to do that then I’d be like shunned by my parents, I’d be shunned by the Pakistani community as a whole. Like “What are you doing? Everybody goes to college that’s just what you supposed to do.” Like “how dare you not go to college.” That’s what you’re supposed to do like first you graduate from high school, then you’re supposed to go to college, and then you’re supposed to become, you know a doctor, a lawyer, engineer and that just how it is. So you can’t take a year off to find yourself? You’re not allowed to do that. Like they might think, you know, you’re only a good, like you’re only worth something if you had a good career, and if you take time off you’ll hinder yourself from getting to that position

In my conversations with Nafeesa, she often spoke to me about her fears about “sticking out in the community.” Nafeesa spoke about being shunned by her parents and the community if she decided not to go to college. Of all of the participants I worked with, Nafeesa was the one had the most interaction with, as her parents are good friends of my parents. Based on my informal conversations with her mother and my knowledge of their relationship, it is hard for me to imagine Nafeesa’s mother “shunning” her if she decided not to go to college. However, I can confidently say that if Nafeesa decided to drop out of college, that her mother, like many parents, I imagine, would not support her decision. Nafeesa’s assertion that she would be “shunned” by her ethno-religious community if she against going to college struck me as premature considering the fact that there a number of people within the Pakistani Muslim community, including some of the participants parents, whom are not formally educated yet actively involved.

For Nafeesa, it was important for her to feel a sense of acceptance from the members of her ethno-religious community. Being accepted in the community, according to Nafeesa, meant “doing what you’re supposed to do” or at the very least appearing as if you are doing what you’re supposed to do. As she explained above, this

meant, graduating from high school, graduating from college and attaining a professional degree.

Both Laila and Nafeesa perpetuated the idea that Pakistani's, unlike Americans, placed a higher value on education. They used the example of kids who "took a year off" after graduating from high school as a way to substantiate their claim that American kids valued education less than Pakistani kids. Over the course of my interviews with each of the participants, they frequently referenced similar examples of American kids who didn't care about education. Conversely, none of the participants offered examples of Pakistani kids who didn't value or care about education. As members of the community there were certain expectations that they felt like they had to live up to.

I have noticed that the academic and career successes of young people are often publically acknowledged and celebrated at mosques and other community gatherings. Conversely, in the conversations I have had with parents and other members of the Pakistani community, academic underachievement is rarely if ever acknowledged publicly and is often understood as a result of Americanization or the loss of ethno-religious values. For example, Ismat's mother told me that she felt safer in the US than she did in Pakistan "because of all of the political madness" going on over there, however she often lamented the fact that she didn't stay in Pakistan:

> In the eighties, everybody used to say that it [moving to the US] will be good for our kids. You know, there's more educational opportunities here, but sometimes I think we came her to raise our kids in a better environment but look what's happening to our kids [in the US].

Although she didn't elaborate on her thought, she later told me that she felt that living in the US led to Ismat abandoning her religious values (Ismat started drinking, dating and doing drugs in high school) which in turn negatively affected her academic performance.

Aneesa's mother perpetuated the stereotype of high achieving Desi children and also expressed fears about raising her children in the US and attributed academic failure to American values:

> I've never heard anyone's kid's drop out of school in the Pakistani Indian community, because we give them our knowledge, education. We've been telling them what is good for them. We are always there. [Pakistani and Indian] Parents are always there with them and helping them and telling them what is good and what is right, what is better for them.

Aneesa's mom went on to explain the difference between American values and the Pakistani and Indian values. She attributed what she interpreted to be American values regarding relationships and marriage, to the educational struggles American [non-Desi] children face:

> And, you know, here, you know how the parents are. They have conflict and all the things that are happening here, going around how they go. So children learn from the parents. I work in a preschool and I see so many children, they have single moms and single dads and are separated and sometimes the kids talk about those things and they don't like it you know because mom has another boyfriend and dad has another girlfriend and that's why they have dropped out. I mean we tell them to get education and religious knowledge also. You know, we are providing all of our good things to them. And I don't know but here, it's different. The company is bad. They do smoking and alcohol and drugs.

Aneesa's mother's response implies that those youth who adhere to their parent's ethno-religious values do not go astray. Parents use these narratives to serve as warnings to Pakistani parents and children alike about the negative effects of assimilation. In their studies on Hmong and Vietnamese communities, Lee (2003) and Zhou and Bankston (1998) found that immigrant parents saw underachievement as an expression of being over-Americanized and viewed Americanization as the biggest threat to their children and families. Likewise, the parents I interviewed also associated American culture and a lack of ethno-religious values with educational underachievement, sexual promiscuity,

divorce, a lack of respect for elders, and/or drug and alcohol consumption and saw these values as potential threats to their social status and their children's futures.

The Community & Untraditional Pathways into Higher Education

The educational attainment/achievement of children is often at the center of the social consciousness of the community and part of a recurring dialogue in mosques, community events. In fact, each of the participants told me that school and education were topics that frequently came up in their interactions with the members of their ethno-religious communities and were often asked about the progress they were making in school their academic achievements. For example, Batool told me about how she negotiated the process of telling the people at her mosque what she was majoring in before she had made a decision to major in English:

> I'm a very indecisive person. I went through, 'Maybe I should major in this. Maybe I should major in that.' And like literally, I just started telling people in the community that I was majoring in bio, coz like in community they're all, 'Oh, what do you do?' Or, 'What would you wanna do?' But then I just started telling everybody a different major. Cause I felt like somebody will be happy in the end. I have to please somebody.

Furthermore, according to the participants, the community defined academic success as graduating from a 4-year college (a UC not a Cal State), attaining a professional career, namely, a doctor or a lawyer, getting married and having children. In fact, Nafeesa and Aneesa, who both attended community college, told me that they were embarrassed to admit that they went to a community college despite the fact that they planned on transferring to 4-year universities in the future. When I asked Nafeesa about the people who influenced her views on education and she explained:

> Well, it's just like the Pakistani community has influenced my views on education. Education is really valued in our community. It's like if you're not

> doing something, you know, if you're not smart, you don't get far if you don't go to a good school then somehow you're less of a person.

I asked Nafeesa to elaborate on what she meant by this and she explained that when she is at a community event, the other young women and "aunties and uncles" often inquire about what she is doing in school. She went on to tell me how she fielded questions about where she goes to school:

> It's really embarrassing to say that I'm going on the community college. But there's like no way for me to avoid saying it. I always say, "But I'm planning on transferring to a UC!"

Nafeesa went on to tell me why she was hesitant to admit that she was going to community college to her peers and elders at the mosque:

> Cause of the stigma attached to community college like 'you are not smart enough to get into a good school so now you coming here.' Which I mean, wasn't the case for me, but, I mean whose gonna stand there and explain. I'm going to community college but there is this and that attached to, no one will listen to that. They're just gonna take away or you're going to community college and this is that what I know about the community college.

According to Nafeesa, the community "put a lot of value on labels." She went on to say that that idea was "bogus" because "you should do what you wanna do, not because someone tells you." Despite the fact that Nafeesa disagreed with the idea of pursuing a degree based on the value that is associated to a profession as opposed to one's interest in the subject, she also mentioned that she was able to avoid the "stigma" because she knew she wanted to pursue medicine, "and luckily, that aligns with the ideals, that type of thinking."

Like Nafeesa's, Aneesa also told me that she felt embarrassed about telling people in the Pakistani community that she attended community college. Still, both of the young

women told me that they really loved their school and felt like they were getting a good education:

> It's a community college, but I feel like I'm still getting on the same… like value of learning that I would get I don't know at a Cal-State. I don't feel like my learning is being cut down just because it's a community college. I still feel like I'm getting a like college education. I definitely feel like that's an assumption a lot of people make. I mean, even me going, even when I was starting community college, I was like, 'Wow! It's a community college. I'm not gonna learn anything here. It's gonna be all the dropouts and stoner kids that couldn't get into like a real colleges.' But I haven't seen that here. Like especially since there's recession and stuff. Like a lot of kids would have maybe gone to these four-year colleges could not afford it or for whatever reason, can't move out of the house.

But Nafeesa and Aneesa weren't the only ones to tell me about the pressure they felt to live up to the standards that they felt were set by the community. Ismat told me that her mother did not want her to attend a continuation school because she wanted her to be in a "regular high school." When I asked Ismat why her mother felt this way she explained:

> She thinks about 'what's the family going to think?' or 'what's going to happen? You can't tell anybody you know.' I mean like that's just how it is. I'm like 'but it will help me. It's not what they're going to go through it's what I'm gonna go through.' That's what I try to tell her. Most of my family doesn't know, maybe like an uncle or two know. But they don't really say anything you know. But I know that some of them will find out. I don't know what they would say or what would it be like. But she just doesn't want anyone finding out. They think they know me but they don't you know.

I asked Ismat why her mother avoided sharing this information with her family and friends in the Pakistani community:

> Because she just wants them to think like I'm doing school just normally and stuff you know not like this or that. She thinks they're going to talk or they're going to say something you know like in Pakistani culture most of them like to talk or whatever, and she just doesn't want them to find out because they'll be like, 'oh other kids are doing good why can't you be like them?'

Ismat went on to explain that she mostly avoided community events because of the pressure she felt to answer questions about school.

> I mean they say 'oh where have you been?' I just say 'school.' I'm not gonna be like 'oh, you know I'm doing this and that.' I just say 'busy with school' but then obviously everyone is busy with school. A lot of aunties are like 'oh, you know you don't come [to the mosque] anymore… blah, blah, blah.' Like, okay! I don't come anymore! Don't make it a big deal.

During our interview, I chose not ask Ismat's mother why she did not tell people in her ethno-religious community and her family why she did chose not to discuss the details of Ismat's academic struggles because I did not want to make her feel uncomfortable. However, her mother ended up telling me:

> I didn't want to open up to anybody about my daughter having problems at school because everybody, talks about how great, like in my family, I have two nieces who are in the GATES, gifted and talented program. Like everybody in the community talks about the A's their kids are getting and that they're like super genius. And here I am, I'm not gonna share with anyone that my daughter is having problems in school. I didn't want, I didn't want her to feel that she's less than anybody [pauses] or maybe I didn't want to feel like I was less.

I thought it was courageous of Ismat and her mother to admit the truth about Ismat's academic performance to a member of the Pakistani community, despite their fears of being judged. Furthermore, it was extremely honest of her mother to admit that she didn't want her daughter's lack of academic achievement to affect her social status in the community or in her family. Before my interview with her mother, Ismat told me that she told her mother that I knew that she [Ismat] occasionally drank alcohol, smoked pot, and had a boyfriend (Ismat told me that her mother found out that she drank, smoked pot and had a boyfriend long before I interviewed either of them). However, her mother, who was extremely involved in the mosque and referred to herself as "religious" in our interviews, did not discuss these issues in her interviews with me. The implication of this

is that to Ismat's mother being academically unsuccessful was not as bad as not adhering to religious guidelines.

Like, the participants who felt the pressure to measure up to their high achieving Pakistani peers, parents also felt the pressures to fit into what they assumed to be their ethno-religious community's definition of what it meant to be a successful parent (i.e., a parent whose child not only maintained their ethno-religious values but also academically successful). Not only was the religious identity of girls like Jamila, affirmed by the members of their ethno-religious communities, but they were also commended for the successes they experienced at school. Conversely, the girls like Ismat, and even Nafeesa and Aneesa who took a less traditional path into higher education, were concerned about how this was interpreted by others because they of the messages they received from the members of their ethno-religious communities about community college and how it would affect their social status within their ethno-religious community.

Staying Close to Home

Parents and community members expected the young women to pursue higher education. However, they often wanted their daughters to stay close to home. Aneesa, who was in the process of transferring to a four-year university from a community college, told me that her parents encouraged her to go to a school that was driving distance from their home. She had applied to two universities, one that was nearby her family's home and one that would require her to move onto campus.

> My dad and I were talking about school and he says again, "Yes. You should go to Cal State. It's closer and UC is too far." I want to go to UC, but I don't know what's going to happen.

I asked Aneesa why she wanted to go to a UC as opposed to a CSU, assuming that she would say that it was because it would allow her to move out of the house. However, Aneesa explained:

> It'd be better. I want to try the best school that I can and get the best education and I think that if I graduate from UCI, it would hold more weight than graduating from Cal State Fullerton because it's the university. I know that's university, too, but I don't know. I just think it's the better school. And plus, there are a lot of Pakistani people who go there and I like that.

Like, Aneesa, Jamila's parents also expected her to live at home while she attended University. When I asked Jamila what she liked about her university, she told me that she liked the fact that it was close to home. Nevertheless, Jamila explained that her decision to attend this university was not only hers but also, her mother's:

> I had decided on going to a Cal State because there you see. I was going to UCX (University of California X) but they weren't offering enough money so I was thinking that I would go to a Cal State and like transfer to like UCY or some other school but you know how the Desi moms are. So my mom was like, 'you have to go to a UC.' And they wanted me to stay close by because I'm the first-born and their first kid going off to college and stuff. So they really pushed me to stay here plus UCZ was offering me a full ride for four years. So I did that. So that's mostly why I'm here.

Although Jamila's mother wanted her to attend a prestigious university and "get a good education", her parents did not allow her to attend a university that would require her to move out of their home. However, a few years after Jamila started college, Jamila's younger sister gained admission at a university that would require her to live on campus. Jamila's parents also wanted her sister to attend the local university however Jamila, who was in college, encouraged her parents to allow her sister to live on campus, which they eventually did. Nevertheless, her parents required her sister her to come home during the weekends and holidays, which Jamila said she did happily. Jamila told me that she didn't mind living at home because it allowed her to help her mother out around the house and

quell her parents' loneliness. She did however lament the fact that she chose to go to UCZ because she didn't feel like she received the level of education she expected from a UC. She told me that she planned on moving out of the house if she decided to go to graduate school. Jamila explained that a number of the women at her mosque who knew she went to UCZ asked her to convince their daughters to attend the same school:

> Recently a lot the kids at the mosque they're graduating this year. A lot of the women they want their daughters to go to UCZ and so they were trying to get me to convince them to go there and I was just telling them, 'don't go here at all.' I mean, it's a really bad experience. I mean it's not just my experience it's my friend's experiences as well. I just feel like you know there are better opportunities at like community colleges than there are here.

Jamila told me the women asked her to talk to their daughters to go to UCZ because they didn't want their daughters to go to schools that would require them to move out of the house. Jamila told me that she was approached by the mothers because she was representative of a "good Muslim girl" within the community, who lived at home with her family, was academically high achieving and went to a prestigious university, did not drink or do drugs, regularly attended the mosque and participated in religious activities at the mosque, had a "good-reputation" in that she was not known to date or be sexually promiscuous, respected her elders, listened to her parents and lived at home with them and prayed regularly. Despite the fact that she agreed to meet with their daughters, Jamila recognized that the mothers wanted her assistance in controlling their [daughters] movement, and used it as an opportunity to discourage them from going to UCZ not only because she didn't like the school but also as she explained, she didn't think there was anything wrong with girls living outside of their parents homes.

Conclusion

The push for education in the ethno-religious communities the participants were a part of mirrors the model minority rhetoric that is associated with many other Asian groups. According to Lee (2005), "During the 1960's the stereotype of Asian Americans as hard-working and successful 'model-minorities' emerged and Asian Americans were thereby likened to Whites. According to the model minority rhetoric, the success of Asian Americans proves that the United States is an open society free of racial bias and inequality." She goes on to explain that within the model minority discourse, "Asian Americans are represented as 'good' minorities and African Americans are represented as 'bad minorities'" (p. 5). Prashad (2000) notes that the entry of Desis (South Asians) in large numbers after the passage of the Civil Rights Acts brought them into the model minority category, which served as "a godsend for Desis" (p. 171) in the US because it paid tribute to Asian intelligence despite the fact that it did so "on the backs of blacks" (p. 169) and was used in a war against Black Americans in the US. While South Asian American youth and adults are not often identified as Asian because of phenotypic differences in the US, the model minority label also includes South Asian communities, particularly Indians, based on generalized notions about the value they place on education, their perceived hard work ethic, high levels of higher educational attainment and disproportionate economic success in the US. Pakistani youth and adults, particularly those who cannot immediately be identified as Muslim, undoubtedly benefit from the racial stratification of the US. However, unlike their Indian counterparts, Pakistani youth do not fit neatly into the category of model minority because of their association with Islam. Pakistani Muslim youth represent multiple marginalities in the US as non-Whites, members of a demonized religious community, young people, and

finally as immigrants/the children of immigrants which counteracts their model minority status. They are (whether they realize it or not) at times on the margin of the margin, and are subject to what Sirin and Fine (2008) term "moral exclusion" in the US and cast as threats to America. As Sirin and Fine explain, moral exclusion is based on moral panics which "often funnel collective anxieties onto the bodies of youth of color who attract a disproportionate share of the watching" through surveillance by the government and the "White/good/rational/civilized side of the binary" (p. 77). Furthermore, the hegemonic conception of Muslim women as the victims of their ethno-religious communities who devalue their education and rights, has also led to the taking back of the model minority status from Pakistanis.

Despite the fact that the status of Pakistanis has been severely downgraded by the dominant society, the parents and participants in this study seemed to hold tightly to their imagined and now defunct status of model minority. As such, Ismat, who was not representative of the monolithic image of a high achieving Pakistani girl that was disseminated in her ethno-religious community and by their parents, was marginalized by the community and made to feel inferior. Like sexuality (both homosexuality and overt heterosexuality), academic underachievement was largely unacknowledged in the ethno-religious communities the participants were a part of.

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the ways the participants interpreted, inhabited and resisted the messages their parents sent to them about the role of education in their lives. Although participants' parents were generally supportive of their daughters academic goal and career aspirations, the participants and their parents both confirmed and disconfirmed monolithic images of the Pakistani community. Furthermore, it

appears that the messages parents sent to their daughters about education and schooling were not only intended to motivate and ensure that their children to attain a higher socioeconomic status but also to teach their daughters to distinguish themselves their non-Muslim and American counterparts and maintain their ties to their ethno-religious communities.

Furthermore, the participants maintained a dual frame of reference in which they differentiated and contrasted their existing positions in the US from that which their parents had in their native countries. Their mothers' situations seemed to have a significant impact on the participants' expectations for their futures. Moreover, the participants' parents, particularly their mothers, were involved in their daughters' educations in both "socially sanctioned" (Lopez, 2001) and unsanctioned/non-traditional ways and emphasized the importance of formal schooling and religious education. Although the levels of strictness varied, the participants were also subject to strict social control by their parents and ethno-religious communities. As such, many of the participants internalized the notion that educational attainment would lead to freedom and independence. My findings also suggest that parents viewed underachievement and the loss of ethno-religious values as an expression of over-Americanization.

My conversations with the young women and their parents seems to support the research on immigrant youth suggests that the maintenance of certain cultural traditions often leads to higher academic achievement (Gibson, 1988; Lee, 2005; Lopez, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Waters, 1999; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). However, the maintenance of cultural traditions was not the only factor that influenced their educational achievements. None of my participants were required to work and had more

opportunities than their mothers did in Pakistan. Furthermore, they had access to more resources than their parents did in Pakistan, lived in safe neighborhoods, had parents with high expectations who were generally supportive of their goals and members of a community that expected academic success, came from middle class homes, had parents, teachers, peers and/or siblings that were able to help them. Finally, with the exception of Jamila, the participants conformed to school rules, stayed out of trouble, which increased their chances for academic success.

CHAPTER 5

AGENCY

Over the years, I have become increasingly troubled by the mainstream media and academy's insistence on the idea that young Pakistani Muslim women who inhabit the social norms of gender and sexuality of their ethno-religious communities, lack agency. Although norms are socially constructed, constantly in flux and negotiated in a variety of ways, they are generally understood as static and specific to ethno-religious communities (much like culture, race and identity are understood). What is more, the issues facing Pakistani Muslim women are often oversimplified by the academy and media who paint them as *either* complicit in their oppression *or* as liberated because they are resistant to their parents' ethno-religious communities/beliefs. Dominant representations of Pakistani and Muslim women not only position them as the victims of their ethno-religious and cultural communities, but also assume that they are all the same. In short, such representations often fail to capture the complexity of the lives of Pakistani and Muslim women as well as the diversity that exists among the women. What is more, such discourses tie the agentive capacity of young Pakistani and Muslim women to their ability to resist the messages sent by their inherently oppressive families and ethno-religious communities. Therefore, the young Pakistani women who inhabit those norms are often perceived and portrayed as the victims of their ethno-religious communities. In short, the dominant discourse portrays these young women as oppressed by interpreting their lives, desires and experiences through western feminist, secular and assimilationalist reasoning. However, Holland (2003) and Mahmood (2003) argue that agency and resistance to norms should not be conflated and thought of as one and the same.

Mahmood explains that the western feminist framework conceptualizes freedom, as the consequence of her own will rather than that of custom, tradition, or social coercion.

By applying a different definition of agency that is not limited to acts of resistance to religion and cultural norms, we can grow our understanding of this community and communities like this one. My research highlights the way young people are interpreting assumptions made about them by members of their ethno-religious communities and the dominant group; groups who fail to understand the complexity of their identities. I went into the field with the assumption that these young women, like all people, were agentive in their own lives despite the barriers to empowerment that they encountered in the dominant society as well as their ethno-religious communities. I wanted the participants to have an opportunity to address their feelings about how they are perceived by the dominant society and members of their ethno-religious community and a space to share their thoughts about the reality and impact of these messages. I discovered that they conceptualized agency in unique ways.

In this chapter, I take a different approach to analysis than I did in the first two data chapters in that I focus on two young women, Batool and Mehar to elucidate my points. I decided to do so because I feel that it will provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the young women. I chose to focus on Batool and Mehar because they represent the diversity that exists within and amongst young Pakistani Muslim women not only in terms of life experiences and beliefs but also in terms of the way they have chosen to navigate and interpret the various messages they have received. I begin the chapter with a review of the literature on agency, by Dorothy Holland and Saba Mahmood. Next, I present the stories of Mehar and Batool. In the first case study, I

looked into the way Mehar interpreted and embodied the messages she received from her ethno-religious community and family about honor and sexuality. In the second case study, I concentrated on the way that Islam informed Batool's beliefs and expectations for career, family, and future. I conclude by using Holland et al and Mahmood's notion of agency to problematize the dominant conceptions of truth that standardize experiences across gender, ethnicity, and religion and analyze the ways Mehar and Batool inhabited the messages they received from their parents and ethno-religious communities. While I primarily focus on the messages they received from their ethno-religious communities in the case studies, however I briefly analyze the way Mehar and Batool resisted the messages they received from the dominant society by inhabiting the norms of their ethno-religious communities in the discussion of the case studies.

Conceptualizations of Agency

There is a vast body of work on the concept of agency. In this section, I will focus on Dorothy Holland et al and Saba Mahmood's conceptualizations of agency. Further considered in my analysis is the work of Judith Butler and Foucault around agency as discussed in both Holland et al and Mahmood's work. I will start with Holland et al's discussion on identity, agency, and culture.

In their book, Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds, Holland et al. (2003) mention two key debates within anthropology (and psychology) that have significantly affected their conceptualization of the notion of agency. I will begin my analysis of their work by briefly outlining these debates. As I mentioned earlier, since the mid-twentieth century, anthropologists have deliberated the meaning, value, and use of the cultural concept in social science research.

Anthropologists, psychologists and other social scientists/theorists concerned with issues of identity and human behavior have been engaged in an equally polemical debate about the impact culture has (or does not have) on peoples actions and possibilities. According to Holland et al., culturalists believe that behavior follows cultural principles while constructivists believe that behavior involves the acting out (or refusal) of subject positions. The culturalist argument is rooted in the belief that "behavior follows cultural principles; it falls in line with heartfelt moral precepts that transcend the actual people with whom one interacts and the actual situations surrounding those actions" (p. 14). Conversely, constructivists believe that behavior is "pushed into line by relations of power and influence that obtain in the venues where, and among the particular people with whom, one interacts" (p. 14). However, Holland et al assert that accounts of culture that ignore the importance of social position, "surreptitiously participate in the silencing of those who lack privilege and power" (p. 25). Nevertheless, Holland et al. do not totally reject the culturalist position and maintain that, "culturally constructed moral worlds…have a persuasion of their own" (p. 14). Despite Bourdieu's argument that the culturalist position cannot encompass the constructivist position, Holland et al.'s perspective attempts to move beyond and build upon the culturalist and constructivist position using dialogic perspectives, such as Bakhtin's notion that humans tend to embrace "a number of views in virtual simultaneity and tension" (p. 15).

The second debate within anthropology and psychology, highlighted by Holland et al., focused on the notion of self. According to Holland et al., universalists assigned theoretical priority to the "natural self" and believed that "culture is subordinate to universal properties of human psychology"; while culturalists submitted that culture

shapes the self in profound ways (p. 21). However, Holland et al explain that Foucauldian and related understandings, otherwise referred to as discourse or discursive theory, provoked a new concept of self—as socially constructed. They elucidate, "as Foucault insisted, significantly for the study of culture and self, 'cultural forms' are presumed to affect and shape subjectivity, and these cultural forms come in great variety" (p. 26). Social constructivists, on the other hand, emphasize that our communications with one another not only convey messages but also always make claims about who we are relative to one another and the nature of our relationships. Furthermore, social constructivism conceives "discourses and practices to be the tools that build the self in contexts of power, rather than as expressions of stable interpretations of the world and values that have been imparted to the person through enculturation" (p. 28).

Holland et al (2003) submit that the intellectual and political climate within anthropology has decisively changed, thus the self is neither understood as a universal, identical self, nor as the static elements of cultural molds into which the self is cast. Moreover, "the self is treated as always embedded in social practice, and as itself a kind of practice" and finally, the sites of the self, or "loci of self production or self process…are recognized as plural" (p. 29). This updated conceptualization "provides a basis for a practice theory of self" and challenges anthropologists who have attempted to differentiate a western egocentric & individual self from a non-western "sociocentric or interdependent self" (p. 29). Now, persons are recognized to have perspectives on their cultural worlds that are likely to differ by gender and other markers of position. The new "ethnographers of personhood," describe "how specific, often socially powerful cultural discourses and practices both position people and provide them with resources to respond

to the problematic situations in which they find themselves" (p. 32). Nonetheless, Holland et al argue that there is an overemphasis on "subjectification by discursive practices" due to a critical disruption detailed by Foucault, that "leaves subjects left with no surplus by which to escape complete and utter domination and compliance" (p. 33). This in turn, leaves little room for agency. Conversely, Holland et al. make an effort to extend, through concepts drawn from Bakhtin and Vygotsky, the "lessons learned from anthropological encounters with self and identity" to a "cultural studies of the person" (p. 32). They attempt to resolve the critical disruption between person and position left by Foucault by focusing on the "codevelopment" of people, cultural forms, and social positions in particular historical worlds.

Holland et al.'s conceptualization of identity and agency is informed by the "Bakhtinian sociohistoric" view of the self in which "persons develop through and around the cultural forms by which they are identified and identify themselves, in the context of their affiliation or disaffiliation with those associated with those forms and practices" (p. 33). In other words, persons develop in a variety of ways in an environment that is varied but still informed by the cultural forms and practices that they are associated with and associate (or do not) themselves with. Their understanding of agency is equally shaped by Vygotsky's notion of "semiotic mediation," that humans develop qualitatively different mental functions as a result of learning to use collectively derived symbols in regulating their own behavior. Semiotic mediation is seen as tool of "agency" or tool of "gaining control over ones behavior" and the symbols of mediation are "collectively produced, learned in practice, and remain distributed over others for a long period of time" (p. 38). The process of semiotic mediation is one of "heuristic

development" (p. 40). In other words, persons develop more or less conscious conceptions of themselves as actors in socially and culturally constructed worlds, and "these senses of themselves, to the degree that they are conscious and objectified, permit these persons, through semiotic mediation, at least a modicum of agency over their own behavior" (p. 40). Furthermore, agency can only be understood when a person's "figured world" is understood. By figured world, they mean "a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular acts are valued over others…each is a simplified world populated by a set of agents who engage in a limited range of meaningful acts or changes of state, as moved by a specific set of forces" (p. 53).

Holland et al. pay attention to two forms of agency in their ethnographic research. The first form, hailed by Bourdieu as the predominant form of agency, suggests that agency lies in the improvisations that people create in response to particular situations, mediated by sensitivities toward a set of culturally devised games or contexts of actions, where there are general dispositional motives and acts and ways of faring well and faring poorly. They opportunistically use whatever is at hand to affect their position in the cultural game in the experience of which they have formed these sets of dispositions (p. 279). Holland et al repeatedly point to one example of improvisation carried out by a lower caste woman in Nepal. This woman needed to get to a second floor balcony for an interview with an anthropologist, who happened to be staying in the home of an upper caste member of the community. Although the anthropologist did not restrict Gyanumaya (the lower caste woman) from entering the home, the lower caste woman did not want to compromise the home of the upper caste member of the community by

getting to the balcony through entering on the first floor and contaminating their kitchen, or claiming a position to which she was not entitled. Therefore, she devised a solution by climbing up the outside of the house to enter the balcony. Culturalists, according to Holland et al. would overlook Gyanumaya's improvisation and focus, for example, the cultural prescriptions of caste, while constructivists would see the improvisation as a sign of positioning by powerful discourses. Either way, the unusual form of behavior Gyanumaya produced and the agentive/improvisational nature of her feat would be overshadowed by an emphasis on what was produced by culturalists and constructivists alike. Instead of looking at one or the other, Holland et al. try to see both culture and subject position at the same time. "In our vision, Gyanumaya and the rest of us, individually and collectively, are not just the products of our culture but also and critically appropriators of cultural artifacts (verbal, gestural and material productions) that we and others produce" (p. 17). According to Bourdieu's practice theory, improvisations "are sort of impromptu actions that occur when our past, brought to the present as habitus, meets with a particular combination of circumstances and conditions for which we have no set response" (As explained by Holland et al., 2003, pp. 17-18). Holland et al. elaborate on Bourdieu's idea that the improvisations of the parental generation are the beginning of a new habitus for the next generation and argue that improvisations, from a cultural base and in response to the subject positions offered *in situ*, are, when taken up as symbol, potential beginnings of an altered subjectivity, an altered identity" (p. 18).

Still, they argue that improvisations crafted in the moment are but one of the margins of agency. "Self directed symbolizations" are a second means by which a degree

of agency is made possible. According to Holland et al., Bakhtin and Vygotsky conceptualized human action in a way that avoided an asocial and acultural figuring of the world by taking both social constraints and the cultural and social contexts into account when considering how groups and individuals are able to redirect themselves. Therefore, agency should not be understood through a culturalist view, which "credits an asocial emphasis on cultural logics" or a constructivist view, "which emphasizes the calculus of social positions by actors." Rather, researchers should consider not only the means by which behavior is collectively orchestrated, but also "the ways in which creativity is collectively enabled" (p. 275). Identity and agency, they argue, develop heuristically (through investigation) and human agency, even among those who lack power, happens daily and mundanely. As Holland et al. submit, "humans' capacity for self-objectification—and through objectification, for self-direction—plays into both their domination by social relations of power and their possibilities for (partial) liberation from these forces" (p. 5). They argue that the redirection of human actors, individuals, and groups is not only possible through improvisation, but as Bakhtin and Vygotsky have argued, on the "margins and interstices" of collective cultural and social constructions. Both forms of agency "enable the creation of new worlds and new identities and make us appreciate how figured (objectified) identities become important tools with which individuals and groups seek to manage one another and their own behavior" (p. 281).

Unlike Holland et al., whose idea of agency is based on their analysis of culturalist and constructivist theories, Saba Mahmood's conceptualization of agency is informed by and builds off of the work of postructuralist scholars, Judith Butler and Michele Foucault. Central to her construction of agency is a challenge to feminist theory

and secular-liberal thought. In order to fully understand Mahmood's notion of agency, it is important to be aware of her critique of these schools of thought.

From 1995-1997, Mahmood conducted a two-year ethnography on an urban, woman-led, mosque movement (part of the larger Islamist movement) in Cairo, Egypt with the intention of analyzing the conceptions of self, moral agency and politics that "undergird" a non-liberal movement, "to come to an understanding of the historical projects that animate it" and to speak back to the "normative liberal assumptions about human nature against which such movements are held accountable." According to Mahmood, normative liberal assumptions include: the belief that all human beings innately desire freedom; that everyone seeks to affirm their autonomy when allowed to do so; and that human agency primarily consists of acts that challenge social norms as opposed to those that uphold them. Feminism becomes an essential element of secular liberal politics, in that women's freedom is seen as central to liberal values. Conversely, members of Islamist movements, like the women's mosque movement in Cairo, pursue practices and ideals embedded within a tradition that has historically accorded women a subordinate status. Mahmood explains, women's participation within the mosque movement is "critically structured by" and serves to uphold a "discursive tradition that regards subordination to a transcendent will (and thus to male authority)" (p. 3) as its goal.

Feminist theorists, in turn, commonly perceive and portray women supporters of Islamist movements as "pawns in a grand patriarchal plan" who, if freed from their oppression, would express an innate "abhorrence for the traditional Islamic mores" used to subjugate them. Mahmood goes on to explain that even theorists who are unconvinced

by the theory of ‘false consciousness,’ or the internalization of patriarchal norms through socialization, continue to frame women’s participation in Islamist movements as contradictory to their own “interests and agendas” (p. 2). Furthermore, both liberal-secular feminists and those skeptical of false consciousness of Muslim women, share the belief that there is something intrinsic to women that should prompt them to oppose the practices, values, and restriction that the Islamist movement represents. However, Mahmood argues that these theorists fail to question the history by which we have come to assume the idea that women should innately oppose these practices, values and rules is true.

Nevertheless, more recently (within the past forty years), some feminists have begun to challenge the idea of false consciousness. Because women’s subordination to ‘feminine’ traits appear to be the necessary condition for their improved role in public life, these feminists have begun to ask how women contribute to and resist their own domination. Mahmood describes these scholars as focused on analyzing religious traditions “in terms of the conceptual and practical resources they offer to women, and the possibilities of redirecting and recoding these resources in accord with women’s own interests and agendas” (p. 6). This “recoding,” represents agency.

Agency, in this sense is understood as a “feminine response to hegemonic politics” in which women use instruments of oppression as a means to assert their value and resist and set limits to their domination. Agency is analyzed by locating the moments of disruption and articulation of opposition to male authority. Such challenges to male domination are seen as an emergence of a feminist consciousness and the unintended objective effects of a woman’s actions. Therefore, agency, according to feminist

theorists, can be defined as the capacity to realize one's own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental (superior) will, or other obstacles. Feminists maintain that there is a humanist/universal desire for autonomy and self-expression that even if underdeveloped or latent, can be ignited in the form of an act of resistance when conditions permit. However, Mahmood maintains that they (feminist scholars) are too preoccupied by finding moments of resistance and attributing them to feminist politics or feminist consciousness, that are not a part of their experience. Mahmood cites the work of Abu-Lughod, who argues that instead of simply interpreting resistance as moments of opposition from dominant relations of power, it should also be understood as an indication of different forms of power. This distinction, Mahmood acknowledges, allows scholars to move beyond the binary of resistance and subordination but implies that the task of identifying an act as one of resistance is unproblematic (p. 9). Nevertheless, according to Mahmood, by not problematizing the notion of resistance, Abu-Lughod fails to acknowledge a whole range of human actions that are not socially, ethically, and/or politically indifferent to the goal of opposing hegemonic norms and not limited to the narrative of subversion and reinscription of norms. Implicit in Abu-Lughod's argument is a universality of desire that assumes that desire equals freedom from subordination and for women, freedom from structures of male domination. Using this train of thought, agency is comprehended as the same as resistance to relations of domination and an accompaniment to the universalist claim that freedom is a social ideal.

Mahmood maintains that these assumptions are indicative of a deeper tension within feminism that can be attributable to its dual character as an analytical and politically prescriptive project. Feminism, according to Mahmood, is based on the idea

that where society is structured to serve male interests, the result will be either the neglect or the suppression of women's concerns. Furthermore, feminism offers a diagnosis of women's status across cultures, and offers a prescription for changing the condition of marginalized/oppressed women. Finally, feminism, like liberalism, perceive freedom as normative, and feminists apply critical scrutiny to those who want to limit women's freedom rather than those who want to extend it.

The liberalist notion of positive (the capacity to realize an autonomous will) and negative (the absence of restraints on one's ability to act as one wants) forms of freedom both inform feminist scholarship and link self realization with individual autonomy. The concept of individual autonomy is central to both negative and positive conception of freedom. According to liberal theory, in order for an individual to be free, her actions (however illiberal) must be the consequence of her own will, rather than that of custom, tradition, or social coercion. In other words, freedom refers to one's ability to autonomously choose her desires.

Mahmood acknowledges the global impact liberal discourses of freedom and individual autonomy have had on women, but argues for the uncoupling of the notion of self realization from that of the autonomous will by attending to the ways that these liberal assumptions (about self-realization, autonomy and freedom) have become naturalized in the scholarship on gender. She highlights the attempts some feminists have made to redefine autonomy "so as to capture the emotional, embodied, and socially embedded character" of women through their critiques of the liberal notion of autonomy. Postructuralist theory, for example, locates its critique of autonomy within a larger critique of the misleading character of "the rationalist, self-authoring, transcendental"

(supernatural/idealistic) "subject assumed by Enlightenment thought" (the idea of eventual progress) and liberal belief. According to postructuralists, the universal scale and authority assumed by rational thought is protected by its exclusion of "all that is feminine, emotional, non-rational, and intersubjective" (used by a number of persons) and this "cannot be conceptually or valuably recovered but must be thought through the very terms of discourse" of abstract thought that goes beyond the ordinary limits (metaphysical transcendence) "that enacts these exclusions" (p. 12). Mahmood's argument for uncoupling the notion of self-realization from the autonomous will is informed by postructuralist critiques of the transcendental subject, voluntarism, and repressive models of power. Nonetheless, she disagrees with the tendency within postructuralist feminist scholarship to conceptualize agency in terms of subversion (resistance) to or resignification (making new meaning) of social norms. She goes on to say that the normative political subject of postructuralist feminist theory continues to be a liberatory one, whose agency is conceptualized on the binary model of subordination and subversion. In doing so, Mahmood contends that poststructuralist feminist scholars omit dimensions of human action whose ethical and political status does not map onto the logic of repression and resistance and are bound to other reasons and histories (p. 13).

In order to grasp these neglected dimensions of human action, Mahmood suggests that it is crucial to detach the notion of agency from the goals of progressive politics. According to Mahmood, if the desire for freedom or subversion of norms is not an innate desire that motivates all beings and the ability to affect change in the world and in oneself is historically (what constitutes change) and culturally (the means by which it is affected) specific, then the meaning and sense of agency cannot be understood in advance, but

must be understood through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being. As she proposes, "what may be a case of deplorable passivity from a progressivist view, may actually be a form of agency, but one that can only be understood by undertaking the discourses and structures that create the conditions of its enactment." Agentival capacity therefore, is "entailed not only in those acts that resist norms, but also in the multiple ways in which one inhabits norms" (p. 15). Mahmood goes on to say that the terms people use to organize their lives are not simply a gloss for universally shared assumptions about the world and ones place in it, but are actually constitutive of different forms of personhood, knowledge, and experience. Therefore, we cannot treat as "natural and imitable only those desires that ensure the emergence of a feminist politics" (p. 15). Instead, Mahmood proposes a critical vigilance, on the part of social scientists, against the omissions that any process of translation entails. Her goal is not to justify that tradition nor argue for some essentialism or cultural relativism, but rather to take a step toward explaining the power that a discourse proclaims (p. 17).

In an effort to further unpack Mahmood's theoretical framework, it is essential that we consider the work of postructuralist theorists Judith Butler and Michele Foucault (as analyzed by Mahmood), both of whose ideas are pivotal to her conceptualization of agency. According to Mahmood, central to Butler's work is Foucault's discernment of power. According to Foucault, power should be understood as a "strategic relation of force" that permeates life and produces new forms of desires, objects, relations and discourses. Furthermore, because it is not something that individuals own and position themselves according to, power does not precede the subject. In other words, the subject is produced through power relations. Consequently, "the very process and condition that

secure a subjects subordination are also the means by which she becomes a self conscious identity and agent" (p. 17). As Mahmood goes on to explain, Foucault's understanding of power and subject formation "encourages us to conceptualize agency not simply as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create and enable" (pp. 17-18).

Enlightened by Foucault's notion of power and subject formation, Butler argues that there is no "prerepresentational sex (or material body) that is not already constructed by the system of gender representation" (p. 18). Put plainly, Butler argues that the notion of gender *and* the sexed, material body are constructed though what she calls performativity, or the reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains. When heterosexual norms are consistently and repeatedly acted out, it produces the "appearance of gender as an abiding interior depth" and on the other hand, the "factuality of sexual difference" which as Butler submits, strengthens the essentialness of heterosexuality. According to Mahmood, unlike feminist scholarship that has treated norms as social impositions that construct the individual, Butler argues that norms are the necessary ground through which the subject is realized and comes to enact her agency. Moreover, Butler argues that subjects are produced not only by discursive logics which are discernible (speakable, signifiable, and intelligible) by the subject, but also discursive logics that are beyond the description of and not understandable to the subject. For Butler, agency is the capability for performativity to be repeated and is grounded in the "essential openness of each iteration and the possibility that it may fail or be reappropriated" for purposes other than the strengthening of norms (p. 18). If all social formations, for example sex and gender, are reproduced

through a reenactment of norms, this makes these formations vulnerable because each restatement/reenactment could possible fail. Therefore, as Mahmood explains, Butler believes that the conditions that make social formations possible are the same conditions under which they will be unraveled. Hence, agency resides within the "productive repetition" of doing and undoing of social norms.

Although she recognizes the inescapable relationship between the stabilization (strengthening) of norms and the destabilization (weakening) of norms, Mahmood argues that Butler's discussion of agency continues to focus on "operations of power that resignify and subvert norms" (p. 21) because her theorization of agency is based on a "radical democratic politics" that sets as its goal, to disrupt the discourses of gender and sexuality. However, according to Mahmood, "norms are not only consolidated and/or subverted, but performed, inhabited and experienced in a variety of ways" (p. 22). Moving beyond an "agonistic and dualistic framework" of doing and undoing and consolidation and subversion, Mahmood thinks about the variety of ways in which norms are lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for and carried out. In order to do so, she claims that researchers must explore the present or "immanent" forms a normative act takes, the model of subjectivity it assumes such as "articulations of emotion, reason & bodily expression" and finally the kind of authority upon which a normative act is dependent upon. For instance, the majority of the participants in Mahmood's study associate the norm of modesty with the bodily form it takes, in this case the veil. Therefore, the veiled body becomes the necessary means through which the norm of modesty is created and expressed. Conversely, secularists believe that the veil is an unnecessary element in the enactment of modesty. Instead of focusing on how the norm

of modesty is subverted or enacted, secularists and the members of the mosque movement focus on how the norm of modesty is lived and inhabited. According to Mahmood, not paying attention to the present forms norms take, and inquiring into the attachments their particular structure or form generates within the "topography of the self" has led to a lack of understanding of movements, particularly Islamic movements, that "reduces their complexity to the tropes of resistance" (p. 25).

Unlike Mahmood and Holland, whose conceptualization of agency was based on research that was conducted in Egypt and India, countries that are significantly less ethnically and religiously diverse, my work focuses on the children of Pakistani immigrants living in the US. I am not, of course, proposing that there is not ethnic and religious diversity in India and Egypt, because Mahmood's work with the women's piety movement shows that secularism is also embraced in Egyptian government and society. However, the messages about gender and sexuality that young Pakistani women living in the US encounter in their ethno-religious communities are often vastly different than the messages they receive from the institutions that they inhabit in the dominant society, unlike the participants of the piety movement, in Mahmood's study, who garnered some support for their efforts by the dominant institutions in Egyptian society like the media, schools, and the government. In short, the norms of sexuality and gender that have been constructed by the ethno-religious communities that Mehar and Batool are members of, often divert from the norms around and about sexuality and gender that have been constructed by the dominant US society. They are members of two communities (the dominant US society and their ethno-religious communities) that define themselves against each other. Nonetheless, like Mahmood and Holland, I also argue that agency

should not be understood as simply the resistance to norms, but also the inhabiting of norms.

Mehar

The conversations I had with Mehar were some of the most candid and powerful conversations I have ever had with a young person, or an adult for that matter, including the other participants I spoke to. In one of our last conversations, I remember saying goodbye to Mehar, closing the door behind her, and then bursting into tears at the information that she had just shared with me. When someone shares the intimate details of their life with you, how can you help but not become emotionally invested in that person, particularly if they are a young person that you see so much of yourself in? Our struggles, though different, were similar in that we both valued our relationships with our parents and wanted to cause the least amount of harm to them regardless of the sacrifices we would have to make. We had become so close in such a short period of time and she was no longer one of my participants, but rather someone I saw as a younger sibling. Someone I wanted to advocate for and support. I saw much of myself in Mehar and struggled with my role as a researcher/excavator when she shared the details of her life and her struggles with me. There were multiple times when I asked Mehar if she wanted me to exclude certain parts of our conversation because I wanted to make sure she was ready to share this information with me. However, Mehar seemed invested in the idea that she was doing this research because she felt like she wanted to share her perspective, one that is purposefully ignored, hidden and marginalized by the members of our ethno-religious communities and I support her in her effort. Like the other participants, Mehar recognized the need to speak out about issues that affect people like her and told me on

multiple occasions that "if this is gonna help what you are trying to do, then I'll be more than happy to spill it." Mehar, saw her participation in this research project as a form of action, and as a result was willing to divulge information about herself that she had never shared with another Pakistani person other than her sibling. All of these young women opened their lives up to me and put their trust in me that I would make sense of their lives in a way that represented them with respect.

The first time I had a conversation with Mehar, I realized that she was nothing like the young woman I remembered her to be. Although Mehar is significantly younger than me, my mother was friendly with Mehar's mother and so I witnessed Mehar's transition from childhood to adolescence while I was living in California. For the six years I was living in New York, I had minimal interactions with most members of my ethno-religious community in Southern California, and did not see Mehar again until I recruited her to be a part of this research project. When I left California, Mehar was an adolescent, and when I came back to California to conduct my research, she was an adult who I no longer could recognize. Although I didn't know most of the participants before I interviewed them, I did remember Mehar. I cannot recall a conversation I had with Mehar when she was a child, but I do remember that she was an adorable, shy, hijabi girl, who always sat next to her mother at the mosque and had a semi-permanent scowl on her face. However, the Mehar I interviewed and got to know hardly resembled the little girl I remembered her to be. She no longer wore hijab, was quick witted and brilliant.

Mehar grew up in a small suburb in southern California. She went to a high school that she described as predominantly "White, rich and upper class." Mehar, on the other hand, grew up in a middle to lower middle class neighborhood, but was able to

attend her high school because her mother worked for the district. Unlike the other participants, neither of Mehar's parents completed their college education in Pakistan but had some college in the US. Mehar described her parents as "conservative and religious."

Like the other young women I interviewed, Mehar had high career and academic expectations and aspirations for herself. However, of the eight participants, Mehar was the only one who attended a college outside of California. School was something she enjoyed and came easy to her. She graduated high school and college with honors and received a prestigious scholarship that would allow her to study and live abroad after graduating college. Her parents were extremely supportive of her education and high academic expectations and aspirations for her, but like the other young women's parents, wanted Mehar to attend a local university after graduating from high school. Mehar's parents struggled with the fact that she was going away to college because, as she explained, they believed that it could negatively affect her if she wasn't under their guidance and alone. Her parents eventually allowed her to attend a university outside of California because they were offering her more financial aid than any of the other schools she had applied to.

Mehar told me that going off to college, studying abroad and traveling to different countries was something that she enjoyed doing and it allowed her to become more confident live her life without the pressure of her parents and having to worry about what the community would say.

Hijab and Faith

When Mehar was 9, a relative suggested that she and her mother start wearing the hijab. At that time, she refused but later started wearing the hijab at the age of ten. I asked Mehar why she initially refused to wear the hijab but then later decided to wear it:

> I started wearing the hijab partly because my mom asked me to. I didn't really know why I was wearing it. I listened to the other girls talk about their reasons for wanting to wear hijab and it was so powerful. They really knew that this was something they wanted to do and fully knew what they were exactly getting into and I felt like I was just doing it to please my parents basically and a few years down the line, I even thought about it and I feel like subconsciously I did it out of a fear of God because the day after I said I was not going to wear hijab, I got into a massive car accident and I was the only one who was hurt. And so as a kid, I felt like I just kinda started internalizing that thing, that fear like 'I'm doing this because look what happens if you say no.

However, her decision to continue wearing hijab was not just influenced by her fear of what would happen if she stopped wearing it, but also her desire to maintain her image as a hijabi and her parents respect in their ethno-religious community:

> I was very much like these are my strict rules, I have an image to maintain and I need to maintain this at all times, sort of just like stick it with it. I contemplated taking it off for years but never had the sort of guts to do it because I was afraid of well my parents have this standing and respect in the community and I have this image of always wearing the hijab, being the quiet girl sitting in the corner. Like I'm a poster child for this thing, so I always felt like I needed to keep it up.

Nevertheless, in high school, Mehar began to notice that the hijab became the only thing that defined her and so she began defining herself in a new way by "being the only hijabi to do theater, or being the only hijabi at the time to do speech and debate, or being the only hijabi that didn't hang out with the other hijabis." In other words, the hijab defined the way the members of the dominant group defined her.

Mehar went on to tell me that she decided to stop wearing hijab after her first year of college. I asked her what the catalyst was to her deciding to no longer wear hijab and

she explained that her decision to take off her hijab in college was based on the fact that her relationship with her faith had changed and therefore her intention regarding wearing the hijab had changed.

> Somewhere down the line when I felt like talking it off, I realized that I don't even know why I started. And I realize that it doesn't even matter why I started, your intentions can change over time and at that point I couldn't even pray five times a day, I couldn't read the Qur'an without being like, I don't do any of those things, why am I wearing the hijab? I am a horrible representation of Islam. Like I just feel like I had started blaming it so much for everything. Like I just wanted to be invisible. I guess I don't like sticking out all of the time. I guess I just spent so much of my life letting it define me or letting myself be influenced by my religion or my faith that I just felt like, I just feel like I need some time to like live without constantly having to assess myself like 'am I gonna burn, or am I gonna rejoice?' I just wanted a change in my life and the biggest change I could think of was stopping wearing hijab.

Religion, according to Mehar, "had just become a point system."

> I was just like so if I do this then I'm gonna get this many points and if I do that then I'm gonna get that many points and it's just like there was gonna be a scale at the end of my life and I was just gonna be like, 'so how many points tallied up' kinda thing. So I just felt like I needed to stop doing that.

Despite the fact that her relationship with her faith had changed, Mehar continued to refer to herself as Muslim over the course of our conversations and mentioned that although she did not pray five times a day anymore, she still felt like she was a spiritual person.

Izzat

Mehar also expressed her frustration and anger about being judged by her ethno-religious community for talking off the hijab and attending an out-of-state school. She also mentioned pressure she felt from her parents and community members to maintain an appearance as a "good Muslim girl" (i.e., a young woman who does not engage in

premarital sex, a woman who dresses conservatively). Throughout our conversations, Mehar frequently spoke about the idea of maintaining an appearance in the community and the concept of *izzat*.

Izzat comes from the Arabic word *izzah*, meaning glory. Maintaining the reputation of oneself and one's family (especially women) is part of the concept of *izzat*. According to Shah (2010) izzat can be loosely defined as “family honor” (p. 38). She goes on to explain that women and girls are expected to maintain the honor of the family, community and almost everyone else through a continuance of an “honor code” that is often defined by men. However, Shah reminds us that various interpretations of this moral code are structured differently in different Muslim societies. Shah explains, “the great emphasis on values of modesty and chastity in Islam is often constructed socially as gender-specific.” These values are linked to family honor or *izzat* and “women are made into bearers of these values” (p. 39). The concept of *izzat* draws from the Qur’anic teachings, but in practice, it is defined by cultural systems (Shah, 2010).

Unlike Shah, Mehar defined the concept of izzat in a non-gender specific way as “just basically honor.” She went on to tell me that many of the choices she and her parents had made in their lives were based on the responsibility they felt to maintain the honor of their families in their ethno-religious communities.

> I just feel like the community I have grown up with has been very judgmental and um, it’s always apprehended me in what I want to do or what my parents wanted to do with their lives because they’re constantly thinking about izzat and this goes like before they had kids, this goes with their own relationships, relationships with their families, like it’s always maintaining an appearance.

She went on to tell me that her parents were married before they were able to realize their educational goals because of the pressures they felt to maintain their family’s

honor, or *izzat.* Although her mother often lamented the fact that she wasn't able to pursue her academic and career goals because of the pressures she felt to get married and maintain her family's *izzat*, Mehar mentioned that her parents expected their children to make decisions that wouldn't compromise their honor and their family's honor in the larger community. For example, Mehar told me that although her parents were extremely proud of her educational achievements and had a great deal of trust in her, they were also a bit apprehensive to allow her to attend an out of state school because of the way they and she might be perceived by their ethno-religious community. Although it didn't stop her from taking off the hijab or attending a school out of state, Mehar admitted that she often thought about what the community would think when making big life decisions:

> It's like this whole sense of community and like izzat has been drummed into me by my parents, so I always have to consider like what the community is thinking of me so when I made this like really big life decision, that for me was really big to move out and go away to [university], I automatically felt like what's the community thinking after I felt like what my parents were thinking, or maybe even more than my parents. Like 'what's the community gonna say? What are people gonna say?' cause like that's always been my mom's excuse for anything I'm doing like you have to think about like what people are gonna say. I just feel like everyone's putting up like this fake appearance that we're all perfect little nuclear families without our extended families living here or abroad and like we're all religious and we're all like still maintaining our faith despite living in America type of thing. But there are a lot of issues that are underneath the surface and we're all hiding behind this battle cry of *izzat.*

I don't think that Mehar was suggesting that "hiding behind the battle cry of izzat" was something specific to the diaspora, because as she mentioned earlier, her parents also were taught to consider their family's honor when making decisions about their lives in Pakistan. However, I do think that there is an extra pressure for young Pakistani Muslim women, like Mehar, and their families who are living in the US to maintain their izzat and the izzat of their families because American culture and values around family and

sexuality are often perceived as vastly different than Pakistani culture and/or Muslim values by Pakistani's living in the US.

Sexuality and the Risks of Coming Out

According to Mehar, sexuality, particularly homosexuality amongst South Asian Muslim youth was an example of a "contemporary issue" that went largely unaddressed by the members of her ethno-religious community, except in cases when it was being condemned. In a previous interview, Mehar and I spoke about the fears that parents in the community had about raising their children in the US and she mentioned that a few of her friends in the community had become estranged from their parents after telling their parents that they were gay. However, in our final interview, directly after our conversation about izzat, Mehar revealed that she was not actually talking about her friend, but rather about her sibling, Faraz, who recently told his parents that he was gay.

As I reflect on her decision to share this information from me, I cannot help but think that if I was in Mehar's position, I don't know if I would have had the courage Mehar had to admit this to a member of our ethno-religious community because of the widely held heteronormative and homophobic beliefs that are perpetuated in our community. In fact, I cannot think of any openly gay members of my ethno-religious community or any Pakistani Muslim parents who have openly shared the fact that their children are gay in my ethno-religious community. One of the reasons for this, as Minwalla et al (2005) explain, "contemporary Muslim scholars contend that all humans are 'naturally' heterosexual; accordingly, homosexuality is considered a sinful and a perverse deviation from a person's true nature. All Islamic schools of thought and

jurisprudence consider homosexual acts to be unlawful, but each differ in terms of penalty—from severe punishment to no punishment warranted" (p. 114).

Mehar told me that Faraz knew that his parents would not support his lifestyle because they believed that homosexuality was a sin. Nevertheless, Faraz decided to come out to his parents because he wanted to be honest with them:

> Faraz wanted to include them in his life, this is his life and this is like a part of him and he really likes to share everything with them, like before he told them that he was gay when we were in high school, he told them that 'oh yeah, you know, I just went out drinking with my friends' like he was really open about things. He was like 'I don't want to lie to you' and I on the other hand am like no way, I'm never gonna tell my parents that I'm gonna go out and party now, I would never do that. That's where we're completely different. But just that blatant honesty with our parents, I really admire Faraz for that.

I asked Mehar how her parents felt about the fact that Faraz was gay and she told me that they "felt like they did something wrong." She went on to say that they felt like Faraz became gay after he moved out of the house to go to school because "apparently during that period when he wasn't under their guidance." While her parents spoke to him "on good days," and Faraz had come home to visit "a few times," her father refused to visit him at his home. Furthermore, her parents' concerns about maintaining their family's izzat and their fears about "what people would say," if they found out that Faraz was gay, Mehar explained, was what prevented her parents from accepting him.

> It's like this whole concept of izzat is what keeps my parents from like accepting him because it's not really about religion. I've already ruled that out because it's about maintaining their societal image, like what are people going to think?

She went on to tell me that she thought her parents would have had a different perception of Faraz if he would have taken his studies seriously and been more financially secure, instead of working odd jobs. She explained:

> if he could show them that he's a responsible adult then like I think they would have a different perception of him and him being gay wouldn't be the soul thing that they see when they see him, because they would see that he would be successful

Mehar's parents discouraged her from going to visit Faraz because they thought that she would be influenced by his lifestyle. Nevertheless, Mehar told me that she supported her brother:

> I'm full forward on Faraz's side and they know that and they know that they can't talk to me about what their opinions are because it'll just end up with both of us yelling at each other that "you're ignorant" and "you're irreligious" or something like that. I feel like a lot of our interactions are pretty superficial. We can't really discuss or talk about anything, I don't talk to them about anything besides like 'let's play a game or 'let's watch some TV.' But when it comes down to it, our core beliefs are so different. Like theirs are hinged upon religion or hiding behind religion, rather. I'm like 'do you really think his being gay is such a big deal or do you think he's gonna go to hell for this?' I can't have any serious discussion with them because then it's just like 'oh wow, we must have raised you wrong because you have different beliefs than we do.' But we both have our own views and um we might just end up taking that to the grave.

I asked Mehar if Faraz's coming out affected her in any way and she told me that it not only affected her relationship with her parents, but also the future she imagined for herself. She explained that his decision to do so made her feel like she would have to get married and have children, despite the fact that she was not sure if she wanted to do so, because this would ensure that her parents to had at least one child that followed "the right path." When I asked Mehar why she wasn't sure if she wanted to get married or have children, she took a moment to respond. I sensed that I the question I asked had made her uncomfortable and so before she was able to respond, I told her that she had the right to "pass" on any questions and asked her if she wanted to take a break from our conversation. She told me that she was fine, took a deep breath and said:

> But it also affects me because um, I'm actually bisexual, and I have dated girls and it makes it really difficult because as soon as I get into a serious relationship

> with one of them, and it's obviously easier when I'm at school, but like I shut it down because I'm like 'well this isn't gonna go anywhere

Although school had "a big impact" on shaping her ideas about sexuality and gender, Mehar told me that she knew she wasn't straight before she went away to school. She went on to explain that she just wasn't very open about it because she was a hijabi girl who came from "a really conservative family."

> I would just admire boys and girls from afar and I knew what I felt for girls was like the same sort of attraction it was for guys, like the same level. Like I didn't really act upon it and I really stayed away from guys like for the same reason. I didn't act upon any sort of sexual attraction at all. So like when I was living away from my parents, like it would have happened like if I would have met the right person. But definitely, being in a very secure gay atmosphere helps you in like allowing you to develop your own identity.

Of the eight participants, Mehar was the only one who identified as bisexual. While the other participants didn't specifically refer to themselves as "heterosexual" they all told me that they had either been in intimate relationships with men or their desires to find male partners whom they could eventually marry.

I asked Mehar why she decided to share this with me considering the fact that no one in the community knew that either she or Faraz identified as something other than heterosexual and she explained that although she knew that she did not need to tell me, she felt like what I was doing was "really important." Furthermore, she went on to say that if she "passed" on sharing this information with me that she "would just be fueling the whole izzat thing again." She told me that she decided to tell me because she and I had a relationship that was different and went "beyond the concept of izzat." At the time, I didn't ask Mehar to explain what she meant when she said that our relationship went "beyond the concept of *izzat*," but I assume that she meant that I did not pose a

threat to her, Faraz or their family's honor because our conversations were confidential. Furthermore, in a prior conversation I had expressed my disdain for the homophobia in our community and my concerns about the lived-realities of Pakistani LGBT youth.

Mehar told me that when she came out to her brother, he was devastated. She explained that she thought it was because Faraz felt guilty about the fact that his decision to come out caused "such a big rift in the family" but also:

> because I am doing really well for myself right now, I have this education, but now I have this flaw of also being attracted to women so then Faraz was like 'No! Just no! This can't happen! Don't do it! Just stop.' And so it's like really interesting how we need to balance each other out a lot of the times.

I don't think that Mehar meant to imply that Faraz believed that she was flawed for being attracted to women but rather, he didn't want her to act on her desires because he felt that it would be doubly devastating to their parents. In fact, this was part of the reason why Mehar didn't plan on coming out to her parents. She told me that she "just prefer[ed] to keep it that way." I asked her what she meant when she said that she and Faraz need to balance each other out and she explained:

> I can't live a gay lifestyle because I need to consider what my brother is doing. It devastated my parents and we both can't fuck up in that way. If they can at least go to the grave thinking that they did something right, then who am I to begrudge them that?

Although Mehar implied that Faraz "fucked up" by coming out to his parents, she did not share her parents belief that homosexuality was wrong. In fact, Mehar believed culture, not religion, "skewed" people's views about homosexuality and told me that she thought that there was space in Islam for gays and lesbians. However, it was important for her to not further "devastate" her parents by telling them that she too was gay.

Compromise and Empowerment From the Closet?

None of the relationships Mehar had with women progressed into stable relationships because as she explained, “when things get really serious, I’m just like ‘peace, it’s not gonna work out.’” However, she thought that this wouldn’t be the case if she dated a guy. She told me that she imagined herself ending up with a south Asian guy “just by default” because, as she explained, “I can’t let my mom and dad go to their grave thinking that they’re never gonna have grandchildren or something.” Mehar told me that she would definitely marry a guy because she was queer, not gay:

> I just can’t see myself in a long term relationship with a woman just because I wouldn’t want to have the same relationship with my parents that Faraz has with them.

Still, Mehar told me that if her parents “were not part of the equation” it would change her decision to eventually marry a man. I asked her how this made her feel and she explained that her decisions weren’t based on her individual desires, but rather on the community:

> That’s what we’re based on and we do things based off of a large family structure, not just a nuclear family like ‘this is my mom and dad, and I don’t give a fuck what my grandma tells me because I don’t have to listen to her, she’s just old and senile.’

She went on to say that although she would love to give her parents “the bird,” that she would never do that because she loved her parents and it was not the way that she, like other Pakistani and/or Muslim people, are raised.

> We’re raised to consider what our parents feel, what our extended family feels about everything and I think we just have a different set of values. And if it’s better or if it’s worse, we’re just different. It’s just different. We’re based on a society that has more of a communal interest than an individual interest and maybe that’s a shortcoming of the western world

Implicit in Mehar's statement is the idea that family is not valued or as valued by the dominant groups as it is by Pakistani's. Just as the dominant society paints Pakistani culture and Islam as fixed and monolithic, Mehar, like the other participants, learned to understand American culture as one-dimensional. This underscores the pervasiveness of what Balibar (1991) and Bonilla-Silva (2011) refer to as naturalization of culture. Based on my conversations with Mehar, it was clear that she had internalized the idea that cultures are bounded, an idea that I believe was informed from her family, her ethno-religious community, her school, and the dominant society.

Mehar went on to explain that like her parents who were "forced to compromise" and marry each other because of family pressures and her mother who compromised her education for her family, she too was willing to compromise by not telling her parents that she was gay. Nevertheless, she told me that unlike her parents who had to "completely give up what they were doing to please their family" that she was not completely giving up what she was. She told me that she wasn't completely giving up who she was because she was still able to study abroad, go to school out of state and pursue her interests.

> I choose to keep certain parts of my life private. It's a little bit more work than being straight up and blunt and being like 'I'm bi, deal with it' but I just think that means we have a more considerate culture. Like we breed more caring and sympathetic people. I don't know, maybe I'm gonna take back about what I said about the community being a piece of shit, like maybe we actually had some benefit in actually considering others before just putting ourselves first

Still, she went on to say that her educational and career goals were something that she was unwilling to compromise on:

> I can't always take what they say into consideration because it's always gonna be the safe path; come back, go to med school. My mom still asks me to go to med school and I just realized that I can't keep doing that because I would be living a

> lie basically because everything I'd be doing I'd be doing it for them. Like I wore the hijab for like ten years because I was like doing it for my mom. Like I'm not gonna keep living my life because I'm doing that for my parents. Like I know where I can make compromises and this isn't something that I'm gonna compromise in and I think it's completely possible to still travel to still date the people I want to date. It's all possible to still do that and be faithful to my parents and ensure their happiness. It's just how you balance it. I don't think necessarily what I am doing is wrong and I don't think that I'm really lying to them. I'm just protecting them and they protected me in their own ways. They lied to me growing up so I feel like I only have the right to lie to them as they age (laughs).

Although she did not explicitly say why education and career were non-negotiable, I think that Mehar believed that education was something that she needed in order to be socially and economically mobile in her life. Conversely, coming out to her parents would undoubtedly negatively affect her life in that it would damage her relationship with her parents. Education was imagined and understood as a necessity, as opposed to sexuality, which was something that she could choose to compromise as a bi-sexual. As a bisexual, being with a man represented a part of her desire therefore, compromise was easier for Mehar. However, I do believe that Mehar's situation would be different if she identified as a lesbian instead of bisexual. I am not proud to admit it (because it problematizes Mehar's explanation of her own experiences), but I found myself questioning if Mehar was truly bisexual as opposed to a lesbian because she told me that if her parents were okay with homosexuality, that her decision to stay in the closet and eventually settle down with a man, would be different. In one of her case studies, Mahmood explains that some of her participants wore the hijab before they had internalized the value of modesty because they believed that through their practice, they would eventually adopt the value. Similarly, I wonder if Mehar identified as a bisexual as opposed to a lesbian as a way to train herself to learn to love a man. Nevertheless, my

conjectures are not intended to take away from the sense that she made out of her life's experiences.

I asked Mehar if she saw herself as oppressed and she told me that she was comfortable with the life she lived and she didn't mind that she was not completely honest with her parents.

> I mean if I came from a different background, like if a white girl is open about her relationships and everything with her parents, there's still aspects of her that she's not sharing with her parents. Like this is just something that I don't share with them and I don't think it hinders our relationship. In fact, it strengthens it.

She told me that her sexuality was just something they didn't need to know about:

> they wouldn't benefit from it and I see it as strengthening our relationship and I don't feel it oppresses me, it's just different. Just because someone doesn't understand it doesn't mean that they should say that 'this woman, she doesn't even know it and she's being oppressed.' It's like you don't need to give me any self awareness. I understand the consequences of my actions upon myself and upon my family and those around me. So like maybe in time, I will change the way I act or the way I interact with others but I know what I am doing is right and I know I'm doing right by me. And I don't give a fuck about what other people are saying.

As I listened to Mehar tell me that she didn't see herself as oppressed, I couldn't help but think that anyone who did not have the option of being accepted by their parents unless they complied with their beliefs was in fact oppressed. But there was also a part of me that understood where Mehar was coming from because like Mehar, many of the decisions I made in my life were based on my anxieties about how my decisions would compromise my family's izzat. For example, I often worry about how my desire to marry my partner, a man who was not born a Muslim, will influence other people's perceptions of my parents because interreligious/ethnic marriages are frowned upon in my ethno-religious community. I have frequently heard people from my ethno-religious community, including my parents, interpret a person's decision to marry 'outside of the

community' as a reflection of that persons lack of consideration for their family's honor. However, homosexuality, unlike interreligious marriage, is not merely frowned upon but rather considered unacceptable in our ethno-religious community. In fact, I know people in our community who married non-Muslims and they are still welcome to be a part of the community. However, I cannot name one person from any of the Pakistani Muslim communities that I have been a part of who is openly gay and accepted by the members of that community. It is fair to assume then that Mehar would be risking much more by exposing her homosexuality to the community and her parents than I would by marrying a non-Muslim man. While I recognize the oppressive forces that exist within our ethno-religious community and am deeply troubled by the repercussions of these forces on people like Mehar, I am hesitant to label Mehar as 'oppressed' because she doesn't imagine herself as oppressed. What is more, my conversations with Mehar show that she made a conscious choice to compromise her freedom to openly live as a bisexual woman.

Batool

The first time I met Batool was when her mother introduced us at an event at one of the mosques that I used to recruit participants. I met Batool's mother, Shirin, at the same mosque over twenty years prior when my family moved from Texas to California in the early 1990's. Shirin was one of the first people I met at the mosque but I hadn't seen Shirin since I was in my teens and had no idea that she had a daughter who was a sophomore in college. I can't say that Shirin was my friend growing up because she was a few years older than me and I always felt like I wouldn't be able to relate to girls who wore hijab, which Shirin did. Nevertheless, I always enjoyed seeing Shirin and was

happy that Batool had agreed to be a part of my research not only because she represented the ethnic diversity within the Pakistani community (Batool was of Pakistani, Indian and Euro-American descent), but also because she was the only participant I had who wore the hijab. Like Mehar's family, Batool's family lived in middle to lower middle class suburban neighborhood. Batool described her neighborhood as "mostly Latino." Batool's parents worked outside of the home.

Batool was the first participant I interviewed. This interview forced me to confront the assumptions I had made about each of the participants before I actually had a chance to sit down and talk to them. I remember pulling up to Batool's home, sitting in my car and feeling nervous about having a conversation with her. I remember the sweat on my steering wheel as I pulled up to her family's home. I remember questioning if I had worn the right outfit? Was I covered enough? I remember expecting Batool and her mother to look at me with judgment because I didn't wear the hijab, because I was 34 years old and still unmarried, living far away from my family. I remember wanting them to accept me having decided before I rang the doorbell that they did not. I remember feeling fearful.

After the interview, I sat in my car and felt excited about our conversation but also deeply concerned about the assumptions I went into our conversations with. Batool was completely different than the girl I imagined her to be. She was strong willed and determined unlike the meek, powerless caricature I had sketched of her in my mind. As much as I wrote about and talked about the problems with the western-feminist, secular, orientalist interpretations of young Pakistani and Muslim women, the more these ideas had invaded my beliefs. Prior to our conversations, the participants were mere characters

in an article, not yet made of flesh & blood. I had become so removed from the world and my community by reading about them that I had no idea that my inner thoughts resembled those of the people I am trying to disprove. The term dialogue comes from the Greek word 'dia,' meaning looking at the world through the eyes of another. I went into the interviews with the assumption that I had figured out their worlds but it was not until my first interview with Batool that I realized that their lives were vastly different that the lives I imagined for them. Ideas, although powerful, don't allow for the same humanization of people that actual dialogue allows for. It was my conversations with Batool and the other participants that allowed me to be more human and humanize my participants.

After completing high school, Batool was admitted to a number of state universities in southern California. However she decided to attend a local community college for the first two years and eventually transfer to a UC. Batool was a sophomore in college but, at the time of our first interview, was undecided about the major she wanted to pursue. During our first interview, Batool told me that she was considering English as her major because she enjoyed writing but also told me that she wanted to obtain a degree that would allow her to help people.

Unlike most of the other participants, Batool's notion of self was not based on her ethnic background but rather on her relationship to Islam and defined herself, first and foremost, as a Shi'a Muslim girl. When I asked Batool to describe herself she told me that she was "someone who makes Islam her lifestyle." I asked to explain what she meant by this and she told me that "basically, somebody who works towards, like bettering themselves every day. I would say I'm basically somebody who follows Islamic

guidelines and principles and stuff." It was also clear that Batool had close relationships to her parents and her siblings. Unlike the other participants, who were unable and unwilling to talk to their parents about the particulars of their lives, Batool told me that she shared everything with her parents.

Representing Islam…the Right Way

According to Islamic law, women are required to wear the hijab when they reach the age of nine. Although there are no statistics regarding the prevalence of hijab in the community, based on my observations, the number of women who wear hijab in the three mosques I used to recruit participants is significantly less than the number of women who do not wear hijab. As such, Batool was the only participant who did wear the hijab. Nevertheless, most of the girls and women I have observed at these mosques dress conservatively in that they do not wear clothing that reveals their legs, shoulders, or chests like shorts, tank tops or sleeveless shirts, and shirts that expose their chests. Batool started wearing hijab at the age of eight. When I asked her why she wore the hijab, she explained:

> I wore it because my mom talked to me about it. I was Islamically nine years old and it was expected of me to wear it. I knew it was a religious requirement, but you don't think that a man would be attracted to you at that age, but I felt excited because my mom and my aunt wore it and it was pretty, I was excited.

Batool did not go into detail about how non-Muslims perceived her choice to wear hijab, but she did tell me that she was seen as different at her school because she was the only girl who wore the hijab. Batool went on to tell me:

> In the beginning you don't understand. I knew Muslim girls covered for modesty, but I didn't know what modesty meant. But when I was thirteen, I understood

> that a lot of times you do things because you don't know why, but later on it's good for you. Like your choices are changed when you wear hijab. Like at school, I don't want to go to certain events because why would a girl wearing hijab go to something like that? It just really helps you make other choices. In my day to day life, people respect me. But this isn't something that completely protects me. It's not a shield, but it does help to shield me from certain things. Like when you wear the hijab, guys respect you in a different way, their complements are different.

Ironically, while we were having this conversation, a man walked by our table at a local coffee shop and told Batool that she was beautiful in Arabic. While the hijab did not shield her from the unsolicited gaze of men, Batool believed that the hijab was a symbol of modesty that served as a reminder that she was a representative of Islam.

As I got to know Batool, I realized that she was quite different than I imagined her to be. It was only after my first interview with Batool, that I realized that I had internalized many of the stereotypical ideas about "conservative" Muslim women who wore the hijab. I didn't expect that a girl who wore hijab would try out for her school's basketball team or audition for a part in the school play or be an avid gymnast and a consummate fashionista, but she did and she was. In fact, Batool was the first and only hijabi girl at her high school to play on the basketball team and star in her school's play. What I found most interesting about Batool was that that the hijab did not impede her pursuit of activities like theater and basketball because she was able to be in her school's play and play a sport without compromising her Islamic values.

> All my friends that haven't joined sports teams that wear hijab. It's kind of like, they're good at basketball but why wouldn't they join it? It's just, coz they, they're just like shy about it. They're like, 'Oh, no. I probably not gonna get picked anyways because of this.' But in reality, hijab kind of, I mean, it makes you stand out but it can make you stand out in a good way or a bad way just depending on how you want to present yourself. When I got into high school, I was like, 'Okay.' There's all these sports and all these clubs you can join, there's so much extra-curricular stuff. But then I was thinking like, 'Wait. How am I gonna do this like in hijab?' And then, that's when I was thinking about the whole

> drama thing with the play. So when I went to like audition for it, I didn't, I really didn't expect to get the part. I just did it for fun, kind of like I see if I get it. I was like, 'Oh, I was just gonna try. Just for fun.' And I ended up getting callbacks. And once I got callbacks, I was like, 'Oh, my gosh.' I was like, 'Whoa. I actually have a chance.' That's when I really got serious into this. But I remember once I got the part, then everyone like assumed I wouldn't wear my hijab or they're like, 'Oh, so we're gonna see your hair for the play?' Then I was thinking like, 'Wait. Did they think like if I got the part that's what I would have to do?' And so I remember I talked to the director and like, he literally changed parts of the play in order, if I didn't feel comfortable with it. Like he changed certain lines of the play. The whole time at the high school I never got into theater because I was so like nervous. I was like 'how will I do this as a Muslim hijabi girl respectfully?' Like, 'How would I get into this? You have to play a character.' There's not gonna be a Muslim character in a play. But so when I looked at into my senior year, he like changed the part for it to match me.

As I mentioned in chapter 3, Muslim students are often discouraged from putting difference on display. However, I was heartened by the director's effort to include Batool in the school's play. His decision, I believe, not only served as a catalytic moment for Batool in that she sent the students, parents and staff a powerful message about What is more, Shirin, Batool's mother told me that she encouraged Batool to participate in extracurricular activities not only because it would allow Batool to pursue her interests but also because it would give Batool a chance to represent Islam:

> I want Batool to go out there and make a difference, show who she is. Represent Islam the right way, the real way not what is perceived on television. You know, in a positive way. Coz that's what Islam is. It's a beautiful, positive religion. And that's what I wanted her to show.

Shirin told me that she disagreed with the way Islam and Muslims were portrayed as violent and repressive to women by the media.

As I got to know Batool, I realized that her religious beliefs informed all of the decisions she made about her life. It was clear to me that Batool had spent a lot of time thinking about her relationship to her faith and had a great deal of knowledge about Islamic laws and principles. Unlike the other participants, she didn't seem to struggle

with the fact that she couldn't date, or couldn't drink because she was invested in the idea that living a lifestyle that was based on structure and boundaries was actually beneficial for people. Batool gave me an example about a conversation she had with a security guard at her school, who asked her why Muslims were forbidden from having premarital sex or drinking:

> He said, 'but we're only human! We're just human.' And I told him 'like yeah, we're human. We're not animals! And he started laughing and he was like 'whoa! I didn't really think about it that way!

She went on to question what it meant to be humane:

> Like, what is it to be humane? It's like, one person might say it means 'to do this' and another person may be like 'well no, it means to do this' but I feel like all of the rules in Islam they have like, a basis. There's a reason behind it and it kind of helps you be as human as possible. And it puts up structure in your life and discipline and boundary that you may not notice, that we don't drink, we don't do drugs we can't have relationships outside of marriage. And in our society, a lot of the problems that we have to do with not having those boundaries.

Marriage

When I arrived at Batool's house to pick her up before our second interview, Batool and her siblings were in the kitchen. Shirin came to greet me at the door covered in flour and told me that Batool had recently become engaged. Batool, her siblings and Shirin were making sweets to take to her future in-law's home. Shirin told me that a month prior, Batool's fiancé's family, who went to the same mosque as Batool, had contacted Shirin and Batool's father to see if Batool would be interested in meeting with their son, Amir, to see if there was any potential for marriage.

Batool's parents agreed to allow them to meet and asked Batool if she was interested in meeting Amir. She told them that she would be willing to do so as long as Amir and his

parents knew that she would not consider marriage until she completed her studies at the university. Amir and his parents agreed because he, like Batool, would not be done with is studies for another two years.

The first time Batool met Amir was when he was on break from his graduate school in the Northwestern US. For the next few months, Batool and Amir got to know each other over the phone and on chaperoned meetings at a local coffee shop. A week before my second interview with Batool, she accepted his proposal for marriage and the two became engaged.

Batool later told me that, unlike some of her friends' parents, her parents never brought up marriage or "pushed" her to get married because they wanted her to complete her studies. In fact, Batool was surprised by the fact that her parents allowed her to meet with Amir, "just last year, I couldn't even to go Starbucks by myself and now they're letting me get married? I asked Batool why she thought her parents allowed her to get married and she explained:

> I think my parents gave me a good foundation to make good decisions and good choices for like the rest of my life and for my future. When it came to marriage, when it came to school, like everything. I also think it has to do with my fiancé. They found somebody that they really trust and they really like and they think that will make me happy. And he has the same values as us.

Batool told me that she accepted Amir's proposal because he was educated, respected women, and someone who she "would be able to get closer to God with." Moreover, Batool explained that she and Amir had common interests about "what you do for fun" and shared the same values and spiritual beliefs. Batool told me that she liked the fact that they would be able go to masjid [mosque] and pray together. She described him as well balanced and structured but also someone who was fun and liked to travel.

She and Amir were planning on having their *nikah* (Arabic for marriage) ceremony, in the summer. According to Islamic law, men and women are not allowed to enter a relationship until and unless the bride and the groom agree to a solemn and sacred contract known as the *nikah*. Although the *nikah* would technically qualify them as husband and wife, Batool told me that the only reason that the ceremony would be performed in the Summer would be so they could "make their relationship legitimate." Furthermore, as Batool explained, the nikah would allow her to become closer to Amir because "God doesn't put true love in your heart before the day of your *nikah*." What is more, after the nikah ceremony, they "would be able to go out without the community talking" because they would be technically married and not violating any religious rules or cultural norms.

As I celebrated the news of Batool's engagement with Batool and her family, I couldn't help but think how fast this process had come to pass and wondered if it would change her plans to finish her studies before moving out of her parents' home. She told me that getting married before the age of 25 was never part of the plan before she started talking to Amir, but maintained that even after the nikah ceremony that she would live at home with her parents until finish her studies. She told me, "I told him that 'this is not part of the plan but If you're gonna be part of the plan, then we have to be on the same path' because I can't keep changing my mind over things. Especially when it comes to school or where I live. Those are big things."

Of the eight participants, Batool was the only one who was engaged to be married. In fact, all of the other participants told me that they did not want to get married until they had graduated from college and/or graduate school, had established careers,

and were in their late twenties and early thirties. At the time of our interview Batool was 19 years old. I asked her how she felt about getting married at such a young age:

> In this society, people have relationships when they're thirteen, and you could have like fifty relationships when you're thirteen and that's okay but if you make a commitment at 19, then people are like 'Why? That's bad!' But I felt like by making a real commitment, I feel safe. You know, I've never had a boyfriend in my life and if I was in a relationship and I didn't know where it was going? Like I like to know where things are going. I like to feel secure. And even though I'm young, he's someone who understands me.

While Batool was excited about getting married, she was also nervous about her ability to fulfill her role as a wife. "I am young and there are a lot of things that I need to learn. I mean, like I am not the best cook like I still have to learn how to take care of a house and stuff and it's a lot of responsibility but it is something that we have always talked about that we're going to work on it together." Nevertheless, she told me that "knowing where she was going" in life, made her feel secure.

According to Batool, getting engaged limited the choices she had to travel and attend an out of state university, but it also allowed her to make a plan for her life, something she had a hard time doing when she was single because she had too many choices:

> When you start a relationship you have to make sacrifices. You can't be like, okay, 'but I really want to go to the Amazon and do relief work for 10 years and then come back.' It is like I could have been here or I could have been there but then I'm like 'okay, no, I'm gonna have my *nikah* in the summer. In two years, I am going to move out. He wants to live over here and my family's over here and I wanna live over here. I wouldn't apply the university in another State. It's like, so many questions I've had about me or like where I am going were answered in five seconds. I mean, if I weren't engaged, I could probably have done something else, but now that I am thinking about it, I am like "okay." It is like your choices are kind of limited but not necessarily a bad way, either. It's just, you just know.

She went on to tell me that getting engaged had also helped her to make a decision about a major. When I first interviewed Batool, she told me that was thinking about pursuing English as a major because she loved to write, but she wasn't sure if it was the right

decision because she also wanted to attain a degree that would allow her to help people. However, after getting engaged, Batool decided to major in Nutrition instead of English. She explained that it was a degree that would be conducive to her role as a mother in the future:

> When I have kids, I can definitely implement it [knowledge of her subject] inside the home, whether or not I want to take it outside of the home.

I asked Batool if she planned on working after completing her degree and she told me that she would work if she needed to support her family because her parents taught her to be "strong and prepared" in case she needed to be the caretaker of her family. Like her parents, Batool's fiancé, Amir, was extremely supportive of her educational goals but did not expect Batool to work after she graduated from college. In fact, he told her to choose degree based on her interests and "not to worry about making a lot of money." She told me that "in Islam, the women's responsibility kind of lies in the home, you know, raising the kids and the family and it's not obligatory for her to work. But I mean there is nothing wrong if she wants to work, that's her decision. And my parents have always told me that 'you can go out there and work and stuff, but at the same time, if you don't want to, you can stay home and take care of your family and stuff." Batool's vision of her future and her parent's expectations and aspirations for her life after marriage were imagined in accordance to her religious responsibilities as wife and mother. As I listened to Batool talk about life after marriage, it became clear that her role as wife and mother took precedence over her career goals.

> As a woman, once you get married, at certain times it is going to get to the point where you are going to have children and so, once it gets to that point in life I am going to be focused on my children. I am not going to be one of those moms that put my kid in daycare while I am pursuing this career because I think my main - my focus are my children. So, when I get to that point in my life, when I do want

> to have children I am not going to even think about working. I would but I prefer during that time I just want to be there for them and focus all my attention on them and on their education. Especially in this society it's like, with kids, it's like you really have to know what's going on.

Still, Batool told me that she didn't believe that working "was definitely a good thing not a bad thing," and that she would consider pursuing her career goals before she had children and after they had grown up. She emphasized the fact that her education would allow her to be a "good role model for her children," like her mother, Shirin, who had only started working because she needed to financially contribute to her family.

As I listened to Batool tell me about the future she imagined for herself, I couldn't help but feel disappointed in Batool for her decision to forgo her career for her domestic responsibilities and guilty about the fact that I felt this way. Unlike Batool, the other participants I spoke to did not imagine their career goals and desire to have a family as mutually exclusive to each other. I thought about the conversations I had with some of my female cousins in Pakistan, who excelled in their studies and had the potential to be successful career women, but instead chose to 'sit at home' and tend to their families. I remember criticizing my cousins who decided to be 'stay-at-home' mothers, feeling like I had lost respect for them because of their decisions to do so. But I realized that I condemned their choices, not because they were wrong, but rather because they were antithetical to mine. Similarly, my disappointment in Batool and my underlying judgment of her was based on the fact that her views (about the role of women, mothers, and wives) disagreed with mine. All researchers go in to the field biased. Nevertheless, as storytellers, it is implicit that we take the time to recognize our biases and explicitly state them in the work we produce.

Knowing Your Rights

I had completed my interviews with Batool but I had yet to formally interview her mother. When I arrived at Batool's house to interview Shirin, she told me that Batool had recently decided to break her engagement. Batool and her sisters were not home at the time, but Shirin told me that Batool was still quite upset about the outcome. While I did get a chance to briefly talk to Batool about her decision to break her engagement with Amir near the end of my interview with her mother, my conversations with Shirin about it were much more extensive. This is in part due to the fact that I knew Batool was still upset about her break-up, but also because it was a sensitive subject and I sensed that Shirin was uncomfortable about me talking about it with Batool.

Shirin told me that a few months after their engagement, Batool became uncomfortable with some of the conversations she was having with Amir, her fiancé. Shirin told me that a few months into their engagement, Batool began noticing a side of him that was rigid and uncompromising regarding about minor issues, like recycling, that were unrelated to Islam. At the time, Shirin told me Batool dismissed this rigidity and "chalked it up" to passion for what he believed in. As they continued to get to know each other, Batool started to feel like Amir was trying to control aspects of Batool's life that were not justifiable according to Islamic law. For example, Shirin told me that Amir wanted "veto power" over Batool's money including the way she made her money, and the way she spent her money. However, Batool told Amir that she didn't agree with that because "Islam didn't agree with it." Islamic Law dictates that women not only have the right to work and earn money but also the right to keep all of the money that they have earned which challenges the stereotypes of Muslim women having 'no' rights.

Shirin went on to say that Amir "did his research later on and he found out that 'oh, Batool right. But the point is that he did not know about that and you know that's not a good thing." According to Shirin, Batool, unlike many of the young Muslim women she knew, was aware of her Islamic rights and therefore, was able to advocate for herself. Shirin told me about a girl at her mosque whose parents had arranged her marriage without her consent, a practice that is considered illegal according to Islamic law as an example of why it was necessary for women to be knowledgeable about their Islamic rights. She went on to say that it was equally important for Muslim men to be aware of the rights of Muslim women.

Furthermore, Amir was also critical of the way that Batool dressed, despite the fact that Batool dressed according to the Islamic laws and guidelines for women.

Shirin explained:

> She came to a point where she tells him, and I was so proud of her, she said 'I follow the Sharia Law, Amir, I don't follow the Amir law. When there's an argument, you know how it's settled? It's settled by the Sharia Law. There's nothing un-Islamic about what I'm wearing, now if you told me that my clothes were too tight or too alluring or something, that's maybe a different story, but I'm allowed to wear what I'm wearing and there's gonna be a problem if you're gonna tell me that I can't do certain things that Islam allows.'

Shirin told me that when Batool was debating whether or not to pursue her relationship, she told Batool to consider not what she would gain from the situation, but rather, what she lose:

> Are you willing to give up your freedom, things that Allah has given you as rights? Because no man in this world has a right to take it away from you.

She described her daughter as a fighter and told me that she would never allow herself to stay in a situation in which her Islamic rights were compromised.

When I asked Batool how she felt, she told me that she was confident about her decision to break her engagement:

> It's not how it was back then, that if it doesn't work out you have to stick it through, it's not like the 18th century. It's not like a formula like 'man plus woman equals marriage'

I remember feeling a sense of relief after finding out that Batool's relationship with Amir had ended. I now realize that the relief I felt was reflective of the lack of faith I had in Batool's ability to make the right decisions about her life. At the time, I wasn't able see the "fighter" that Shirin described. I saw a girl who accepted the fact that she would have to ask her husband's permission before leaving the house; a young woman who did not put her religion before everything, including what I interpreted as her goals. What I didn't realize is that her ultimate goal, was not traveling the world, or being a 'supermom,' but rather, to be as true to her faith as possible. For Batool, being true to her faith included having rights that were associated with being a woman. Nevertheless, I felt relieved when Batool's decided to break her engagement, even though it was based on the same reasoning she used when explaining her role as mother and wife.

Discussion

In the case studies, I explored how Batool and Mehar interpreted and embodied the dominant messages they received (about sexuality and the gender) from their parents and ethno-religious communities and Islam. In this section, I investigate how their interpretations of these messages and lived experiences can help us make sense of the concept of agency. Both Holland et al and Mahmood suggest that everyone is agentive and conceptualize agency as the resistance to and inhabiting of norms. Nevertheless, the

dominant conceptualization of agency has been informed by a liberal feminist secular lens, which suggests that agency is synonymous with resistance to dominant norms. Thus, young Pakistani Muslim women who inhabit such norms are portrayed and perceived as lacking agency. Using Mahmood's critical reconceptualization of agency, one that delinks the concept of agency from secular progressive politics, this work seeks to explore the varied modes of agency embodied by these young women.

According to Mahmood, agency is understood and interpreted through the normative liberal assumption that suggests that people universally desire freedom, aspire to assert their independence when given the opportunity, and that agency largely entails acts that defy social norms as opposed to those that sustain them. Furthermore, women's autonomy is seen as central to liberal values. Feminists believe that there is something intrinsic to women that should prompt them to oppose the practices, values, and restrictions that subjugate them. Mahmood explains that the western feminist framework conceptualizes freedom as the consequence of her own will rather than that of custom, tradition, or social coercion. However, Mahmood argues that these theorists fail to question the history by which we have come to assume the idea that women should innately oppose these practices, values and rules is true. Mahmood goes on to suggest that the liberal-feminists imagine the agency of Muslim women as dependent on their capacity to reach the point of self-realization and reject the ethno-religious norms, customs and teachings of their families, communities and Islam. Still, this type of scholarship ignores the multilayeredness and interconnectedness of culture because power is understood in a one dimensional way. Therefore, Muslim women, like Batool and Aneesa, who inhabit ethno-religious norms like heteronormativity or patriarchy (that

do not support liberal normative assumptions about freedom and independence) are complicit in their domination and unagentive.

The lives and choices of Muslim women are understood through a deficit lens that imagines them as the oppressed victims of Islam, their ethno-religious communities, and their families. However, Mahmood argues that all forms of desire are discursively organized and how we learn to define and desire freedom is based on how we are socialized. Furthermore, structures of power, like patriarchy or heterosexism, are negotiated by different groups in different ways. Mahmood argues that we live in a patriarchal world, but maintains that patriarchy is practiced in different ways and affects the lives of women in different communities/societies in different ways. Similarly, we live in a heteronormative world where heterosexism and homophobia are practiced in different ways. The implications of this are that one's surroundings, parents, community educational background and experiences inform how we think about things like desire and freedom and this informs the norms we resist and inhabit.

Batool did not measure herself based on a liberal-progressive version of feminism that portrays/perceives young women as unagentive if they do not resist the patriarchal nature of their religious and ethnic communities. The western feminist ideal of free will was not something that Batool sought to affirm. Batool did not seek to challenge the patriarchal structure of the home or do what she wanted to do. Rather, it was important for her to do what was required of her as a Muslim woman because her beliefs and behavior were not based on the western feminist conception of free will, but instead, Islamic Law. For example, to Batool, wearing the hijab and for that matter, taking it off,

was not a choice but instead something that she was required to do as a Muslim woman. In short, she did the hijab because of something other than their personal desires.

Perhaps more than any other young Muslim woman I have ever met, Batool lived her life according to the teachings of Islam. As such, Batool accepted the fact that after marriage, she would be required to ask her husband's permission to leave the house because as a Muslim woman, it was required of her by Islam. Nevertheless, Batool also used the same Islamic laws to justify breaking her engagement because she did not want to compromise the rights she had as a Muslim woman. Accordingly, Batool's decision to break her engagement was not based on a feminist ideology, because she never referred to herself as a feminist. From liberal feminist perspective, Batool's choices can be interpreted as oppressive because she saw her position as her future husband's wife in a way that could be interpreted as oppressive by the western feminist framework. Furthermore, she could be portrayed and perceived as suffering from a false consciousness by feminist scholars. Nevertheless, Batool did not see herself as oppressed because she was not operating and basing her decisions on a western feminist framework of what it means to be free or empowered. Her notion of empowerment was only informed by Islamic laws.

Mehar's decision to keep her sexuality hidden was based on her desire to maintain her parent's izzat (not to fight against the heteronormative ideal that was perpetuated in her home and ethno-religious community) and sustain her relationship with her parents. As Mehar explained, she wore hijab so that that she would be able to maintain her parents' izzat, or honor, although she made the choice to remove it later on. Nevertheless, I struggle with how to make sense of Mehar because to Mehar, the western

feminist notion of autonomy and free will was something that she valued. The only reason Mehar was not living the life she wanted to, was because it meant that would not be accepted by her parents, not because she believed that homosexuality was wrong. Mehar explicitly said that her choices (in terms of who to be with) would be different if she thought her parents accepted homosexuality. Still, in reflecting on my conversations with Mehar, it became clear that it was more important for her to maintain her relationship with her parents and protect their *izzat* by doing hijab or hiding her sexuality, than it was for her to act on her own free will. Like Batool, Mehar sacrificed her free will for something that she valued more. As Holland et al suggest, humans embrace a number of views in near "simultaneity and tension." Mehar agreed with the western notion of empowerment as equaling freedom to make decisions about her life, but she also made choices (regardless of whether I agree with those choices or not) that diverted from the western notion of freedom and empowerment. For example, Mehar resisted her parents' desires for her to go to a local university and attended a school out of state but she also hid her sexuality from her parents because she wanted to maintain her parent's izzat. For Mehar, who identified as bi, acting on her sexuality was not a choice when she was amongst her community or her parents because maintaining her relationship to and the izzat of her family superseded her desire to be openly gay. Nevertheless, she did engage in relationships with women when she was not amongst the community in California or away from her parents. Like, Gyanumaya, the lower caste woman mentioned by Holland et al who scaled a building because she did not want to compromise the home of the upper caste member by claiming a position to which she was not entitled, Mehar devised a solution to live her life in the way that she wanted to and at the same time maintaining

her parents izzat. I want to reiterate that my interpretation of this is not intended to advocate for the homophobia that exists within the Pakistani community, but I do think it is important to recognize that one can be agentive and oppressed at the same time. In the face of a problematic situation, Mehar had come up with a way to manage her sexuality by acting on it or hiding it, depending on the context she was in. In hiding her sexuality from her parents, Mehar had conformed to the positioning that the discourse of izzat that informed the practices of the ethno-religious community and family that she was a part of. Nonetheless, Mehar's choice to repress her sexuality was not based on the beliefs she embodied, but of the social significance of izzat that was imposed upon her.

Both Batool and Mehar valued women's empowerment and education (women's rights, respect of women) but defined/understood it and enacted it differently. Mehar identified as a feminist and seemed invested in the western feminist idea that empowerment equals a woman's right to choose and maintained that she was making the choice to keep her sexuality from her parents, unlike her brother. Conversely, Batool's notion of freedom and empowerment was based on knowing her Islamic rights and having the right to uphold those rights. Batool didn't desire freedom in the secular feminist sense, but rather what it meant according to Islam. To Batool, knowing her rights was freedom.

It can also be inferred, that by inhabiting the messages they received from their ethno-religious communities that they also resisted the messages they received from the dominant society about gender, marriage and sexuality. For example, both Mehar and Batool wore the hijab, an act that is perceived by the dominant US culture as inherently oppressive to women because they are required to cover their hair and body as opposed to

having the freedom to choose what they want to wear. I do not mean to imply that the value of modesty is not embraced within the dominant culture of the US, because it is. Furthermore, it is interpreted by different ethnic, cultural and religious groups in a variety of ways depending on the social and cultural context. What is more, there is diversity within groups in terms of how they define and embody the value of modesty (including Muslims). Nevertheless, the way modesty is understood and embodied in the dominant US culture differs from the way it is understood and embodied by the ethno-religious communities that Batool and Mehar are a part of. For example, I think it is fair to assume that in contemporary Western society, a woman who wears shorts that come to her knees, is not considered to be immodest or in decent by the dominant culture in the US. However, within the ethno-religious communities that Batool and Mehar are members of, it would be considered highly immodest for a woman to expose her legs. Therefore, by deciding to wear the hijab, both Batool and Mehar resisted the messages they received from the dominant US culture about modesty. Furthermore, Mehar's decision to stop wearing the hijab can also be interpreted as an inhabitation of dominant US norms that don't require women to cover their heads.

Another example of how the young women resisted the norms of the dominant culture by inhabiting the norms of their ethno-religious community can be understood by looking at protocols and practices of courtship in the dominant US society and among Muslims. Although social rules regarding dating vary considerably according to factors social class, religion, age, sexual orientation and gender, it is fair to assume that in the US, dating is the predominant form of courtship, and like premarital sexual activity, regularly happens before marriage. However, Batool did not spend time alone with her

fiancé or engage in premarital sexual activity with him. Earlier, Batool mentioned that non-Muslim people thought it was "bad" that someone would choose to get married at a young age but did not perceive dating before marriage as problematic. In choosing not to date before marriage, it can be suggested that Batool was, in fact, resisting the norms of the dominant culture.

The last example I want to use is that of Mehar decision to conceal her homosexuality from her parents. In a conversation with Mehar, she told me that she believed that 'coming out of the closet' was a western notion. Furthermore, Mehar's decision to conceal her sexuality from her parents and ethno-religious community was motivated by the fear of rejection and conformity to the cultural norms of izzat or maintaining her family's honor. In fact, research shows that LGBT Muslim youth often choose to conceal their sexuality from their parents to maintain their family's honor (Yip, 2004). Although he recognizes that homophobia is not limited to the Muslim community, Yip (2003) asserts, "of course, there will always be voices that condemn homosexuality, and within the Muslim community they are strongly dominant" (pp. 19-21). I feel like it is safe to say that there is less public support for homosexuality within the Pakistani Muslim communities that the participants and myself are members of than there is in the dominant US society. I say this with the understanding that LGBT youth and adults continue to be the targets of widespread institutional and individual discrimination in the US. Nevertheless, it can be argued that Mehar's decision to conceal her sexuality from her parents and ethno-religious community and 'stay in the closet' was an example of her resisting a message of the dominant society; that coming out equals empowerment. Again, I do not mean to imply that coming out is safe for LGBT youth in

the US considering the statistics that show that nine out of ten LGBT youth experience harassment in schools (National School Climate Survey, glsn.org). However, her decision to inhabit the norm of *izzat* can also be interpreted as her resistance to the Western norm/notion of coming out.

Batool and Mehar's stories raise thought-provoking and complex questions about "choice" and agency. My research shows that Batool and Mehar embodied agency differently. Furthermore, they both held somewhat essentialized images of dominant US culture and that these ideas shaped their responses not only to US culture but to their own ethno-religious communities. As such, agency can be embodied by inhabiting the seemingly oppressive norms of their ethno-religious communities, as well as also a resistance to the assimilative pressures of the dominant US society. What I have come to realize is that we as researchers, have a great deal of power when interpreting the lives of other people and how we choose to use that power and interpret our findings is always subjective and informed by our own experiences, values and beliefs.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation confirms the idea that the lives, experiences and perspectives of immigrant youth are complex and multifaceted and that their identities are always in flux and ever changing. What is more, this research contradicts the cultural clash theory, which suggests that Pakistani parents are inherently obstructive to their daughter's educational and career goals. This work also challenges research (Abbas, 2002; Ghuman, 2001; Zaidi & Shuraydi, 2002) and hegemonic discourses about young Pakistani women that positions them as passive recipients of unjust cultural and religious practices which seek to oppress them. Finally, this dissertation complicates our perception of agency and choice in relation to young Pakistani Muslim women, deepens our understanding of the role of parents and ethno-religious communities in the lives of immigrant youth, and highlights the role that youth, parents, and community play in reinforcing a monolithic notion of culture. Finally, this dissertation explores the ways that seemingly paradoxical stereotypes, as members of a model minority and the victims of their parents, Pakistani culture and Islam, have informed the ways young Pakistani Muslim women identify themselves and are identified by others.

In this dissertation, I found that the young Pakistani Muslim women I worked with identified themselves in a variety of ways ranging from sect specific forms of identification (Shi'a) to ethno-national (Pakistani American) characterizations of themselves. In Chapter 1, I focused on the discourses of difference the young women engaged in and found that the participants often defined themselves in contrast to their American peers, parents, religious and not so/non-religious counterparts, and/or relatives

in Pakistan. My findings indicate that the participants (and their parents) seemed to have internalized the idea that culture is generally monolithic, static and definable and imagined cultural practices as "right" or "wrong."

As I reflect on why the young women chose to focus on difference when identifying themselves and discussing on their experiences, it seems they did so because a limited conceptualization of culture was disseminated, promoted and preserved by the public and private discursive spaces and institutions they inhabited, including (but not limited to) their schools, families, and ethno-religious communities and the media. For example, in Chapter 1, I found that the majority of participants, including Aneesa, Nafeesa, Noor, Ismat, Batool, Jamila, defined themselves against Pakistani and Muslim youth and adults whom they saw as "un-modern" or "backwards" because their experiences in schools and the in larger society "taught them that an immigrant status was a stigmatized status" (Lee, 2005, p. 54). Nonetheless, the participants (and their parents) also defined themselves against American culture or society, which they imagined as contrary to their ethno-religious communities values of modesty, *izzat* or family honor, and hard work/academic achievement because their experiences at home and in their ethno-religious communities taught them that their status as Americans/life in the US compromised their 'Muslim-ness,' their 'Pakistani-ness,' more specifically their family values, social status and gender roles.

The institutions that the participants inhabited promoted the notion of "differentialism" (Balibar, 1991) or the "biologization of culture" (Bonilla-Silva, 2011) by defining themselves against each other to in an effort to promote their own agendas. For example, institutions, like schools and the government, define Asian students against

Black and Latino students through the perpetuation of the model minority myth in an effort to promote the value of meritocracy which suggests that we all, regardless of race, religion, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, migration history and gender (to name a few), 'start from the starting line' and have equal opportunities to succeed. This strengthens the case for a one size fits all curriculum, which, as we see, has resulted in the rapid privatization of schools, and frees institutions from assuming responsibility for the social, educational, economic, and health disparities youth and adults from socially and economically marginalized communities face. In other words, the model minority myth, which emphasizes difference, is strengthened by the denial of difference (meritocracy). On an aside, by naturalizing the difference between Islam and the West, the government, the justice system and local law enforcement agencies, are able to justify federal (Patriot act, the global and domestic 'war on terrorism'), state and local policies (surveillance of Muslim students) that have led to and are currently resulting in the pilfering of resources from and massacre of innocent peoples in Muslim countries, as well as the subjugation of Muslims in the US.

Furthermore, this research suggests that the participants' families and ethno-religious communities defined themselves against the dominant US society in part because, I assume, they were cognizant of their subjugated social status in the US, but also because they felt that it would allow them to promote their ideas and agendas and preserve their values. For example, in my conversations with the participants and some of their parents, I learned that parents perpetuated the naturalization of culture by emphasizing what they imagined as the 'social ills' of the dominant American society, like sexual promiscuity, immorality, individuality and academic underachievement. My

research shows that the participants' parents and members of their ethno-religious communities often presented Pakistani and Muslim value systems as mutually exclusive to American culture and values. It seems that the purpose of these discourses of difference was to promote their [parents] notions of modesty, *izzat* or family honor, communality, and preserve their collective, familial and individual social status, their Islamic values, and their daughters' sexuality. Nevertheless, when parents, youth, and communities promote the naturalization of cultural difference, they are, in essence, submitting to the idea of absolute difference (that their culture can be essentialized), which in turn is used against them by institutions, as Balibar suggests (2005) who justify otherness and exclusion through the logic of cultural differentiation.

As indicated in the previous chapter through the experiences of Mehar and Batool, the participants also challenged and/or embodied the pressures to conform from the dominant society, their families, and ethno-religious communities and in doing so were agentive. For example, Mehar's decision to keep her sexuality hidden was based on her desire to maintain her parents' izzat (not to fight against the heteronormative ideal that was perpetuated in her home and ethno-religious community) and sustain her relationship with her parents. Nevertheless, as I mentioned earlier, Mehar's decision to participate in this research project was motivated by her desire to expose a need for dialogue within her community. Therefore, it can be argued that by making the decision to reveal her identity as a bisexual woman in this research project, Mehar also challenged (albeit anonymously) the heteronormative rhetoric promoted by her ethno-religious community. Moreover, as a hijabi, Batool resisted the assimilative pressures of the dominant society.

Furthermore, the messages parents sent to their daughters about education and schooling contradict the research on Pakistani women and theories of cultural clash that suggests that Pakistani parents are inherently obstructive to their daughters educational and career goals. My conversations with the participants and their parents show that the participants' parents supported their educational aspirations and expressed high expectations for their academic achievement. This research also found that the participants and their parents had dual frame of reference in which they differentiated and contrasted their existing positions in the US from that which their parents had in their native countries. Moreover, the participants' parents, particularly their mothers, were involved in their daughters' educations in both "socially sanctioned" (Lopez, 2001) and unsanctioned/non-traditional ways and emphasized the importance of formal schooling and religious education.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The purpose of this dissertation was multifold. My intention was not only to understand the messages young Pakistani Muslim women received from their parents, ethno-religious communities about the role of education in their lives but also to understand how they made sense of those messages. Essentialist interpretations of Pakistani culture and Islam limit a critical understanding of their relationships with their ethno-religious communities, family, the dominant society and Islam and our understanding of their agentive capacities. In this dissertation, I attempted to highlight the multifaceted and discursive nature of Pakistani culture, as well as the resolve and

agentive nature of young Pakistani Muslim women. In my work, I found that there were multiple points at which the beliefs, ideas and behavioral patterns of Pakistani youth converged with their parents, non-Muslim/non-Pakistani peers, and members of their ethno-religious communities, but there were also multiple points at which they deviated. As such, this work has important implications for educational research, theory and practice.

Segmented assimilation theorists and education researchers, tend to rely on a narrow definition of culture that not only overshadows the similarities between immigrant culture and the dominant society but also solidifies the differences between them by focusing on clash of cultures that prevents immigrants from being incorporated into American society. For example, Zhou & Bankston (1998) define immigrant culture as consisting of "an entire way of life, including languages, ideas, beliefs, values, behavioral patterns, and all that immigrants bring with them as they arrive in their new country" (p. 11). Similarly, research on the educational experiences of young Pakistani women in the 'West' (Abbas, 2002; Ghuman, 2001; Zaidi & Shuraydi, 2002) which suggests that parents, culture and religion are the principal factors limiting the educational expectations, aspirations and attainment of female Pakistani youth has also relied on equally limited conceptions of culture and religion. Immigrant culture (i.e., values, ideas, way of life, etc.), according to segmented assimilation theorists as well as researchers in education, is understood then, as markedly different and in opposition to the culture of members of the 'Western' culture. However, people from seemingly distinct cultures may share similar values, yet carry out/practice those values in markedly different ways. By overlooking points of convergence and deviation, researchers run the

risk of perpetuating stereotypes and become complicit in the 'biologization' of culture (Bonilla-Silva, 2011). I am not suggesting that researchers in education and/or other disciplines fail to recognize the differences that exist within and between groups and normalize difference. But rather, cognizant of their complicity in the process of difference making and continue in the tradition of critical education scholars (see Lee, 2005; Ngo, 2006; G. Lopez, 2001; N. Lopez, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999) whose work about immigrant youth and communities "reflects a strong commitment to intersectionality, as well as close attention to difference" (Fine & Sirin, 2008).

Furthermore, this dissertation suggests that 'difference' informed the way immigrant youth and youth of color are categorized and learned to navigate their worlds. However, the work of Bigelow (2008), Purkayastha (2005), and Ghaffar-Kucher (2012), suggests that there is a primary form of categorization through which youth define themselves and/or are defined by others. However, in my research with young Pakistani Muslim women, I found that ethnicity, religion, gender *and* culture were all implicated in their categorization of themselves and their description of the ways people have categorized them. I found that in some cases, religion stood out more than ethnicity as an indicator of difference and in others ethnic background and culture was highlighted as a marker of difference. The participants revealed that they were often identified as members of ambiguous or multiple racial categories and were not always identified as Muslim because the majority of them did not wear hijab. As such, there was no primary marker of difference that "trumped" the other, but rather, multiple systems of categorization (including gendering) were co-opted by and ascribed to the middle class,

Pakistani, Muslim women in my study. Furthermore, as young Pakistani Muslim women, gender was always implicated in the processes of categorization.

In attempting to determine a primary form of categorization, racialization theorists, as well as those who focus on the processes of religification, run the risk of overlooking other forms of categorization that may have a substantial impact on their identities, experiences and opportunities, particularly when researching the lives of youth who fall into ambiguous racial/religious categories. Furthermore, racialization theorists cannot ignore the impact that religion has on the ways youth and adults identify themselves or are characterized by others. A Gallup poll conducted in 2009 on the importance of religion in the US shows that the US is generally a religious nation, although the degree of religiosity varies across states and regions of the country. The poll suggests that "a robust" 65% of all Americans (across the entire U.S. population) reported in 2008 that religion was important in their daily lives and while they did not fall into the category of "most religious states," New York and California, states which are considered to be progressive because they are believed to represent secular politics, also did not fall into the set of "least religious states." Also, the recent defunding of Planned Parenthood programs in Texas, motivated by the institutional push to make abortion illegal (particularly for women from economically and socially marginalized communities), for example, is just one of countless examples of how religion continues to inform policy in the US.

I found that the participants described themselves in thoughtful and complicated ways. However, they also possessed hegemonic conceptions of what it meant to be a Pakistani Muslim woman. Girls in both high school and college were largely unconscious

of a definition of culture as situated in particular social, political, economic, and historical conditions and influenced by matters of power. According to the participants, Islam and Pakistani culture was almost always discussed by their non-Muslim/Pakistani peers in relation to 9/11 and acts of terrorism or Islamic gender oppression, yet the young women's notion of racism and experiences of discrimination was informed by a color-blind ideology that likened the acknowledgment of racism and/or discrimination with the perpetuation of oppression. Accordingly, the participants attempted to circumvent the processes of differentiation, othering and exclusion at school by minimizing their differences around their non-Muslim/non-Pakistani peers and/or forming close relationships with young women within their ethno-religious communities. As Nieto (2010) argues, "Schools' and the larger society's assumptions about people form a belief system that helps create and perpetuate structures that reproduce assumptions" (p. 43). In other words, schools are complicit in the naturalization of culture which leads to otherness and exclusion. That the participants felt the need to conceal their difference implies that schools need to find ways to engage marginalized students in critical dialogues about difference and the processes that lead to difference making/differentialism, otherness, and exclusion. By doing so, teachers can help their students grow their understanding of themselves, their families and their communities and avoid contributing to the same process that seek to oppress them.

Finally, this work underscores the need for further research about the role that family and ethno-religious communities play in the educational trajectories and life experiences of Pakistani youth living in the US. In order to critically understand the lives and educational experiences/aspirations of immigrant youth, researchers need to conduct

more studies that focus on and highlight the family. Although researchers will never be able to fully understand the lives of their participants, it is possible to better comprehend their perspectives if we engage in research that does not limit itself to the perspective of the individual, but rather envisions the participant as part of a community of people who help them to navigate their lives path, and includes the perspectives of those people who inform the lives of the primary participants. My conversations with the participants parents allowed for a more comprehensive understanding the lives and perspectives of the young women as members of their particular families and helped me, at least, in part, to understand how youth conceive of and internalize static notions of culture and religion and why the naturalization of culture is perpetuated by immigrant parents, children and communities.

APPENDICES

PARENT PERMISSION FORM

My name is Sara Zaidi and I am a student in the Urban Education Ph.D. Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled "Beyond Essentialism: Young Pakistani Women's Reflections on Education, Family and Future." This is a research study of the educational experiences, expectations and aspirations of young Pakistani women. The goal of this project is to contribute to the small but growing body of research on the education of young Pakistani women in the United States. Specifically, this project will address the messages parents send to their daughters about the role education in their lives. This study also intends to understand the ways in which young women interpret these messages. I would like permission to interview you about your child/children's education. I would also like permission to interview your child, ____________________, about her experiences and opinions about education/schooling.

You will be interviewed once between winter 2010 and spring 2011. Your daughter, _____________________, will be interviewed on multiple separate occasions from Winter 2010 to Spring 2011. Each interview will take from one to two hours. I would also like to observe your daughter on multiple separate occasions (at least 3) at home, at a community event, the mosque, and/or with friends/family. With your permission, I will observe your daughter at home, with friends, and if possible at social events. I will observe your daughter a minimum of four times and each observation will last approximately 2-4 hours or more if needed. I will pay you, your daughter, and her sibling $20.00 per interview. I will also pay your daughter $20.00 per observation. With your permission, I would like to audio-tape any interviews I conduct with you or your children so I can record the details accurately. The tapes will only be heard by me and my advisors. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I, and my advisor, will have access. At any time you can refuse to answer any questions or end this interview.

The risks from participating in this study are no more than encountered in everyday life. The benefit of your participation is that it will add to the generalized knowledge of research on the educational experiences of Pakistanis in the United States. There will be approximately 30 participants taking part in this study.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

My signature below indicates that:

- I agree to let my child participate in Sara Zaidi's research project "Beyond Essentialism" from December 2010-August 2011.
- I understand that my child will be interviewed multiple times and observed on multiple occasions, including in my home.
- I understand that I have the right to stop an interview/observation at any time.
- I give permission to Sara Zaidi to interview and observe me and my child.

I agree to have this interview audio-taped please [circle one]: Yes No

_________________________ _________ _____________________________ _____
Participant's signature/assent Date Investigator's signature Date

_________________________ _________ _____________________________ _____
Participants Parent signature Date Investigator's signature Date

CONSENT FORM: Pakistani Women 18+

My name is Sara Zaidi and I am a student in the Urban Education Ph.D. Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled "Beyond Essentialism: Young Pakistani Women's Reflections on Education, Family and Future." This is a research study of the educational experiences, expectations and aspirations of young Pakistani women. The goal of this project is to contribute to the small but growing body of research on the education of young Pakistani women in the United States. Specifically, this project will address the messages parents send to their daughters about the role education in their lives. This study also intends to understand the ways in which young women interpret these messages. I would like permission to interview you about your experiences and opinions regarding your education/schooling, your family's role this and your future academic and career plans.

You will be interviewed on multiple separate occasions from Winter 2010 to Spring 2011. Each interview will take from one to two hours. I would also like to observe you on multiple separate occasions (at least 3) at home, at a community event, the mosque, and/or with friends/family. With your permission, I will observe you at home, with friends, and if possible at social events. I will observe you a minimum of four times and each observation will last approximately 2-4 hours or more if needed. I will pay you $20.00 each per interview. I will also pay you $20.00 per observation. With your permission, I would like to audio-tape any interviews I conduct with you so I can record the details accurately. The tapes will only be heard by me and my advisors. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I, and my advisor, will have access. At any time you can refuse to answer any questions or end this interview.

The risks from participating in this study are no more than encountered in everyday life. The benefit of your participation is that it will add to the generalized knowledge of research on the educational experiences of Pakistanis in the United States. There will be approximately 30 participants taking part in this study.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

I agree to have this interview audio-taped please [circle one]:
Yes No

___________________________	_________	___________________________	_____
Participant's signature	Date	Investigator's signature	Date

Interview Protocol: Young Pakistani Women

Interview Protocol 1A: Background

Oral Script: Interview with Young Pakistani Woman

Hi. Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with me today. The purpose of this interview is so that I can begin to get to know you. I will be asking you questions about yourself and about your relationship with your family. I want to begin the interview by letting you know that everything we discuss today, including your names will remain confidential. Although I want to interview your family, I will not be disclosing any information from this interview or the observations, even if family (your parents and siblings), friends, and/or any mutual acquaintances ask questions. If you agree to have this interview taped, only I and my advisors will have access to those tapes. At any time, you may ask me to clarify a question, refuse to answer a question or end the interview. I have approximately 15 questions to ask you and it should take approximately two hours to complete. Do you have any questions? Let's get started."

1. Tell me about yourself? How would you describe yourself to someone who doesn't know you?
2. In your opinion, what does it mean to be a young Pakistani woman (I will replace young Pakistani woman with the labels they use to define themselves) growing up in the US?
3. What are some of the advantages of being a young Pakistani woman?
4. What are some of the disadvantages? Explain
5. What do you think your life would be like if you grew up in Pakistan? How would it be different? How would it compare?
6. Do you ever feel that people (parents/teachers/friends/community members) see you in ways that are different from how you see yourself? If so, please explain.
7. Describe your friends to me? What do you have in common with them? How are you different?
8. What do you enjoy doing alone, and what do you enjoy doing with your friends?
9. What do you like about your life?
10. If you had the chance to change anything about your life, would you? If so what would you change? Why?

Interview Protocol 1B: Family Life

1. Tell me about your family?
2. Please describe a typical day at home, with your family?
3. Do you have any siblings? Describe them to me?
4. What about your parents? Will you describe them to me? What do you enjoy doing with your family?
5. Describe your relationship with the various members of your family. Is your relationship with your mother different than your relationship with your father? Your siblings?

6. Do you know why your parents decided to move to the US? Have you ever visited Pakistan? Do you still have family there?
7. A. What was it like to grow up in your neighborhood/move to the US?

   B. How does the type of education/schooling you've received in the US differ from the type of education/schooling you received in Pakistan? [for participants who grew up in Pakistan]
8. How do you think your life would be different if your parents never moved to the US?
9. Are you in contact with any of you family members in Pakistan? Tell me about your relationships with them?

Interview Protocol 2: Educational Experiences/Aspirations

Oral Script: Interview with Young Pakistani Woman

Hi. Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with me today. The purpose of this interview is so that we can discuss your experiences at school and at home as well as your hopes and dreams for the future. I want to begin the interview by letting you know that everything we discuss today, including your names will remain confidential. Although I want to interview your family, I will not be disclosing any information from this interview or the observations, even if family (your parents and siblings), friends, and/or any mutual acquaintances ask questions. If you agree to have this interview taped, only I and my advisors will have access to those tapes. At any time, you may ask me to clarify a question, refuse to answer a question or end the interview. I have approximately 15 questions to ask you and it should take approximately two hours to complete. Do you have any questions? Let's get started."

1. What kind of school do you go to? What do you like about it? What would you change about it?
2. How does it feel to be a student in that school?
3. What kind of student are you?
4. Tell me about a typical day when you come home after school? Describe it as if you were making a movie about it.
5. If you were at home and you needed help with one of your assignments, who would you ask for help?
6. Tell me about the classes you enjoy the most? The least? Why?
7. What do you enjoy most about school?
8. What do you enjoy least about school?
9. Has anything related to Pakistan/Islam or being Pakistani/Muslim come up in any of your classroom discussions? Which classes, and what do you remember about those discussions?
10. Do you want to go to college? If not, please explain. Do you have an idea about what you want your major to be?
11. What about your teachers? How do their expectations for your future compare to yours?
12. Can you think of a conversation that you've had in school with a teacher, a fellow student, or an administrator about your ethnic background or religion? Great, what did you discuss in that conversation?
13. Do you go to any after school programs, take classes outside of school that are related to or help you with your schoolwork? What about classes that are unrelated to school like Sunday school classes, music lessons, art classes, etc.? Tell me about those classes. How are they different than your classes at school?
14. What are your expectations for yourself?
15. What do you think you'll be doing a year from now? What about five years from now? How about ten years from now?

Interview Protocol 3: Family and Education

Oral Script: Interview with Young Pakistani Woman

Hi. Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with me today. The purpose of this interview is so that we can discuss the messages you receive from your parents/siblings/family about schooling/education. I want to begin the interview by letting you know that everything we discuss today, including your names will remain confidential. Although I want to interview your family, I will not be disclosing any information from this interview or the observations, even if family (your parents and siblings), friends, and/or any mutual acquaintances ask questions. If you agree to have this interview taped, only I and my advisors will have access to those tapes. At any time, you may ask me to clarify a question, refuse to answer a question or end the interview. I have approximately 15 questions to ask you and it should take approximately two hours to complete. Do you have any questions? Let's get started."

1. What are some of the messages your parents send to you about the role of education/school in your life? Please think of specific examples.
2. In your opinion, what expectations do your parents have for you? School? Education? Religion? Future? Career?
3. In your opinion, what influences your parents expectations of you and your future?
4. How do you feel about their expectations for you?
5. How are their expectations for you different from their expectations for your siblings? If not, please explain.
6. Do your parents want you to go to college?
7. How are your expectations for your academic future different than your parents expectations for your academic future?
8. Tell me about your parents' educational background?
9. Can you think of a recent time when you and your parents discussed your school work? Great, now tell please tell me everything that happened.
10. Can you think about a specific time when you had a dispute with your parents about your anything school related? What about something that you and your parents agree upon in regards to your education? Don't be afraid of giving too much detail: I am interested in everything.
11. In your opinion, what do your parents like the most about your school? The least?
12. How important do you think schooling/education is to your parents? Please explain. Can you think of a specific example of a conversation you had with your parents about learning/school/education?
13. How important do you think it is for your parents that you do well in school? Please explain.
14. Can you think of a specific example of when your parents talked about education/school with their friends/family members/each other about anything related to education?
15. Do you think your mom and dad have different expectations when it comes to your education or the education of your siblings?

Interview Protocol: Parents

Oral Script: Parent Interview

"Salaam'alaikum/Hello. Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with me today. The purpose of this interview is to better understand your ideas about the role education and schooling play in your daughter's life. I want to begin the interview by letting you know that everything we discuss today, including your names will remain confidential. Although I have interviewed your daughter/child, I will not be disclosing any information from this interview or the observations to anyone, even if your children, friends, or mutual acquaintances ask questions. If you agree to have this interview taped, only I and my advisors will have access to those tapes. At any time, you may ask me to clarify a question, refuse to answer a question or end the interview. I have approximately 15 questions to ask you and it should take approximately two hours to complete. Do you have any questions? Let's get started."

1. Please tell me about your educational background.
    a. Where did you go to school?
    b. What is the highest degree you have completed?
2. How was your education/schooling different than your children's education?
3. Please tell me a little about each of your children.
4. How do you feel about the education your daughter is receiving at her school? Is there anything you would change? Why? Can you think of a specific example of a positive experience you had at her school? Please explain.
5. In your opinion, what do you think the purpose of schooling? What do you think the goal of education should be? What about the role of the teacher?
6. How is your relationship with her teachers and school administrators?
7. When was the last time you visited her school? What was the purpose of your visit?
8. In your opinion, what should the role of the parent be in their children's education? What role do you assume in your daughters education?
9. What kind of student do you think your daughter is?
10. In terms of schooling, where do you see your daughter in 1 year? 5 years? 10 years? Do you think your expectations compare/contrast to the expectations she has for herself?
11. Is there anything you want your daughter to learn that she doesn't learn in school? Are there any other schools/classes your daughter attends/takes? For example, is she involved in any after school activities, Sunday school, art classes, SAT preparation classes? How important is it for you that your daughter takes these classes?
12. What messages do you want to send to your daughter about the role education should have in her life? Can you think about specific examples of how you communicate these messages to her?
13. Do you have different expectations for your daughter than her sister/brother? If so, please explain.
14. How do you think your children compare/differ in terms of education/schooling?
15. If you had the power to decide where your daughter would be in 1 year, what would she be doing? 5 years? 10 years?

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